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2023**



**UPSCLOGY'S
PUBADPEDIA**

**A MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE
FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL
(UPSC CSE)**

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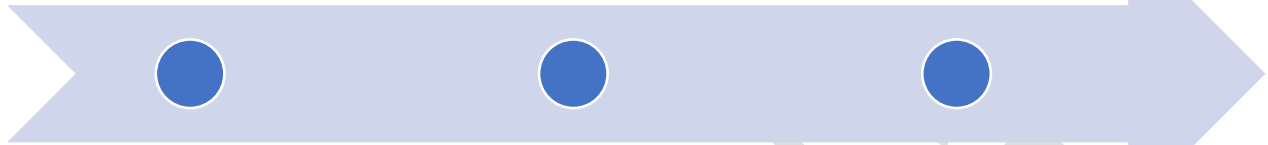
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MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR



I am honored to present to you the latest edition of the PubAdPedia Magazine for UPSC CSE. As the author of this edition, I am excited to share with you some of the latest updates and insights in the field of public administration. I have endeavored to bring you "insightful articles, analysis, and the most crucial linkage between content (current affairs) and context (static theory/thinkers) on various topics related to the public administration optional for civil services examination.

Our aim is to equip you with the knowledge and analytical skills that you need to succeed in the UPSC CSE exam and beyond. The articles and features in this magazine have been carefully curated to reflect the latest trends and developments in the field of public administration, and we hope that they will be both informative and engaging.

As an author, I am always keen to hear from my readers, and I would be delighted to receive your feedback on the content of this magazine. Please feel free to write to us with your comments, suggestions, or queries, and we will do our best to respond in a timely and helpful manner.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere hope that this edition of the PubAdPedia Magazine will serve as a valuable resource for all those who are preparing for public administration optional. I am confident that you will find much to learn and appreciate in these pages.

Rahul Shakya
NET-JRF Holder (Public Administration)
University Gold Medalist (Mechanical Engineering)

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WORDS OF APPRECIATION



Being a student of Masters of public administration from Jamia Milia Islamia and having a deep interest in subject, initially current affairs Identification and Interlinking was not a challenge for me.

But later on, it became difficult for me to actively Identify and Interlink topics in limited TIME.

Coincidentally, when time management for optional current affairs become a bit difficult, You launched the **PubAdPedia Magazine** Initiative. I was already aware of your credibility in field of Public Administration because of Daily Answer Writing Initiative that I had joined in 2019. So it was an easy decision for me to try the PubAdpedia Magazines.

As I have already told you in my earlier feedbacks, the Flowcharts ("फूल पत्ते" diagrams, that i used to call them) where you interlink current affairs with static theory/thinkers was really helpful. This Rahul-Factor is the USP of your magazine, but I believe it is going to be the TSP for Aspirants (Time Saving PubAdpedia).

My best wishes to you and your initiatives for the aspirant community!

Mehak Jain

Rank 17, CSE 2021

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WORDS OF APPRECIATION



Recent trends of UPSC Public Administration optional paper clearly indicates that giving recent current linkages and examples can significantly boost one's marks in the optional.

But unfortunately there is lack of such regular Public Administration specific current affairs collection and quality presentation or linkages. Due to time and other constraints aspirants can't do a comprehensive study and brainstorming for this aspect.

But fortunately I have seen Your PubAdpedia magazines as a good effort in that direction. Your efforts can really aid serious aspirants' preparation in a positive manner and save much of the valuable time.

Your basics and understanding of the subject is quite profound and enriching. The flow chart based easy explanation and linking things with static syllabus like thinkers etc is a good approach of your magazine. This can be of good help for freshers as well as seniors alike.

Also I liked your noble intentions of providing the magazine access to poor deserving aspirants free of cost. This shows goodness of your heart and is in sync with my core belief of #Sharing is Caring !

I wish all my best wishes to you and the PubAdPedia magazine. I hope the magazine and your efforts get a rightful top place soon.

God Bless You!

Vijay Wardhan Sarswat

I.P.S. (CSE 2018)

I.A.S. (CSE 2020)

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WORDS OF APPRECIATION



Dear Rahul,

This is to extend my congratulations on the wonderful unique initiative, PubAdPedia Magazines. You are one of the most well known & reliable faces in the online world of CSE guidance. This is a feat in itself, given how cut throat the field is. Only genuinely good content and honest advices can attract aspirants today. You've proved your mettle there with your GS & Public Administration videos.

What stands out about PubAdPedia Magazines is that it fills the crucial gap of linking syllabus topics with current affairs. This not only gives one easy marks but also improves understand of topics for those not so 'straight' Pub Ad questions. Everyone who has prepared for this optional knows the importance of linkages & examples. This was a dire need left unfulfilled till now. When one prepares current topics from a GS point of view, it needs a lot of extra effort to segregate & link them with Public administration topics. Because of redundancy of effort and paucity of time (always a case with upsc aspirants), they end of skipping it. PubAdPedia does that for you.

Your magazine is the answer to the question why public administration seems easy but doesn't fetch marks!

I'm sure PubAdPedia will make the UPSC path easy for all aspirants with Public Administration optional.

Keep coming up with great content that helps aspirants across sections.

My best wishes.

An ardent follower of your content.

Prashasti

Rank 413, CSE 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

✚ Disappearing Languages, Vanishing Voices [Impact of Globalization on Communication]

#TheHindu

Disappearing languages, vanishing voices

English as a common language in India has been acting as a threat by connecting multilingual Indians since the time of the British Raj. While communication in English is not much of a problem in the cities, the language becomes an impediment in the remote areas. This leads to the question: why cannot all people in the world speak in the same language? It would be so much simpler and strengthen our power as a united human force.

Let us look at the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. In Chapter 11 of the *Book of Genesis*, it is said that the descendants of Noah, after the aftermath of the great flood, spoke a common language. They migrated towards the east and finally settled down at a place called Shinar. They began building a city and a tower tall enough to reach heaven as a demonstration of their collective strength.

Yahweh, the god of the Hebrew Bible, became alarmed and annoyed on observing this, and broke them into many groups, each speaking a different language to reduce the power of their collective strength. This created confusion in terms of communication and understanding and the project failed. Some people are of the opinion that the British made a blunder teaching English to Indians which helped them to unite, communicate and become powerful enough to end colonialism.

Irrespective of whether the story is true or not, the writer of this narrative knew the power of a common language. Language is a vehicle to transfer information, ideas and emotions.

A forecast of language extinction

An estimated 7,000 distinct languages are spoken as a mother tongue across the world. But these languages are shrinking rapidly. An interesting mathematical model published in *The Economic Journal* which forecasts the extinction of 40% of languages with less than 35,000 speakers within 100 years. By extinction it is meant that the languages will no longer be spoken as a mother tongue, or as the principal language. In essence, the diversity of languages is shrinking with time.

Mother tongues of about half the people in the world belong to a pool of 10 most spoken languages; language diversity faces a grave threat. Today, English is the most widely spoken language of the world. British colonial rule helped spread the language.

This shrinking in the diversity of languages and



Suprakash Chandra Roy

is a writer, author and former Editor-in-Chief of the journal, 'Science and Culture'

Any loss of language is not only a loss of linguistic diversity but also a loss in terms of the associated cultural variations, opinions, views and knowledge

their extinction are also related to the migration of people to countries which have a common language. When people migrate, there is pressure to shift to the dominant language spoken in the country where they live in order to capitalise on the social and economic advantages offered by the new place. In the process, first-generation migrants become bilingual, the next generation has a weaker grasp of its mother tongue, and the third generation may no longer speak or understand their grandparents or great-grandparents at all. India is a good example with increasing migration to English-speaking countries. English now has 340 million native speakers and more than 1.2 billion second language speakers, with much scope for further growth. One wonders what would happen to Hindi, with an estimated 586 million second language speakers in the world. Would it grow to the level of English?

On the language index

The Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD), which was introduced to quantitatively understand the trends over the past 30 years in the number of mother-tongue speakers of the world's languages, is a measure to gauge the decline of languages. There is also a Language Diversity Index, where the probability that two people selected from a population at random will have different mother tongues; it ranges from 0 (everyone has the same mother tongue) to 1 (no two people have the same mother tongue). Obviously, countries that have people with a smaller number of mother languages have a lower LDI than countries with a large number of mother tongues. For example, the United Kingdom has an LDI of 0.139 when compared to 0.930 for India. Interestingly, although the predominant language in the United States is English as in the United Kingdom, due to the significant presence of migrants from different countries, the LDI of the U.S. is 0.353. In terms of LDI, the three lowest ranking countries are Haiti (0.000), Cuba (0.001) and Samoa (0.002), while the top ranking three countries are Papua Guinea (0.990), Vanuatu (0.972) and the Solomon Islands (0.965).

The ILD demonstrates that globally, linguistic diversity declined by 20% over the period 1970-2005. Regionally, indigenous linguistic diversity declined over 60% in the Americas, 30% in the Pacific including Australia and almost 20% in Africa. But calculating the index from a sample of only a certain number of languages, let us say

1,000 languages out of 7,000 languages, over a period of time may not give us the correct picture as the world population is also increasing. The index actually tries to understand the distribution of speakers among all the spoken languages of the world. What has been found is that the distribution is becoming greatly uneven with the passage of time.

What we see is that a greater number of people in the world are transitioning to just a few dominant languages at the expense of several smaller ones, resulting in a loss of linguistic diversity, where, finally, some of the languages are becoming extinct. According to the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), dozens of languages today have only one living native speaker, which shows how precariously placed some languages are. Once they vanish, an identity and culture also vanish.

Language is not only a vehicle for communication to express ideas and emotions but it also carries cultural values and indigenous knowledge. The extinction of languages will only result in shrinking cultural diversity and an increase in cultural homogenisation.

The situation in India, need for strategies

According to a report published by UNESCO in 2018, 42 languages are heading towards extinction in India. These were spoken by less than 10,000 people. According to the norms set by UNESCO, any language spoken by only 10,000 people is potentially endangered. Most dying languages are from the indigenous tribal groups spread across India.

The world is very concerned about biodiversity and is alarmed by the loss of species. Different languages can be compared to distinct species in the linguasphere, if we can use such a term. Any loss of language is not only a loss of linguistic diversity but also a loss in terms of associated cultural variations, opinions, views and knowledge. It is time to evolve ideas to arrest the decline of languages on the larger global canvas. The world must at least try to find ways and means to preserve some of its endangered languages. The LSA is doing an admirable job in trying to learn about these endangered languages; it is also making videotapes, audiotapes and written records of the languages, along with their translation. It is hoped that other institutions will emulate this and act to reduce the disappearance of languages in whichever way they can.

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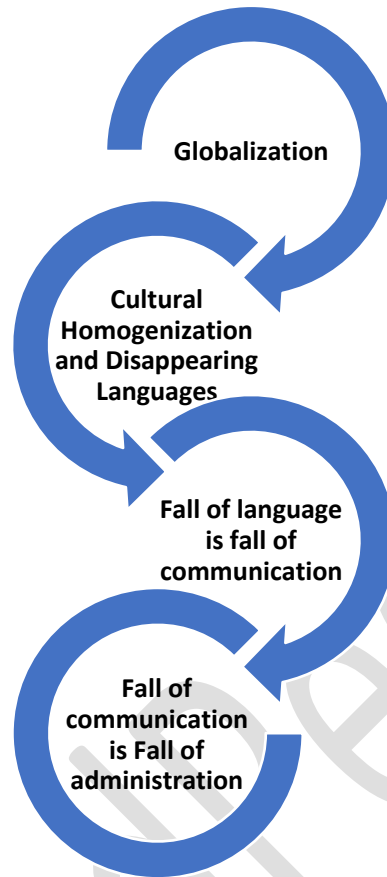


Fig. Relation between Globalization and Communication

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2.ADMINISTRATIVE THINKERS

✚ Khap Panchayats

#TH

Note the example.

Haryana khaps seek ban on marriages within same villages, live-in relationships

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

The representatives of 23 khaps in Haryana's Jind at a meeting on Sunday sought an amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, to ban marriages within the same village and gotra (sub-caste) in the State and make live-in relationships illegal.

'Against social norms'

Majra khap chief Gurvinder Singh Sandhu, also secretary of five-member co-ordination committee for the khaps, said marriages within the same village and gotra (sub-caste) were not allowed in these parts of rural Haryana and the young boys and girls marrying against the social norms led to disputes.

"The government giving police protection to such couples encouraged the



A khap meeting in progress in Haryana. FILE PHOTO

practice. Such marriages are not acceptable in most parts of Haryana, especially Jind. The live-in relationships also cause social disorder and must not be allowed. Parents consent be mandatory for love marriages as well," said Mr. Sandhu.

He said the khaps across Haryana had been demanding ban on marriages within same village and go-

tra (sub-caste) for long, but the government had failed to listen to them. He alleged that the government wanted to weaken the khaps which, in fact, acted as government's associates by facilitating settlement of minor disputes at community level.

'No legal separation'

Majra khap spokesperson Samundra Singh said the courts had recognised certain rights of live-in partners at par with the married couples, but there was no provision for legal separation in such relationships similar to a divorce in a marriage.

The need for better co-ordination among khaps was also stressed at the meeting and a 23-member president board was constituted for making collective decisions on important matters.

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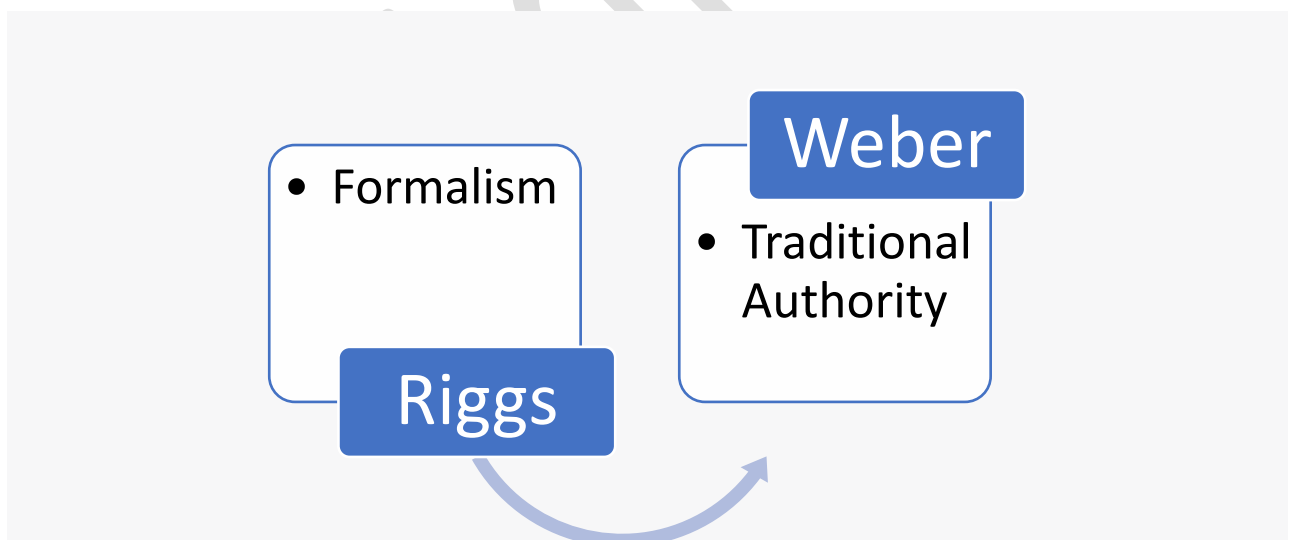
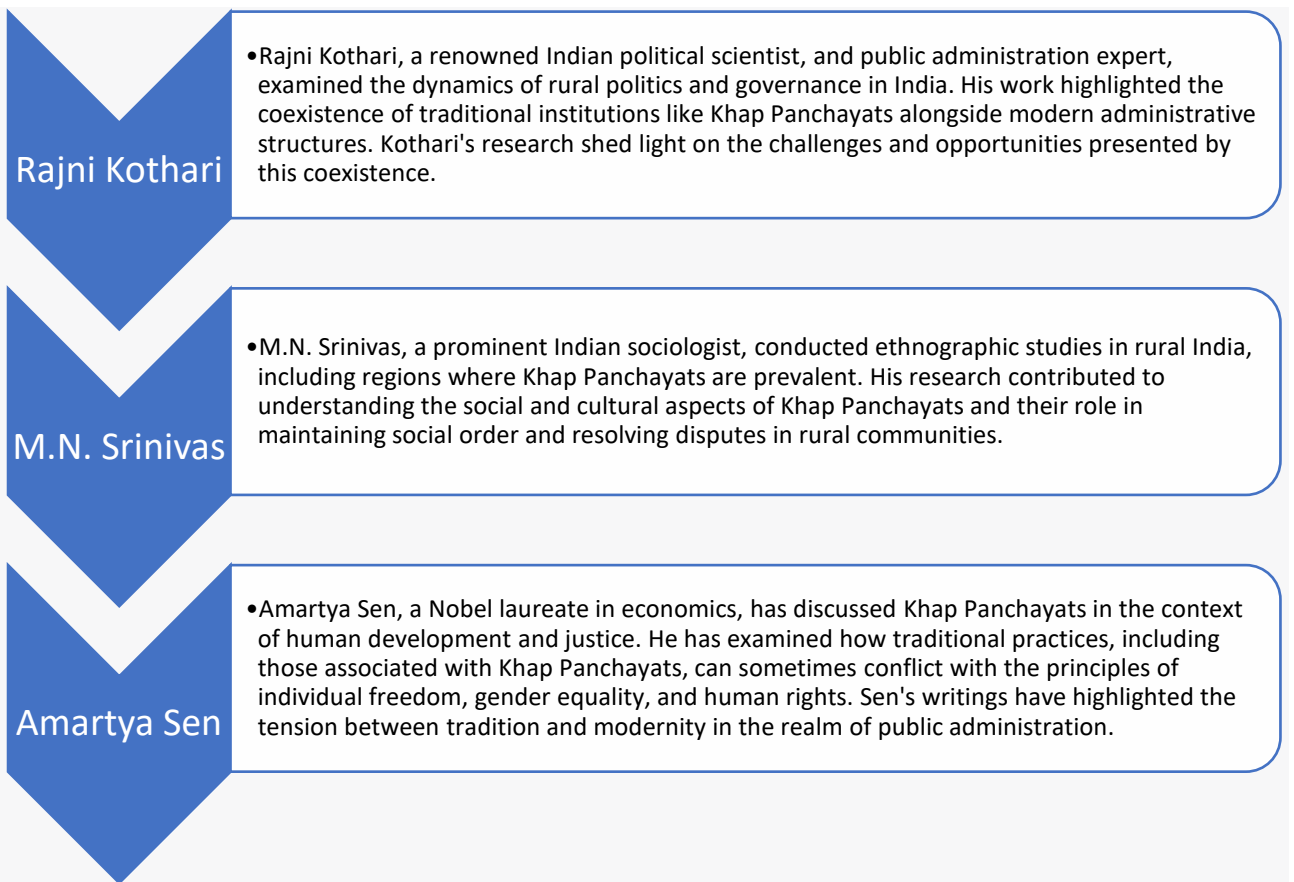


Fig. Khap Panchayat and Thinkers <R-Factor>

3. TECHNIQUES OF ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENT

✚ Moody's "Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets" Report
#TheHindu

Aadhaar unreliable in 'hot, humid' India: rating agency

Amid India's digital infra push, Moody's says the world's largest digital ID programme often denies service to users, it questions reliability of biometric technology, warns of privacy and security risks

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Global rating major Moody's Investors Service has flagged concerns about security and privacy vulnerabilities in centralised identification systems such as India's Aadhaar programme. The unique ID system often results in "service denials", and using biometric technologies in humid conditions is unreliable, it noted.

The Aadhaar system enables access to public and private services, with verification through fingerprint or iris scans and alternatives such as one-time pass codes (OTPs). However, it "faces hurdles, including the burden of establishing authorization and concerns about biometric reliability", Moody's said.

Low rating

Moody's Investors Service has cautioned against centralised digital ID systems such as Aadhaar as they pose security and privacy vulnerabilities. Here are a few warnings from the firm which offers credit ratings, research, and risk analysis:

- A single entity controlling users' ID credentials can dispose of user data for internal or third-party profiling purposes
- Aadhaar system faces hurdles, including the burden of establishing authorisation
- Reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual labourers, in hot, humid climates is questionable



■ All digital IDs can have negative social repercussions

"The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) administers Aadhaar, aiming to integrate marginalized groups and expand welfare benefits access... The system often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for ma-

nual laborers in hot, humid climates, is questionable," it stressed.

The rating agency's remarks assume significance in view of the government's adoption of Aadhaar for routing direct benefit transfers to beneficiaries of official wel-

fare schemes, and in particular, the diktat to mandate Aadhaar-based payments for labourers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Last month, the government extended its deadline for switching to a Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) for MGNREGS beneficiaries for the fifth time, pushing it to December 31 this year.

In a report on "Decentralized finance and digital assets" issued on Saturday, Moody's acknowledged Aadhaar as "the world's largest digital ID program" that assigns unique numbers to over 1.2 billion Indian residents.

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Identity pangs

A report on global digital IDs brings Aadhaar's limitations, risks in focus

In an innocuously titled report on "Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets" released last Saturday, global rating major Moody's Investors Service has flagged some uncomfortable home truths about India's ambitious digital identification (ID) programme for residents, Aadhaar. As the world's largest digital ID programme with biometric and demographic details of over a billion residents, Aadhaar stands out for its scale. But at a broader level, the agency has red-flagged security and privacy risks from "centralised" digital ID systems such as Aadhaar, where a single entity controls identifying credentials. Moody's, which has mooted decentralised ID systems that give users more control over their data, has also lent weight to worries about the efficacy of Aadhaar's biometric-based authentication systems to verify identities. "The system often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual labourers in hot, humid climates, is questionable," it said. While this observation is of relevance amid the government's push to switch all payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to an Aadhaar-based payment system, it echoes the concerns raised ever since its launch under the United Progressive Alliance regime.

The vigorous pursuit of Aadhaar, after some initial hesitation, under the present government has manifested in the 12-digit number becoming mandatory for almost all welfare benefits to weaker sections as well as activities such as opening bank or provident fund accounts, securing telephone connections and remitting taxes. Its use, backed by the expansion of access to no-frills bank accounts and mobile phone connections, has indeed enabled the direct transfer of benefits to millions in welfare schemes and weeding out ghosts and middlemen. Yet, there have also been instances of people being excluded from basic services for lack of an Aadhaar or labourers and senior citizens struggling to confirm their fingerprints and retina scans to prove they exist. An audit of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India released last year, had flagged lapses that jeopardise privacy and compromise data security, along with flaws in enrolment processes leading to duplication and faulty biometrics. India has pushed for digital public infrastructure like the one built around the edifice of Aadhaar, as a means for service delivery in G-20 nations and beyond. Having appointed a part-time chief to the UIDAI last month after four years, the government must seek an honest review of, and course correction in the Aadhaar programme, before expanding its linkages further, be it for electoral rolls, private entities or MGNREGA payments.

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Nandan Nilekani

Nandan Nilekani is one of the key architects of the Aadhaar program. While he played a pivotal role in its implementation, he has also been involved in addressing challenges and criticisms related to Aadhaar. His work includes advocating for the use of technology in public administration and addressing privacy concerns associated with Aadhaar.

Jean Drèze

Jean Drèze, an economist and development expert, has raised concerns about the potential exclusion of marginalized groups due to Aadhaar-related issues. He has highlighted the need for robust administrative systems to ensure that Aadhaar does not lead to service denials for vulnerable populations.

Weber

- The Aadhaar project, with its focus on creating a standardized and digitized identification system, aligns with Weber's ideas of an impersonal and efficient bureaucracy.

Simon

- Simon's concept of "bounded rationality" suggests that decision-makers often make choices based on available information and cognitive limitations. The Aadhaar project involves complex decisions related to data management, privacy, and technology, where bounded rationality plays a role.

NPM

- Aadhaar's goal of streamlining government services and enhancing efficiency through a digital identity system aligns with NPM principles.

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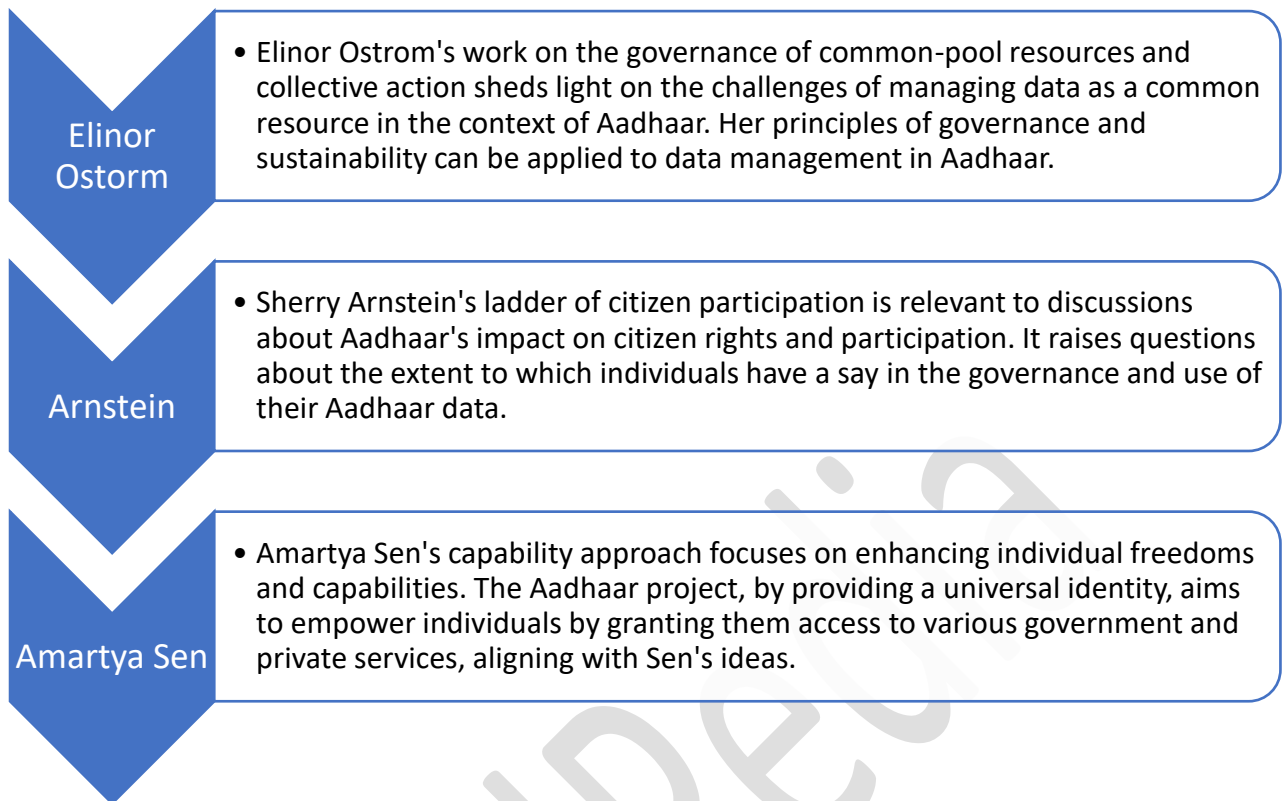


Fig. Aadhar and Thinkers <R-Factor>

4. ACCOUNTABILITY & CONTROL

✚ I.N.D.I.A. v/s “Media Anchors”
#TH

Context	<p>Recently, the INDIA bloc announced that it would boycott 14 television news anchors as it did not want to legitimize a “hate-filled narrative.” However, news broadcasters associations accused the Opposition of intolerance, undermining democracy, and setting a dangerous precedent.</p>
Pros	<p>Accountability and Responsibility: Boycotting news anchors accused of "partisanship and hate-mongering" sends a message that public figures, including journalists, should be held accountable for their actions and statements. It emphasizes that freedom of expression should not be a shield for promoting hate or misinformation.</p> <p>Political Strategy: The boycott can be viewed as a strategic move by the opposition alliance to disengage from media platforms that they believe are biased or hostile to their viewpoint. It allows them to exert control over their messaging and avoid confrontations that may not be productive.</p> <p>Media Ethics: It draws attention to the ethical responsibility of journalists and media organizations to maintain</p>

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	<p>fairness, objectivity, and a commitment to truth. This can potentially encourage self-regulation within the media industry.</p> <p>Politicization: Using the media ecosystem by politicians into their campaign team. For example: former U.S. President Donald Trump is not even going to participate in the presidential primary debates because he feels that he will not benefit as much as his competitors will benefit from appearing on the same stage as him.</p> <p>Public Awareness: The boycott can raise public awareness about media practices and the influence of certain news anchors on public opinion. It may encourage citizens to critically evaluate the news sources they rely on.</p>
<p>Cons:</p>	<p>Freedom of Expression: The decision to boycott specific news anchors raises concerns about freedom of expression. While it is important to hold individuals accountable for their actions, there is a risk of the decision being perceived as an attack on free speech, potentially chilling open discourse.</p> <p>Setting a Dangerous Precedent: Publicly naming and boycotting journalists may set a dangerous precedent. Other political parties or interest groups might adopt similar tactics, resulting in a further polarized</p>

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and divisive media environment.

Escalation: The decision may lead to a tit-for-tat escalation, with various groups and political parties boycotting journalists they disagree with. This could result in a fragmented media landscape where certain voices are silenced or marginalized.

Censorship Concerns: Critics argue that the boycott could be seen as a form of censorship, as it seeks to limit the reach and influence of certain journalists. This raises questions about whether political entities should have the authority to decide who can or cannot be heard in the media.

Impact on Media Independence: Media organizations may feel pressured to align with political interests to avoid being targeted for boycotts. This could compromise the independence and credibility of journalism, as outlets may be hesitant to publish critical stories.

Status of RTI

#TH

Note- Read previous editions for linking between “RTI and Thinkers”

Context	<p>For 13 years, the Right to Information Act, 2005, helped citizens obtain information and data from Central and State institutions that are not readily available in the public domain. India’s RTI Act has been commonly cited as among the most comprehensive public records access legislations in the world. In recent years, though, activists worry that the system is being made less and less effective, shutting off a crucial means to hold public officials accountable.</p>
Amendments and Challenges	<p>The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, amended this qualified prohibition into a total prohibition. However, the National Campaign for Peoples’ Right to Information (NCPRI) argued that it would make ‘social audits’ in ration distribution impossible to carry out. In social audits, a community member gets a list of ration beneficiaries through an RTI request, and individually verifies that the beneficiaries got what they appear to have received on paper. There are also concerns that powerful public officials would evade accountability by invoking this blanket ban on disclosing personal information.</p> <p>Past amendments to the RTI Act have also raised concerns. The Right to</p>

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	<p>Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 gave the Union Government unilateral power in deciding how long information commissioners, who hear appeals against unsatisfactory or absent RTI responses, can serve, and what their salaries are.</p>
<p>Undermining the RTI Act</p>	<p>The RTI Act's implementation is dependent on subordinate rules made by the Union Government and State Governments. For instance, the simple matter of what payment method a public authority can accept is left to the States to decide. Some States like Tamil Nadu do not accept Indian Postal Orders (IPOs), which are cheques that can be bought at post offices and attached to an application as payment. IPOs are generally the easiest payment method to obtain. Other payment methods are less convenient or otherwise burdensome — court fee stamps can only be purchased at a courthouse, and a demand draft for ₹10 may require a processing fee that is over twice that amount. Tardy appointments to information commissions — the Central Information Commission (CIC) for the Union Government, and various State Information Commissions (SICs) — have also undermined confidence in the RTI framework, as appeals can take months or even years to be heard, if ever. For example, the Jharkhand SIC has had no commissioners to hear appeals since May 2020, essentially suspending the ability to appeal</p>

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	ineffective administration of the RTI Act in the State.
Challenges with Online RTIs:	<p>many States do not have an online RTI portal, and even if they do, it is common for many State Government bodies to simply not be registered on the portal. The Union Government's RTI portal — launched in 2013 — is also past its prime. While many public authorities under the Union Government are on the portal, filing applications on it has become harder. Having an account on the RTIOnline portal allowed citizens to have their personal particulars filled in on each application by default. Now, however, the facility to create an account has disappeared, and the site forces all users to enter their particulars afresh each time they file an application. Further, past data of applicants has been stuttering in and out of the portal. In August, data of applications filed by users before 2022 disappeared without a trace, and after The Hindureported this, the Government restored the applications.</p>
The Way Forward:	<p>Dissatisfaction with the RTI Act is growing, as more first appeals are being filed. Activists warn that the Act's weakening isn't just due to legal changes but also stems from how institutions and websites handle RTI requests, narrowing avenues for information access and appeals that often go unanswered.</p>

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Media – Watch vs Read
#TH

Most Indians who consume news online like to watch, not read

In India, the role of mobile news aggregators as primary news sources is on the rise

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

The 2023 Digital News Report by the Reuters Institute published recently indicates a shift among online news consumers in India, who are increasingly turning to search engines and mobile news aggregators as their main source of news, thus moving away from websites of traditional outlets. The report underscores that among Indians who engage with news online, the majority favour watching or listening over reading the news.

In Scandinavian countries, well-established news brands continue to enjoy robust direct engagement with consumers for online news. In these markets, people still widely use social media platforms, but mainly for other activities rather than news consumption. In stark contrast, in regions such as Asia, Latin America, and Africa, social media reigns supreme as the main gateway to news, making traditional news outlets increasingly reliant on third-party traffic for audience reach.

Additionally, in specific Asia-Pacific markets such as Japan and Korea, local portals such as Naver and Yahoo! remain the dominant channels for news access. Meanwhile, in India and Indonesia, the role of mobile news aggregators as primary news sources is on the rise. **Chart 1** plots responses for the question, "Which of these was the main way in which you came across news in the last week: Mostly direct, mostly social, mostly aggregated?"

In countries with a strong tradition of reading, such as Finland and the United Kingdom, approximately 80% of respondents still favour reading news online. Conversely, India and Thailand, around 40% of people said they prefer to watch news online. Even more dramatically, over half (52%) of the respondents in the Philippines fa-

your video news consumption.

Chart 2 plots responses for the question, "In thinking about your online habits around news and current affairs, which of the following statements applies best to you: Prefer to read, prefer to watch, prefer to listen?"

The Digital News Report has also identified alarming declines in both the consumption and dissemination of news in India. The data show that access to online news has sharply fallen by 12 percentage points between 2022 and 2023, a trend that is particularly pronounced on social media platforms, which saw an 11-point decline. These platforms have traditionally been the primary news sources for a younger demographic.

Similarly, television, which commands a wide audience, has not been immune to this trend, experiencing a 10-point dip in viewership among our sample group comprising mainly younger and urban individuals. This decline in news engagement can be partially linked to the diminishing influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly since lockdown measures were relaxed in April last year. **Chart 3** shows sources of news for Indian news consumers between 2021 and 2023. In India, the overall trust in news has remained stagnant at 38% between 2021 and 2023.

Chart 4 shows the share of respondents in India who said that they trust 'most news most of the time'.

Chart 5 plots the share of respondents across nations in the Asia-Pacific who said that they trust 'most news most of the time'. With 38%, trust levels in India are among the least in the region.

In countries such as Finland (69%) and Portugal (58%), there are higher trust levels, with lower trust levels in countries with higher degrees of political polarisation such as the United States (32%), Argentina (30%), Hungary (25%), and Greece (19%).

Disruption in dissemination

The data for the charts were sourced from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023. For the report, research was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire at the end of January/beginning of February 2023. Data from India, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are representative of younger English-speakers and not the national population

Chart 1: Which of these was the main way in which you came across news in the last week: Mostly direct, mostly social, mostly aggregated (in %)

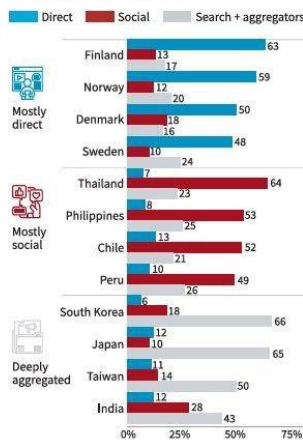


Chart 2: In thinking about your online habits around news and current affairs, which of the following statements applies best to you: Prefer to read, prefer to watch, prefer to listen? (in %)

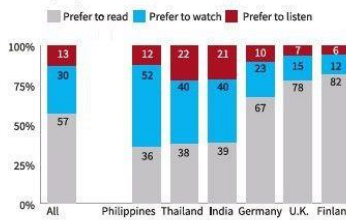


Chart 3: The chart shows sources of news for Indian news consumers between 2021 and 2023

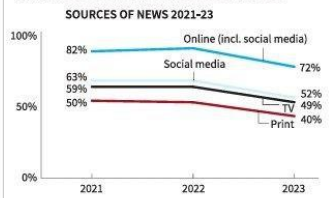


Chart 4: The chart shows trust in news among Indian consumers between 2021 and 2023

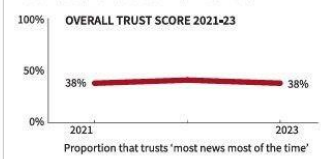
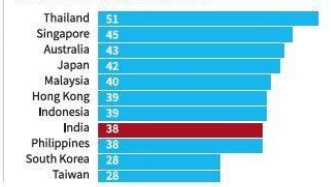


Chart 5: The chart plots the share of respondents across nations in the Asia-Pacific who said that they trust 'most news most of the time'



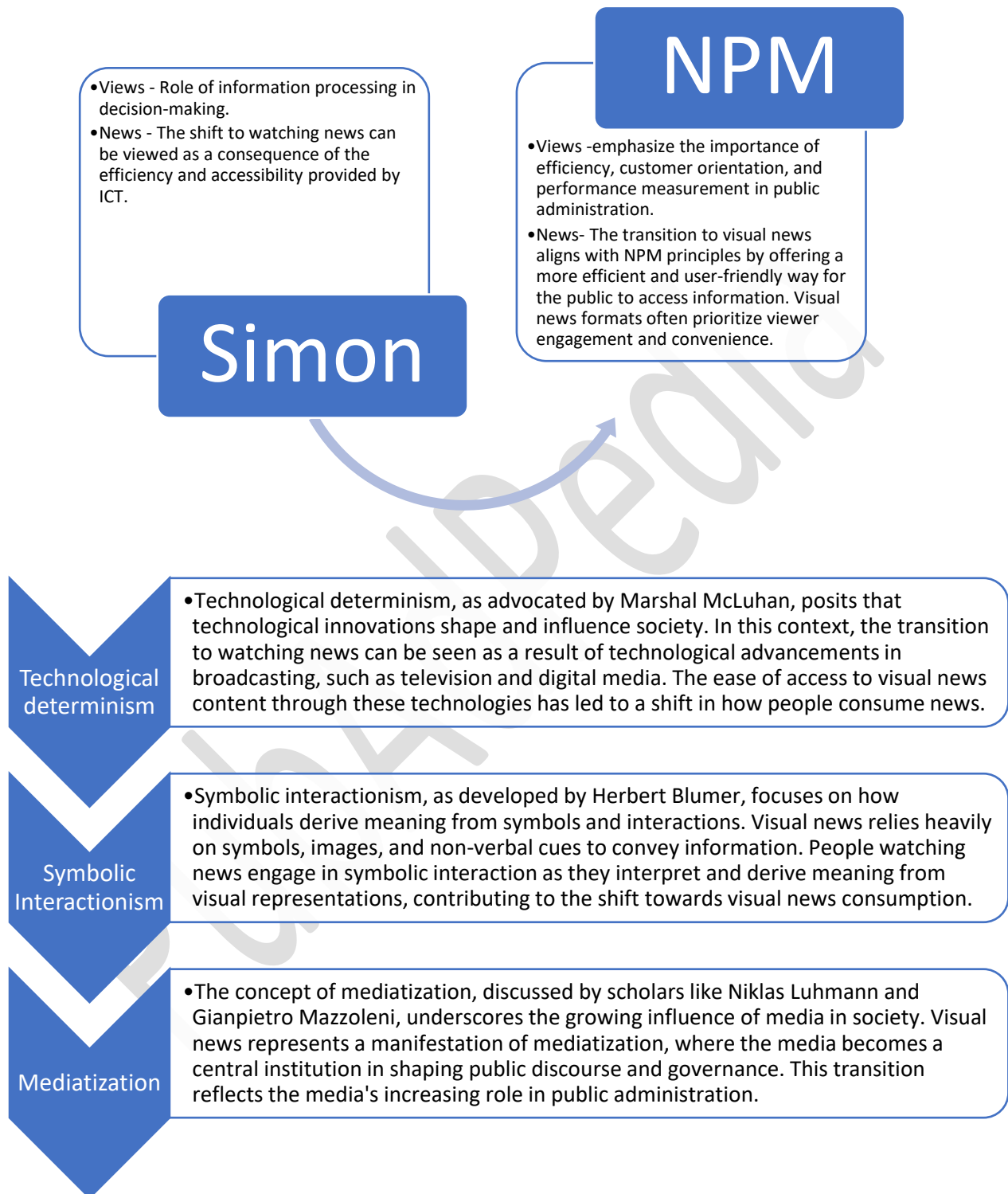


Fig. Media and Thinkers/Theories <R-Factor>

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5. DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Women in Positions, Professions and Parliament #TheHindu

Note – Read Women and Development <WAD> from Mohit Bhattacharya.



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India-UN Capacity Building Initiative

#TH

	<p>India and the United Nations have launched "India-UN Capacity Building Initiative", a joint capacity building initiative for the Global South.</p> <p>Objective - to share India's development experiences, best practices, and expertise with partner countries in the Global South through capacity building and training programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It also leverages India's Technical and Economic Cooperation platform to share its development experiences worldwide, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
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6. COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

French Principle of Secularism - *Laïcité*

#TH

Understanding *Laïcité*, the French principle of secularism

It involves the complete removal of religious values from the public sphere and their replacement with secular values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. The underlying goal of *Laïcité* is to implant tolerance and assimilate people

Radhika Santhanam

Recently, the French government announced that the practice of wearing abaya would be banned in state-run schools as it violated the principle of *Laïcité*, which is the French idea of secularism. The education minister said, "When you walk into a classroom, you shouldn't be able to identify the pupils' religion just by looking at them. Secularism means the freedom to emancipate oneself through school." He described the abaya as a "religious gesture, aimed at testing the resistance of the republic towards the secular sanctuary that school must be."

The move was met with criticism by many. Some said that this amounts to a policing of teenagers' clothing (public schools in France do not have a uniform). Some said that it was an attack on freedom and women's bodies. Others said that this was yet another instance of *Laïcité* being used as a tool of oppression rather than assimilation.

The meaning of *Laïcité*

Coined in the 19th century, *Laïcité* is a complicated and politically charged term. It is understood as a formal separation of the state and Church. It involves the complete removal of religious values from the public sphere and their replacement with secular values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. The underlying goal of *Laïcité* is to implant tolerance and assimilate people. As per the principle, religion is to be confined to the private sphere. It is important to note here that the state plays an important role in ensuring that affairs are run according to the principle of *Laïcité*.

Laïcité, a product of the struggle of

anti-clerical Republicans against the power of the Catholic Church, was an abstract idea following the French Revolution in 1789. It took a concrete shape in the form of The Law of 1905 in the Third Republic when state-run secular schools were established. The Law of 1905 guarantees freedom of conscience and freedom of worship except when it clashes with public order. It states that the Republic would neither pay for nor subsidise any form of worship. Today, while there are publicly funded Catholic schools in France, most children attend public schools which are secular spaces and free of cost.

Change in demographics

Laïcité was not seen as problematic for the most part of the 20th century because France was largely homogenous. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, there was large-scale decolonisation in North Africa, which led to an influx of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. The change in demographics caused episodic tensions.

The incident that particularly rattled France and drew extensive press coverage was in 1989 when three Muslim girls, who refused to remove their head scarves in class, were expelled from their school in the town of Creil, about 48 kilometres from Paris. The headmaster claimed that he was enforcing *Laïcité*. Muslim leaders as well as Catholic leaders decried the move, arguing that *Laïcité* meant respect for and tolerance of religious differences among students. The confusion over the term was clear, for the incident was both condoned and opposed in the name of *Laïcité*. In November that year, the Supreme Court ruled that the headscarf was not incompatible with the principle

of *Laïcité*.

This incident, in particular, brought Islam to the centre of the debate. Over the next few decades, global developments, such as the 9/11 attack and the invasion of Afghanistan by the U.S., and domestic ones, such as the rise of the National Front, which was avowedly anti-immigration; the shooting of journalists at Charlie Hebdo; and the killing of three people at a church in the city of Nice all contributed to this and arguably led to anti-Muslim sentiment.

Following the recommendation of the Stasi Commission, which was set up to reflect upon the application of the *Laïcité* principle, France passed a law in 2004 prohibiting the wearing of "ostentatious" symbols that have a clear religious meaning, such as a Catholic dress, a Jewish kippah, or a Muslim headscarf, in public spaces. In 2011, France banned the wearing of face-covering veils in public places. Every such controversial decision of the French state in the name of *Laïcité* has led to new interpretations of the principle. Although *Laïcité* applies to all religions – there was a row in 2012 when a Sikh man was asked to remove his turban for an official photograph – the debate has increasingly moved to Muslim practices in the last few decades.

In 2015, a Muslim girl in France was banned from class for wearing a long black skirt that was seen as "too openly religious" despite the 2004 law allowing for "discreet religious practices" and the girl arguing that it was not a "religious sign." In 2018, there was an outcry when a student wore a headscarf during a television interview in her university campus even though this is not illegal in France (headscarves are allowed in universities since students are adults). In 2020, following the beheading of a school

teacher for showing cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed, French President Emmanuel Macron banned homeschooling for children over three years old and asked Muslim leaders to agree to a "charter of republic values" as part of a broad clampdown on radical Islam. Long garments like abayas have been seen as a grey area so far, since Muslim groups have said that an abaya is not "required religious attire" but is in fact a fashionable garment tied to Arab culture. These incidents have led to the belief that promoting discrimination against Muslims has become acceptable under the guise of *Laïcité*.

A different approach?

Yet, despite efforts to ensure secularism, 36% of French people said in a survey in 2022 that they believe that secularism was "rather not sufficiently" being defended in France, while 21% said it was "not at all" being defended.

The question now is whether *Laïcité* actually helps people integrate into society or whether it is being used as a tool to oppress communities. Do people have to give up their own traditions and practices in order to assimilate (Mr. Macron said there was a need to "free Islam in France from foreign influences" and build an "Islam of Enlightenment")? Or should France let religious identities "dissolve into more diversified practices and identities" (Roy, 2005; translated by Yolande Jansen) in order to ensure integration, which would be a challenge to the principle of *Laïcité* itself?

Mr. Macron said, "A united France is cemented by *Laïcité*." Yet, there is some concern that a tool to prevent social fissures and promote universalism may, in fact, cause more fractures if there is a rigid, unyielding commitment to it.

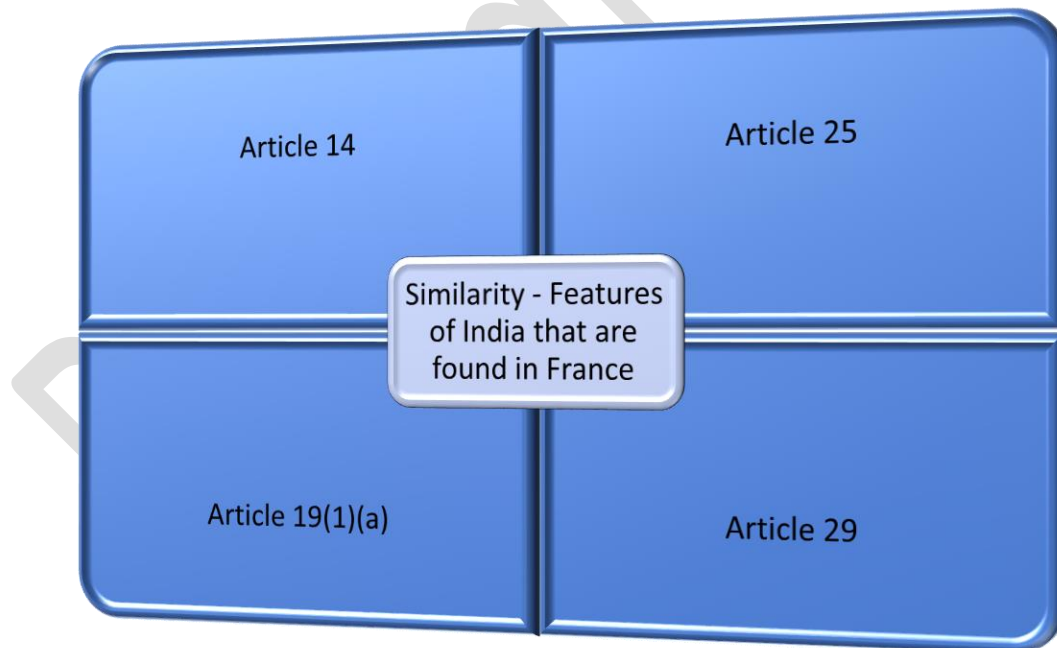
Basis	Indian Secularism	French Secularism
Principle	Sarva Dharma Samabhava means equal respect for all religions. This allows for a more accommodating approach to religion in public life.	France follows a strict form of secularism known as Laïcité which emphasizes the complete separation of religion from public life.
Religious Symbols	India generally allows religious symbols in public spaces . For example, Sikhs who wear turban	France has faced controversy over its policies regarding religious symbols, such as the ban on the

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	are exempt from the helmet requirement while riding a two-wheeler.	wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools and face-covering veils in public spaces.
State Funding of Religious Institutions	India allows state funding for religious institutions.	France strictly prohibits it as part of its laïcité principle.
Religious Personal Laws	There are separate personal laws for different religious communities, governing matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. For example, the Hindu Succession Act (1956) .	France has a unified civil code that applies to all citizens regardless of their religion.
State Neutrality	The state often engages with and supports various religious communities and their institutions.	Public institutions are expected to remain entirely secular and avoid any endorsement or involvement in religious affairs.



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7. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Gresham Law

#TH

Gresham's law: what happens when governments fix currency exchange rates

The law, named after English financier Thomas Gresham, came into play most recently during the economic crisis in Sri Lanka last year, during which the Central Bank of Sri Lanka fixed the exchange rate between the Sri Lankan rupee and the U.S. dollar

Prashanth Perumal

Gresham's law refers to the dictum that "bad money drives out good." Gresham's law comes into play when the exchange rate between two moneys or currencies is fixed by the government at a certain ratio that is different from the market exchange rate. Such price fixing causes the undervalued currency – that is, the currency whose price is fixed at a level below the market rate – to go out of circulation. The overvalued currency, on the other hand, remains in circulation but it does not find enough buyers.

It should be noted that the market exchange rate is essentially an equilibrium price at which the supply of a currency is equal to the demand for the currency. Also, the supply of a currency in the market rises as its price rises and falls as its price falls; while, on the other hand, the demand for a currency falls as its price rises and rises as its price falls. So, when the price of a currency is fixed by the government at a level below the market exchange rate, the currency's supply drops while demand for the currency rises. Thus a price cap can lead

to a currency shortage with demand for the currency outpacing supply.

Origins of the term

Gresham's law is named after English financier Thomas Gresham who advised the English monarchy on financial matters. It applies not just to paper currencies but also to commodity currencies and other goods. In fact, whenever the price of any commodity – whether it is used as money or not – is fixed arbitrarily such that it becomes undervalued when compared to the market exchange rate, this causes the commodity to disappear from the formal market. The only way to get hold of an undervalued commodity in such cases would be through the black market. Sometimes, countries can even witness the outflow of certain goods through their borders when they are forcibly undervalued by governments.

Gresham's law can be seen at play whenever a government fixes the exchange rate (or price) of a commodity money (such as gold and silver coins) far below than the market price of the commodity backing them. In such cases, people who hold the commodity money

would stop offering the money at the price fixed by the government. They may even melt such commodity money to derive pure gold and silver that they can sell at the market price, which is higher than the rate fixed by the government.

Driving out the dollar in Sri Lanka

The law came into play most recently during the economic crisis in Sri Lanka last year, during which the Sri Lankan central bank fixed the exchange rate between the Sri Lankan rupee and the U.S. dollar. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka, at a certain point, mandated that the price of the U.S. dollar in terms of the Sri Lankan rupee should not rise beyond 200 rupees per dollar even though rates in the black market suggested that the U.S. dollar should sell for far more than 200 rupees. In effect, people were banned from paying more than 200 Sri Lankan rupees for a dollar, thus causing the rupee to be overvalued and the U.S. dollar to be undervalued when compared to the market exchange rate. This caused the supply of dollars in the market to fall and the U.S. dollar to be gradually driven out of the formal foreign exchange market. People who wanted U.S. dollars to

purchase foreign goods then had to purchase dollars from the black market by paying far more than 200 Sri Lankan rupees for each U.S. dollar.

Gresham's law, however, holds true only when the exchange rate between currencies is fixed under law by the government and the law is implemented effectively by authorities. In the absence of any government decree fixing the exchange rate between currencies, it is good money that eventually drives bad money out of the market and not the other way round. When the exchange rate between currencies is not fixed and people have the choice to freely choose between currencies, people gradually stop using currencies that they consider to be of poor quality and adopt currencies that are found to be of better quality. This phenomenon wherein "good money drives out bad" is called Thiers' law (named after French politician Adolphe Thiers) and it is seen as a complement to Gresham's law. The rise of private cryptocurrencies in recent years has been cited by many analysts as an example of good money issued by private money producers driving out bad money issued by governments.

<p>Direction</p>	<p>Note the Law as PYQ was asked on the same.</p>
<p>Gresham Law</p>	<p>Gresham's law is a monetary principle that states that "bad money drives out good". Bad money is a currency with equal or less value than its face value. Good money has the potential for a greater value than its face value. It implies that if there are two types of money in circulation, one with a higher intrinsic value and one with a lower intrinsic value, people will</p>

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	<p>tend to hoard the more valuable money and spend the less valuable money. As a result, the less valuable money will dominate the market, while the more valuable money will disappear from circulation.</p>
<p>Law in Action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This law comes into play when the government fixes the exchange rate between two currencies, creating a disparity between the official rate and the market rate. ➤ Gresham's Law became noticeable during Sri Lanka's economic crisis when the country's Central Bank set a fixed exchange rate between the Sri Lankan rupee and the U.S. dollar. ➤ Despite unofficial market rates suggesting that the U.S. dollar was worth much more, the government insisted on a fixed rate of 200 Sri Lankan rupees for one U.S. dollar. This led to the Sri Lankan rupee being considered more valuable than it actually was and the U.S. dollar being undervalued according to market rates. As a result, fewer U.S. dollars were available in the official foreign exchange market, and people started to avoid using them in official transactions.

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Related Term - Thiers' Law

It highlights a phenomenon where "**good money drives out bad.**" In a free exchange rate environment, **people tend to favor higher-quality currencies and gradually discard those they perceive as inferior.**

The rise of **private cryptocurrencies (Good Money)** in recent years is often cited as an example of **how well-regarded, private money producers can displace government-issued currencies (Bad Money).**

✚ CAG Report on "Bharatmala Project" #IE

The Report

- As per the report, the sanctioned cost for construction of highways per km is Rs 13.98 crore per km. But the cost incurred on the projects is Rs 23.89 crore per km.
- Also, the current preconstruction cost is Rs 8.28 crore per km as against the CCEA approved cost of Rs 1.39 crore per km.
- In the Bharatmala project Phase 1, only 75.62% of the CCEA-approved length has been awarded, up to 31 March 2023, and the project has already sanctioned 158.24% of CCEA approved financial outlay.

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8. ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

Administrative Adjudication – 31 GST Appellate Tribunals

#TH

<p>About GSTAT</p>	<p>The appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GSTAT.</p> <p>Appeals pertaining to disputes of less than Rs. 50 lakh that don't deal with a question of law could be decided by a single-member bench.</p> <p>Hence, a GSTAS is a forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.</p> <p>Being a common forum, GSTAT will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.</p>
<p>Significance</p>	<p>The constitution of GSTATs will expedite the process of adjudication and provide tax certainty especially in recurring litigative issues.</p> <p>Ensuring speedier and economic resolution of cases by dedicated and specialised GSTATs will help in bolstering business sentiments and ease of doing business in the country.</p> <p>Where the taxpayers feel that there</p>

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	<p>has been a burden of a high rate of pre-deposit, the decisions by the tribunal will give some relief.</p>
<p>News Summary:</p>	<p>While States had proposed 50 tribunal benches to the GST Council, the Union government had signalled that they will come up in a phased manner, beginning with State capitals and cities with HC benches.</p> <p>The first set of tribunals will become operational sometime between this November and January 2024. There will be one principal bench of the Appellate Tribunal in New Delhi and several State benches.</p> <p>To start with, UP will have the highest number of benches of the GST tribunals, with 3 benches proposed to be set up across Lucknow, Varanasi, Ghaziabad, Agra, and Prayagraj. Karnataka and Rajasthan will have two benches each, while Maharashtra and Goa together will have three benches to take up appeals.</p> <p>Tamil Nadu, along with Puducherry, will have two benches, as will Gujarat along with the UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu. Disputes arising in West Bengal, Sikkim, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be taken up by two benches of the tribunal to come up in Kolkata.</p> <p>For the seven 7 States, one tribunal bench has been proposed in</p>

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	Guwahati, with circuit benches in Aizawl, Agartala and Kohima that will be operationalised depending upon the number of appeals filed by suppliers in respective States.
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9. PSUs

✚ ISRO related PSU - HEC in News

#TH

PSU engineers who build equipment for ISRO await salary

About 3,000 employees have not received their pay for 20 months, forcing them to sell food and garments to make a living

Amit Bhelari
RANCHI

Nearly 3,000 employees of the Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC), including technicians and engineers who helped produce many pieces of equipment for the Indian Space Research Organisation, including the launch pad of Chandrayaan-3, are now forced to sell food and garments to make a living.

These employees have not been paid for the past 20 months.

The HEC, based in Ranchi, Jharkhand, is India's oldest public sector unit that supplies equipment to all major steel plants. The firm has three divisions – the Heavy Machine Tools



All at sea: Heavy Engineering Corporation employee Ajay Mirdha selling momos at Argoda Chowk in Ranchi. AMIT BHELARI

Plant, the Heavy Machines Building Plant (HMBP), and the Foundry Forge Plant – that jointly manufacture equipment.

With salaries unpaid, many HEC employees have withdrawn much of their provident fund, with some even having to take loans to get by. Their

children were pulled out of private schools and admitted to government schools because of the high fees.

Devendra Kumar, who has been working with HEC since 1993, is forced to sell readymade clothes, including *gamchas* (towels) and ladies

garments in Shalimar Bazaar near old Vidhan Sabha. Mr. Kumar, who still works at the HMBP, attends office from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., following which he doubles as a salesman.

'Difficult to survive'

"It is difficult to survive without a regular salary. I am unable to support the education of my three children who are pursuing degree courses in Ranchi. My eldest son wanted to study medicine, but we did not have money for his admission," he says.

Ajay Mirdha, another HEC employee, sells momos at Argoda Chowk. His entire family is involved in this business. His wife Manju Devi runs the stand in the morning, and son Priyanshu Mirdha

handles it in the afternoons along with his sister Priyanka Kumari, a Class IX student.

In December 2013, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Ranchi to address an election rally in which he had expressed his disappointment over the condition of the HEC. Ten years later, not much has changed as some employees say it is on the verge of shutting down.

P.D. Mishra, general secretary of the HEC Officer's Association, said the absence of a full-time chairman-cum-managing director has led to the delay in payment of salaries. Mr. Mishra said officials of the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. have been given additional charge of the HEC.

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10. PHILOSOPHICAL & CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT

✚ Fraternity
#TheHindu

How fraternity in India is different from the idea enshrined in the Constitution

Fraternity does not mean anything if it glosses over social inequalities and then invokes social solidarity. Such a solidarity comes riding on the hate against an imaginary other, and tends to maintain social status quo

Moggallan Bharti

The idea of fraternity, as philosopher Angel Puyol argues in his 2019 book *Political Fraternity- Democracy beyond Freedom & Democracy*, should be mainly understood in the domain of the political. That is to say that the concept involves the emancipation and empowerment of the people despite its variegated history, since the time of Plato; and though neglected, it remains a significant tenet of liberal political philosophy along with the idea of liberty and equality. India's independence struggle, and the subsequent emergence of constitutional democracy saw the necessity of liberty, equality and fraternity for a complex Indian society at the precipice of becoming an independent republic. In this context, Ambedkar's stress on the inseparability of the three ideas and the underlining of fraternity cannot be emphasised enough. The framers of the Indian Constitution knew the significance of fraternity in a society, divided on the basis of various hierarchical social inequalities.

Ironically though, fraternity also happens to be the constitutional value that has received the maximum neglect both in the world of ideas and in the political field of action. However, the notion of fraternity has its own journey within India's sociology, regardless of its huge political purchase otherwise. While fraternity remains one of the chief goals of India's parliamentary democracy, and is actually the foundational political objective of its constitutional democracy, the current nature of India's fraternity is different from the political fraternity espoused in its Constitution.

Origins of the concept

The idea of fraternity has been an elusive

concept since ancient times. In Plato's *Lysis*, the philosopher invokes the word *philia* (love) for the strong desire to pursue wisdom. That is, love and friendship with others becomes more meaningful through the sharing of knowledge. The emphasis is on 'share' which gives us an early idea on the discourse of fraternity in ancient Greece. In Aristotle, we see the emergence of the *polis* – the logical location of a man who remains, first and foremost, a political being, and hence is part of the *polis* and not of the wild. Justice and friendship among citizens came to be the most enduring features of the *polis*. This here, is the birth of the idea of political fraternity.

In the middle ages, fraternity flourished mostly through religion, within the churning of Christian society in Europe. The concept of fraternity then eventually found its entry into politics with the French revolution of 1789 in the triptych of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'. From the civic-political friendship of ancient Greece, to medieval Christian society, and then to its revolutionary dimension, fraternity has always found a place in the ever-evolving world of action.

Friendship among equals

In community ties, as M. C. Williams in *The Idea of Fraternity in America* (1973) explains, one sees an integral value system which is the foundation of the idea of fraternity. And it's not surprising that, in the western world, that is how the idea of fraternity grew. The privileging of the idea of community and the moral values associated with it, over the individual, gradually gave way to religious morality and its associated 'way of life'. This elementary dimension of fraternity is missing when we assess fraternal ties in India. For, in order to have fraternal bonding between individuals, they must

have a shared past. And that shared past has to be an amicable one, and cannot be drawn from ideological differences rooted in the vast social inequalities among different communities. Since ideological motivations hamper political fraternity between individuals, one has to have a secular conception of fraternity, and subsequently of its politics. Decidedly, the shared history of India is marred by the caste system, and it militates against the principle of equality as well as the idea of liberty. The traditional roots of organising civic life in India is predominantly communal; but the Constitution privileges the individual – ensconced in the liberty, equality, and fraternity trioka – leading to everyday conflict with community. Therefore, the only conception of fraternity feasible for India must be rooted in politics – the only realm where caste privilege can be challenged. The idea needs to be curated and carved, and instilled through political conditioning and not from the stand point of any moral considerations. One of the main ideas behind the introduction of a slew of affirmative actions – of which the reservation system has survived – was to build a certain equality between extremely different social groups in terms of their access to social and economic goods.

On the formulation of liberty, equality and fraternity co-existing as mutually indispensable preconditions to citizenship rights, besides Ambedkar of course, we also see John Rawls stressing on the same principle in his *Theory of Justice* (1971), wherein his 'difference principle' works towards maintaining a certain equality in order to realise political fraternity. The idea was and still is to create a level playing field between varying social groups, locked in structural hierarchies, to begin to understand what it takes to really actualise fraternal

relations. This can only be possible with the underlying acceptability of the idea of equality. In the absence of this crucial understanding, what you have is fraternal ties for sure, but within caste groups, and not across them. In other words, what we have is caste consciousness of unity, which remains aloof to members of other caste groups, and is often hateful to members of so-called lower caste groups in particular. India essentially then has fraternity within its caste communities, where forging political unity remains a forlorn goal.

The limits to fraternity

Certain preconditions are necessary in order to achieve the kind of political fraternity inculcated by the Constitution of India. At the very first, fraternity does not mean anything if it glosses over social inequalities and then invokes social solidarity. Such a solidarity comes riding on the hate against an imaginary other, and tends to maintain social status quo which bolsters the already privileged at the cost of the continued subjugation of the underprivileged. Secondly, the call of such a fraternity is increasingly replaced with the rhetoric of belligerent nationalism which castigates a home grown religious minority as its arch enemy. Religious minorities have faced such social and political opprobrium countless times in this country. And finally, any sorts of fundamentalism jettisons the possibility of fraternity – a fanatic can be anything but fraternal in the true sense.

To conclude, in India, caste and the idea of political fraternity, given its social milieu, cannot coexist. One has to give way for the other to emerge. And to figure out which one survives and which goes, is the task of the politics of the future.

Moggallan Bharti, teaches at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi.

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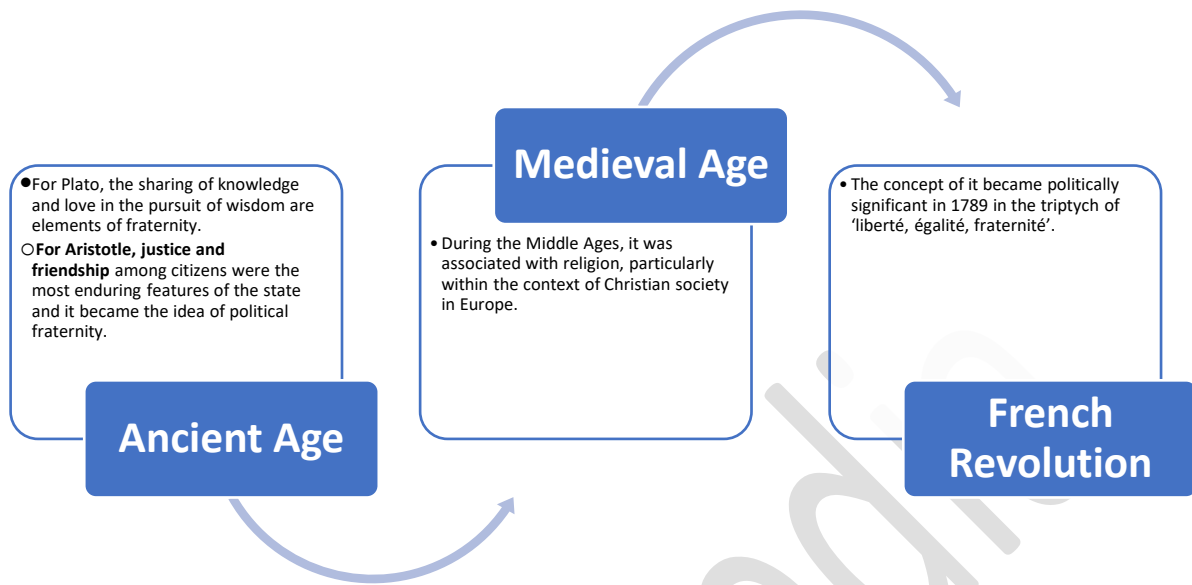


Fig. Origin and Evolution of Fraternity

<p>Meaning</p>	<p>It refers to the idea of brotherhood and solidarity among citizens of a nation and inculcates a sense of unity, social harmony, and mutual respect among individuals.</p> <p>Philosopher Angel Puyol, in his book “Political Fraternity: Democracy beyond Freedom & Democracy,” argues that it is central to the emancipation and empowerment of people.</p>
<p>How is fraternity in India different from the idea enshrined in the Constitution?</p>	<p>Caste-Based Divisions: The Constitution envisions fraternity as a means to bridge social divides and create unity among India’s diverse population. However, the deeply rooted caste system in India continues to influence social interactions,</p>

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	<p>politics, and access to opportunities, making it challenging to achieve a fraternity that transcends these divisions.</p> <p>Community vs. Individual: The Indian Constitution prioritizes individual rights and liberties, which can sometimes conflict with the communitarian approach underlying fraternity.</p> <p>Social Inequalities: The constitutional concept of fraternity presupposes social and economic equality among citizens. However, India continues to grapple with significant economic disparities and enduring discrimination based on caste, gender, and other factors, hindering the development of genuine fraternity.</p> <p>Communal Tensions: Religious and communal tensions in India have, at times, hindered the pursuit of fraternity. The constitutional vision of fraternity should extend across religious and communal boundaries to foster inclusivity. However, divisive politics occasionally exploits religious differences, undermining the spirit of fraternity.</p>
Way Forward	<p>In India, the coexistence of caste and political fraternity is a challenging endeavor due to the country's unique social landscape. Achieving political fraternity that transcends caste boundaries requires addressing these</p>

	<p>complex issues. The future of Indian politics will determine whether fraternity or caste prevails, and this choice will shape the country's destiny.</p>
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✚ Constitutional Travesty

#TheHindu

A Minister without portfolio is a constitutional travesty, says Madras High Court

Mohamed Imranullah S.

CHENNAI

“A Minister without portfolio is a constitutional travesty,” the Madras High Court observed on Tuesday. It said the continuation of V. Senthilbalaji in the Cabinet, despite his being in judicial custody in a money laundering case, “does not augur well with the principles of constitutional ethos on goodness, good governance and purity in administration”.

Chief Justice S.V. Ganga-purwala and Justice P.D. Audikesavalu expected Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to take a call on the arrested Minister’s continuation in the Cabinet purely on concerns over constitutional and public morality, though a person in judicial custody was not barred, either under the Constitution or any statute, from continuing as a Minister.

‘Corrosion of values’

“The founding fathers of our Constitution may not have comprehended corrosion of good and clean governance to an extent that a person would be retained as a Minister without portfolio, that too, while in cus-



V. Senthilbalaji being produced in a special court in Chennai.

FILE PHOTO

tody, nor did they envisage that the Executive Head would reward an elected Member with the status of a Minister, though finding him not fit to discharge the responsibilities of a Minister,” the Bench wrote.

The court made the observations while disposing of a batch of three writ petitions filed by AIADMK former MP J. Jayavardhan, Desiya Makkal Sakthi Katchi president M.L. Ravi and one S. Ramachandran against Senthilbalaji’s continuation in the Cabinet even after the Enforcement Directorate arrested him as early as on June 14, 2023.

The judges agreed with senior counsel V. Raghavachari and advocates K. Sakthivel and S. Sheik Ismail that a person in judicial custody would not be able to

perform the duties of a Minister effectively. “He is a Minister for the name sake... a Minister without any work...,” they said.

It also said, “The present case brings to the fore the erosion of high standards of character and conduct demanded from the legislators. The petitioners expect and legitimately so high standards of moral conduct by the persons in power. The Chief Minister is the repository of the people’s faith. Political compulsion cannot outweigh the public morality, requirements of good/clean governance and the constitutional morality.”

Authoring the verdict, the Chief Justice said, “The CM is an executive head. It is the responsibility of an executive head to assign ministerial responsibilities to an elected representative. However, if he feels that a particular elected representative cannot be assigned the responsibility of a Minister, there cannot be moral or constitutional basis to retain such a Member of the Legislative Assembly as a Minister without portfolio, which would be opposed to the ethos, good governance and constitutional morality or integrity.”

Direction-

Note constitutional travesty.

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Living in the age of moral dystopia

We are living in the age of moral dystopia, a norm-less era where it is difficult for men and women to be human and convenient for the state to be less than neutral, just, and fair. Leaders not only fail to keep their pledges, but they are not even expected to keep them. The government wears its majoritarian colours with pride, unabashed and unifying. In a tragic case of downward filtration, it all percolates down to everyday lived experience of the faceless multitudes. Monuments, offices, and houses all seem to be judged by the faith or political predilections of their builders and occupants. If you question the actions of the government or the actions of non-state actors taking out hate marches, you become the most vulnerable. Conformism is the norm today. Humanism, justice, and freedom have all been consigned to the deep freeze, to be retrieved at some indefinable point in future.

A changed value system

Take the case of activist-public speaker Yogita Bhayana, who helped rebuild the shop of an old Muslim man days after goons had set it on fire in Gurugram. The moment this news was shared on social media along with the video of the grateful man, many trolled Ms. Bhayana. Some advised her, rather sarcastically, to go and help another 50-60 men down the road who had suffered too. Others reminded her of the Hindu women in the neighbourhood. In a not-too-distant past, Ms. Bhayana would have been hailed for promoting communal harmony. But not today.

Now, the value system has changed, and shared living is no longer a cherished ideal for millions. It is to each their own, as Anis discovered in Nuh around the same time. He had given shelter to three Hindu men who faced a danger to their life from an approaching mob. The men were



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Conformism is the norm today. Humanism, justice, and freedom have all been consigned to the deep freeze, to be retrieved at some indefinable point in future

grateful to be alive. A day later, his house was damaged by a bulldozer, which went on an overdrive in the State. Finally, the Punjab and Haryana High Court stepped in, stating clearly, “Apparently, without any demolition orders and notices, the law-and-order problem is being used as a ruse to bring down buildings without following the procedure established by law. The issue also arises whether the buildings belonging to a particular community are being brought down under the guise of law-and-order problem and an exercise of ethnic cleansing is being conducted by the State.”

Moral fibre was long since damaged, but this tattered? How else does one explain the sordid and public humiliation of women in Manipur and the whataboutery that followed in the top echelons of power? How does one even attempt to rationalise women handing over women to a mob? Or people marching in favour of the men accused of gang-rape of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua?

Today, we wish to hold to account a king or an invader for the ignominy he probably visited some 400 or 1,000 years ago. But we find our lips glued together when it comes to seeking justice for victims in Manipur or Haryana. We talk of invaders and how they broke many a place of worship, some real and some imagined, and set about righting historical wrongs. And how do we do that? By attacking the place of worship of the faith of the monarch who died hundreds of years ago. And so, we have had repeated attacks on mosques in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and now Haryana. We have stayed quiet. After all, what is a mosque but a *dhanca* or structure, as senior BJP leader L.K. Advani once said with respect to the Babri Masjid? Now, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath says the same about Gyanvapi. There is no regret, no sense of shame. It is just history on rewind. And we just watch.

These are indeed times of

moral foibles. Every nation has its moments of neuroses. In our case, it is collective short-term amnesia. We watch and we forget. We read and we move on. Be it a man being lynched, a shop being demolished, or a woman being brutalised, our memory seems to be like a sieve. We retain very little. Are we weary of the daily sordid spectacle? Probably. Are we too occupied with the daily goings-on to really care? Most likely. Either way, it emboldens intolerant, even violent non-state actors to do what they do. If it were about a mosque here or a shop there, the rot or the mob would have been controllable. It is not, and there lies the problem.

The lack of intervention

Today, the executioners of injustice don't need a mob with its tridents, hammers and pickaxes. Today, bulldozers get down to work. Even as a man's life's earning in the form of a tiny shop or a small concrete dwelling is razed to the ground, yesterday's mob member is today's selfie-seeker. Some make a video to upload on social media. We saw a cow vigilante pounce upon a weak man and record himself harassing and abusing him. We saw how a policeman on a train killed his supervising officer and three Muslim passengers and then made a video hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Adityanath even as one of the bleeding men took his last breath near his boots. People often make videos, but few attempt to save the life of innocent people. As for bulldozer victims, they are spectators to their own destruction, brick by brick, slab by slab. Sections of the media, meanwhile, hail the rising pile of debris as a proof of instant justice.

The ferocity of destruction through bulldozers, the bestiality of mob lynchings, the brutalisation of a large segment of our population – we have seen it all. Quietly, maybe even wearily. Anomie is a lived experience in 'New India'.

✚ Non-Fancy case in Constiyutional Bench
#TheHindu

Wrong to think only ‘fancy’ cases reach Constitution Benches, says Chief Justice

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Friday told a lawyer to “disabuse” his mind of the notion that the Supreme Court constitutes Constitution Benches to hear “fancy” matters which have nothing to do with the daily travails of the ordinary people.

The Chief Justice said that in cases like the Article 370 abrogation challenge, the court had listened to the “voice of the nation” with stakeholders from the Valley. Chief Justice Chandrachud pulled up advocate Mathews Nedumpara for his letter to the top court’s Secretary-General, saying the court was “wasting time” hearing Constitution Bench cases and should focus on public interest petitions to benefit the common man.

“You may think that a



D.Y. Chandrachud

Constitution Bench hearing on the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution is irrelevant. But that is not what the petitioners in the case and the government think,” the Chief Justice addressed Mr. Nedumpara. He said not every Constitution Bench case was about the interpretation of the Constitution.

“If you had come and sat in our court the day before yesterday you would have seen us in a Constitution Bench dealing with a matter that touches upon the livelihood of hundreds

of thousands of drivers across the country. The issue was whether a person who holds a light motor vehicle can drive a commercial vehicle. So, please disabuse your mind that the Supreme Court is only dealing with some fancy constitutional matters which have no bearing on the lives of ordinary people,” Chief Justice Chandrachud told the lawyer.

Mr. Nedumpara said he was not against the court hearing Constitution Bench matters, but his objection was to the court hearing issues of public policy without hearing the public.

“Even there you are wrong. In the Article 370 case, we had groups of individual intervenors on both sides who came and addressed us from the Valley. We have been hearing the voice of the nation in that case,” Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

Direction

Direction - Note the “DRIVER Case” which can be used to analyse the EXTENT to which Constitution Bench is

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 **Need of Dynamic Judges**
#TH

Criminal trials ideally need dynamic judges, says top court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said that criminal trials ideally need active and dynamic judges rather than reticent or taciturn ones.

“Reticence may be good in many circumstances, but a judge remaining mute during trial is not an ideal situation. A taciturn judge may be the model caricatured in public mind. But there is nothing wrong in his becoming active or dynamic during trial so that criminal justice being the end could be achieved,” a Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, J.B. Pardiwala and P.K. Mishra high-

lighted. The judgment concerned an appeal by a man facing the death penalty for the rape and murder of a 10-year-old.

Justice Pardiwala said the case was riddled with inconsistencies that neither the public prosecutor nor the trial judge had cared to point out. In one instance, the contradictions concerned who had actually lured the victim out of her house.

The Supreme Court said the court’s silence regarding these disparities, even when the case came up in appeal before the Patna High court, was “shocking”. The case has been returned to the High Court

for a fresh look.

“If a criminal court is to be an effective instrument in dispensing justice, the presiding judge must cease to be a spectator and a mere recording machine. He must become a participant in the trial by evincing intelligent active interest by putting questions to witnesses in order to ascertain the truth,” Justice Pardiwala observed. Section 165 of the Evidence Act confers vast and unrestricted powers on the trial court to put “any question he pleases, in any form, at any time, of any witness, or of the parties, about any fact relevant or irrelevant” in order to discover facts.

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11. UNION GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Simultaneous Election

#TH #TheIE #PRS

What is the debate around 'one nation, one election'?

How does having simultaneous elections across Lok Sabha and State assemblies counter federalism?

Kartikey Singh

The story so far:

 On September 1, the Central government set up a panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.

What is the ONOE plan?

The idea of ONOE centres around the concept of synchronising the timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country.

After the enforcement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, the first-ever general elections to Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies were conducted simultaneously in 1951-1952. The practice continued into the three subsequent Lok Sabha elections until 1967, after which it was disrupted. The cycle was first broken in 1959 after the Centre invoked Article 356 (failure of constitutional machinery)

of the Constitution to dismiss the then-Kerala government. Subsequently, due to defections and counter-defections between parties, several Legislative Assemblies dissolved post-1960, which eventually led to separate polls for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Currently, the assembly polls in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha are held together with the Lok Sabha elections.

What do reports say about ONOE?

In August 2018, the Law Commission of India (LCI), chaired by Justice B. S. Chauhan, released a draft report on simultaneous elections, wherein the constitutional and legal questions related to the issue were analysed. Notably, the Commission submitted that simultaneous elections are not feasible within the existing framework of the Constitution. It said that the Constitution, the Representation of the People's Act 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies would require

appropriate amendments to conduct simultaneous polls. The commission also recommended it receive ratification from at least 50% of the States. However, with respect to the advantages of holding simultaneous polls, the commission said that ONOE will lead to the saving of public money, reducing the strain on the administrative setup and security forces, timely implementation of government policies, and administrative focus on development activities rather than electioneering.

Way back in 1999, the LCI headed by Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy also advocated for simultaneous elections.

What are the concerns?

The foremost concern is with regard to its feasibility. Article 83(2) and 172 of the Constitution stipulates that the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies respectively will last for five years unless dissolved earlier and there can be circumstances, as in Article 356, wherein assemblies can be dissolved earlier.

Therefore, the ONOE plan raises serious questions – what would happen if the Central or State government collapses mid-tenure? Would elections be held again in every State or will the President's rule be imposed? Amending the Constitution for such a significant change would not only necessitate extensive consideration of various situations and provisions but would also set a concerning precedent for more constitutional amendments.

Second, the idea of ONOE does not square with the concept of 'federalism' as it is established on the notion that the entire nation is "one" contradicting the content of Article 1 which envisages India as a "Union of States". Third, the present form of recurrent elections can be seen as beneficial in a democracy as it allows voters to have their voices heard more frequently. As the underlying issues of national and State polls are different, the present framework prevents the blending of issues, ensuring greater accountability.

The Central government has also highlighted the substantial costs associated with frequent elections. However, this notion is misleading. In an article in *The Hindu*, the author contended whether the Election Commission's expenditure of ₹8,000 crore over five years, amounting to ₹1,500 crore annually, or ₹27 per voter per year, can be considered a 'massive' expense for maintaining the pride of being the world's largest electoral democracy.

The writer reads law at RGNUL, Punjab

THE GIST

On September 1, the Central government set up a panel to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.

The idea of ONOE centres around the concept of synchronising the timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country.

The idea of ONOE does not square with the concept of 'federalism' as it is established on the notion that the entire nation is "one" contradicting the content of Article 1 which envisages India as a "Union of States".

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3 mn EVMs, massive security and funds: Challenges in holding simultaneous polls

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 1

THE LOGISTICS challenges of holding simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies — arranging around 30 lakh electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines, and deploying central forces around the country — will be immense, but not insurmountable, according to several former Chief Election Commissioners (CEC).

Parliament and state elections were held simultaneously until 1967, but over the years as Assemblies and Lok Sabhas were dissolved before the end of their terms, the elections fell out of sync with each other. Currently, elections to the Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim Houses are held along with Lok Sabha polls.

In 2022, then CEC Sushil Chandra had said the Election Commission of India (ECI) was "fully geared up" to hold simultaneous elections. Current CEC Rajiv Kumar declined to comment on the issue on Friday.

Voting machines

To be able to hold simultaneous elections, the EC will need around 30 lakh EVMs, according to estimates. Former CEC O P Rawat said the government had asked the ECI to study the feasibility of simultaneous polls in 2015. Rawat was one of the Election

Commissioners at the time.

"The ECI has been recommending since 1982 that an amendment should be brought to bring those state assemblies that are out of sync with Lok Sabha back in sync. In 2015, we submitted a feasibility report to the government. It would require amendments to the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act. And the ECI would need more time and money to manufacture more EVMs and VVPATs. A total of about 30 lakh EVMs (control units) would be needed," Rawat said.

As of March, the ECI had 13.06 lakh control units (CUs) and 17.77 lakh ballot units (BUs) of EVMs, the Law Minister had told Parliament. Another 9.09 lakh CUs and 13.26 lakh BUs were under production, taking the total to 22.15 lakh CUs and 31.03 lakh BUs.

Prof Rajat Moona, director of the Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar and a

member of the ECI's technical committee on EVMs, said it had taken about a year to manufacture 6-7 lakh EVMs, making the task of simultaneous polls in 2024 "difficult".

Increased costs

In submissions to the government and Committees of Parliament, the ECI has over the years flagged what it would take to hold simultaneous polls. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice had noted in its 2015 report the "several difficulties" pointed out by the ECI.

"The chief issue highlighted by them is that simultaneous conduct of elections would require large-scale purchase of Electronic Voting Machines and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail machines. For conducting simultaneous elections, the Commission expects that a total of Rs 9,284.15 crore will be needed

for procurement of EVMs and VVPATs. The machines would also need to be replaced every 15 years which would again entail expenditure. Further, storing these machines would increase the warehousing cost," the committee report said.

Rawat said: "As of now, the ECI delivers the cheapest election in the world — one dollar, one vote. That means each EVM is used over multiple elections. If there are simultaneous polls, EVMs would be used for three elections as their life span is about 15 years."

From 2014 to 2019, the Union government gave states and Union Territories a total of Rs 5,814.29 crore for holding elections, as per a reply to Parliament in 2021.

Central forces, poll staff

The requirement of central forces to maintain law and order during the poll process may pose another challenge. Rawat said most states ask for central forces during elections. The movement of the forces as well as polling parties is another issue that will have to be addressed.

Meeting challenges

Former CEC T S Krishnamurthy said the idea of simultaneous elections had its pros and cons. "It will save time, expenditure, and administrative labour. There are challenges, but they are not insurmountable. If the elections are held over a span of three-four months, it can be done," he said.



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Simultaneous polls – but only in a presidential system

A fresh attempt is being made by the Narendra Modi government to veer towards one nation-one poll, which would mean that all State elections are held simultaneously with the general election to the Lok Sabha. In order to kickstart this process, one would need to curtail the term of the Assemblies in several States, whose terms have not ended at the time the Lok Sabha election is to take place.

Options that are undemocratic

There is a deeper problem in implementing one nation-one poll. In the present parliamentary system of India's democracy, at both the central and State levels, since the survival of the government is dependent on its enjoying the confidence of the majority of the house (majorities can change mid-term because of splits in parties, defections or even if some Members of Parliament/Members of the Legislative Assemblies from the ruling party refusing to support the government) the government can fall mid-term thus leading to mid-term elections. However, in one nation-one poll you cannot have mid-term elections if the rest of the States and the Centre have to go to the polls together. Therefore, the only option would be to either continue with a minority government headed by a Chief Minister/Prime Minister who has lost the confidence of the House or to impose President's rule for the rest of the term. In my view, both these options would be undemocratic as it would mean that the government rules the Centre/States without enjoying the confidence of the majority of the House. This will defeat the essence of democracy in a parliamentary system.

Therefore, in my view, one nation-one poll is possible only if we switch to a presidential form of government where the government is run by a directly elected President/Governor who does not need to enjoy the confidence of the majority of the House. This happens in countries such as the United States. In those countries, there is also a clear line of succession laid down for the President/Governor. If the President dies mid-term, the Vice-President and thereafter the Speaker becomes the President for the remainder of the term. Such a presidential system can have one nation-one poll without compromising the essence of a democracy.

The issue of one nation-one poll has been examined by the Law Commission and some parliamentary committees as well and the conclusion was that it would be exceedingly difficult to implement it without substantial changes to the Constitution. There were some suggestions that one nation-one poll can happen even in a parliamentary democracy by ensuring that when a government loses the confidence of



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the majority of the House by a no-confidence motion, such a no-confidence motion must be accompanied with a confidence motion in an alternative government. This will ensure that some government or the other continues for the remainder of the term. However, the problem here is that the legislators may not have confidence in an alternative government if they feel that a substantial number of Members of the House have lost the confidence of the people. Therefore, the will of the people about the government can only be determined by fresh elections.

If one provides that a no-confidence motion has to be accompanied by a confidence motion in an alternate government, we may have a situation of a government continuing in office which effectively has lost the confidence of the majority of the members. It will not be able to pass legislation or even money Bills and finance Bills, without which it will become difficult to run the government. These suggestions are impractical if we continue with parliamentary democracy in a one nation-one poll system.

Need for amendments

The provisions of the Constitution that would need to be amended to switch to an essentially presidential system would be as follows: Part V - The Union - Chapter I - Executive - Articles 52-78 and Chapter III - Legislative Powers of the President; Part VI - The States - Chapter II - The Executive - Articles 153-167 and Chapter IV - Legislative Power of the Governor

Introduction of the presidential system would also require amendments to include several new provisions within the Constitution regarding the powers of the President, the Governors, the Council of Ministers, and provisions relating to the line of succession.

Some people feel that parliamentary democracy in India is part of the basic structure of the Constitution. Though the Constitution-makers had discussed the issue of a parliamentary versus presidential form of government at some length in the Constituent Assembly, they, for good reason, adopted the parliamentary system in a diverse country such as India. However, in my view, that would still not make the parliamentary system part of the basic structure. Democracy is certainly a part of the basic structure, and is consistent with the presidential form. One cannot say that the American system is not democratic.

Some people also feel that the presidential system would be antithetical to a federal country. But that is not the case either. The United States is a federal country, with its States enjoying vast powers even within a presidential form. The devolution of powers to the States or to the lower

tiers of government such as municipalities, and panchayats will not depend on whether the system is presidential or parliamentary. In a presidential system, the power of the government is concentrated in one directly elected person whether he is the President of the country or the Governor of the State rather than being in the hands of multiple legislators. This is probably a reason why the Constitution-framers chose a parliamentary rather than a presidential form since they did not want executive power to be in the hands of one person alone, especially in a diverse country such as India. However, that to my mind is not part of the basic structure.

The government's move

Though the present government has appointed another committee headed by a former President of India and hand-picked members to decide on this issue, it does not enjoy a two-thirds majority in either House so as to push through these amendments without the support of a substantial section of the Opposition. The Opposition, i.e., the INDIA alliance, has indicated that it does not support this move. Thus, this fresh attempt to switch to one nation-one poll appears to me to be a non-starter.

In my view, it may have been floated at this juncture only to give the government some leeway to postpone elections in five States which are due to go to the polls this year end. The ruling party is staring at defeat in almost all these States and do not want to go to the general election on the back of a defeat. However, even postponing these elections in five states till April-May 2024 would involve constitutional issues. For instance, Article 172(1) states that a Legislative Assembly of a state, unless sooner dissolved, 'shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer and the expiration of the said period of five years shall operate as a dissolution of the Assembly'.

Perhaps what the ruling party may be wanting is to impose President's rule in these five States by exercising powers under Article 356 of the Constitution and then get a pliant Election Commission of India to toe the government's line to postpone the Assembly elections until the general election to the Lok Sabha. The question is, will that not fall foul of the Constitution and the laws? In my view, it will. Though the Supreme Court of India has held that the Election Commission of India has a leeway of up to six months to hold the elections after the dissolution of the Assembly (in Re Special Reference Case 1 of 2002), the justification of using that leeway merely because a committee is again considering the idea of one nation-one poll would be a *mala fide* decision, and thus liable to be struck down by the courts.

The attempt being made by the government of the day to veer towards simultaneous elections will be deeply problematic in a parliamentary democracy

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A 'distraction' balloon in the winds of federalism

The 'one nation one election' proposal mooted yet again by the Narendra Modi government is deeply flawed. The reasons for the proposal are fallacious. The idea is unimplementable. It is nothing but a 'distraction' balloon floated to tide over the negative headlines about the Prime Minister's cronyism and the Chinese President Xi Jinping's snub to the G-20 summit.

The government argues that India is in a 'permanent campaign', to borrow the words of the American political commentator Sidney Blumenthal. India has had either a State or a national election every year for the last 36 years. This devours enormous financial resources and efforts, and the time of the government and political parties is the seeming concern. An election held constantly in some part of the country with a 'model code of conduct' distracts from governance and leads to policy paralysis. This is the essence of the opening argument in the notification issued a few days ago to constitute a panel to study a 'one nation one election'.

Do not conflate these two

Except 'India' does not have an election every year, one of India's States does. There is a fundamental difference between the two. When there is an election in say Bengal, with the Trinamool Congress, the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Left contesting, a Tamil Nadu governed by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is not impacted. An election in Assam with a model code of conduct does not stop road projects or 'development' in Gujarat. So, when there are elections in a few States, 'India' is not in an election mode; some of India's States are. All of India's major political parties are not in an election mode, only some are. It is important to not conflate the two, since this notion is the basis for all arguments used to propagate the 'one election' idea.

The national parties with a Delhi-based high command culture such as the Congress and the BJP are the ones that may feel the pressure of constant elections because municipal or State elections held in any part of the country involve their national leadership – especially, when the campaigners-in-chief of the BJP, for a local body to a State election held anywhere in the country, also happen to have the important jobs of Prime Minister and Home Minister, it can feel like they are being stretched in a 'permanent campaign'



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The 'one nation one election' proposal, premised on flimsy grounds, is politically unfeasible, administratively unworkable and constitutionally unviable

and sidetracked from governance. But if the BJP chooses or wants to fight all elections in the country with the Prime Minister as their campaigner-in-chief and the Home Minister as their sole election in-charge, it is their flaw and not the nation's problem. It is certainly not a virtue for a Prime Minister to be so frequently relegating the duties of his office, meant to serve all citizens, to a lower priority such as the electoral interests of his party.

Each of India's States has different political cultures and parties. Why should the basic constitutional structure of the country be changed for two national leaders to help balance their campaign and governance schedules, under the alibi of perennial elections? The one election idea is only for the convenience of the BJP's campaign and snacks of arrogance and ignorance of India's political diversity. Furthermore, this is an attack on and an affront to India's federalism. Today, an elected Chief Minister of a State has the powers to recommend dissolution of their State legislatures and call for early elections, as Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) did in 2018, breaking the cycle of simultaneous State and Parliament elections in the State. Under a 'one election' framework, KCR will not have the right to do this. Why should these powers be taken away from the States and only the Union government have the powers to dictate the election schedule for every State? This is yet another blow to India's federalism.

Misleading arguments

Yet another misleading argument put forth in support of the idea is that between 1951-52 and 1967, India had simultaneous elections, and hence it is appropriate to revert to that system.

That was not by design but by happenstance, since all States started off the block at the same time and had stable tenures in the first two decades after Independence. It is a testament to India's plurality and the need for diverse political representation that a plethora of regional parties mushroomed over the last six decades to govern various States as per their own election schedules as the State's politics warranted. It is foolhardy and regressive to forcibly re-synchronise the election schedules of various States by design.

Cost savings is the other reason cited for a concurrent elections proposal, something that even knowledgeable political commentators fall for but one that is deceptive.

Various estimates by the Election Commission,

NITI Aayog and the government show that the costs of conducting all State and parliamentary elections in a five-year cycle work out to the equivalent of ₹10 per voter per year. The NITI Aayog report has also said that when elections are synchronised, it will cost the equivalent of ₹5 per voter per year. If any, in the short term, simultaneous elections will increase the costs for deploying far larger numbers of electronic voting machines and control units. So, it is laughable to imply that India's federalism needs to be subverted, political diversity thwarted, and the constitutional structure amended to save ₹5 for every voter in a year. The government could have saved that amount just by not building the grand 'Central Vista' in Delhi. Political parties and candidates may spend a lot more money on elections than the government but that is not the tax-payers' money. On the contrary, there is economic research to suggest that such election spending by parties and candidates actually benefits the economy and the government's tax revenues by boosting private consumption and serving as a stimulus.

The government's logic is incompatible with the vagaries of a parliamentary system in a large and diverse democracy. A single election calendar may spend a lot more money on elections where the survival of the executive is not dependent upon a legislative majority. In India's parliamentary democracy, this is *ipso facto* a non-starter and one should not be wasting the nation's time deliberating on this.

Unitarism in the form of efficiency

'One nation one election' is a politically unfeasible, administratively unworkable and constitutionally unviable proposition. The idea is premised on flimsy and shallow grounds of cost savings, policy paralysis and governance interference. It is nothing but a deliberate ploy of the Narendra Modi government to move the headlines away from cronyism and China. That it chose to use 'one nation one election' to deflect attention is a reflection of its dismal lack of belief in India's federal democratic parliamentary structure. The real implicit message underlying the Modi government's 'one election' distraction is the clear ideological divide in Indian politics today – the BJP's "India is a uniform nation and polity" versus the INDIA alliance's "India is a union of diverse states and polities". Those of us who believe in the real India will never seek to shoehorn it into a deranged fantasy of unitarism dressed up as efficiency.

Advantages of ONOE <Highlighted by Draft report on simultaneous elections by the Law Commission of India (LCI) in August 2018>

Reduce election expenditure-

- Cost reductions for political parties and candidates during their election campaigns.
- Economic costs associated with Model Code of Conduct.
- Cost savings for public.
- Intangible costs due to lack of leadership as ministers focus on elections

Reduce the manpower- It prevents the duplication of efforts by

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	<p>administrative and law enforcement agencies in conducting multiple elections.</p> <p>Improve governance- The system will help ruling parties focus on governance, instead of being constantly in election mode. For Instance, Prime Minister would no longer remain Campaigner-in-Chief.</p> <p>Boost voter turnout- According to the Law Commission, it increases voter participation.</p> <p>Improve administration- It will increase the focus of administrative machinery on nation to remain consistently focused on developmental effort.</p> <p>Reduce policy paralysis- This system will lead to minimised disruption of essential services.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<p>Feasibility: Article 83(2) and Article 172 of the Indian Constitution stipulate that the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies respectively, will last for five years unless dissolved earlier and there can be circumstances wherein assemblies can be dissolved earlier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government faced dissolution within 13 days of taking power. ➤ Article 356 ➤ Therefore, the ONOE plan

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raises serious issues of feasibility if the Central or State government collapses mid-tenure.

Constitutional challenges - The move requires amendment to the Representation of Peoples' Act 1951 and the Constitution's basic structure, posing a challenge. **Multiple amendments**- It requires amendment in five Articles of the Constitution, namely Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356.

Against Federalism: The idea of ONOE does not square with the concept of 'federalism' as it is established on the notion that the **entire nation is "one"** **contradicting the content of Article 1** which envisages India as a "Union of States".

Diminished Accountability: Having to face the electorate more than once every 5 years enhances the accountability of politicians and keeps them on their toes. Finally, a lot of jobs are also created during the elections, which boosts the economy at the grassroots levels.

EVM and VVPAT Requirement: Approximately 30 lakh EVMs and VVPATs machines would be **needed for simultaneous elections.**

Massive Cost Considerations: The ECI has highlighted that simultaneous elections would require a substantial budget. A total

	<p>of approximately Rs 9,284.15 crore would be needed for procuring EVMs and VVPATs, with additional costs for replacing machines every 15 years.</p> <p>Impact on Voter Behaviour: Some political parties argue that it may influence voter behaviour in a manner that voters would end up voting on national issues even for State elections and this may lead to larger national parties winning both State and Lok Sabha elections thereby marginalizing regional parties.</p> <p>Election Issues: State and national elections are often fought on different sets of issues — and in simultaneous elections, voters may end up privileging one set over the other in ways they might not have done otherwise.</p>
<p>Recommendations of the Law Commission Working Paper (2018) to restore Simultaneous Election</p>	<p>Simultaneous elections may be restored through an amendment of the Constitution, RPA 1951 and Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. A definition may be added to section 2 of the 1951 Act.</p> <p>The no-confidence motion may be replaced with a constructive vote of no-confidence through amendments in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies rules of business.</p> <p>ADL may be suitably diluted to prevent stalemate in case of a hung Assembly or Parliament</p> <p>The statutory limit of six months for</p>

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	issuance of notification of general elections may be extended for securing flexibility as a one-time measure.
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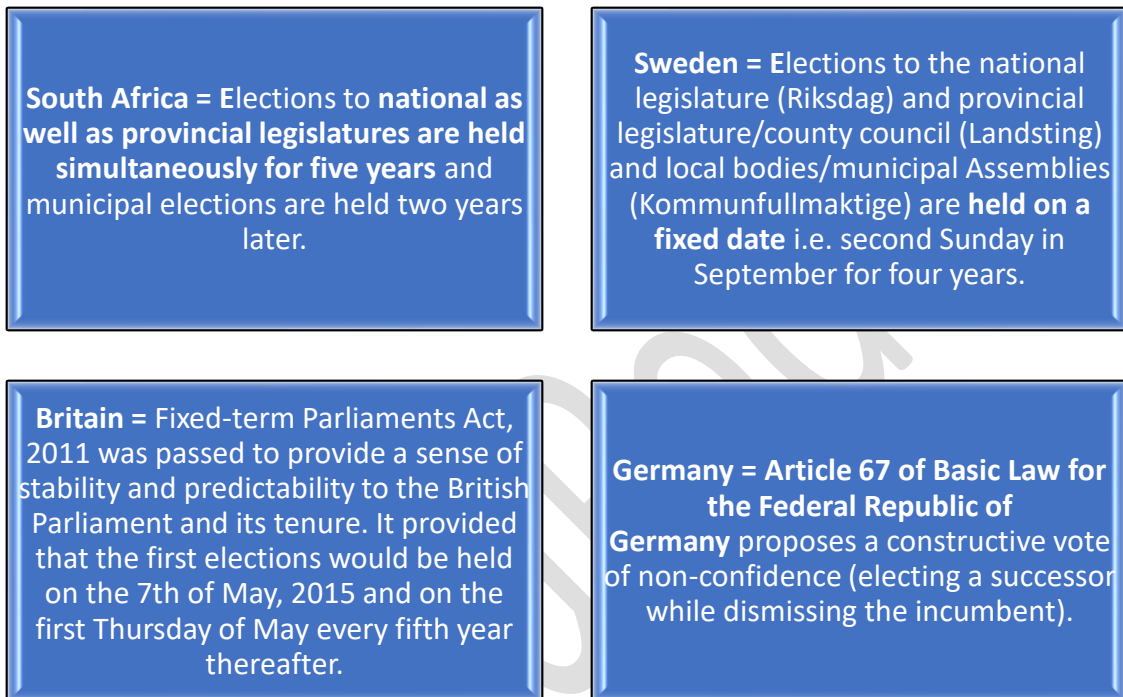


Fig. International Case Studies related to Simultaneous Election

Women Reservation in Parliament

#TH #PRS

Highlights	<p>The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008 seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by Parliament.</p> <p>One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies.</p> <p>Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.</p> <p>Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of this Amendment Act.</p>
Need/Advantages	<p>Global Gender Gap Index Improvement</p> <p>Women's right to self-representation and self-determination;</p> <p>The various surveys do indicate that women representatives from Panchayati Raj have worked commendably in the development and overall well-being of society in villages and many of them would definitely want to work on the larger scale.</p> <p>More women in decision-making positions are needed to address the high percentage of crimes against women, low participation of women in the workforce, low nutrition levels, and skewed sex ratio.</p>
Key issues and Analysis	<p>There are divergent views on the reservation policy. Proponents stress the necessity of affirmative action to</p>

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improve the condition of women. Some recent studies on panchayats have shown the positive effect of reservation on empowerment of women and on allocation of resources.

Opponents argue that it would perpetuate the unequal status of women since they would not be perceived to be competing on merit. They also contend that this policy diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reform such as criminalisation of politics and inner party democracy.

Reservation of seats in Parliament restricts choice of voters to women candidates. Therefore, some experts have suggested alternate methods such as reservation in political parties and dual member constituencies.

Rotation of reserved constituencies in every election may reduce the incentive for an MP to work for his constituency as he may be ineligible to seek re-election from that constituency.

The report examining the 1996 women's reservation Bill recommended that reservation be provided for women of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) once the Constitution was amended to allow for reservation for OBCs. It also recommended that reservation be extended to the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils. Neither of these recommendations has been incorporated in the Bill.

Beyond representation, has women's reservation in local governments yielded substantive benefits? A 2004 paper by Esther Duflo and Raghavendra Chattopadhyay on panchayats in West Bengal and Rajasthan found that women leaders invest more in public goods and ensure increased women's participation in panchayat meetings. A

more expansive study in 2011 across 11 States by Ms. Duflo and others reaffirmed the finding that women-led panchayats made higher investments in public services like drinking water, education, and roads. However, a 2010 paper by Pranab Bardhan and others found that women's reservations worsened the targeting of welfare programmes for SC/ST households and provided no improvement for female-headed households. Meanwhile, a 2008 paper by Vijayendra Rao and Radu Ban found that women leaders perform no differently than their male counterparts in south India and instead institutional factors such as the maturity of the State's panchayat system were more relevant. Worryingly, a 2020 paper by Alexander Lee and Varun Karekurve Ramachandra examining reservations in Delhi found that constituencies reserved for women are less likely to elect OBC women and more likely to elect upper-caste women.

Special Session of Parliament

#TH

Special session of Parliament

The government has announced a 'Special Session of Parliament' from Sept 18-22. The Constitution does not define a 'special session'. The term sometimes refers to sessions the government has convened for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones

EXPERT EXPLAINS



CHAKSHU ROY

ON AUGUST 31, Pralhad Joshi, the Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, announced that a "special session" of Parliament would be held from September 18 to 22. The Minister was quoted as stating that "important items" were on the session's agenda, which the government would circulate shortly.

The announcement has led to speculation about the government's legislative plans for the session. Usually, a few days before a Parliament session, the government convenes an all-party meeting to share its agenda and build consensus on possible issues for discussion.

When does Parliament meet?

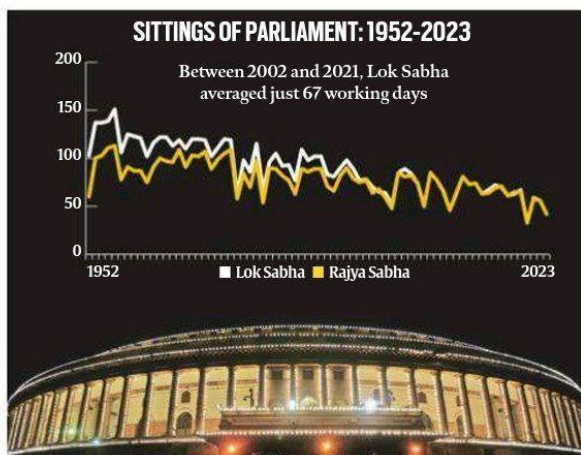
India's Parliament has no fixed calendar of sittings. In 1955, a Lok Sabha committee had proposed a timetable for parliamentary sessions. It recommended that the Budget session of Parliament begin on February 1 and go on till May 7, and the Monsoon session start on July 15 and end on September 15.

The committee suggested that the Winter session, the last session of the year, commence on November 5 (or the fourth day after Diwali, whichever is later) and finish on December 22. While the government agreed to this calendar, it was never implemented.

Who decides when Parliament meets?

The government determines the date and duration of parliamentary sessions. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs takes this decision. It currently has ten Ministers, including those for Defence, Home, Finance, Agriculture, Tribal Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting.

The Law Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs are special invitees to the Committee. The President is informed about the Committee's decision, who then summons Members of Parliament to meet for the session.



What does the Constitution say?

The Constitution specifies that six months should not elapse between two parliamentary sessions. This provision is a colonial legacy. The framers of the Constitution borrowed it from the Government of India Act of 1935. It allowed the British Governor General to call a session of the central legislature at his discretion, requiring that the gap between two sessions should not be more than 12 months.

Dr B R Ambedkar stated that the purpose of summoning the central assembly was only to collect taxes, and the once-a-year meeting was for the government to avoid scrutiny by the legislature. The Constituent Assembly reduced the gap between sessions to six months.

How did the Constituent Assembly reach this decision?

Some members of the Constituent Assembly wanted Parliament to meet throughout the year with breaks in between. Others wanted Parliament to sit for longer durations, and cited the examples of the British and American legislatures meeting

for more than 100 days a year. One member wanted the presiding officers of the two Houses to be empowered to convene Parliament under certain circumstances.

Dr Ambedkar did not accept these suggestions. He thought that independent India's government would hold regular parliamentary sessions. He argued: "The clause as it stands does not prevent the legislature from being summoned more often than what has been provided for in the clause itself. In fact, my fear is, if I may say so, that the sessions of Parliament would be so frequent and so lengthy that the members of the legislature would probably themselves get tired of the sessions."

How often do Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha meet?

Before independence, the central assembly met for a little more than 60 days a year. This number increased to 120 days a year in the first 20 years after Independence. Since then, the sitting days of the national legislature have declined.

Between 2002 and 2021, Lok Sabha averaged 67 working days. The situation in state legislatures is much worse. In 2022, 28 state

Assemblies met for 21 days on average. This year, Parliament has met for 42 days so far.

On multiple occasions, the conference of presiding officers has recommended that Parliament should meet for more than 100 days. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution set up in 2000 made a similar recommendation.

Individual MPs have introduced private member Bills that stipulated increased sitting days for Parliament. Former Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Gujral, in his 2017 private member Bill, suggested that Parliament should meet for four sessions in a year, including a special session of 15 days for debating matters of urgent public importance.

If the 1955 recommendations of the Lok Sabha committee were accepted, Parliament would be in session for eight months every year. The US Congress and parliaments of Canada, Germany, and the UK are in session throughout the year, and their calendar of sitting days is fixed at the beginning of the year.

What is a special session of Parliament?

The Constitution does not use the term "special session". The term sometimes refers to sessions the government has convened for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones.

For the two Houses to be in session, the presiding officers should chair their proceedings. The presiding officers can also direct that the proceedings of their respective Houses would be limited and procedural devices like question hour would not be available to MPs during the session.

However, Article 352 (Proclamation of Emergency) of the Constitution does refer to a "special sitting of the House".

Parliament added the part relating to the special sitting through the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Act, 1978. Its purpose was to add safeguards to the power of proclaiming Emergency in the country. It specifies that if a Proclamation of Emergency is issued and Parliament is not in session, then one-tenth of Lok Sabha MPs can ask the President to convene a special meeting to disapprove the Emergency.

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Parliamentary Conduct #TheHindu

Crafting a new chapter in parliamentary conduct

As Members of Parliament troop into brand-new chambers of Parliament on Tuesday for the unexpectedly-convened special session, one of the possibilities in their minds must be the prospects for disruption. That practice, sadly, is often par for the course in India's Parliament, many of whose members (and not only in the Opposition) appear to believe that the best way to show the strength of their feelings is to disrupt the lawmaking rather than debate the law. Last session, the Opposition parties united to stall both Houses almost every single day. While that was extreme, there has not been a single session in recent years in which at least some days were not lost to deliberate disruption.

It was not always this way. Indian politicians were initially proud of the parliamentary system they had adopted upon independence, patterned as it was on Britain's Westminster model. India's nationalists had been determined to enjoy the democracy their colonial rulers had long denied them, and had convinced themselves the British system was the best, precisely since they had been excluded from enjoying its benefits. When a future British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, travelled to India as part of a constitutional commission and argued the merits of a presidential system over a parliamentary one, his Indian interlocutors reacted with horror. "It was as if," Attlee recalled, "I had offered them margarine instead of butter."

Many of India's first generation of parliamentarians – several of whom had been educated in England and watched British parliamentary traditions with admiration – revelled in the authenticity of their ways. Indian MPs still thump their desks in approbation, rather than applauding by clapping their hands. When Bills are put to a vote, an affirmative call is still usually "aye", rather than "yes" (though "hanh" is gaining ground on the Treasury benches these days). An Anglophile Communist MP, Professor Hirendranath Mukherjee, boasted in the 1950s that a visiting British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, had commented to him that the Indian Parliament was in every respect like the British one. Even to a Communist, that was a compliment to be proud of.

A fading of British practices

But seven-and-a-half decades of independence have wrought significant change, as exposure to British practices has faded and India's natural boisterousness has reasserted itself. Some of the State Assemblies have already witnessed scenes of furniture overturned, microphones ripped out and slippers flung by unruly legislators, not to mention fisticuffs and garments torn in scuffles among politicians. While things have not yet come to such a pass in the national legislature, the code of conduct that is imparted to all newly-elected MPs – including injunctions



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India's Parliament and democracy can be saved if the government and Opposition come together on basic matters; practices in the Houses of Westminster could offer solutions

against speaking out of turn, shouting slogans, waving placards and marching into the well of the house – is routinely breached. Pepper spray was once released in the well by a protesting MP, resulting in the hospitalisation of some MPs and the then Speaker experiencing discomfort. Equally striking is the impunity with which lawmakers flout the rules they are elected to uphold. On several occasions now, MPs in the Upper and Lower Houses have been suspended from membership for such transgressions as charging up to the presiding officer's desk, wrenching his microphone and tearing up his papers – only to be quietly reinstated after a few months and some muted apologies.

Space for the Opposition

Perhaps this makes sense, out of a desire to allow the Opposition its space in a system where party-line voting, made obligatory by the anti-defection law, determines almost all legislative outcomes. But in the process, standards have been allowed to slide, with adjournments being preferred to expulsions. The result is a curiously Indian institution, where standards of behaviour prevail that would not be tolerated in most other parliamentary systems.

But can India's Parliament go on like this? Many worry that such conduct has so thoroughly discredited the legislature in the eyes of the public that the credibility of the institution is beyond redemption. This would be one more nail in the coffin of a democratic system that is already under severe assault from an overweening government, media intimidation, the hollowing out of autonomous institutions, pressures by investigative agencies on political opponents and the government's flagrant disregard for parliamentary conventions. Currently, all major parliamentary committees dealing with sensitive issues are chaired by MPs of the ruling party or its allies, in disregard of the practice whereby, for instance, the External Affairs Committee was always chaired by an Opposition MP, to show that the nation was of one mind on foreign policy.

Perhaps the answer lies in returning for inspiration to the source – the Houses of Westminster. There are two British parliamentary procedures that were curiously never adopted by India – which, if brought into our practices, could remove any incentive for disruption.

The first is to allow the Opposition a day a week to set the agenda, since disruptions are always sought to be justified as required to force the government to debate an issue it does not want to. In Britain, "Opposition Day" permits Opposition parties to select specific policy areas or issues they want to bring to the floor of the House for debate. These debates allow the Opposition to focus on matters of political significance that the government would rather sweep under the carpet, and they provide

Opposition parties with the opportunity to draw attention to issues they believe are important, criticise government policies, and propose alternatives. The number of Opposition Days in a parliamentary session is typically determined by the government and Opposition parties through negotiation and agreement. This arrangement ensures that the Opposition has a designated platform to express its views and priorities within the parliamentary schedule. It could be adopted as part of a grand bargain under which the Opposition, in turn, foresees any resort to disruption.

Question time for the Prime Minister

A second practice is especially worth emulating in our country, where the Prime Minister notoriously prefers monologues to answering questions and does not even answer the questions addressed to him in the daily Question Hour, leaving that task to a Minister of State in his office. This is Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQs), a significant and widely watched parliamentary event in the United Kingdom, where MPs have the opportunity to question the Prime Minister about various issues. PMQs take place every Wednesday when the House of Commons is in session, usually at noon, and typically lasts for about 30 minutes, though the exact duration can vary. The order of questioning alternates between the Leader of the Opposition and backbench MPs from both government and Opposition benches. The Leader of the Opposition starts by asking several short questions, followed by supplementaries, and then other MPs have a go. Each question is relatively short, and the Prime Minister responds in kind. PMQs are known for spirited exchanges and are immensely popular television viewing in Britain. Both are key aspects of the British parliamentary system's tradition of executive accountability. While Opposition Days and PMQs can be raucous and often confrontational affairs, sometimes characterised by political theatre, they serve the important function of allowing MPs to scrutinise the Prime Minister and the government, are central to the U.K.'s democratic process and show parliamentary democracy in action.

Finally, the Speaker can change his current habit of rejecting every single adjournment motion moved by an Opposition MP; clubbing all proposed amendments to Bills into one and rejecting them by voice vote without discussion; and refusing to even notice requests for recording dissent through "division". These parliamentary techniques are essential for Opposition members to feel they are valued members of an institution rather than irrelevances who can always be disregarded and outvoted. If the government and Opposition can come together on such basic matters, Parliament – and our democracy – can still be saved.

Direction

1. Note Opposition Day, PMQs for Way Forward
2. Note Colonial Legacy – Indian MPs still thump their desks in approbation, rather than applauding by clapping their hands. When Bills are put to a vote, an affirmative call is still usually "aye", rather than "yes" (though "hanh" is gaining ground on the Treasury benches these days).

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“Code of Conduct” in Lok Sabha #TheIE

Lok Sabha gets a new home, MPs’ code of conduct still undecided

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 27

AS PARLIAMENT moved to a new building last week, members of Lok Sabha carried along two matters that they have kept pending for years.

The first is the formulation of a Code of Conduct for members of Lok Sabha; second, a declaration of members’ business interests. Both conditions have long been applicable to members of Rajya Sabha.

Code of Conduct

On September 15, Lok Sabha said in response to a query by *The Indian Express* under the Right to Information (RTI) Act: “The matter (of the Code of Conduct) is under consideration of the Committee on Ethics.”

The Committee on Ethics has in fact been

considering the matter for more than eight years.

On December 16, 2014, the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee headed by Gandhinagar MP L K Advani submitted its report on proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha to Speaker Sumitra Mahajan. The report was tabled in the House two days later.

The committee’s recommendations were included in the report of the Rules Committee of Lok Sabha, which was laid on the table of the House on August 5, 2015. The report said [the Ethics Committee] shall “formulate a Code of Conduct for Members and suggest amendments or additions to the Code of Conduct from time to time”.

The matter has stood there ever since.

Business interests

Asked in the same RTI application about

the status of the matter concerning the declaration of the business interests of members, the Lok Sabha Secretariat provided an extract, paragraph 52A, from a publication of Parliament titled “Directions by the Speaker Lok Sabha. This paragraph applies to members of Parliamentary Committees, not to all MPs.

The extract (“Personal, pecuniary or direct interest...”) says: “(1) Where a member of a Committee has a personal, pecuniary or direct interest in any matter which is to be considered by the Committee, such member shall state one’s own interest therein to the Speaker through the Chairperson of the Committee. “(2) After considering the matter, the Speaker shall give decision which shall be final.”

Long-running saga

Concerns over potential conflicts of interest

of MPs were first expressed almost a century ago. On January 26, 1925, it was noted in the Central Legislative Assembly that “a member having a personal, pecuniary or direct interest in a matter before the House is required, while taking part in the proceedings on the matter, to declare the nature of the interest”.

EXPLAINED POLITICS

The first Ethics Committee in Lok Sabha was constituted on May 16, 2000 by the late GMC Balaogji of the TDP. Balaogji was followed by Speaker by Manohar Joshi of the Shiv Sena, Somnath Chatterjee of the CPM, Meira Kumar of the Congress, and Sumitra Mahajan and Om Birla of the BJP.

The Ethics Committee is reconstituted every year. The committee was headed by T R Baalu of the DMK in 2009-10, by Advani in 2011-12, and by Dr Chintia Mohan of the Congress in 2013-14, according to the Lok

Sabha website.

The Lok Sabha website states that the Ethics Committee shall “(a) Examine every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker... formulate a Code of Conduct for members and suggest amendments or additions to the Code of Conduct from time to time.”

After the Ethics Committee’s report is tabled in the House, it is taken up for discussion. Once approved by the House, it goes to the Rules Committee, which drafts Rules based on the recommendation.

Rajya Sabha led the way

The first Ethics Committee in Rajya Sabha was inaugurated by Chairman K R Narayanan on May 30, 1997.

The Fourth Report of the Committee was adopted by Rajya Sabha on April 20, 2005, and a 14-point Code of Conduct for members

of the House has been in force ever since.

It says, “...If Members find that there is a conflict between their personal interests and the public trust which they hold, they should resolve such a conflict in a manner that their private interests are subordinated to the duty of their public office.” The code also says that “members should never expect or accept any fee, remuneration or benefit” for their actions on the floor of the House.

Rule 293 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) states: “There shall be maintained a ‘Register of Member’s Interests’ in such form as may be determined by the [Ethics] Committee which shall be available to members for inspection on request.” This is accessible to citizens under the RTI Act.

LONGER VERSION
indianexpress.com/explained

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Secretariat – The Backbone of Parliament

#TheIE

As Parliament turns 75, the story of its 'backbone' — the Secretariat

**EXPERT
EXPLAINS**

CHAKSHU ROY

PARLIAMENT'S 75-year journey can be seen through several lenses. It could be statistical – like the number of days that Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha worked – or about the Members whose debates shaped legislation. But the discussion of Parliament's rich history must also include an account of the behind-the-scenes, painstaking work done by women and men of the Parliament Secretariat.

This professional body advises Presiding Officers of the two Houses, provides MPs with information for their legislative interventions, and ensures that the legislature functions smoothly. It is also the custodian of procedure, precedent, and legislative knowledge, and their transfer across parliamentary terms. If Parliament is a body, the Secretariat is its backbone.

Role of Vithalbhai Patel

Vithalbhai Patel, who in 1925 became the first elected Speaker (then called President) of the Central Assembly, cham-

ioned the idea of a separate Secretariat for the legislature. He believed that if the office of the Speaker had to work independently, it needed staff directly under its control.

Patel also pushed for a separate security establishment for the legislature. In 1925, after Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs into the Central Assembly, the British administration wanted to place police officers to control access to the Parliament building. But Patel believed that Assembly precincts came under the Speaker's authority, and he shut access to the visitor galleries until the government agreed to place security arrangements under the Speaker's control.

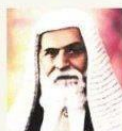
Patel's perseverance created a separate office for the legislature in 1929, unconnected with the government. By then, a cadre of specialised Parliament staff had started emerging as legislatures evolved in the country.

Parliamentary reporters

Perhaps the first set of such individuals were the parliamentary reporters. These individuals are responsible for accurately reporting legislative proceedings. They sit in the House, close to the Presiding Officer's chair. Within a few hours of the end of a parliamentary sitting, their work makes hundreds of pages of speeches of MPs, ministe-



(Left) M N Kaul, who is referred to as the father of Lok Sabha Secretariat, and Vithalbhai Patel, the first President of the Central Assembly, who pushed for independent secretariats for the national legislature. PFI, Lok Sabha Secretariat



rial statements and observations by the Chair available to the public.

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha rules of procedure require that the "Secretary-General shall cause to be prepared a full report of the proceedings of the House at each of its sittings and shall, as soon as practicable, publish it in such form and manner" as directed by the Presiding Officer. The rule's genesis lies in an 1861 communication from the Secretary of State for India to the Governor General, which underlined "the highest importance" of making available to the public "correct reports of the proceedings under the authority of the Council...".

As a result, parliamentary reporters started producing an "abstract of the observation of members". With the advent of shorthand, it changed to "abstract of proceedings". And by the time the Central Assembly started functioning in 1921, the reporters kept an ad verbatim record of its proceedings—a practice

that continues till today.

The builder: M N Kaul

The task of professionalising the Parliament Secretariat and establishing its standard operating procedures fell to Maheshwar Nath Kaul, a lawyer who joined the legislative assembly office in 1937, and rose to become secretary of the Constituent Assembly. He was instrumental in shaping the constitutional provisions related to legislators and pushed for the independence of its Secretariat.

Post-independence, he created Parliament's research and reference service, the purpose of which was to provide members with information they might require to discuss Bills and other subjects. Kaul also knew that Parliament and its MPs would need more office space. In 1956, he started pushing for separate buildings for the secretariat, library, committees and MPs.

Parliament's many languages

From the first Lok Sabha onward, members demanded simultaneous interpretation services in the chamber. The Secretariat started providing Hindi and English real-time interpretation in 1964. It required interpreters to be familiar with parliamentary business, as well as proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, language nuances, literature, idioms, and humour. The Parliament Secretariat now provides MPs with simultaneous interpretation of 22 languages.

Structuring of Secretariats

In 1974, a committee of MPs recommended structuring the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats into 11 functional areas—legislative (dealing with the work of the Houses), library research and information, ad verbatim reporting, editorial and translation, interpretation, printing and publication, watch and ward (renamed Parliament Security) service, etc. With administrative consolidation, the roughly 2,200 Lok Sabha and 1,500 Rajya Sabha Secretariat officers were organised into eight services.

The Constitution specifies that Parliament can make a law to regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to the secretarial staff of

Parliament. But Parliament has made no such law; therefore, these are done according to the rules made by the presiding officers of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The Secretaries-General of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are at the helm of the respective Secretariats. The Presiding Officers of the two Houses have discretion in appointing the Secretary-General. For example, the Rajya Sabha recruitment order specifies that the Chairperson of Rajya Sabha shall make the appointment to the post of the Secretary-General. The order also empowers the presiding officer of Rajya Sabha to fill senior positions like that of Secretary/Additional Secretary by "persons of equivalent stature and experience from other sources on contract basis".

The Secretary-General aids and advises the Presiding Officer of the House in discharging her/his constitutional and statutory responsibilities. The Parliamentary Pay Committee, in its 2009 report, described the role of the Secretary-General as one that "renders advice to the Presiding Officer as well as the House on all matters relating to the running of the House and its Committees and the second being the Secretary-General of the Secretariat of the House. In the latter role, he acts as the head of the administration".

Chakshu Roy is Head of Outreach at PFI Legislative Research

Function of Secretariat

- Providing secretarial assistance and support to the **Council of States (Rajya Sabha)**
- Providing amenities to Rajya Sabha Members
- Serving the various **Parliamentary Committees**
- Preparing research and reference material and bringing out various publications
- Recruiting manpower in the Sabha Secretariat and attending to **personnel matters**
- Preparing and publishing a record of the **day-to-day procedure**.

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12. LAW AND ORDER ADMINISTRATION

Feminization of Police Force

#TH

Push for more women, this time in the police

In a few years from now, women lawmakers will form at least 33% of all lawmakers in India. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023 has been passed by both Houses of Parliament. This Bill provides for one-third of total seats in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of every State and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi to be reserved for women for 15 years. Additionally, this reservation will also extend to seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The representation of women Members of Parliament in the current Lok Sabha is about 14.4%, compared to 4.9% in the first Lok Sabha in 1952.

The purpose of this amendment is to increase women's participation in policymaking. However, as the amendment has caveats, experts are of the view that the earliest this amendment can be implemented is the general election of 2029, provided Census 2021, which is pending, is taken up soon and the process of delimitation is carried out without delay. Otherwise, implementation will be delayed till the general election of 2034. While there is no direct link between the number of legislators and the strength of law enforcement agencies, the number of women in these gives a fair idea about how representative these institutions are of the society they represent.

Reservation, actual availability in the police Most States have a policy to fill up 30% or 33% of the vacant posts (of direct recruitment) with women in their police forces through horizontal reservation – i.e., if the minimum reserved vacant posts are not filled up in each category of the SC, ST, Other Backward Classes and un-reserved with women on merit, women candidates are pushed up in the list to make up for the gap. The reservation for women in the State armed police forces is restricted to 10% in some States. Women are generally recruited against notified vacancies after permission is granted by the government to fill up vacancies.

The 'Data on Police Organizations', a publication by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) shows that while the total available strength of the State police forces increased by about 7.48% in the last five years, i.e., from about 19.26 lakh as on January 1, 2017, to about 20.70 lakh as on January 1, 2021 (against a sanctioned strength of 24.64 lakh and 26.31



R.K. Vij

is a retired Indian Police Service Officer

States in India need to act as data show that the available women force is insufficient even in dealing with cases of law and order that are related to women

lakh, respectively), the representation of women in the State police force increased from 1,40,184 to 2,17,026 in the same period, which is about 7.28% and 10.47% of the total available force, respectively. Though the data for the year 2021 (as on January 1, 2022) has not been published, the Minister of State of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Rajya Sabha in February 2023 that the representation of women in the police force (as of January 1, 2022) remained at 11.7% of the total State police force.

According to the details published by the BPR&D (as on January 1, 2021), a few States such as Kerala, Mizoram and Goa do not have a policy of reservation for women in the police force, but women's representation in these States varies between 6% and 11%. Bihar provides for 35% reservation for women and 3% for backward caste women, but the actual number of women in the force is about 17.4%. Chandigarh has a maximum percentage of women (about 22%) in the police force, while Jammu and Kashmir has the minimum (about 3.3%). Himachal Pradesh has not notified reservation for women, but 20% vacancies of constables are filled up by women. Though the MHA has repeatedly asked States to increase the representation of women in the police force to 33%, the actual availability remains low. Many States do not have a permanent police recruitment board and do not have a free hand to undertake recruitment at regular intervals.

Assuming that the attrition rate in the police forces is about 2.5% to 3% and the annual sanction of new posts to be about 1.5% to 2%, recruitment is done only against about 4% to 5% of the total posts. Thus, going by the past, it would take not less than 20 years to increase women's representation from 10% to 30% in the entire police force.

Crime data and need for more women police With 'criminal law' and 'criminal procedure' on the Concurrent List, the central government has made various amendments in these laws; certain reports and statements are to be mandatorily recorded by a woman police officer. Arrest and search of a woman accused must be done by a woman police officer.

According to National Crime Records Bureau data, about 10% of the total crime defined under the Indian Penal Code was committed against women and about 5.3% of total arrested persons in 2021 were women. Therefore, the available

women force is insufficient even in dealing with cases that are related to women. Women are also needed for law-and-order and day-to-day duties. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act has further enlarged the scope of women recruitment in the police force.

It is undisputed that women can handle any assignment in a police institution. They have already proved their mettle in most police duties. In a democratic country, every institution needs to be truly representative of its populace to win their trust.

Efforts must be made

'Police' being a 'State' subject in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, the implementation of 'police reforms' remains primarily a concern of the States. The MHA began providing financial incentives from 2018-19 (by reserving 10% in the first year and 20% of total modernisation funds thereafter) to States that implement police reforms to a satisfactory level. Merging women police with the regular police was one such reform. Similarly, though the establishment of the Police Recruitment Board was another such reform, many States were not enthusiastic about implementing this, and, consequently, did not get this benefit. The 'satisfaction level' with family quarters (as on January 1, 2021) was only about 30%. The MHA also provided a special grant to encourage States to establish a 'women desk' in every police station. But there are not enough women personnel to handle them in the districts. The MHA also has a special provision in the modernisation plan to build separate toilets for women staff, and ensure crèche facilities for children in every police station which is sanctioned thus.

Efforts should be made to encourage more women to join the police force – for this, a conducive environment and basic infrastructure are a minimum necessity. A uniform Police Act for the entire country may help the Centre frame uniform standards for women police also. Every State should have a recruitment board to ensure recruitment on a regular basis. Taking a step forward, a special drive should be launched by all States and Union Territories to recruit more women and increase their representation in the police force, just as the Constitutional 128th amendment for women in legislatures would do in the near future.

The views expressed are personal

Status

As per the response provided by the Minister of State for Home Affairs (MHA) in the Rajya Sabha in February 2023, the representation of women in the police force (as of January 1, 2022) remained at 11.7% of the total State police force.

While many States have mandated 10% to 33% reservation for women in

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	<p>the police, not one of these States has met its goal.</p> <p>The share of women among the higher ranks was even lower at 8.7%.</p>
Need of “Women in Police”	<p>Legal Mandates and Specialized Roles: For instance, recording reports and conducting arrests, to be handled by women officers in cases involving women. Additionally, specialized legislation like the POCSO Act necessitates the presence of women officers. This ensures that sensitive cases are handled with the required empathy and professionalism.</p> <p>Addressing Crimes Against Women: NCRB reveal that a significant portion of crimes defined under the Indian Penal Code is committed against women. Having women police officers is crucial for effectively addressing these crimes, providing support to victims, and ensuring that justice is served. Their presence can lead to increased reporting of such crimes and a more empathetic response to survivors.</p> <p>Insufficient Female Police Force: NCRB data also highlights that the existing women police force is insufficient, even for cases related to women. Increasing the number of women officers is necessary to bridge this gap and provide adequate coverage for all types of incidents, including day-to-day law enforcement activities.</p>

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	<p>Proven Competence: Women in the police force have demonstrated their competence in various roles and responsibilities. They are fully capable of handling any assignment within a police institution, proving that gender should not be a barrier to their involvement in law enforcement.</p> <p>Representation and Trust: In a democratic country like India, it is essential for every institution, including the police, to be representative of the populace they serve. Increasing the number of women in the police force is a step towards building trust and confidence in the community. It sends a message that the police are accessible and responsive to the needs of all citizens</p>
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[Beyond the Write-Up]

<p>Challenges</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is time to look beyond numbers to institutional barriers that hinder women's growth within the service. 2. Frequent inter-district transfers and disallowing postings in home districts for specified periods of time coupled with poor childcare support systems and lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure present distinct difficulties for women. 3. Taken together, these and other barriers limit the avenues for women's promotion. 4. Sexual harassment at the workplace that policewomen suffer
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	<p>is not adequately acknowledged.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. There is even less recognition of the impact that the policing sub-culture, with its association with “masculinity” and coercive force, has on the participation of women. 6. No wonder it is common to hear the police being described as policemen as if women in the police don’t exist at all. 7. The underlying assumption seems to be that an increase in numbers will automatically make the organisational culture more egalitarian. This is far from the truth. 8. Women are typecast for example, they are asked to deal with crimes against women, while they are kept outside the mainstream of varied experiences. 9. As a result, new recruits will become increasingly ghettoised in the absence of a framework to guide their career path. 10. Increasing the number of recruits alone will not be enough; institutional changes embedded in principles of diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunities are as important.
<p><u>Way Forward: Need to develop model policies:</u></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One way to mainstream women in the police is to develop a model policy that will challenge the deep-rooted patriarchy in the institution. 2. Unfortunately, till now, not a single State police department has attempted to even draft such a policy.

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3. A model policy, while laying the foundation for equal opportunities for women in every aspect of policing, should also strive to create a safe and enabling work environment. Without this, all other efforts will remain piecemeal.
4. One of the first steps to ensure a level playing field for women in the police is to increase their numbers.
5. Merely providing reservation is not enough; police departments should *develop an action plan to achieve the target of 30% or more in a time-bound manner.*
6. This also applies to States that have not provided a quota as yet. Departments should also undertake special recruitment drives in every district to ensure geographical diversity.
7. To achieve the target, the police should reach out to the media and educational institutions to spread awareness about opportunities for women in the police.
8. Current data reveal that most women in the police are concentrated in the lower ranks. Efforts should be made to change this. The impulse to create women-only battalions for the sake of augmenting numbers should be eliminated.
9. Second, the model policy should strive to ensure that decisions on deployment of women are free of gender stereotyping to facilitate bringing women into leading

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	<p>operational positions.</p> <p>10. Women police officers should be encouraged to take on public order and investigative crimes of all types and should be given duties beyond the minimum mandated by special laws. Desk work too must be allocated evenly among men and women.</p> <p>11. <i>A major burden of family and childcare responsibilities</i> falls on women. Yet, police departments still lack proper internal childcare support systems.</p> <p>12. Departments need to be mindful of this social reality and exercise sensitivity in making decisions on transfers and posting of women personnel.</p> <p>13. As far as possible, women should be posted in their home districts in consultation with supervising officers.</p>
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 **SC Judgement on CBI's Retrospective Powers**
#TheHindu

Context	A Constitution Bench held that a Supreme Court judgment of 2014 which declared Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act invalid has a retrospective effect.
Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act	<p>Section 6A of the DSPE Act was added in 2003 through Section 26 of the Central Vigilance Commission Act(CVCA).</p> <p>The section mandated the government's prior sanction to proceed in corruption cases against officers of the rank of joint secretary and above.</p> <p>However, an exception provided in Section 6A(2) states that no approval is necessary for cases involving arrest of a person on the spot on the charge of accepting or attempting to accept a bribe.</p>
2014 Ruling	<p>In 2014, a five-judge Constitution Bench struck down Section 6A of the DSPE Act, ruling that status or position cannot shield an officer of the level of joint secretary and above from an unconstrained probe by the CBI in cases of corruption.</p> <p>This court termed Section 6A a "discriminatory" provision that "impedes tracking down the corrupt senior bureaucrats".</p> <p>But the 2014 ruling did not clarify</p>

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	<p>what would happen to existing cases being probed by the CBI</p> <p>Therefore, a constitution bench was constituted to examine whether the 2014 decision would affect existing corruption cases.</p>
Current Judgement	<p>The constitution bench held that the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling which struck down Section 6A of the DSPE Act will apply retrospectively.</p> <p>This means that there would be no protection to the public servants on the premise of a sanction under Section 6A in pre-2014 cases.</p>

[Related News]

CBI – A CAGED PARROT?

The SC raised questions on the CBI's independence while hearing the Coalgate scam case, called it a "*caged parrot speaking in its master's voice*".

Issues with CBI:

1. **Autonomy:** Lack of enough financial and administrative autonomy in non-corruption cases has been often cited as major roadblocks in independent investigation by CBI.
2. **Dependence on MHA:** For staffing, especially on depositions of IPS officers, which affects its functional autonomy.
3. **Constitutional status:** CBI enjoys great power over the investigative machinery of the country, yet it derives its origin from DPSE Act, 1946 and the MHA resolution of 1963 which puts its constitutional status on shaky ground. Guwahati High Court in 2013 termed CBI unconstitutional which was later stayed by the Supreme Court.
4. **Political interference:** CBI often handles sensitive cases and those of national importance. However, due to it being under the control of central government with latter having immense control over its functioning, often allegations of political misuse of CBI have been there. Misconduct or tardiness in investigation has been alleged on CBI's part in cases like

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Bofor's scam, Hawala scam, 2G scam case, coalgate scam case, etc. Due to this issue, SC, while hearing case on coalgate scam in 2013, called CBI a caged parrot.

5. **Internal faction within CBI and corruption:** Recently, the allegation of corruption against each other by the special director of CBI, Rakesh Asthana, and CBI director, Alok Verma, leading to subsequent ouster of latter by CVC, brought to the fore the internal division within the ranks of CBI. Supreme Court has ordered CVC enquiry in the corruption case.
6. **The appointment of interim chief,** Nageshwar Rao, by the centre bypassing the selection process under the Lok Pal Act, 2013.
7. **Police is a State subject** under the Indian Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) which the CBI has to follow makes it a police agency. Thus, CBI requires consent of the State government in question before it can make its presence in that State. Section 6A of DPSE Act, which was termed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2014, also was a roadblock in CBI functioning.

How to make CBI more effective?

- *Statutory backing:* A formal, legal framework for CBI for effective and independent functioning.
- *Checking political interference in appointment:* The Lokpal Act, 2013 provides for a 3-member selection committee comprising of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and the Chief Justice of India for appointment of director of CBI. The procedure must be followed in letter and spirit.
- *Accountability to Parliament:* Like Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), parliamentary oversight would ensure better accountability, reduce chances of political misuse, and increase its credibility.
- *Dedicated cadre:* Dedicated officers of its own without depending upon deputations. CVC provides for tenurial stability of 2 years which must be respected for transparent and independent investigations as well.

 **Cybercrime Investigation Tool – TTPs**
#TheHindu

	<p>A new cybercrime investigation tool called TTPs (tactics, techniques and procedures)-based cybercrime investigation framework is being developed.</p> <p>The tool will help in tracking and classifying cybercrimes identifying chain of evidences required to solve the case and in mapping evidences onto the framework to convict criminals.</p> <p>It is developed by IIT Kanpur's c3ihub with support from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).</p>
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13. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Bemetara Way

#TH

Bridging the malnutrition gap, the Bemetara way

It is often said that simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication. Experience has taught us that simple things may not always be easy, but are often the most effective solutions. In this light, counselling people on eating and feeding practices along with monitoring their progress can prove to be a game-changer.

Over the years, the government has made painstaking efforts to ensure food security. Now, children have mid-day-meals in their schools and people receive monthly rations through an ever-improving Public Distribution System. Ready-to-eat packets and hot meals are served to mothers and children at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), under the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan. Further, various add-ons such as egg, banana, protein powders, peanut *chikki* and jaggery are also being distributed under various special State-specific schemes, an example being the Mukhyamantri Suposhan Yojana in Chhattisgarh. But, nutrition security is still a distant dream. People often lack knowledge of proper eating and feeding practices. Myths around food and increased accessibility to highly processed food have compounded the problem. Nutrition counselling can potentially be the answer to this problem.

It is important to note that "Jan Andolan", or social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), has been a facet of POSHAN Abhiyaan. This includes bicycle rallies, plantation of Poshan Vatikas, celebration of Poshan Maah, Poshan Pakhwaras and Godh Bharaais. Different States have held various awareness programmes under the SBCC. However, the concept of nutrition counselling has yet to be properly institutionalised and implemented uniformly across States. In fact, according to the POSHAN Abhiyaan Progress Report, 2018, "A focused and coherent SBCC Action Plan is essential to take the work of POSHAN Abhiyaan forward." Thus, there

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Nutrition counselling is a simple but powerful strategy as the experience in this district in Chhattisgarh shows

is a need for field staff to be properly trained in nutritional counselling and there is a need for it to be implemented, mandatorily and uniformly, by States.

Lessons from Bemetara

Bemetara in Chhattisgarh is a puzzling district in the context of its malnutrition status. Situated in the fertile plains of Chhattisgarh, it is unaffected by Naxalite activities and is agriculturally rich. Its inhabitants are also relatively affluent. However, the number of Severe Acute Malnourished (SAM) children there was as high as 3,299 in December 2022. This figure bears a striking resemblance to the situation in tribal-dominated and Naxal-affected districts such as Bastar. It points to the lack of proper knowledge about feeding practices. The problem is not about access but improper knowledge around when, how and what to eat. This is why nutrition counselling combined with robust monitoring was chosen as the *modus operandi* for this area.

Poth Laika Abhiyaan – which means "Healthy Child Mission" (literal translation) in the Chhattisgarhi language – is a nutrition counselling programme that is being implemented in 72 of the most affected AWCs in the Bemetara sub-division of Bemetara district. It has the technical support of UNICEF, Chhattisgarh. Here, ground-level staff from the Health and Women and Child Development departments have been well trained on how to provide nutrition counselling in the region. Every Friday, the parents of the targeted SAM and Medium Acute Malnourished (MAM) children are summoned and counselled. They are taught in simple Chhattisgarhi language the importance and the constituents of "Tiranga Bhojan" (a balanced diet), the need to wash hands regularly and many other tips in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many harmful dietary myths and superstitions are dispelled as well. The progress

of the targeted children is being monitored. Local leaders such as *sarpanchs*, *panchayat sachivs* and religious heads have also participated in the counselling sessions. Door-to-door visits to the houses of targeted children are also done to monitor their progress.

Data that is encouraging and significant

As a result of the simple mantra of nutrition counselling along with regular monitoring and evaluation, as many as 53.77% of targeted children were brought out of malnutrition by the Poth Laika Abhiyaan, in a span of nine months, i.e., from December 2022 to July, 2023 – 599 out of 1,114 children. Further, 61.5% of MAM children and 14.67% of SAM children have been brought out of malnutrition. These figures are both encouraging and statistically significant. When comparing this with a random control group of 20 AWCs where this mission was not being implemented, only 30.6% children were taken out of malnutrition. That is, 33.8% MAM children and zero SAM children were taken out of malnutrition. This shows a total increase of 23% over and above the control group, which is very encouraging. Further, while providing meals requires elaborate budgeting and the risk of leakages, this mission is a zero cost one, requiring no more than a few training sessions and regular monitoring. Thus, it has shown itself to be cost effective as well.

From the experiences highlighted, there is no doubt that this model needs to be replicated on a larger scale across districts and States. Providing food to the poor needs to be supported with nutrition counselling and monitoring in order to truly accelerate the eradication of malnutrition.

It is only when this simple but impactful strategy of nutrition counselling is followed both in letter and spirit, that India can move closer towards achieving the ambitious yet noble dream of a "Kuposhan Mukh Bharat".

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14. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES IN ADMINISTRATION

✚ Are natural disasters man-made?
#TheHindu

<p>Context</p>	<p>In the conversation, there are arguments both in support of and against the idea that natural disasters are man-made: @pubadpedia</p>
<p>In Support of Natural Disasters Being Man-Made:</p>	<p>Poor Planning and Construction: The article suggests that poor planning and haphazard construction have multiplied the impact of natural disasters. This implies that human decisions and actions, such as building in flood-prone areas, contribute to the severity of disasters.</p> <p>Anthropogenic Climate Change: It is acknowledged that anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change has played a major role in increasing the frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards. This reinforces the argument that human activities are contributing to natural disasters.</p> <p>Lack of Sustainable Development: The conversation points out that development often prioritizes economics over sustainability, leading to practices like filling water bodies and destroying natural drainage systems. This implies that human-driven development choices exacerbate disaster risks.</p>
<p>Against Natural Disasters Being Man-Made:</p>	<p>Historical Prevalence: The discussion acknowledges that India has faced natural disasters long before the framing of climate change as a</p>

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catalyst. This suggests that while human actions may exacerbate disasters, they have historically occurred naturally.

Knowledge vs. Implementation: The conversation highlights a potential disconnect between knowledge and implementation. While there may be knowledge about disaster risks and solutions, decisions may not always align with this knowledge due to various factors, including political will and competing interests.

Complex Factors: The complex nature of urbanization, population growth, and dependence on fossil fuels is acknowledged. It implies that addressing disaster risks involves navigating intricate challenges that may not have straightforward solutions.

Disaster Risk Reduction

#TH

Redouble efforts to reduce disaster risks

As leaders underscored at the G20 summit in New Delhi yesterday, ahead of the United Nations General Assembly SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) summit in New York next week, the world stands at a critical juncture. Risks are being created faster than they are being reduced. The aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a polycrisis of war, debt, and food insecurity, are putting our collective ability to cope to the test. And all against the backdrop of the climate crisis, driving the extreme weather events that are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity.

The rise in disasters is a trend, not an aberration. Headlines this year alone have brought a relentless wave of bad news across the world, from severe flooding in China to destructive wildfires in Europe and Hawaii to the hottest month ever on record in July. This is set to become the new normal if more action isn't taken.

And perversely, it is the most vulnerable countries and communities which are paying the greatest price despite having contributed least to the problem. The majority of the 50 countries most vulnerable to climate change also suffer from severe debt issues.

India, already among the world's most disaster-prone countries, is experiencing this new reality acutely. In 2022, the country was battered by disasters or extreme weather nearly every day, while this year's severe monsoon has caused widespread loss of livelihood and lives.

We have the solutions at hand
Yet, there is also good news. First, we have the solutions for both adaptation and mitigation at hand. The SDGs remain our best blueprint for peace and prosperity, together with commitments made in Paris to limit global warming to 1.5°C, and the global framework for reducing disaster risks – the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk

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Kamal Kishore

is Member Secretary and Head of the Department, National Disaster Management Authority

Shombi Sharp

is UN Resident Coordinator in India

The G20 Summit and India's success in disaster risk reduction are an opportunity to accelerate international cooperation and build resilience to risks

Reduction. Eight years into the implementation of the Sendai Framework, progress is severely lacking. However, in May this year, UN member states committed to accelerate resilience building with renewed urgency.

Many lessons are being learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, including on the importance of systems-wide disaster risk reduction, resilience, and adaptation. The crisis not only revealed our vulnerability to risk, but also forged new ways of working together, including through digital innovations, such as computer modelling and India's CoWIN digital vaccine system.

Another reason for optimism is India's stewardship on disaster risk reduction. All the 28 States have prepared their own disaster management plans in recent years. Accordingly, mortality from extreme weather events has fallen drastically in recent years. India's early warning system for cyclones covers the entire coastline and has helped reduce cyclone-related mortality by 90% over the last 15 years, while heat wave action plans at the local level have reduced heat wave deaths by over 90%. The recent zero death toll of Cyclone Biparjoy in Gujarat demonstrates what can be achieved through effective preparedness, response, and early warning and action systems. In fact, there were rays of joy amidst the disaster, as hundreds of babies were reported to have been born to women who had been transported to hospitals and shelters for safe delivery by the government before the cyclone.

The 15th Finance Commission in India introduced significant reforms to disaster risk financing. With a total allocation of \$28.6 billion at the national and State levels for a period of five years, the Government of India has provided sufficient resources for disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and capacity development.

On the international stage, India is promoting disaster resilience and sustainability,

including through the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, a global partnership for building resilience in infrastructure. India's National Disaster Response Force responds to domestic disasters and is also regularly deployed to disaster zones around the world.

Importantly, India's ongoing G20 presidency established the first-ever work stream on disaster risk reduction. The Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group is aligned with the SDGs and reflects many of our shared priorities.

The transformations we need

Disaster risk must be integrated at all levels, into how we build, how we invest, and how we live. **One of the most cost-effective risk-reduction methods is early warning systems for all, spearheaded by the UN, with India's support. Just a 24-hour warning of a coming storm can reduce the damage caused by 30%.** Yet, over a third of the world's population, mostly in least developed countries and Small Island Developing States, do not have access to such systems. The ultimate goal is a global multi-risk warning system for all kinds of hazards, whether biological, tectonic, or technological.

Improving global data capabilities will help us predict and respond to the risks we are facing. We commend India's G20 presidency for its progress on knowledge sharing, joint data infrastructure, and risk analysis.

Finally, we need to ensure that no one is left behind. We must enhance international cooperation in disaster prevention, response, and recovery, especially for the countries of the Global South.

The G20 summit and the outcomes of the Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group are an opportunity to design a future where we are equipped to withstand disaster risk. **As UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "Extreme weather events will happen. But they do not need to become deadly disasters."**

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Floodplains Protection

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Protecting floodplains is the need of the hour

Humanity is struggling with a shortage of water as well as an excess. As the World Health Organization stated, “Floods are increasing in frequency and intensity, and the frequency and intensity of extreme precipitation is expected to continue to increase due to climate change.” Last year, devastating floods in Pakistan claimed 1,700 lives and affected 33 million people. The 2013 floods in Uttarakhand, the 2014 floods in the Kashmir Valley, the 2015 floods in Chennai, and the 2017 floods in Gujarat all caused loss of lives and livelihoods and massive damage to infrastructure. This year too, we saw the devastating effects of rain-induced floods and landslides in several districts of Himachal Pradesh. The Yamuna water level crossed the 208.5 metre mark, breaking a 45-year-old record. All these disasters point to the severity of the situation and the urgent need to tackle it.

As per the Geological Survey of India, over 40 million hectares, which is nearly 12% of the total land area of India, is prone to floods. The severity and frequency of floods has especially affected our cities, where there is little effort made in maintaining natural topography. Cities expand fast and mostly in a haphazard manner, which makes them vulnerable to disasters. Flooding affects the economy too – Indian cities are projected to contribute to 75% of the GDP by 2030. India primarily relies on the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and the rules made in pursuance of the Act, to deal with flood management. But this law is meant to deal with multi-hazard risks and is not specifically focused on flood risk management. As per the Act, disasters cannot be predicted. This is not entirely correct, especially with respect to the frequency and intensity of floods.

Change in strategy

Disaster risks across the world are found to be situated within



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Illegal construction work in floodplains reduces the capacity of rivers to contain a high level of water within their banks

environmental and natural resource governance. There is a shift in the strategy of flood control in countries such as Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands to flood risk management as opposed to flood protection. While the protection strategy includes technical measures such as the laying of dikes, temporary flood defence walls, and polders, the key elements of the management strategy are retention of water and restoration of floodplains. In India, there are large-scale encroachments on floodplains. These increase the frequency of floods and the damage caused by them. A 2018 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India attributed encroachments in the floodplains of the rivers of Tamil Nadu and the failure to act on them as the prime reason for the Chennai floods of 2015. The auditor called the deluge a ‘man-made disaster’.

Occupying floodplains

Illegal construction work in floodplains reduces the capacity of rivers to contain a high level of water within their banks. This is especially the case during heavy rainfall when water flows down from upper catchment areas. Thus, the tendency to occupy floodplains results in flooding. Uttarakhand has been neglecting eco-sensitive floodplains by allowing the construction of guest houses and hotels on the river front to promote tourism and boost its economy. In the wake of the massive floods in 2013, the National Green Tribunal virtually barred construction of buildings 200 m along the banks of the Ganga, in a 2015 directive. But attempts were made to bypass this. It is also unclear whether environmental impact assessments are done properly in the State. The Uttaranchal River Valley (Development and Management) Act, 2005, is meant to regulate mining and construction in the river valley. But reports indicate that there is

rampant mining and construction activity with little regard for the environment.

Floods do not merely show the fury of nature; they are also often brought about by climate change-induced rainfall. This especially impacts mountainous regions such as the Himalayas.

Laws in India which are meant to protect the environment are not implemented. While there are central policy measures to protect floodplains, they are mostly non-binding on States. No State in India has been able to prevent encroachment on floodplains.

Preserve ecosystems

There are many experiences around the world which point to the potential benefits of protecting and preserving ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, lakes, and coastal areas in reducing physical exposure to natural hazards such as floods, landslides or avalanches by serving as buffers. In 1996, Germany made a fundamental change to its Federal Water Act in the aftermath of a massive flood. The law provides for protecting original retention capacity while reconstructing bodies of water. Therefore, flood plain restoration and water retention of water bodies are considered to be pillars against flooding.

Climate change adaptation is a cross-sectoral issue. It involves laws relating to land use, preservation of water bodies, coastal regulations, and environmental impact assessment. Thus it is complex; a multitude of laws need to be integrated into a coherent framework. The purpose will not be served if, for instance, a law to tackle climate change is passed by Parliament while changes to land use and the preservation of water bodies are not made.

However, achieving this requires strong political will. Populist leaders tend to refrain from implementing “green” policies. This must change if we want to save lives and livelihoods and safeguard infrastructure.

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Earthquakes in recorded History

#TH

The deadliest and strongest earthquakes in recorded history

The Bhuj earthquake was the deadliest in India, while the 1941 quake in Andaman and the 1897 quake in Assam were the strongest

DATA POINT

Jasmin Nihalani
& Vignesh Radhakrishnan

A powerful 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck Morocco near the ancient city of Marrakech on Friday last week, killing over 2,900 people. According to the Significant Earthquake Events database, maintained by the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), a U.S. government agency, this is the strongest quake to hit Morocco. The magnitude of the deadliest quake to hit the country was much lower at 5.9; it occurred in 1960 and killed about 13,100 people. The database uses the Moment Magnitude Scale to measure the intensity of recent quakes. For older quakes, it uses other methods and places them on a 0 to 9.9 scale.

This data must be taken with a pinch of salt, because the availability of data varies depending on the country. For instance, till date, Morocco has seen 21 significant earthquakes that have resulted in a death toll of over 22,700 people. However, only four of them have magnitude data. For example, the 1755 quake in Morocco is said to have killed over 3,000 people according to the NCEI data, but the accurate magnitude is unavailable.

Interestingly, the Significant Earthquake Database of the NCEI contains information on earthquakes from 2150 BCE to the present that meet at least one of the following criteria: moderate damage (approximately \$1 million or more), 10 or more deaths, magnitude of 7.5 or more, or the earthquake generated a tsunami.

Map 1 plots the death toll from significant earthquakes in the last 200 years. Each circle corresponds to an earthquake. The bigger the circle, the higher the number of deaths related to those quakes. In the last 200 years, Haiti saw the deadliest earthquake in 2010 which killed 3.16 lakh people.

The second and third deadliest quakes occurred in China in 1920 and 1976, resulting in a death toll of 2 lakh and 2.42 lakh, respectively.

In the last 200 years, China has suffered the highest number of quakes – 428, according to the NCEI. It is followed by Indonesia (366 quakes), Iran (272), Japan (256), and Turkey (209). India, which recorded 85 quakes in the last 200 years, ranks 16 on the list.

Even if the list is expanded to include all the earthquakes that have struck the world since 2150 BCE as compiled by the NCEI, China is still the country with the highest number with over 620 recorded earthquakes claiming the lives of nearly 20.75 lakh people. However, these are crude estimates given that older data are based on written records. For instance, the 1556 earthquake in China's Shaanxi province is estimated to have killed 8.3 lakh people as per written records.

The deadliest earthquake to have hit India, whether we consider the last 200 years or since 2150 BCE, occurred in 2001 in Gujarat. The Bhuj earthquake, as it is commonly known, is considered to be the deadliest as it killed over 20,000 people.

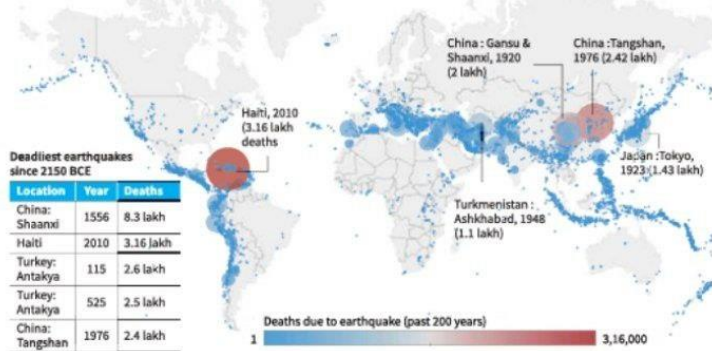
Map 2 shows the magnitude of earthquake events in the past 200 years. During this period, there have been four quakes with a magnitude of over 9 on the magnitude scale. The most severe quake struck the Chilean city of Puerto Montt in 1960 (9.5). The other three struck Alaska in 1964 (9.2), Honshu (Japan) in 2011 (9.1), and Sumatra (Indonesia) in 2004 (9.1). Of the 10 most severe earthquakes since 2150 BCE, seven have occurred in the last 200 years.

While the Bhuj quake is the deadliest in India, it is not the strongest. The 1941 quake in Andaman, poorly recorded due to World War II, and the 1897 quake in Assam, were both considered the strongest with a magnitude of 8 according to NCEI. The Bhuj quake measured 7.6.

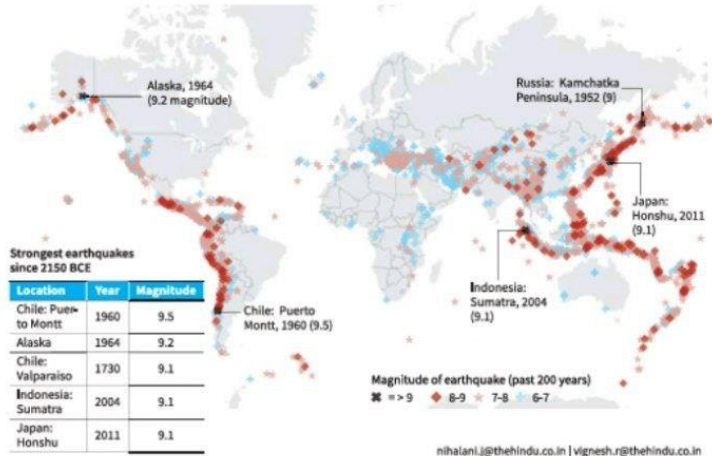
Devastating tremors

The data for the maps have been sourced from National Centers for Environmental Information, a U.S. government agency

Map 1 | The map plots the death toll from significant earthquake events in the last 200 years. The bigger the circle, the higher the number of deaths related to those quakes. The earthquakes marked are the deadliest in the past 200 years



Map 2 | The map shows the magnitude of earthquake events in the past 200 years. The earthquakes marked are the most severe in the past 200 years



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