

CITY COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE

PERSPECTIVE

A Departmental Journal

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PERSPECTIVE

The Departmental
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Science

City College

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ABOUT CITY COLLEGE

With a legacy spanning one hundred and fifty years, City College, Kolkata stands as a distinguished name in academia, recognized for its significant contributions to the Bengal Renaissance, which illuminated the entire nation. Throughout the years, its focus on tradition alongside modernity, legacy in conjunction with technology, and history paired with vision have established the college as a leading institution on the educational landscape of the country.

Following its initial NAAC accreditation in 2007, followed by a reaccreditation in 2023, the college has experienced steady advancement and has actively engaged in various teaching-learning initiatives to adapt to and meet the evolving demands of modern education. City College emerged from a broad educational movement in Bengal during the latter part of the 19th century, spearheaded by the generous members of the "Sadharan Brahmo Samaj." At a time when only a handful of Government educational institutions existed, catering exclusively to the children of affluent families, and when attending Government schools and colleges was merely a distant dream for countless students from underprivileged backgrounds, BSES took the initiative to establish numerous educational institutions for the marginalized middle class of Bengal. This vision materialized with the founding of City College, which began as a High School established by Anandamohan Bose, the first Wrangler of Bengal, on January 6, 1879. The unwavering support and guidance from Pandit Shivrath Shastri and Rastraguru Surendranath Bandyopadhyay facilitated the establishment of the school. The institution was founded with the aim of educating Indian students without regard to caste or creed, following an enhanced and inclusive educational framework. The goal was not solely to achieve academic qualifications but also to foster the holistic development of students.

Over time, the school enhanced its facilities to fulfill all the criteria necessary for university affiliation. In 1881, the City school was upgraded to a first-grade college. Sir Alfred Croft, who was the Director of Public Institutions at that time, noted in his official report that 'the unaided City College of Calcutta held a unique and esteemed status concerning the study of science.' By 1920, the college was equipping students for the B.A. examination in subjects such as English, Sanskrit, Political Economy, Political Philosophy, History, and Persian, as well as for the B.Sc. examination in Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry. In 1939, a Commerce Department was established, followed by the launch of the Women's department in 1943. Currently, the college comprises 15 departments, supported by a highly qualified teaching and non-teaching staff, along with libraries and laboratories for the science and commerce departments, in accordance with the demands of contemporary education.

In 2013, the Ministry of Human Resource Development deemed the college appropriate for implementing its pilot project of the Community College scheme. Consequently, the 'Community College of City College' is now on a path towards offering job-oriented disciplines in the state. Numerous prominent figures from the Bengal Renaissance, including Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das, Sir Surendranath Bandyopadhyay, Dr. Rajendra Prasad (the former President of India), Harendra Kumar Mukhopadhyay (the former Governor of West Bengal), Umesh Chandra Dutta, Bhashacharya Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, and Muhammad Shahidulla, have taught at this college, contributing to a legacy of excellence. Under the diligent oversight of BSES, City College has evolved from its humble beginnings into a formidable institution over the past 140 years. It has progressively achieved a prestigious standing in the realm of higher education in Bengal, with aspirations to further enhance its capabilities to keep pace with the rapid advancements in science, technology, and education across all areas of life.

In 2017, the Government of West Bengal assumed control of the administration of City College, and since that time, it has been operating as one of the aided colleges in West Bengal.





MESSAGE

From the

PRINCIPAL

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the faculty members and students of the Political Science department on the release of the third edition of 'Perspective', the departmental journal. This edition yet again provides students with a platform to express their thoughts in the form of essays, poetry, and artistic creations. I am confident that readers will find the contributions from students to be thought-provoking, engaging, and pertinent. I hope they will continue to write, compose, create and share their ideas with the larger academic community.

I wish them all the best!

Dr. Sital Prasad Chattopadhyay
Principal
City College

FROM THE EDITOR/HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT



It is once again that time of the year when I am presented with the opportunity to pen this note. The previous editions of 'Perspective', a journal published by the Department of Political Science at City College, have been positively received by our colleagues and peers, and I am confident that this edition will also meet their expectations. For the better part of their semester, our students have dedicated themselves to framing their essays and poetry which they share here for the enjoyment of all our readers. I am certain they will be well received.

The successful publication of their essays represents not only a personal accomplishment for each student but also a notable milestone that showcases their diligence, creativity, analytical thinking, and commitment to the art of writing and more importantly, expressing. During a time when the average human attention span is on the decline and substantial written content is becoming more scarce, these essays and poems stand out as both invigorating and praiseworthy. These young minds have invested their thoughts, experiences, and viewpoints onto paper, and witnessing their work in print will surely enhance their confidence and inspire them to persist in refining their abilities.

On behalf of the department, I extend my gratitude to everyone who played a role in bringing this edition to fruition, and I offer my heartfelt congratulations to them all.

Dr. Aditya Kant Ghising
Head
Department of Political Science
City College

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About the Department of Political Science, City College

The Department of Political Science at City College aims to provide a nurturing and academically vibrant environment to the students. The department is equipped with a library which students and faculty members can access easily. Fieldtrips are often organized in line with the curriculum of the University of Calcutta and students are trained and strongly encouraged to participate in seminars, inter-college debates and essay writing competitions. This not only enables them to learn the subject effectively but also helps them in becoming informed and active citizens. Many of them are now pursuing post-graduation in various universities in West Bengal and some have also joined the workforce successfully. At present, the department has three full-time faculty members and one resource person.

FACULTY PROFILE

Dr. Subrata Choudhury**Associate Professor**

Qualifications: M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D.

Teaching Areas: Political Thought & Theory (Western & Indian), Political Sociology, Research Methodology

Dr. Aditya Kant Ghising (HoD)**Assistant Professor**

Qualifications: M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D., UGC-NET

Teaching Areas: Political Thought & Theory (Western & Indian), Global Politics, Comparative Government and Politics, Skill-Enhancement Courses, Constitution, Research Methodology.

Mohidul Sk.**Assistant Professor**

Qualifications: M.A., B.Ed., WB-SET

Teaching Areas: Political Thought & Theory (Western & Indian), Public Administration, Indian Government & Politics, Comparative Government & Politics, Skill Enhancement Courses, Constitution.

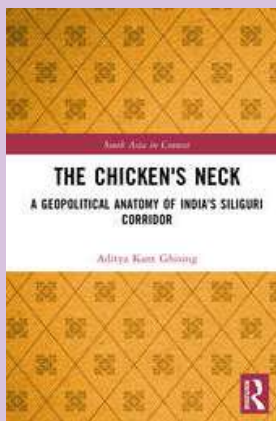
Aparupa Banerjee**Resource Person**

Qualifications: M.A., M. Phil., UGC-NET

Teaching Areas: Political Thought & Theory (Western & Indian), Comparative Government and Politics, Skill-Enhancement Courses, Constitutional Values, Research Methodology.

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT

Publications (2025-2026)



Book

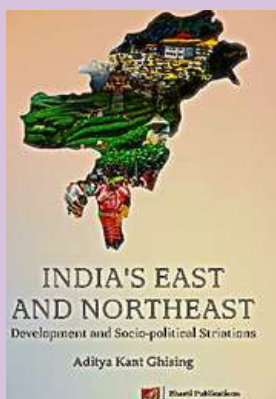
The Chicken's Neck: A Geopolitical Anatomy of India's Siliguri Corridor.

Publisher: Routledge, USA

ISBN:978-1-041-07161-7

Year: 2025

Author: Aditya Kant Ghising



Book

India's East and Northeast: Development and Socio-political Striations

Publisher: Bharti Publications, New Delhi, India

ISBN:978-93-49566-69-9

Year: 2025

Editor: Aditya Kant Ghising



Recent Extra-curricular Activities



Field visit to Doordarshan Kendra with the objective of understanding the process behind the broadcasting of news and information. 20/11/2024



Seminar on Media and Politics. Speaker: Prof. Somak Sen, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Mass Communication, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata. 11/02/2025



Celebration of Constitution Day. 26/11/2024

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS (July-December, 2025)



Shrinjini Bhattacharya, a 1st semester student in the Department of Political Science, has secured 3rd position in an Essay Competition at the Vidyasagar Smriti Puraskar event organized by Vidyasagar College for Women, on 19.09.2025.



Jit Bhattacharya, a former student of the department is one of the 50 students selected at the national level for the prestigious Abhijit Sen Rural Internship Program, 2026. More details of the internship may be obtained at <https://nfi.org.in/internship>

1

The Open Society on the Brink: Popper's Paradox and the Weaponization of Liberty

~Ushnish Ganguly

(Alumnus), Senior Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Democracy has always been a shape-shifter. From the direct assembly of Athenian citizens to the sprawling representative republics of today, democratic governance has survived by adapting to its enemies. It evolved social welfare programs to counter the appeal of communism, expanded civil rights to address internal contradictions, and built constitutional safeguards against monarchical backsliding. Yet for all its historical resilience against external threats—fascist armies, communist revolutions, authoritarian coups—democracy now faces a threat it seems uniquely ill-equipped to handle: itself.

The current crisis is not an invasion from without but a rot from within. Across established democracies, illiberal movements have learned to weaponize the very freedoms that define open societies. They invoke free speech to spread disinformation, use due process to shield anti-democratic organizing, and exploit electoral systems to dismantle the institutions that enable fair elections. This phenomenon validates a warning issued nearly eighty years ago by

philosopher Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Popper articulated what he called the paradox of tolerance: unlimited tolerance eventually destroys itself because tolerant societies will inevitably extend protections to the intolerant, who will then eliminate tolerance altogether.

As Popper wrote, "If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant... then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."

While democracy has historically adapted to external pressures, the current rise of internal illiberalism represents an existential crisis that validates Popper's paradox. Saving Western liberal democracy requires re-evaluating tolerance not as an absolute moral principle or a suicide pact, but as a mutual treaty that can be revoked when violated by bad-faith actors who seek to destroy the framework of democratic debate itself.

Democracy's Reactive Evolution

Democracy has always evolved in response to crisis. The expansion of suffrage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came after social movements exposed the contradiction of "government by the people" that excluded women and minorities. The New Deal and European social democracies emerged when industrial capitalism created inequalities that threatened social cohesion. The civil rights movements of the 1960s forced democracies to live up to their stated principles. In each case, democracy survived by expanding the circle of inclusion, incorporating previously marginalized groups into the framework of rights and representation.

These challenges, however profound, shared a common characteristic: they either sought to expand democracy or to replace it from the outside with an alternative system. Communists wanted to overthrow capitalism; civil rights activists wanted to join the system they were excluded from. Today's threat is categorically different. Modern illiberal movements do not want to expand democracy or replace it with an openly authoritarian alternative. Instead, they want to hollow it out from the inside, maintaining democratic aesthetics while gutting democratic substance—a process scholars call "autocratic legalism."

Popper understood this danger intimately. Writing in 1945, he had witnessed the Weimar Republic's destruction not through military conquest but through constitutional manipulation. The Nazi Party used democratic elections to gain power, then used legal mechanisms to dismantle the democratic system that had empowered them. As Joseph Goebbels later boasted, "This will always remain one of the best jokes of democracy, that it gave its deadly enemies the means by which it was destroyed." We are witnessing a "Weimar-ization" of modern discourse, where enemies of the open society are treated as legitimate political peers rather than existential threats to the democratic framework.

The Weaponization Playbook

The mechanism of modern democratic backsliding follows a consistent pattern: illiberal actors use democratic protections as both shield and sword. As a shield, they invoke free speech to defend lies, invoke religious liberty to justify discrimination, and use due process to obstruct accountability. As a sword, they employ harassment, doxxing, intimidation, and occasionally violence against opponents—tactics the tolerant state is often too constrained to counter effectively. Consider the contemporary debate over disinformation.

Illiberal movements claim an absolute right to lie, mislead, and incite under the banner of "free speech." When fact-checkers, platforms, or governments attempt to establish guardrails, these same actors frame any moderation as "censorship" or "Orwellian thought control." This represents an inversion of democratic values: the principle meant to protect dissent from power is weaponized to protect power's assault on truth itself.

Popper anticipated precisely this dynamic. He noted that intolerant movements eventually "renounce argument" and "forbid their followers to listen to rational argument, because it is deceptive." Modern social media algorithms are the technological realization of Popper's warning.

They create echo chambers that insulate followers from contrary evidence, making traditional democratic debate—which assumes participants share a common factual reality—functionally impossible. When citizens inhabit separate epistemic universes, democracy cannot adjudicate between competing visions because there is no shared framework for deliberation. The January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol illustrates this weaponization perfectly. The "Stop the Steal" movement used constitutionally protected speech and assembly to organize an attempt to overturn a democratic election. When held accountable through legal processes, many participants claimed their actions were legitimate political protest.

The democratic system, built on the assumption of good faith, struggled to respond to actors who exploited its procedures while rejecting its foundational premise: accepting electoral outcomes.

The Psychological Soil of Illiberalism

Understanding why illiberal movements gain traction requires acknowledging what Popper called "the strain of civilization." Democracy is demanding. It requires tolerating uncertainty, accepting compromise, and living alongside those with fundamentally different values. It offers no final answers, no permanent victories, no certainty. As Popper recognized, this creates psychological stress. Illiberalism offers relief from this burden.

It promises national purity instead of pluralism, strongman efficiency instead of messy compromise, and clear enemies instead of complex problems. Economic inequality and cultural displacement amplify these appeals. When globalization disrupts traditional industries and demographic change alters community composition, the "closed society" of shared identity and hierarchical certainty becomes emotionally attractive. This is not to excuse illiberalism, but to understand its appeal.

Popper argued that the open society triggers a longing to return to "tribalism," to the comfort of the closed society where everyone knows their place and shares common blood and belief.

Modern right-wing populism, whether Trump's MAGA movement, Orbán's "illiberal democracy" in Hungary, or Le Pen's National Rally in France, represents this retreat into the tribal against the complexity of a globalized, pluralistic world.

Reclaiming Intolerant Tolerance

If Popper diagnosed the disease, what is the cure? The answer requires reconceptualizing tolerance itself. Tolerance should not be understood as an absolute moral virtue but as a peace treaty. When all parties agree to resolve disputes through democratic deliberation rather than violence or domination, tolerance is the social contract that makes coexistence possible. But like any treaty, it is contingent.

When one party seeks to destroy the framework of democratic debate, the other parties are no longer bound by the treaty's terms. As Popper wrote, "We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant." This is not a contradiction but a logical necessity. The purpose of tolerance is to preserve a framework in which diverse viewpoints can coexist and compete through reason rather than force. Tolerating those who seek to end this framework is not principled—it is suicidal.

What does this mean practically? First, democracies must enforce boundaries on speech that crosses from expression into incitement or coordination of violence. Germany's prohibition on Nazi symbols and

Holocaust denial represents one model—a recognition that certain ideologies are fundamentally incompatible with democratic coexistence. Second, democratic systems can disqualify from office those who reject core democratic principles, such as accepting electoral outcomes. The Fourteenth Amendment's disqualification clause for insurrectionists represents this principle in American constitutional design. Third, regulation of algorithmic amplification could address how technology enables the epistemic closure Popper warned against.

The objection is predictable: doesn't using Popper's paradox to justify suppression make us the fascists? The distinction lies in purpose and scope.

Intolerance of intolerance is undertaken to preserve the framework of democratic debate; illiberal intolerance seeks to end that framework. Preventing Nazis from using democratic procedures to install dictatorship is not equivalent to Nazis preventing others from challenging their power. One preserves pluralism; the other destroys it.

The Library is Burning

Western democracy stands at a precipice not because it lacks the tools to defend itself, but because it has forgotten that it must. The open society's vulnerability is its openness—Popper's central insight. We have treated democracy as a permanent

achievement rather than an ongoing project requiring active defense. The current crisis demands moral clarity that many democratic societies have lost. We must recover the courage to say "no" to movements that exploit democratic procedures while rejecting democratic principles. This is not authoritarianism; it is the minimum condition for democracy's survival. As Popper warned, "If we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them." Democracy is not a state of nature. It is an artificial construct, maintained only through the vigilance and commitment of those who value it. The paradox of tolerance teaches us that preserving an open society sometimes requires closing the door to those who would burn the library. If we cannot summon that courage, we will lose not just the library, but the very possibility of a world where human beings resolve their differences through reason rather than force. The choice, as it was in Popper's time, remains ours.



2

Can India Become a Global Power by 2047?

~Ritika Shaw

Student, 5th Semester, Political Science Major, City College, Kolkata, West Bengal

India is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world and is already the 4th largest economy by GDP. With its large young population, technological growth, and increasing global influence, India has the potential to become a major global power by 2047, when it celebrates 100 years of independence. However, challenges like corruption, social divisions, lack of awareness, and limited women participation must be addressed. By using its strengths effectively and solving its weaknesses, India can achieve this goal.

Factors Supporting India's Rise*1. Strong and Growing Economy*

India's economy is rapidly expanding and is now the 4th largest in the world. This economic growth provides resources for infrastructure, defence, education, and global partnerships. India's median age of 28.2 years gives it a large, young workforce that can drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and industrial development.

2. Geopolitical Importance

India's strategic location in South Asia and the Indian Ocean gives it control over

important sea routes. India is an active member of international groups like BRICS, Quad, SCO, and ASEAN, which strengthens its global influence in trade, security, and diplomacy. Initiatives like SAFTA and the Neighborhood First Policy position India as a regional leader in South Asia.

3. Technology and Defence Capabilities

India is becoming a technological and digital power. UPI has emerged as one of the world's leading mobile payment systems. India also has more than 100 unicorn startups, showing its innovation potential. Defence achievements like the Tejas fighter jet, INS Arihant submarine, and successful Chandrayaan-3 and Mangalyaan missions highlight India's growing scientific and military strength.

4. Soft Power and Cultural Influence

India's democracy, culture, yoga, cinema, literature, and its 3 crore diaspora worldwide enhance its global recognition. India maintains

balanced relations with major powers like the USA, Russia, and Japan, which strengthens its diplomatic influence and strategic autonomy.

Major Challenges India Faces

1. Social Divisions

India is home to diverse religions, languages, and castes. While diversity is a strength, it sometimes creates social tension and conflicts. Caste-based divisions and religious differences can slow national unity and development if not managed properly.

2. Lack of Awareness and Education

Many people in rural and urban areas still lack quality education and awareness about government policies, digital tools, and global developments. Without improving literacy, skill development, and digital knowledge, India cannot fully utilize its young workforce.

3. Corruption and Weak Governance

Corruption exists at different levels of government, affecting public services, infrastructure, and economic growth. Weak governance and bureaucratic delays make it difficult to implement reforms and large-scale development projects efficiently.

4. Limited Participation of Women

Women in India are still underrepresented in leadership, business, and politics. Gender inequality limits the country's economic potential. Empowering women in all sectors is necessary for India to use its full human resource potential.

5. Low Investment in Infrastructure and Research

India still faces challenges in roads, railways, electricity, healthcare, and urban planning. Research and development spending is lower than in developed countries.

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Recommendations

India should focus on improving education, healthcare, skill development, and employment opportunities. Women should be empowered and included in all sectors. Governance must be transparent, and corruption should be reduced. Infrastructure, research, and innovation must receive higher investment. India should maintain strategic autonomy while building strong global partnerships.

Conclusion

India has already made remarkable progress in economy, technology, defence, and culture. By addressing social and governance challenges, empowering women, and strengthening infrastructure and education, India can emerge as a global power by 2047. With determination, unity, and a clear vision, India is moving towards a future where it can play a leading role on the world stage.



3

Freedom of Speech in the Digital Era: Limitations and Challenges

~Gourak Biswas

Student, 1st Semester, Political Science Major, City College, Kolkata, West Bengal

“Without freedom of thought, There can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty, without freedom of speech” –

Benjamin Franklin

In an age where our generation, in particular, is experiencing a technology boom and where the fine lines between constructive criticism and hate speech are beginning to merge, one begins to question whether we really have the right to exercise our freedom of speech and expression in a true sense.

The digital age has fundamentally transformed public discourse, granting a voice to billions through social media, blogs and various online platforms. This unprecedented connectivity underscores a modern interpretation of the “right to speech in the digital life”, which operates on principles of free expression akin to those offline. The internet initially promised a borderless, democratized forum of ideas, a space where information could flow freely without traditional gate keepers.

However, the rapid evolution of these digital landscapes has exposed significant limitations and challenges. The line between protected expression and harmful content – such as hate speech, misinformation, and harassment – is increasingly blurred. This has led to a global debate over moderation, accountability, and the appropriate scope of free speech online.

Key challenges include managing the speed and scale at which harmful content can proliferate, often outpacing the response times of governments and platform moderators. Balancing individual’s rights with the need to protect public safety and prevent harm has become a complex ethical and legal tightrope. Furthermore, the rise of powerful tech companies as the fact of global speech presents a concentration of power that challenges traditional democratic oversight. Their content policies often opaque and inconsistent, shape what is seen and heard online. The challenges, therefore, is not just defining free

speech, but navigating who gets to set the rules and how those rules are enforced in a manner that is both transparent and equitable, preserving the core ideals of free expression while mitigating its inherent risks in an interconnected world.

In the digital era, freedom of speech faces growing limitations as governments, corporations, and online community's struggles to balance open expression with safety and responsibility. Social media platforms have become major venues for public discourse, yet they often impose restrictions through content moderation policies designed to curd hate speech, misinformation, and harmful behavior. While these measures aim to protect users, they can also lead to inconsistent enforcement and concerns about censorship. Governments of many countries have introduced laws to regulate online speech, terrorism, and false information, but such regulation sometimes risk being misused to silence dissent or control political narratives.

Additionally, the rise of algorithm-driven content filtering can invisibly limit what people see and say by prioritizing certain voices over others. Users may also practice self-censorship due to fear of online harassment, cancel culture, or social backlash. The global nature of the internet complicates the issue further, since what is acceptable speech varies widely across cultures and legal systems. As digital communication continues to expand, societies must work to find a balance that protects individuals from harm while preserving the essential democratic values of free expression.

In today's highly connected world, freedom of speech encounters new and complex challenges that reshape how people share ideas online. One major challenge is the rapid spread of misinformation and harmful content, which pressurizes government and technology companies to impose stricter regulations. While these measures aim to protect users, they often raise concerns about censorship and the potential misuse of power to silence criticism. Social media platforms also struggles with inconsistent content moderation, where some voices are removed unfairly while others spread harmful messages without thinking about the consequences. Another challenge is the rise of online harassment, cyber bullying, and hate speech, which encourages individuals from expressing their opinion freely. Algorithm used by digital platforms further speech by promoting certain content and hiding other view points, creating echo chambers that limits diverse perspectives. Moreover the global nature of the internet means that speech acceptable in one country may be restricted in another, leading to conflicts over whose rules should apply. Surveillance by governments and corporations adds another layer of pressure, as user may self-censorship due to concerns about privacy and monitoring. Overall, the digital era complicates the balance between protecting free expression and ensuring a safe online environment, making freedom of speech more contested than ever. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, freedom of speech faces a complex blend of empowerment and vulnerability.

Digital platforms have enabled individuals to express opinions, mobilize movement, and access diverse perspectives across borders. This expansion of communication has enriched democratic participation and broadened the public sphere beyond traditional gatekeepers. Yet, the same tools that elevate voices also amplify risks, making it essential to confront the evolving boundaries of free expression in an online world. A central limitation arises from the tension between protecting individual rights and ensuring collective safety. Harmful content such as misinformation, hate speech, cyber bullying, and extremist narratives can spread with unprecedented speed, challenging the capacity of platforms and policymakers to respond effectively. Efforts to regulate or moderate such content – through automated systems, legal measures, and platform guidelines – are vital but controversial. Over – regulation may suppress dissenting or minority voices, while insufficient oversight can enable real-world harm, creating a delicate balance between safeguarding societies and preserving liberty. Power imbalances within the digital ecosystem further complicate this landscape.

A small number of technology companies exercises significant control over what is visible or suppressed, guided by algorithms and commercial priorities that may not align with democratic values. Their opaque moderation practices can shape public discourse in ways that are not always transparent or accountable. Additionally, global differences in cultural norms,

political environments, and legal standards make it difficult to establish universally accepted rules for online speech.

What is restricted in one region may be considered essential expression in another. Ultimately, protecting freedom of speech in the digital era requires collaboration, transparency, and continual adaptation. Governments, tech companies, civil society, and users must work together to build fair and accountable systems. By addressing these limitations with care, societies can uphold free speech while fostering digital spaces that are inclusive, responsible, and safe for all.



Digital India and Its Impact on Good Governance

~Shreya Sarkar

Student, 1st Semester, Political Science Major, City College, Kolkata, West Bengal

In the past decade, India has undergone one of the most ambitious transformations in its administrative and developmental landscape through the Digital India initiative. Launched in 2015, the programme sought to bridge the gap between government institutions and citizens by using technology as a driving force. Though the initiative has many layers, its essential purpose is simple: to make governance more transparent, more efficient, and more accessible. As India continues to integrate technology into daily public services, Digital India has emerged as a cornerstone of good governance, reshaping how people interact with the state.

At its core, Digital India is built upon three major pillars: providing digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen, offering governance and services on demand, and empowering citizens through digital literacy. These pillars together aim to reduce the traditional barriers of distance, paperwork, and bureaucratic delays.

In doing so, they support the broader goal of good governance, which rests on values such as transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and efficiency.

One of the clearest impacts of Digital India is visible in the expansion of digital infrastructure. The spread of high-speed internet into rural and semi-urban regions, through projects like BharatNet, has enabled millions of people to access government services that were previously out of reach. Earlier, accessing basic documents such as birth certificates, land records, or ration card details required long travel, long waiting hours, and multiple visits to government offices. Today, many of these services are available online, saving both time and effort for citizens. This shift has improved the efficiency of public service delivery and reduced the opportunities for corruption that sometimes occurred within offline systems. Another major area where Digital India has strengthened good governance is transparency in administration.

Platforms such as the Digital Locker, the UMANG app, and various state-level portals allow citizens to view, download, and submit documents without depending on intermediaries. When processes become more open, the scope for manipulation reduces. For example, digitised land records in several states have helped reduce disputes, forged documents, and bureaucratic delays. By tracking applications online, citizens can also hold officials accountable for delays, leading to more responsible public administration.

The introduction of Aadhaar, though debated in some contexts, has undeniably played a major role in streamlining welfare schemes. The Aadhaar-linked Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system has ensured that government subsidies reach the intended beneficiaries directly, without leakages. Whether it is scholarships, LPG subsidies, pension amounts, or MGNREGA wages, millions of citizens now receive financial assistance in their bank accounts with greater reliability. This has strengthened the trust between the government and the people, a key component of good governance.

Digital India has also boosted financial inclusion, which is an important dimension of equitable governance. The expansion of digital payment systems such as UPI, BHIM, and mobile wallets has made financial transactions easier, quicker, and more secure, even for individuals who do not possess advanced technological skills. The rise of digital payments during and after the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the

country's growing adaptation to a cashless economy. By making financial systems more inclusive and transparent, Digital India has further reduced corruption, increased accountability, and encouraged formal economic participation.

Another significant impact of Digital India is in the field of public grievance redressal. Earlier, complaining about poor service or administrative delays often felt tedious and unproductive. Today, several online grievance portals allow citizens to submit complaints, track their progress, and receive resolutions. This not only empowers citizens but also helps the government identify inefficiencies within its own departments. A governance system that listens to its citizens and responds swiftly naturally strengthens the democratic process.

However, the road to a fully digital India is not without challenges. Digital literacy remains uneven across different parts of the country. While urban areas have rapidly adapted to technology, rural regions still face issues such as low digital awareness, limited internet connectivity, and lack of access to digital devices. These gaps can create a new form of inequality—digital exclusion—where certain communities may be left behind in the digital revolution. Therefore, achieving true good governance requires sustained efforts to improve digital education and infrastructure at the grassroots level. Cybersecurity is another concern in the digital governance ecosystem.

As more data moves online, protecting personal information becomes crucial. Government and private platforms must remain vigilant against data breaches, identity theft, and cybercrimes. Strengthening cybersecurity frameworks, creating digital safety awareness, and establishing strict laws are essential to protect the trust that citizens place in digital governance.

Despite these challenges, the overall direction of Digital India has been encouraging. The programme has helped transform the relationship between the state and its citizens into one that is more transparent, participatory, and efficient. It has simplified access to public services, reduced unnecessary paperwork, and encouraged accountability at multiple administrative levels. Most importantly, it has empowered citizens by giving them the tools to engage directly with governance processes.

In many ways, Digital India has not only modernised governance but also democratised it. When people from remote villages can apply for government benefits with a few clicks, when students can access important certificates online, when workers receive wages directly into their bank accounts without middlemen, and when grievances are resolved through a transparent digital trail, governance becomes more people-centric. This is the true essence of good governance.

To conclude, Digital India has played a transformative role in shaping a more responsive and transparent government. While the journey is ongoing, and challenges need to be addressed, the initiative has laid a strong foundation for an inclusive and technology-driven future. By combining innovation with accessibility, Digital India continues to push the nation closer to the ideals of good governance—ensuring that development reaches every citizen, not through complicated bureaucratic structures, but through simple, efficient, and accountable digital pathways.

5

Education Through a Modern Student's Lens

~Shrinjini Bhattacharya

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Education today is viewed very differently compared to previous generations. Modern times present students with a fast-changing, uncertain, technology-driven world. The idea that education automatically provides better jobs and financial stability has increasingly become a myth.

The rise of digital learning and the influence of AI have made traditional teaching appear "boring" to many students. They often turn to the internet, ChatGPT, Perplexity, or other information-providing platforms instead of relying on teachers at schools or colleges. Education is no longer confined within institutional walls. Online classes, hybrid learning, video lessons, animations, and interactive content have transformed students' perspectives on learning. Many now learn faster and more conveniently online than through direct interaction with educators. While this may seem positive, it is slowly dulling the analytical mindset of the younger generation.

Dependence on technology has reached extreme levels. Concentration and patience are decreasing. Students no longer read books as they once did, as reading is time-consuming and requires independent understanding. The library culture and interest in diverse book genres have nearly disappeared.

Video-based learning, designed for easier understanding, has overshadowed critical thinking and analysis. Students who appear knowledgeable often struggle to differentiate concepts or show curiosity. This is where memorization without genuine understanding becomes common. Questions arising in students' minds are instantly answered by online platforms, providing calculated and exact responses. Over time, students begin to rely on these answers in every situation.

Furthermore, the atmosphere in many educational institutions lacks friendliness and support. Students are often compared, pressured, or even discouraged for asking "stupid" 20

questions.” Psychological and health issues have been increasing since the early 2000s and escalated after the COVID-19 pandemic. Students now chase quick success, which ends in disappointment. Many are pressured to collect multiple degrees just to secure a job early.

The statement “skills matter more than marks” remains more of a slogan than a practiced belief. Parents compare their old educational experiences with the current generation’s reality, creating mental conflicts between two drastically different eras. This constant comparison builds impatience and restlessness in students, turning education from a pursuit of knowledge into a burdensome obligation. As a result, students often try to find shortcuts for tasks that require hard work, weakening their personal development.

Communication issues have also risen. Students face difficulty speaking confidently or interacting in groups, leading to self-doubt. The education system has contributed to feelings of inferiority and isolation when students step into the real world. Balancing technology with real-life learning experiences is essential for students today, but its importance is often misunderstood or ignored.

The education system of the modern era stands at a crossroads. While technology has opened doors to limitless knowledge, it has also created a generation struggling with concentration, confidence, and independent thinking. To build a

healthier academic environment, students must learn to balance digital tools with real-world experiences, while parents and institutions must adapt to the needs of today’s learners. Only when education shifts from pressure to purpose—and from memorization to understanding—can this generation truly thrive in an evolving world.

6

Gujarat 2002: A Tragedy India Cannot Afford to Forget

~Sk. Abhilash Alam

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The Gujarat of today is crowded with flyovers, ring roads, and booming industries, but for those who lived through the violence of 2002, memory still overlays the modern skyline. Many survivors describe the past not as a distant event but as a shadow that follows them quietly—surfacing in the way they choose neighbourhoods, in the hesitations that precede certain conversations, or in the sudden recollection of a neighbour they never saw again. For families who fled their homes, the days of fire and fear remain etched into their emotional landscape. Some rebuilt their lives brick by brick; others lost pieces of themselves that no amount of reconstruction could restore. In tea shops, in the silence of rebuilt homes, and in the stories passed down to children, the riots survive as a private history—one that Gujarat has learned to live with, but never fully leave behind.

A State Transformed, A Memory Unmoved

Twenty years later, Gujarat stands as

one of India's most economically assertive states. Yet, when journalists retrace the lanes of Ahmedabad or Vadodara, they find that the memory of 2002 coexists uneasily with the promise of development. The riots began with the burning of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra on 27 February 2002—an incident investigated by agencies including the Gujarat Forensic Science Laboratory and later examined in courtrooms. The tragedy killed 59 passengers and triggered a wave of anger and grief that quickly spiralled into violence across the state.

Reporters from national publications such as *The Indian Express* described the early days as a blur of smoke, rumours, and frantic movement—families running, shops shuttered, and police units stretched thin. These early accounts, pieced together from field notes and hurried dispatches, illustrate how rapidly a society can slip from uneasy coexistence into chaos.

The Geography of Violence

The violence that erupted in Ahmedabad's Naroda Patiya, Gulberg Society, and several market centres was devastating not only in scale but in its concentration. Political-science research often points out that riots tend to ignite where communities are interdependent yet polarised—places where daily interaction keeps tensions simmering, even if invisible. Gujarat fit this pattern with precision.

Mobs moved swiftly, exploiting local knowledge of lanes and community boundaries. Mixed neighbourhoods fractured almost overnight. In one part of the city, a shopkeeper watched his business burn; in another, families huddled in their homes hoping police would arrive before mobs did. By the second day, schools and open grounds had been converted into makeshift relief camps documented by the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority. Food, blankets, and medical care were provided, but the psychological wounds were far harder to tend to.

For field reporters, the most striking insight was emotional: people did not understand how their familiar streets had transformed so suddenly. The theory of “critical triggers” in political science—where a single flashpoint ignites long-standing unresolved tensions—played out with painful clarity.

The State: Actor, Battleground, and Accused

No analysis of Gujarat 2002 is complete without addressing the role of the state. The government, led by Chief Minister Narendra Modi, faced

accusations of delayed response, inadequate policing, and administrative lapses. Supporters of the administration argued that the violence was unprecedented in speed and scale, overwhelming state machinery. Critics argued that quicker, stronger intervention could have saved lives.

The debate soon moved from public squares to the highest levels of India's judicial system. The Supreme Court of India intervened repeatedly, transferring sensitive cases outside Gujarat and later appointing a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to examine allegations of involvement or negligence by state officials. The SIT eventually concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute top leaders, a verdict that was met with relief in some quarters and disappointment in others.

For political scientists, Gujarat 2002 has since become a case study in “state capacity under ethnic stress”—a moment when institutions are tested not just for efficiency but for neutrality. The episode raised enduring questions: Can a democratic state remain impartial in the face of majoritarian pressure? How does political authority shape the behaviour of police and local officials during communal crises? The legacy of 2002 continues to shape these debates.

The Slow, Contentious Road to Justice

In the aftermath, some of the most notorious cases—Naroda Patiya, Gulberg Society, Best Bakery—entered prolonged legal battles. Witness

testimonies shifted, protection systems sometimes faltered, and the political temperature around each trial remained high. Civil-rights activists such as Teesta Setalvad worked closely with survivors to keep cases alive, gather affidavits, and push for judicial scrutiny.

Over the years, several convictions were secured, including life sentences in some of the most brutal cases. Yet justice, survivors often told reporters, felt incomplete. Legal victories did not erase memories or rebuild neighbourhoods; court orders did not automatically restore trust. For many families, justice was a process, not a destination—and one that unfolded far more slowly than their trauma.

Lives Rearranged, Cities Reshaped

While political debates dominated national headlines, the human aftermath played out quietly and permanently. Displacement reshaped the social map of Gujarat. Families who once lived in mixed localities moved to new, segregated clusters. Houses—rebuilt in charred neighbourhoods carried subtle markers—iron grilles, reinforced doors—that spoke of lingering fear. Even today, auto-rickshaw drivers refer to certain areas as “safe” or “sensitive,” using vocabulary born in the aftermath of 2002.

Children who grew up in relief camps became adults shaped by those memories. Some became activists, lawyers, or social workers. Others preferred silence, unsure how to navigate the weight of inherited trauma. But across communities, one

truth remained: 2002 changed how Gujaratis understood citizenship and belonging.

Memory, Political Narrative, and the Public Sphere

As years passed, the state’s political narrative increasingly emphasised economic development, stability, and growth. For many Gujaratis, the post-2004 period symbolised a new beginning—a desire to move forward. Yet public memory never disappeared; it simply fragmented. Survivors held one version of the past. Political actors offered another. Courts offered a legal version, while journalists documented countless others.

Political science teaches that public memory is not passive—it is shaped by power, institutions, and storytelling. Gujarat 2002 exemplifies this: a single event remembered in divergent, sometimes contradictory ways, each narrative shaping the next generation’s understanding of the past.

Why Remembering Still Matters

Two decades later, the call to remember Gujarat 2002 is not a call to reopen wounds—it is a call to protect the integrity of democratic memory. The riots are a reminder that violence does not erupt in a vacuum; it emerges from a web of identity, power, fear, and institutional failure. They remind us how quickly coexistence can fracture, and how slowly reconciliation unfolds.

Remembering 2002 is also a way to honour those who rebuilt their lives in the aftermath—the shopkeepers who reopened businesses, the families who stitched back routines, the communities who refused to let hatred define their futures. Their stories resist the erasure that often follows traumatic events.

Conclusion

Gujarat today wears the confidence of an economically vibrant state, but the scars of 2002 remain embedded in its social and political DNA. The riots were a human tragedy, a political turning point, and a lesson in the fragility of institutional trust. To remember Gujarat 2002 is to recognise not only the suffering endured but the responsibility borne by a democracy: to ensure that such a rupture never takes root again.





Maritime India: Why the Indian Ocean Region is central to New Delhi's strategic ambitions.

~Avik Mandal

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The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is fundamentally the center of attention of the big plans of India, as it influences the outlook of Delhi on economic development, energy, power projection, and positioning. This vast ocean throws like the sea-band of key trading routes across the globe, oil and energy, linkages between Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and forms the center, therefore, of India becoming a regional and increasingly global player. Important in this regard is such projects as Maritime India Vision 2030 (MIV 2030) and the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) which combine to create a unifying strategy to incorporate India into the IOR economically, at the security level and diplomatically.

They point to the fact that transiting most of the trade in India through the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean, by volume about 95 percent and by value about 70 percent with the so-called chokepoints of the Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca being

the crucial pivots to Indian economic survival and stability. The Indian Ocean is not merely a trade link it is a source of energy security of India. The IOR carries about 80 percent of the world oil in all sea transport, and serves as a major route to the Indian imports, which are primarily those of West Asia and Africa. Even any hiccup in the red sea or the Strait of Hormuz will have a serious dent on the supply of energy in India and Economic stability of India. This geo-economic centrality compels India to pursue a proactive maritime policy which ensures and facilitates such sea lanes.

MIV 2030 which was introduced as an inclusive agenda is to modernize the maritime infrastructure in India and diversify its maritime economy. The plan encompasses more than 150 projects, including the upgrades of the ports and the shipbuilding sector as well as fisheries development and marine resources exploration. One of its main selling points is the combination of technological

innovation plus the sustainability in the maritime operations, which leads to the strengthening of the blue economy and the creation of jobs and the sustainable growth. Its budget is enormous 3 to 3.5 crore of rupee as such a massive expenditure is an expression of India's grandiose plans in the sea.

The Sagarmala Programme is the Sibling of MIV 2030, which enhances connectivity in the coastal areas, simplifies logistics, and builds a green port environment. It aims at reducing the logistics cost which consumes a sizeable portion of the import export cost of India. India demonstrates the ability to expand and take care of the environment at the same time by investing in green ports and sustainable development but still ensuring long-term maritime superiority is a balance that India can maintain. Collectively, these are aimed at transforming India into a regional maritime powerhouse and a force to reckon with the shipping and trade systems in the world.

The IOR security personnel are the ones fueling the Indian naval build up and foreign policy. India would like to play the role of a security provider in the region, which protects the maritime commons against piracy, terrorism, and foreign military infiltration. This is emphasized by its opposition to the Chinese push to its strategy of String of Pearls where China establishes ports and logistical bases out of Gwadar in Pakistan to Djibouti in the Horn of Africa becoming more naval and expanding its regional power.

The main defense policy of India is enhancing its naval forces with the introduction of the home-grown aircraft carrier INS Vikrant which increases that blue-water capability of India. The initiation of Information Fusion Centre Indian Ocean Region (IFCIOR) is a significant development in the field of maritime domain awareness prompting the India and the partner states to share information effectively to identify and deal with any threat. The investments of India in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep emphasize the actions to increase the detection and management of the essential sea routes and chokepoints, such as the Malacca Strait. Such islands serve as forward bases and enhance the situational awareness and the vibe of fast response by India. Also, alliances with the Quad and bilateral naval exercises serve diplomatic and operational purposes of maintaining the operation of the Indo-Pacific as free, open, and secure, not to mention the management of the multi-alignment foreign policy aspects and avoiding exclusive blocks.

Broader Indian diplomatic initiatives are a combination of the IOR focus and the Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific vision, which is aimed at establishing regional connectivity, collective security and economic cooperation. Other projects such as the Sabang Port, Indonesia and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMTH) enhance the relationships with Southeast Asia, offering strategic coverage to the

neighboring countries beyond the immediate vicinity. The capacity building activities by India to the African and island states in terms of training, joint exercises and humanitarian assistance enhance the credibility of India as a responsible security provider and development partner of the Global South. This conforms to the MAHASAGAR Spirit, a platform which enhances maritime collaboration between littoral states around the Indian Ocean, which amplifies the group voice of growing nations amid the rivalry of the great powers. The display of events such as India Maritime Week 2025 is also the rising confidence of the world over Indian fixation on a maritime rebound boasting of a substantial amount of 12 lakh crore invested without government and private shyness. These achievements indicate the desire of India not only to defend her own borders but to dominate, influence, and direct the maritime security system and the economic integration of the IOR.

The strategic ambitions by India in the Indian Ocean Region basically depend on three components including that of the economy, security and that of diplomacy. It is well understood by all that India trades and draws a source of energy along those sea lanes and as such, a firm control of them is very important. That is why both the Maritime India Vision 2030 and the Sagarmala Programme focus on the modern ports and sustainable development. Security-wise, India desires to be the insurance blanket to

the entire IOR consequently it is building itself bigger ships, more sentinels and alliances to ensure that China and piracy are not beyond control. Diplomatically, it is leveraging infrastructure and politically, reliance on alliances to emerge as a dominant force in the Indo-Pacific and remain a viable player in a growing competitive global space. As the Indian sails these waters, the Indian ocean is not merely a body of water, but it is the ingredient that guarantees the country success in economics, security and influence in the 21st century. It is in this light that India is not merely a by-stander, but rather it is influencing the future of the IOR, safeguarding their own interests and fostering regional peace, as well as assisting in establishing a stable order in the maritime environment.

8

The Democracy of Memes: How Online Humor Quietly Shapes Political Thinking

~Md. Kausar

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If someone had told people twenty years ago that a simple picture with a line of text could influence political opinions, nobody would have believed it. Memes were once seen as internet jokes—light-hearted, silly, and entirely unserious. Yet today, memes have become one of the most powerful tools for spreading political ideas, shaping public opinion, and mobilizing young people. They travel faster than news, reach deeper than speeches, and often communicate more effectively than long articles or debates. John Stuart Mill said, “The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race.” Through which he means that every opinion adds value to society, so shutting down any form of expression harms everyone. This helps show that memes, even when humorous, are part of democratic expressions.

This raises an important question:

Have memes quietly become a new form of democratic expression? Or are they turning democracy into a playful battleground where truth and humor mix too easily?

Mememes as the New Political Language

Most political discussions online no longer happen in long comment threads or through articles. They happen through memes. A single image—like a distracted boyfriend, a confused math lady, or a “change my mind” setup—can express a political stance instantly.

Why do memes work so well? Because they combine three things:

1. Humor — lowers resistance to new ideas
2. Simplicity — reduces complex issues into digestible ideas
3. Relatability — connects politics to daily life

This is something political science has struggled with for years: how to get young people engaged. Memes did it accidentally. For example, during major elections worldwide, meme pages grow more influential than official campaign pages. Political parties, activists, and even governments now understand the meme ecosystem so well that they create their own “meme cells” to stay

relevant. Memes have become the lingua franca of digital democracy.

The Surprising Psychological Power of Memes

Mememes work not just because they are funny but because humor slips past our defenses. People rarely question a joke, even if the joke is political. A political message inside a meme feels harmless—but it stays in the mind. Cognitive scientists call this effect “emotional anchoring”. Humor creates an emotional hook → which makes the idea easier to remember. Even when we disagree with a meme, jokes linger. That's why memes spread political propaganda more effectively than long speeches.

They bypass logic and go straight to emotion.

How Mememes Influence Elections

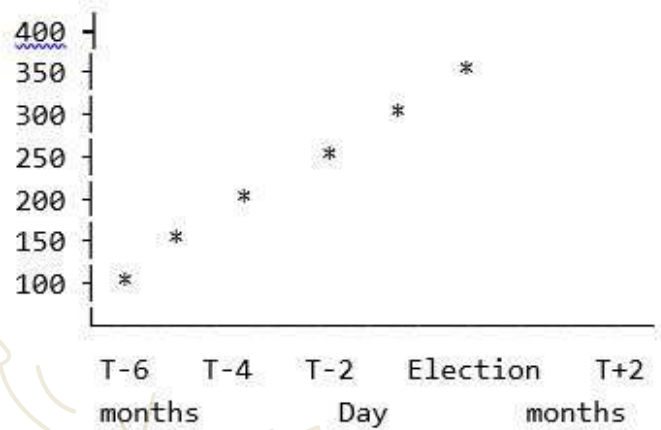
During elections, mememes become a political battlefield. They frame candidates as heroic, foolish, corrupt, kind, clueless, or visionary—often in exaggerated ways. Mememes can:

- humanize a leader
- ridicule an opponent
- shape public narratives
- create political stereotypes
- spread slogans faster than campaigns

In a study of social media behavior, researchers observed that political mememes spike dramatically during election seasons.

A conceptual trend looks like this:

Meme Volume



This trend reveals something modern democracies are still struggling to understand:

- mememes are now part of political campaigning.
- And unlike traditional media, mememes do not come with fact-checks, editors, or accountability.

Mememes as Weapons and Shields

Mememes have a dual personality.

On one hand, they empower ordinary citizens to express political opinions.

On the other hand, they can be used to mislead, oversimplify, or deliberately mock serious issues. For example:

- A complex economic policy can be reduced to one sarcastic image.
- A leader can be turned into a joke so consistently that people stop taking them seriously.
- A false narrative can spread so widely through mememes that people start believing in it.

This ability to distort reality is what makes mememes both fascinating and dangerous. Democracy depends on informed citizens.

But the meme culture depends on entertained citizens. The question is: can these two coexist?

The Meme Public Sphere

The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas talked about the “public sphere”—a space where citizens discuss ideas rationally. But today’s public sphere looks like nothing he imagined. It looks like:

- ·Instagram pages
- ·Reddit threads
- ·WhatsApp forwards
- ·Twitter meme wars
- ·TikTok humor clips

This is the new public square—chaotic, funny, sometimes insightful, sometimes misleading. But it is democratic in one important sense:

anyone with a smartphone can join. You don’t need to write essays, deliver speeches, or join political parties. Your meme is your voice. This creates a playful but powerful form of citizen participation that older generations often misunderstand.

Memes and Collective Identity

Memes do something deeper than just joke about politics—they create communities. A shared meme feels like a secret handshake. It tells you:

- ·who “gets” the joke
- ·who belongs to the same ideology
- ·who sees issues the way you do

This sense of belonging is extremely powerful. It can unite people in protest movements or polarize them into echo chambers. For example:

- ·Climate activists share memes mocking climate denial.
- ·Feminist groups share memes about gender stereotypes.
- ·Libertarians share memes about government overreach.
- ·Students share memes about economic inequality and unemployment.

These memes become ideological symbols. They strengthen group identity, sometimes more effectively than manifestos.

The Dark Side: Virality Without Accountability

One of the biggest risks of meme politics is virality without responsibility. A meme might say something harmful, false, or deeply biased—but nobody can be held accountable. A politician spreading misinformation would face criticism.

A meme spreading misinformation simply becomes a joke that everyone forgets to question. This raises difficult questions:

- ·Can democracy survive when humor becomes a political weapon?
- ·Do we lose seriousness when everything becomes a joke?
- ·Are memes strengthening public discourse or weakening it?

The truth is: they do both.

Memes as Tools of Resistance

Despite their flaws, memes can also be acts of defiance.

When citizens feel powerless, a meme becomes a way to reclaim an agency. In many global protests, memes have been used to:

- ·bypass censorship
- ·mock dictators
- ·spread awareness
- ·mobilize youth
- ·challenge propaganda

This is where memes become genuinely democratic. They turn political critique into something creative, participatory, and widely accessible. A single meme can inspire movement.

Conclusion: Democracy, But Make It Humorous

Memes have transformed political communication in a way no one expected. They are fast, funny, and sometimes frightening in their influence. But one thing is clear: memes have given democracy a new, chaotic, humorous voice. They force us to rethink political participation. They challenge traditional power structures. They make politics feel closer to everydaylife. They invite millions of young people to engage—even through humor. Yet they also blur the line between truth and satire.

Memes democratize ideas, but they can also trivialize them. So, the real question becomes: Are memes enriching democratic thinking? Or are they replacing it with entertainment?

Perhaps the answer dependson us.

Because memes don't control democracy—people do.

The democracy of memes will only be as thoughtful, critical, and responsible as the citizens who create and share them.



9

Preserving and Reclaiming Our Cultural Heritage ~Triyasha Mondal

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The Westernization of Indian society has become a pressing concern, with far-reaching consequences for our cultural identity, creative thinking, and overall well-being. The influence of social media, particularly through influencers, has played a significant role in shaping our perceptions and behaviors. However, this trend has led to a loss of cultural heritage, self-worth issues, and a decline in creative thinking.

One of the most significant impacts of Westernization is the erosion of our cultural values and traditions. Indians are increasingly abandoning their rich cultural practices, such as traditional attire, music, and art, in favor of Western customs. This shift has resulted in a loss of cultural identity, as people prioritize conformity over authenticity. The promotion of Western beauty standards, for instance, has led to a rise in self-worth issues, particularly among young women. The constant bombardment of unrealistic beauty ideals has created a sense of inadequacy, fueling self-doubt and low self-esteem.

The influence of social media influencers has been a significant contributor to this trend. These individuals often promote Western products, lifestyles, and values, creating a sense of aspiration among their followers. However, this comes at the cost of our own cultural heritage. We find ourselves praising Western celebrities while ignoring our own talented artists and performers. The lack of appreciation for Indian culture is evident in our preference for English over our native languages. This trend is alarming, as language is an integral part of our cultural identity.

Instead of blindly following Western influencers, we should be learning about and drawing inspiration from our own warriors and thinkers. The likes of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maharana Pratap, and Subhas Chandra Bose were not only great leaders but also visionaries who possessed exceptional strategic thinking and leadership capabilities. We should adopt their thinking

capabilities and learn from their experiences, rather than being influenced by foreign ideals.

The decline of creative thinking is another consequence of Westernization. The art of poetry, for instance, is slowly dying out, as people prefer to consume Western literature rather than exploring their own cultural heritage. This has resulted in a lack of creative knowledge and a narrow understanding of the world.

The impact of Westernization on our health is also significant. Our comfort zone has become a major obstacle to our well-being. With the increasing reliance on processed foods and modern cooking techniques, we are losing touch with our traditional cooking methods. The use of clay pots and traditional ingredients not only preserves the nutritional value of food but also adds to its flavor and aroma. Similarly, drinking water from clay pots has numerous health benefits, including reducing acidity and improving digestion.

Moreover, the Westernization of Indian society has led to a decline in critical thinking and intellectual discourse. People are no longer encouraged to question or think critically, instead, they are expected to conform to established norms. This has resulted in a lack of intellectual curiosity and a narrow perspective on life. The emphasis on rote learning and memorization has stifled creativity and innovation, leading to a lack of original thought and ideas.

The future generation is likely to bear the brunt of this trend. As we neglect our cultural heritage and traditional values, we are depriving our children of their roots and identity.

The lack of emphasis on Indian history, philosophy, and culture will result in a generation that is disconnected from its past and unaware of its rich cultural heritage. This will have far-reaching consequences, including a loss of national pride and a sense of belonging.

To combat this trend, it is essential that we take a stand and reclaim our cultural heritage. We need to normalize traditional practices and encourage our children to learn about and appreciate our rich cultural legacy. This can be achieved by incorporating traditional practices into our daily lives, such as cooking traditional meals, celebrating Indian festivals, and speaking our native languages. By doing so, we can instill a sense of pride and belonging in our children and help them develop a strong cultural identity.

Balancing traditional practices with modern techniques is key. We can adopt modern methods to make our lives easier while still preserving our cultural heritage. For instance, we can use modern cooking appliances to prepare traditional meals, or incorporate traditional ingredients into modern recipes. This blend of old and new will not only preserve our cultural identity but also promote innovation and creativity.

Some facts that support the need to preserve our cultural heritage include:

- According to a report by the Indian government, the number of poets in India has decreased significantly over the years, with many young poets opting for more lucrative careers.

- A study published in the Journal of Creative Writing found that the lack of emphasis on creative writing in schools has led to a decline in creative thinking among students.
- The impact of Westernization on Indian society has been studied extensively, with many researchers highlighting the need to preserve our cultural heritage.
- Traditional Indian cooking methods, such as using clay pots, have been shown to have numerous health benefits, including reducing the risk of chronic diseases.
- Drinking water from clay pots has been found to have numerous health benefits, including reducing acidity and improving digestion.

By incorporating traditional practices into our daily lives and promoting our cultural heritage, we can preserve our cultural identity and promote creativity, innovation, and intellectual discourse. It is time for us to take action and reclaim our cultural heritage.



10

ভারত, ব্রিকস ও বহুমেরু বিশ্বব্যবস্থার সন্ধান ~Sandipan Roy

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একবিংশ শতাব্দীর আন্তর্জাতিক রাজনীতি এমন এক সন্ধিক্ষণে দাঁড়িয়ে আছে, যেখানে দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ-পরবর্তী পশ্চিমা নেতৃত্বাধীন বিশ্বব্যবস্থার কার্যকারিতা ও গ্রহণযোগ্যতা ক্রমশ প্রশ্নের মুখে পড়ছে। দীর্ঘদিন ধরে USA ও তার ইউরোপীয় মিত্ররা বৈশ্বিক রাজনীতি, অর্থনীতি ও নিরাপত্তা কাঠামোর মূল নিয়ন্ত্রক হিসেবে কাজ করেছে। তবে সাম্প্রতিক দশকে উদীয়মান অর্থনীতি, আঞ্চলিক শক্তি ও গ্লোবাল সাউথের রাষ্ট্রগুলোর উত্থান এই একমেরু কাঠামোকে ধীরে ধীরে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানাতে শুরু করেছে। এই পরিবর্তিত প্রেক্ষাপটেই BRICS জোটকে বহুমেরু বিশ্বব্যবস্থার সম্ভাব্য ভিত্তি হিসেবে নতুন করে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে।

BRICS-এর গঠনের পেছনে যে ঐতিহাসিক প্রেক্ষাপট কাজ করেছে, তা মূলত পশ্চিমা বিশ্বব্যবস্থার কাঠামোগত অসমতা থেকে উৎসারিত। Bretton Woods ব্যবস্থার মাধ্যমে গঠিত IMF ও World Bank দীর্ঘদিন ধরে উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর অর্থনৈতিক নীতি প্রভাবিত করেছে, প্রায়শই কঠোর শর্ত আরোপের মাধ্যমে। একইভাবে, ডলারকেন্দ্রিক বৈশ্বিক অর্থনীতি আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য ও আর্থিক প্রবাহে USA-এর বিশেষ সুবিধা নিশ্চিত করেছে। এই ব্যবস্থার ফলে উন্নয়নশীল ও উদীয়মান দেশগুলোর মধ্যে একটি গভীর অসন্তোষ তৈরি হয়, যা ধীরে ধীরে বিকল্প সহযোগিতা কাঠামোর প্রয়োজনীয়তা সামনে আনে।

এই প্রেক্ষাপটে ২০০১ সালে BRIC ধারণার জন্ম হয় এবং পরে দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার অন্তর্ভুক্তির মাধ্যমে ২০১০ সালে BRICS একটি আনুষ্ঠানিক জোটে পরিণত হয়। ব্রাজিল, রাশিয়া, ভারত, চিন (China) ও দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা—এই দেশগুলো তাদের বিপুল জনসংখ্যা, প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদ এবং দ্রুত বর্ধনশীল অর্থনৈতিক সম্ভাবনার কারণে অল্প সময়ের মধ্যেই বৈশ্বিক রাজনীতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অবস্থান অর্জন করে। পরবর্তী সময়ে BRICS সম্প্রসারণের মাধ্যমে মধ্যপ্রাচ্য ও আফ্রিকার কয়েকটি দেশ যুক্ত হওয়ায় এই জোট আরও বিস্তৃত গ্লোবাল প্রতিনিধিত্বের দাবি করতে শুরু করে। এর ফলে BRICS নিজেকে কেবল একটি অর্থনৈতিক ফোরাম নয়, বরং ‘গ্লোবাল সাউথের’ একটি সম্মিলিত রাজনৈতিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম হিসেবে তুলে ধরতে সক্ষম হয়।

BRICS-এর মূল লক্ষ্যগুলোর মধ্যে অন্যতম হলো উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর স্বার্থকে বৈশ্বিক আলোচনার কেন্দ্রে নিয়ে আসা। এই লক্ষ্য বাস্তবায়নের উদ্দেশ্যে New Development Bank প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হয়, যা অবকাঠামো ও উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পে অর্থায়নের মাধ্যমে পশ্চিমা আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের বিকল্প হিসেবে কাজ করার চেষ্টা করছে। যদিও এই উদ্যোগের পরিসর এখনও সীমিত, তবুও এটি BRICS-এর

বাস্তব ভূমিকার একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উদাহরণ। একইসঙ্গে, দক্ষিণ-দক্ষিণ সহযোগিতা, প্রযুক্তি বিনিময় এবং উন্নয়নমূলক অংশীদারিত্বের মাধ্যমে BRICS একটি বিকল্প উন্নয়ন ধারণা সামনে আনতে চেয়েছে।

BRICS-এর আলোচনায় ডলার-নির্ভর বৈশ্বিক অর্থনীতির প্রশ্নটি বিশেষ গুরুত্ব পেয়েছে। ডলারের আধিপত্য আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য ও আর্থিক ব্যবস্থায় ক্ষমতার ভারসাম্যকে একতরফাভাবে প্রভাবিত করে—এমন অভিযোগ দীর্ঘদিনের। এই প্রেক্ষাপটে BRICS-এর মধ্যে স্থানীয় মুদ্রায় বাণিজ্য এবং ভবিষ্যতে একটি বিকল্প আর্থিক ব্যবস্থার সম্ভাবনা নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু হয়েছে। যদিও একটি অভিন্ন BRICS মুদ্রা এখনো বাস্তব রূপ পায়নি, তবুও এই বিতর্কই বহুমেয়র অর্থনৈতিক চিন্তাধারার বিকাশকে ইঙ্গিত করে। ভারতের অবস্থান এখানে তুলনামূলকভাবে সতর্ক, কারণ সে বৈশ্বিক আর্থিক স্থিতিশীলতা ও নিজস্ব জাতীয় স্বার্থের মধ্যে ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখতে আগ্রহী।

বহুমেয়র বিশ্বব্যবস্থার ধারণা অনুযায়ী, আন্তর্জাতিক রাজনীতিতে ক্ষমতা একাধিক শক্তিকেন্দ্রের মধ্যে বণ্টিত হবে এবং কোনো একক রাষ্ট্র বা জোট একচ্ছত্র আধিপত্য বজায় রাখতে পারবে না। এই দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে BRICS-এর ভূমিকা তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ হলেও সীমাবদ্ধ। BRICS পশ্চিমা আধিপত্যকে প্রশ্নবিদ্ধ করেছে এবং বৈশ্বিক শাসনব্যবস্থায় সংস্কারের দাবি জোরালো করেছে, তবে এটি এখনো পূর্ণাঙ্গ বিকল্প কাঠামো হিসেবে আত্মপ্রকাশ করতে পারেনি। এর অন্যতম কারণ হলো জোটের অভ্যন্তরীণ বৈচিত্র্য ও মতপার্থক্য।

BRICS-এর প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে সদস্য দেশগুলোর ভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থা, কৌশলগত স্বার্থ ও আঞ্চলিক প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা। বিশেষ করে ভারত ও চীন (China)-এর মধ্যে সীমান্ত বিরোধ ও প্রভাব বিস্তার নিয়ে উদ্বেগ জোটের ঐক্যকে দুর্বল করে।

তাছাড়া BRICS-এর কোনো শক্তিশালী প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক কাঠামো বা অভিন্ন পররাষ্ট্রনীতি নেই, যা তাকে পশ্চিমা বিশ্বব্যবস্থার মতো কার্যকর ও সংগঠিত বিকল্পে পরিণত করতে পারত। এই সীমাবদ্ধতাগুলো BRICS-এর সক্ষমতাকে বাস্তবতার মাটিতে বেঁধে রাখে।

সাম্প্রতিক ব্রাজিল-হোস্টেড BRICS সম্মেলন এই বাস্তবতা ও সম্ভাবনার দ্বৈত চিত্রকে আরও স্পষ্ট করেছে। এই সম্মেলনে BRICS-এর সম্প্রসারণ, গ্লোবাল সাউথের টেকসই উন্নয়ন, আর্থিক সহযোগিতা জোরদার করা এবং ভবিষ্যৎ রোডম্যাপ নির্ধারণের মতো একাধিক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর জন্য অর্থায়নের নতুন পথ, স্থানীয় মুদ্রায় বাণিজ্য এবং আন্তর্জাতিক আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর সংস্কারের প্রশ্নও আলোচনার কেন্দ্রে ছিল। যদিও এই সম্মেলনে কোনো যুগান্তকারী বা তাৎক্ষণিক সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়নি, তবুও এটি স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠেছে যে BRICS নিজেকে একটি দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ও ধীরগতির প্রক্রিয়া হিসেবে দেখছে। এই জোট হঠাৎ করে পশ্চিমা বিশ্বব্যবস্থার বিকল্প হয়ে ওঠার দাবি না তুলে, বরং ধাপে ধাপে একটি সমান্তরাল ও ভারসাম্যপূর্ণ শক্তিকেন্দ্র হিসেবে নিজেদের প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে আগ্রহী।

এই সম্মেলনের পর BRICS প্রেসিডেন্সির দায়িত্ব ব্রাজিল থেকে ভারতের হাতে আসা বিশেষ তাৎপর্য বহন করে। ভারতের জন্য এটি নিঃসন্দেহে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কূটনৈতিক সুযোগ, যার মাধ্যমে সে BRICS-এর ভবিষ্যৎ দিকনির্দেশ নির্ধারণে সক্রিয় ভূমিকা নিতে পারে। ভারতের উচিত এই প্রেসিডেন্সিকে ব্যবহার করে BRICS-কে একটি বাস্তববাদী ও অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক প্ল্যাটফর্ম হিসেবে গড়ে তোলা, যেখানে উন্নয়ন, জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মোকাবিলা, প্রযুক্তি ও ডিজিটাল সহযোগিতা এবং গ্লোবাল সাউথের বাস্তব সমস্যাগুলো অগ্রাধিকার পাবে। একইসঙ্গে, BRICS-কে পশ্চিমা-বিরোধী কোনো কঠোর জোটে

পরিণত না করে একটি ভারসাম্যকারী শক্তি হিসেবে তুলে ধরা ভারতের কৌশলগত স্বায়ত্তশাসন ও বহুপাক্ষিক পররাষ্ট্রনীতির সঙ্গে সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ।

তবে ভারতের পথ মোটেও সহজ নয়। একদিকে তাকে BRICS-এর ভেতরে ক্রমবর্ধমান চিন (China)-এর প্রভাব সামলাতে হবে, অন্যদিকে পশ্চিমা দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে রাজনৈতিক ও অর্থনৈতিক সম্পর্কের ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখাও জরুরি। BRICS-এর অভ্যন্তরীণ ঐক্য ধরে রাখা, সদস্য দেশগুলোর ভিন্ন স্বার্থকে সমন্বয় করা এবং জোটকে অতিরিক্ত রাজনৈতিক মেরুকরণের পথে যেতে না দেওয়াও ভারতের জন্য একটি বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ। একইসঙ্গে, BRICS যেন কেবল ঘোষণাভিত্তিক ফোরামে সীমাবদ্ধ না থেকে বাস্তব সহযোগিতামূলক কাঠামো গড়ে তুলতে পারে, সেটাও ভারতের নেতৃত্বের পরীক্ষার বিষয়। এই সব চ্যালেঞ্জ দক্ষতার সঙ্গে মোকাবিলা করতে পারলে ভারতের প্রেসিডেন্সি BRICS-এর জন্য একটি গঠনমূলক, ভারসাম্যপূর্ণ এবং ভবিষ্যতমুখী অধ্যায় হিসেবে চিহ্নিত হতে পারে।

BRICS এখনো পশ্চিমা বিশ্বব্যবস্থার পূর্ণ বিকল্প নয়, তবে এটি বহুমেয় বিশ্বব্যবস্থার দিকে এগোনোর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ধাপ। এই জোট বিদ্যমান বৈশ্বিক কাঠামোর সীমাবদ্ধতাগুলোকে স্পষ্টভাবে তুলে ধরেছে এবং সংস্কারের প্রয়োজনীয়তা কেও সামনে এনেছে। ভারতের আসন্ন BRICS সম্মেলনে BRICS যদি আরও কার্যকর, অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক ও বাস্তবসম্মত ভূমিকা নিতে সক্ষম হয়, তবে তা শুধু BRICS এর প্রাসঙ্গিকতাই বাড়াবে না, বরং বহুমেয় বিশ্বের পথে অগ্রসরমান আন্তর্জাতিক ব্যবস্থাকে আরও ভারসাম্যপূর্ণ, ন্যায্যসঙ্গত ও প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক করে তুলতে সহায়ক হবে— যা ভবিষ্যৎ বিশ্বরাজনীতির ক্ষেত্রে একটি গভীর ও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ আশার দিগন্ত উন্মোচন করবে।



II

একসময় সমৃদ্ধ বাংলা থেকে আজ শিল্পহীন পশ্চিমবঙ্গ- পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থনৈতিক পতনের বিভিন্ন কারণ।

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হুগলি নদীর তীরে অবস্থিত কলকাতা শহর একসময় ছিল কৌশলগত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ও অর্থনৈতিক প্রাচুর্যবান একটি শহর। সেই কারণে কলকাতাকে ব্রিটিশ সরকার তাদের রাজধানী বানায়। এক সময় বঙ্গ ছিল ভারতের অন্যতম প্রধান বাণিজ্যিক কেন্দ্র। পাট, চা, নীল কয়লা ও অন্যান্য কাঁচামালের প্রধান উৎপাদক। ১৯৪৭ সালে দেশভাগের সময়ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ছিল অত্যন্ত ক্ষমতাবান রাজ্য। শিলিগুড়ি টাইমস এর তথ্য অনুসারে স্বাধীনতার সময় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ভারতের মোট জিডিপির ২৭% প্রদান করত যা আজ ৩ পার্সেন্ট এসে দাঁড়িয়েছে। কাঁচামালের প্রধান রপ্তানি কারক উন্নত ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়াল কোম্পানির সম্ভার এবং অর্থনৈতিক দিক থেকে এশিয়ার অন্যতম বৃহত্তম একটি রাজ্য থেকে আজ ইন্ডাস্ট্রি বিহীন একটি রাজ্য বাংলা। তবে এই পরিবর্তন একদিনে বা একটি ঘটনা অথবা একটি সরকারের দ্বারা ঘটেনি, বহু ঘটনার ফলে বাংলা আজ ইকোনমিক হাব থেকে ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়াল পিছিয়ে পড়া রাজ্যে পরিণত হয়েছে। কেন বাংলা একটি অর্থনৈতিক সাবলীল রাজ্য থেকে আজ অর্থনৈতিক দিক থেকে অন্যতম পিছিয়ে পড়া একটি রাজ্যে পরিণত হল তার বিভিন্ন কারণগুলি নিম্নে আলোচনা করা হলো।

১) রাজধানী কলকাতা থেকে দিল্লিতে স্থানান্তর:-

১৭৭২ থেকে ১৯১১ পর্যন্ত কলকাতা ছিল ব্রিটিশদের রাজধানী। তবে 1905 সালে বঙ্গভঙ্গের পর কলকাতায় প্রচুর আন্দোলন বয়কট রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা দেখা যায় এছাড়াও ব্রিটিশদের এমন একটি কৌশলগত ভৌগোলিক জায়গার প্রয়োজন ছিল যা থেকে সহজেই সমগ্র দেশ পরিচালনা করা যায়, সেই কারণে রাজধানী কলকাতা থেকে দিল্লিতে স্থানান্তর করা হয়। এই স্থানান্তর কলকাতার অর্থনীতিতে প্রচুর প্রভাব ফেলে বহু সরকারি আধিকারিকদের কর্মসংস্থান হারিয়ে যায় সরকারি দপ্তর গুলি বন্ধ হয়ে যায়, ফলে সেই সমস্ত স্থানকে কেন্দ্র করে গড়ে ওঠা ব্যবসার ক্ষতি হয়। বহু সরকারি অফিস ও দপ্তর কলকাতা থেকে দিল্লিতে সরানো হয়। তাছাড়াও রাজধানী দিল্লিতে স্থানান্তরের কারণে বহু ব্যবসায়ী তার কোম্পানি কলকাতা থেকে দিল্লি ও বোম্বেতে স্থানান্তর করে।

২) দুর্ভিক্ষ:-

১৯৪৩ সালে বাংলায় দুর্ভিক্ষ দেখা যায়। এর ফলে কৃষি ক্ষেত্র প্রচুর পরিমাণে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়। মানুষ জমি বিক্রি করে দিতে বাধ্য হয়। ফলে উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থা প্রায় ভেঙে পড়ে। এছাড়া পশ্চিমবঙ্গের পাট শিল্প ব্যাপক ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয় এর কারণে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে নেমে আসে দারিদ্র্যের কালো ছায়া।

৩) দেশভাগ:-

১৯৪৭ সালে ভারত স্বাধীন হওয়ার পর পশ্চিমবঙ্গের জমির একটা বড়ো অংশ পাকিস্তানের কাছে চলে যায়। ভারতের স্বাধীনতার আগে এশিয়ার ৮০% সিল্ক পশ্চিমবঙ্গ একাই সরবরাহ করতো। দেশভাগের পর বেশিরভাগ জুট মিল পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ভাগে এলেও বেশিরভাগ কাঁচামাল পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের হাতে চলে যায় এই সময় পারস্পরিক দ্বন্দ্বের কারণে পাকিস্তান কাঁচামাল সরবরাহ বন্ধ করে দেয় ও অতিরিক্ত ট্যাক্স চাপিয়ে দেয়। এর ফলে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বহু জুট মিল বন্ধ হয়ে যায় ও বহু শ্রমিক তাদের চাকরি হারায় ও বাংলায় দারিদ্রতা আরও তীব্র হয়।

৪) অভিবাসীদের আগমন :-

অভিবাসী সমস্যা ভারতের একটা চিরস্থায়ী সমস্যা। অভিবাসীদের আগমন দ্বারা ভারতের যে সমস্ত রাজ্যগুলির ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে তার মধ্যে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ অন্যতম। দেশভাগের পর 1947 সালে উইকিপিডিয়া অনুযায়ী প্রায় ০.৩২ মিলিয়ন মানুষ পশ্চিমবঙ্গে আশ্রয় নেয়। এরপর ১৯৭১ সালে বাংলাদেশ থেকে মুক্তিযুদ্ধের পর প্রচুর মানুষ পশ্চিমবঙ্গে আসে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থনৈতিক অবনতির এটা হল একটি বড় কারণ। বেকারত্বের সংখ্যা বাড়ে সস্তার শ্রমিক প্রচুর পরিমাণে উপলব্ধ হয়ে যায়। যার ফল এখনও পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ভোগ করছে।

৫) স্বাধীনতা পরবর্তী কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের পলিসি:-

স্বাধীনতার পর কেন্দ্র সরকার এর নেওয়া বিভিন্ন সিদ্ধান্ত পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থনৈতিক পতনের পথ প্রশস্ত করে। জুট রপ্তানি করে যে রেভিনিউ আসতো তাতে রাজ্যের শেয়ার কমিয়ে দেয়। এছাড়াও ORF(Ovserver Research Foundation) এর তথ্য অনুযায়ী রাজ্য যে ইনকাম ট্যাক্স কালেক্ট করতো তাতে রাজ্যের শেয়ার ২০% পার্সেন্ট থেকে কমিয়ে ১২% করে দেওয়া হয়। এর ফলে বাংলার অবস্থা আরও খারাপ হতে থাকে। ১৯৫২ সালে কেন্দ্র সরকারের আনা "Freight Equalization Policy" বাংলার অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষতির পেছনে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপাদান হিসেবে কাজ করে।

৬) রাজ্যে সরকারের ভূমিকা:-

১৯৬৭ সালের পর বাংলায় ক্ষমতাধারী রাজ্য সরকার শিল্প খাতের উন্নয়নের প্রতি উদাসীনতা দেখায়। UPI এর তথ্য অনুযায়ী রাজ্য সরকার বেসরকারি শিল্প খাতে সরকারি বিনিয়োগ বন্ধ করে দেয়। এর ফলে বাংলার শিল্পপতির ব্যাপক ক্ষতির সম্মুখীন হয় ফলে বহু কোম্পানি রাজ্য ছেড়ে চলে যায় বা কোম্পানি বন্ধ হয়ে যায়। তৎকালীন রাজ্য সরকার মনে করতেন যে বাংলায় যদি কম্পিউটার শিক্ষার বিকাশ হয় তাহলে বহু শ্রমিকের কাজ চলে যাবে সেই কারণে প্রযুক্তিগত উন্নয়নের পথে তারা কোনোভাবেই এগোতে চাননি এবং এই সিদ্ধান্ত বাংলাকে আরো পিছিয়ে দিয়েছে অন্যান্য রাজ্যের তুলনায়।

৬) নকশাল আন্দোলন:-

ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাসে নকশাল আন্দোলন এক অন্যতম হিংসাত্মক আন্দোলন হিসেবে পরিচিত যার সর্বাধিক প্রভাব পড়েছিল পশ্চিমবঙ্গের উপরে। নকশালরা শিল্পপতিদের পুঁজিবাদী বলে হিংসার সৃষ্টি করে। পুঁজিপতি আক্রমণ ও তাদের সম্পত্তির ক্ষতি করা থেকে একাধিক হিংসাজনিত কাজ করতে থাকে। এই কারণেও বহু কোম্পানি রাজ্য ছেড়ে চলে যায় ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থনীতি আরো খারাপ হয়ে যায়। এই নকশালবাদি আন্দোলনের ফলে Philips, ICI India, Shaw Wallace, The Singhanias of JK Tyre- এর মত বড় বড় কোম্পানি পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ছেড়ে চলে যায় পশ্চিমবঙ্গের প্রায় সব ইন্ডাস্ট্রি বন্ধ হয়ে যায়।

৬) টাটা শিল্প বাস্তবায়নের ব্যর্থতা:-

২০০৬ সালের টাটা কোম্পানির মালিক রতন টাটা পশ্চিমবঙ্গের টাটা ন্যানো কোম্পানির কারখানা তৈরি করার প্রস্তাব দেয়। তৎকালীন পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য এই উদ্যোগকে স্বাগতম জানান। কিন্তু এই সময় জমি অধিগ্রহণ কে কেন্দ্র করে ব্যাপক আন্দোলন দেখা যায় মমতা ব্যানার্জি নেতৃত্বে টাটা গোষ্ঠী ও তৎকালীন রাজ্য সরকারের ব্যাপক বিরোধীতা Go Back TATA স্লোগান,

বিক্ষোপ, অনশন প্রভৃতির কারণে টাটা গোষ্ঠী ফিরে যেতে বাধ্য হয়। এবং এটি ছিল পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থনৈতিক পতনের একটি অন্যতম প্রধান কারণ।

বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি:-

বাংলায় টাটা গোষ্ঠীর পতনের পর থেকে আর কোনো বড় কোম্পানি ইনভেস্ট করতে রাজি হয়নি। আর কোনো বড় ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয় বাংলায় গড়ে ওঠেনি। বর্তমানে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ প্রায় ইন্ডাস্ট্রি শূন্য একটি রাজ্য যা ঋণের দায়ে জর্জরিত। বর্তমান সরকারের বহু প্রকল্প বেকারত্ব কে দূর করতে পারলেও অর্থনৈতিক দিক থেকে পশ্চিমবঙ্গকে সাবলীল করার ক্ষেত্রে তা যথেষ্ট নয়।

উপসংহার:-

বর্তমানে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ভারতের অন্যতম পিছিয়ে পড়া রাজ্যগুলির মধ্যে একটা। একসময় যে রাজ্য এশিয়ার প্রধান অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষেত্র ছিল আজ তা জিরো ইন্ডাস্ট্রি সম্পন্ন একটি রাজ্য বেকারত্বের দিক থেকেও ভারতের পশ্চিমবঙ্গের স্থান অত্যন্ত ওপরে। তবে উপরিক্ত কারণগুলি ছাড়াও পশ্চিমবঙ্গের পিছিয়ে পড়ার পেছনে যে কারণগুলি রয়েছে তার মধ্যে অন্যতম পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মানুষের ব্যবসার উদাসীনতা। বাঙালি সংস্কৃতি, শিক্ষার দিক থেকে অন্যান্য রাজ্যের তুলনায় অনেক বেশি এগিয়ে আছে। কিন্তু তারা ব্যবসার তুলনায় চাকরি এবং সরকারি বড় পদাধিকারী হওয়ার উপরেই গুরুত্ব প্রদান করেছে। তাই ধীরে ধীরে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ব্যবসায়ী গোষ্ঠী বা বড় কোম্পানি গড়ে ওঠা প্রায় বন্ধ হয়ে গেছে তবে পরিশেষে বলা যায় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ যে কৌশলগত অবস্থানে রয়েছে এবং পশ্চিমবঙ্গের কাছে যা যা ভৌগোলিক উপাদান রয়েছে তা থেকে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের উন্নতি সুদূর ভবিষ্যতে অবশ্যই সম্ভব।



संविधान: गणतंत्र की पहचान

~Komal Kumari Das

(Alumna), Political Science (Hons.), City College, Kolkata, West Bengal

मैं भारत का संविधान हूँ,
डॉ. अम्बेडकर द्वारा रचित, छब्बीस जनवरी,
उन्नीस सौ पचास को अपनाया गया,
देश का सर्वोच्च कानून हूँ।

मैं भारत का संविधान हूँ,
दो साल ग्यारह महीने अठारह दिन में,
बनकर तैयार न्याय की राह दिखाता,
एक विस्तृत किताब हूँ।

मैं भारत का संविधान हूँ,
कठोरता और लचीलेपन का अतुलनीय मिश्रण,
अधिकारों का संरक्षक कर्तव्यों का मार्गदर्शक,
समानता का उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण हूँ।

मैं भारत का संविधान हूँ
संसद भवन की पुस्तकालय में मौजूद,
देश की गरिमा, सम्मान का रक्षक,
गणतांत्रिक देश की पहचान हूँ।

Quench Of Thirst

~ Shrinjini Bhattacharya

Semester 1, Political Science (Major)

I whispered to the darkness

To come and devour me

Set me free from the pain that I was in

The pain I had was my bleeding heart

Melting away in a bloodied bath

Same old nemesis from the times of cold

Freezing bodies heated with words such bold

Great are those stories, that let me know

Losing parts were common, it is all a show

Tired eyes shut me deep in my mind

Darkness did devour me, but I am back in life.

Incubus

~ Shrinjini Bhattacharya

Semester 1, Political Science (Major)

What is this feeling that keeps running away

It's just a phase, they say

What if there is no hand I can hold

Why does even your stares feel so cold

Was I into this darkness for long,

Or was it with me all along?

Do I call this my other home in dreams

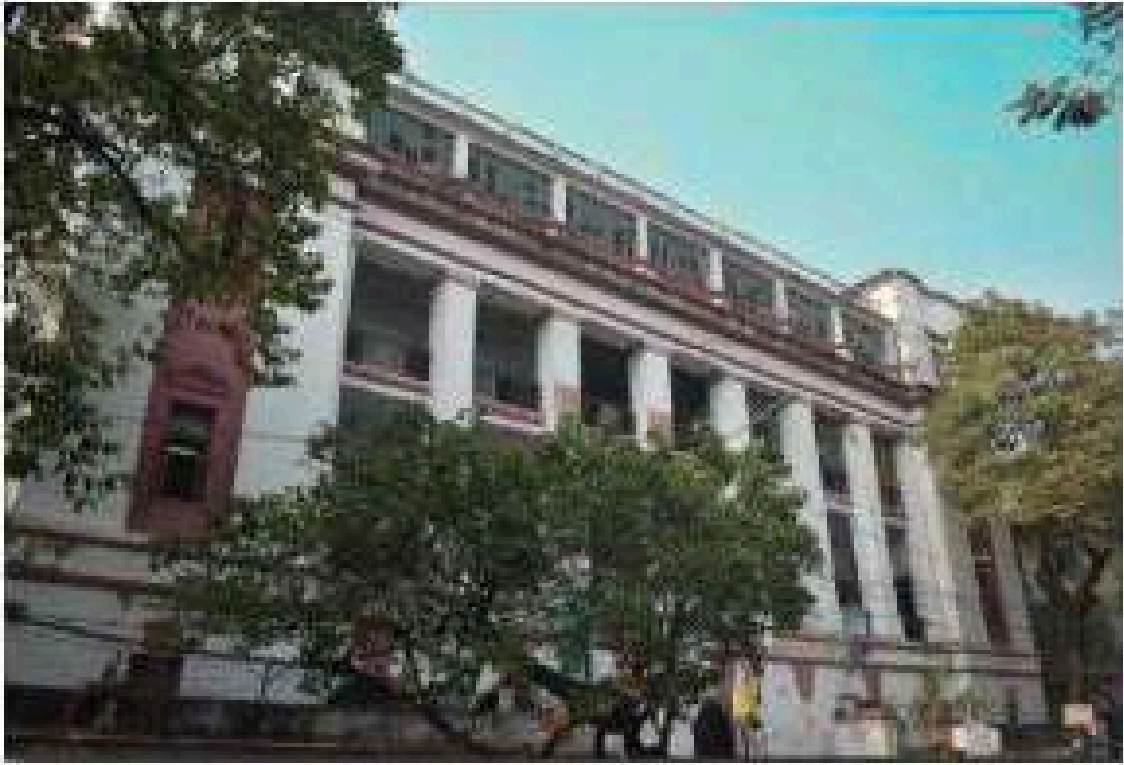
Where no one is there to listen to my screams

Why am I scared to wake up from this game

Maybe I know it will be the same

To what I dreamt and what reality holds

No one to blame, as new chapters unfold.



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