

FREE(?) SPEECH

In your opinion, must there be regulation on the freedom of speech? If so, where do you think the line of regulation must be drawn?

“Free Speech is the most fundamental, the most basic right that ought to be bestowed upon every human being. We therefore, as budding lawyers of this nation, must unquestionably strive to give a voice to those who feel mute. Rights are there for the betterment of the people and the society that they live in. However, free speech should not be absolute as that would wreak havoc in the society. But, this is no justification for unreasonably restricting the same to the extent that it prevents a free flowing thought process and decimation of information. Speech and information form the bedrock upon which most communities have established. In today’s day and age, free speech has become more of an imperative. It is an absolute essential to preserve democracy. There is undoubtedly a need to find a middle ground.”



“One of the founding principles of a democratic system of government is the idea of having the freedom of speech and expression. True, free speech cannot be unbridled and invites restrictions, but the use of these restrictions in the contemporary world has gone overboard. These restrictions have begun to create apprehensions in the minds of the people who long to exercise this free speech, which defies the sole purpose of having to cherish the idea in the first place. The question today remains, how to strike a balance between free speech and mutual respect in this world, both blessed and cursed with instant communication?”



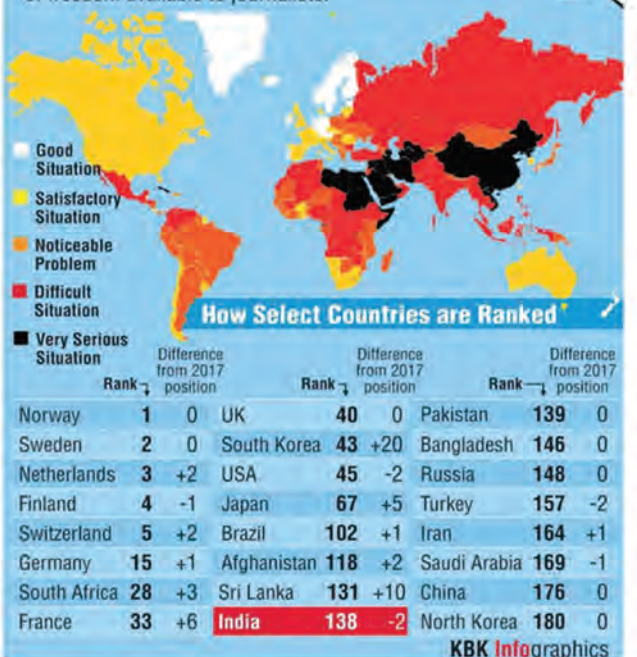
Do you think the protection of “religious sentiment” is a valid and justifiable restriction on the freedom of speech?

“The essence of the question is ideally flawed. No one expects one to be more sensitive while talking about one religion and go all out when talking about the other. When a person is criticising a certain religion, it is EXPECTED that the person has no wish to live and has sacrificed his RIGHT TO LIFE because he may or may not make it to see the next dawn. It is expected that one is more sensitive whilst criticizing certain religions to be fair to themselves and for their own safety and security or else mob lynching and be-headings are some of the most common ways taken up by religions mobs to end their source of criticism. However, it is justified that people are expected to be more sensitive about religious sentiments than other things because when it comes to ones religion - the first plan of action for any human being is to take offence to the statement so made. Therefore, when it comes to such situations, one has to take the responsibility to understand that if a person or a majority is not able to cope up with the criticism of their religion, then it is us who should try to exercise our version of the 5th and not criticise anything which hurts the sentiments of our fellow human beings. Because to protect the public at large and maintain peace in the society, it is the responsibility of the other half of the population to work in order to achieve such a world. We cannot teach people to “NOT GET OFFENDED” but we can teach ourselves to “NOT OFFEND”.”

World Press Freedom Index 2018

India has been ranked 138th in the World Press Freedom Index 2018, two places down from last year. Norway is at the top and North Korea at the bottom of the 180 countries surveyed.

Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders, the Index ranks countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists.



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Please give your feedback at: awaaz@slsh.edu.in

“Free speech in today’s world, to be consise, is a heads I win and tails you lose situation.”
- Radhakrishnan Raman
(Asst. Professor)

ALFAAZ

“Bandish kahu isko,
ya sazish hai ye teri.
Zubaan pe mere taala hai, khayaalo pe pehredaari teri.
Abhi bhi kuch alfaaz baaki hai, Abhi bhi baaki hai kuch umeed meri.
Azaad hi paida hua tha mei,
nahi marunga leke ye gulaami teri.”



PULWAMA

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

PAKISTAN

It was just another normal day for us Indians, until our smartphones began flooding with articles from different news sources, carrying disturbing information. The word “Pulwama” flashed bright and bold across everyone’s screens, receiving mixed and confused responses.

The light heartedness which pervaded our conversations earlier, just so happened to vanish in a spilt second, when we learnt about one of the deadliest attacks in J&K— The Pulwama Attack.

On 14th February, 2019, a CRPF convoy carrying 2,547 CRPF personnel was attacked at Awantipora in J&K’s Pulwama district, leaving at least 40 dead. The convoy was rammed with another car carrying a suicide bomber who was armed with several dangerous explosives. The collision resulted in a humongous blast that caused numerous fatalities of innocent CRPFs and casualties in the vicinity of the crime. Largely condemned by India and other countries across the globe, [#pulwama](#) began trending on every social media platform, attracting superfluous comments from all. Shortly thereafter, Pakistani militant group, *Jaish-e-Mohammed*, claimed responsibility of the attack, and pridefully pinned the blame on 22-year-old Adil Ahmad Dar, hailing from Kakapora. The young man had been radicalized after being beaten by the Indian police and getting frequently involved in tiffs with them, which perpetuated his hatred towards Indian personnel.

Media in the present day serves as one of the primary, if not trustworthy, sources of providing information to the masses. Whether it manifests as newspapers, flyers, posters, digital articles, snapshots or videos, everyone is constantly kept in the loop. Media houses are swayed by personal bias often; the Pakistani media is no exception to this. They indulged in portraying an “edited albeit different” version of the Pulwama attack.

Labelling the terrorists as “freedom fighters”, *The Nation*’s statement quoted a *JeM* spokesperson, who insisted that the “outfit” had nothing to do with the attacks. Further alleging brutalities committed by Indian occupying forces in Kashmir, *The Nation* portrayed the terrorists as national heroes and lauded them for their bravery and “refusal to bow down”. *Dawn*, on the other hand, took a diplomatic approach to the situation and outrightly denied allegations by India regarding Pakistan’s involvement. They propounded that Pakistan has merely limited itself to “providing diplomatic support to Kashmiris’ right to self-determination”. Subtle changes in the identity of Kashmir were resorted to by *The Express Tribune*, which, as a matter-of-fact, referred to the territory attacked as “Indian-occupied Kashmir” or IOK. This is another instance of Pakistan’s blatant claim of “owning” Kashmir. Joining the bandwagon of vague and useless reports was *Pakistan Today* that affirmed Pakistan’s condemnation of the attack and called out the Indian government for its “insinuating remarks”. It noted that the Pakistani government had not released an official statement denying their direct involvement nor did they take any action against *JeM*’s base, situated within its territorial limits, even after India repeatedly requested them to take necessary action.

It is interesting to note that the Pulwama attack served as the perfect ingredient to fuel existing tense relations between the neighbouring countries, owing to the fabrication by both. There still seems to be a sliver of hope, for people actively voiced the need for peace instead of instigating a war. So, does the media influence the masses or is it the other way around? It is left to subjective interpretation.

Aishwarya Iyer (2016-21)



INDIA

February 14th— a day that signifies ‘love’, commemorated by millions across the world, took a different turn in the Indian subcontinent. A fatal attack, the impact of which reverberated through the country, left multitudes of Indians vexed. It re-ignited the Indo-Pak blame game, and the media covered every aspect of it.

It is undisputed that every media channel had its own coverage, delving into different aspects. Be it taking a closer look into the perpetrators, *Jaish-e-Mohammed* or questioning Imran Khan’s credibility as a PM or alleging that Pakistan had endorsed the terrorists, they left no stone unturned.

In the days that followed, media channels, telecast the news with hashtags and controversial headlines, adding to the anger and anguish of people. A typical news hour is a debate with eminent people on board expressing their views on the matter. This was common to all channels. Naturally, given the gravity of the situation, the stances taken were aggressive. Almost every development relating to the attack was streamed as “breaking news”, flashing repetitively on the screen, followed by a photographic or video-graphic proof to support the same. Channels called out Pakistan’s government, alleging their linkage with the terrorist organisation. While the same had not been proved, Pakistan fell under severe criticism for not taking prompt action or condemning the attack. Their silence on the matter, which broke later, left room for speculation.

It is of no doubt the role of the media, being the fourth pillar of democracy, is vital. But the thought that has been probing me is whether they acted responsibly and whether it is appropriate to sensationalise a sensitive issue like this?

There is also the matter of fake news, which is rampant in India. Of course, the Pulwama attack was not spared. Supposed footage of the suicide bomber was being circulated on messaging applications, until the same was deemed fake by concerned authorities. Instances like these add fuel to the fire when the common man fails to verify his information.

The power of the media is often undermined. Sources state that Facebook and Twitter are major domains from where people gather their information. Again, is the video stating hard facts, a verified one?

We mustn’t take to information provided to us, without questioning its authenticity, especially in grave matters like the instant attack. This being an issue of international importance, the media will continue to impact its viewers. Instead of pointing fingers at each other and taking news at face-value, we should pause to verify the news as there is always more than what meets the eye.

Antara Balaji (2017-22)





To,
Squadron Leader Siddharth Vashisht & Sergeant Vikrant Sehwat,
Indian Air Force

Dear Pilots,

I know both of you would be thinking that the country has forgotten your sacrifice as the whole country is busy celebrating the return of Wing Commander Abhinandan. This letter is just to tell you that your contribution is immeasurable and the whole nation owes you. You have sacrificed your lives while fighting against terrorism and safeguarding the citizens of this nation. We promise you that we will take care of your families and fulfil all their needs.

You will always be in our hearts.

REST IN PEACE, PILOTS.

Regards,

Your biggest fan.



Dear Mr. Imran Khan,

I was delighted, when you were sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan— either as a fan who saw one of his favourite cricketers as the PM or as a neighbour who was thrilled to see a '*Naya Pakistan*' emerging, as you had promised. Your promises were sky high and the citizens were thrilled to have a reformist PM after a long time.

During the partition in '47, both the countries were given the same amount of financial resources. Pakistan, being geographically smaller in size, would have been a more developed state than India is at present, but that did not happen. Your country was busy funding terrorism and spreading violence while India was galloping like a horse. I was shocked to know that Pakistan is the only country in the world where literacy rate is decreasing by the year.

You vowed to change the circumstances and make the country a better place. You opened the Kartarpur Corridor. You promised to look into the tragic case of a young Indian prisoner stuck in a Pakistani jail. You were making all the right moves, saying all the right things, pushing all the right buttons. Suddenly, you go silent and find it tough to come up with any words of comfort. Suddenly, you can't get yourself to act against those responsible for Pulwama, almost as if Masood Azhar is beyond your control. You, who never took a step back on the cricket field, have surrendered to the military men who control your government. If you can't act against Azhar— say so, rather than parrot the much-abused line that Kashmir is a disputed land, terror is localised, and groups like the *Jaish* are freedom fighters. If you can't act against those who perpetrate terror against Indian citizens, what price does our friendship and the endless hospitality you have enjoyed with so many Indians mean?

They called you the 'blue-eyed boy' of the Pakistani Army. They called the elections rigged and festered with violence to tilt the results in your favour, and you proved them right.

Apparently, I was wrong to assume that a '*Naya Pakistan*' was on its way. I never criticized your act of selling the official cars or the buffaloes, like all your critics did, because I saw the silver lining in your cloud. But you, Mr. Khan, disappointed all your supporters by not fighting against the disease which has affected Pakistan called 'terrorism'. I am sorry to see you like this, an egoistic man who is fast turning out to be a liability for his own nation.

It must be tough to wait for every small decision from the army headquarters, right, Mr. Khan?

Maaf karna Imran miya, it's time to talk again: as a sportsman, you spoke out for neutral umpires with an intensity that shook and changed the game; as a politician, you must speak out and act against the merchants of terror who seek to destroy communities.

I write this to you with anger and sorrow. Though the anger will subside one day, the sadness won't.

Regards,

Rishabh Negi.





PANORAMA

CRUSHING THE CLUTCHES OF PATRIARCHY

Aritra Deb (2016-21)

It has been 68 years of experimenting with the Constitution, but living up to the ideals of our *lex suprema* still seems to be a farfetched dream. It is not unknown that the fulcrum of constitutional values is the fundamental right to equality. Even though doctrinal equality apparently makes itself felt in the laws of the land, substantive equality is still a goal to be achieved. We are aware of how women are still treated unequally in the world's largest democracy. The patriarchal society is to be blamed largely for that. The presumption that the domestic responsibilities of the family rests on the woman is an archaic concept. While the concept of democracy purports to provide everyone with free and equal voice, patriarchy limits all powers in the hand of the male. The very nature of patriarchy is inconsistent with the demands of a democratic nation. Patriarchy has become so deeply embedded in our values, to the extent that our society has structured its authority in consonance to the patriarchal mind-set. Several customs that are practiced even today perpetuate these unjust norms in the name of religious practices. The centuries' old custom of barring the entry of menstruating women to a temple is the best example. According to the Hon'ble Justice Dr. DY Chandrachud, such exclusion is no less grave than the antiquated and abandoned practice of untouchability. Initiating a practice of barring a woman from worshipping a God due to physical differences from that of a man and then practicing such rituals for centuries is a hurdle in the enjoyment of constitutional freedoms promised by the hallowed Article 15 of our Constitution. The stigma attached to menstruation is a result of the traditional belief that owes its origin to the prevailing patriarchal order, even though the same has always been in conflict with the Constitutional order. The fact that such an antediluvian practice has been abolished as late as 28th September, 2018, is a sign of the prolonged process of doing justice to women. The case of Joseph Shine, where adultery was discussed, reproduced what the case of Navtej Singh Johar had already settled—a law that perpetuates gender stereotypes falls foul of the constitutional morality and the same has no stand in the era of evolving constitutional jurisprudence. All things said and done, evolving from such archaic thought processes is the need of the hour. At the core of patriarchy is the power-hungry clan of megalomaniacs who wish to control the opposite sex on the terms that are set. Therefore, it is men who ought to give up the surfeit authority that they possess. The change can already be seen in the recent decisions of the Apex court.



SPREAD OF HATE SPEECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Harshit Singh (2018-23)

'Hate speech' can be termed as speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display that incites violence and prejudice against a group or an individual on the basis of their membership to that group, or intimidates them. Such speech tends to cause tension in the society which could, and often does, result in violence and unrest on class or community lines.

Though a big concern, hate speech in the real world can easily be curbed with effective law enforcement. The problem worsens when it comes to the online world, or more specifically, to social media. Hate speech online is situated at the intersection of multiple tensions. The simpler expression of conflicts within and across different sections of society manifests how technologies with transformative potential like internet bring with themselves many challenges, like balancing the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed to us under Article 19(1) and the defence of human dignity.

We have come a long way from the days when Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were hailed as enablers of free speech and democracy. Such platforms have undeniably helped democratise the public sphere. Individuals can amass tens of thousands of followers and earn millions of views without relying on the conventional media or public relation agencies. However, this unchecked flow of information brings with itself multiple challenges.

Internet's speed and reach makes it difficult for governments to enforce national legislation on the virtual world. Organisations that mediate online communication, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google etc., have advanced their own definitions of hate speech which become guiding principles behind the rules and policies made by these companies. National and regional bodies have sought to promote interpretations of the term which are more rooted in the local traditions.

There are three types of actions that can be taken to counter the circulation of hateful dialogue on social media: Law enforcement, content moderation, and education.

Many governments have threatened social media companies with strict rules on intermediary liability, which means that these companies may be held liable for the content posted on their platforms. The problem is that intermediary liability can easily be used to restrict freedom of expression and force companies to censor their users for fear of legal consequences.

Regardless of government regulations, companies have a responsibility to avoid contributing to human rights violations. Content moderation is, therefore, an important part of the solution. All major platforms have community standards and rules of conduct in place to deal with incitement of hate and discrimination, which would work well if they don't clash with human right laws. But making them effective will require social media companies to consistently uphold these laws and devote sufficient resources to addressing violations.

Reducing the hate on social media also requires education. Both of the other ways can only treat the symptoms of online abuse. But educating the population through school programs, or campaigns on social media itself is the long-term way to reduce racism, sexism, bigotry, and other forms of hate speech online so as to understand and address the roots of discrimination and hate in our societies.





“It is very heartening to go through the editions brought out by AWAAZ. I am pleased to notice that students have created an informal space, to share their ideas and world view on a wide range of issues. I wish them all success in all their endeavors to sustain such a vibrant forum in the form of AWAAZ.”

- Prof. (Dr.) Sarfaraz Ahmed Khan, Director, SLS Hyderabad

L.A.W. – A BLISSFUL FORM OR A PERFECT STORM?

Manisha Nanda (2016-21)

Modern technology has, from its onset, changed the course of warfare and the way it is perceived and advanced. With the advent of novel introductions in the theatres of war, the development of ‘Lethal Autonomous Weapon systems’ is a subject the debate over which seldom leads to a conclusive stance. These weapon systems, popularly known as LAWs, will be fully autonomous weapons, i.e., they will function with no human intervention whatsoever. While the development of this technology would result in a multitude of benefits to the military, the complex issues accompanying the same cannot be disregarded *in toto*.

The introduction of LAWs would predominantly save lives in the course of warfare, bring about force projection and lead to multiplication with an increased efficacy in the operations of the military. With greater autonomy, these systems will be less susceptible to remote intervention by anonymous entities, thereby reducing hostile intrusions. This qualifies LAWs to be a significant military asset. However, the lack of moral agency and human judgment is immensely criticised by the opponents and it is claimed that, if such weapon systems are made readily available to fight wars for us, then States would unflinchingly choose to go to war instead of resolving their conflicts via negotiations. This poses a huge threat to global security, as international relations would be substantially jeopardised leading to divisions. This, in turn, would weaken our abilities to manage conflicts. Moreover, in case of violation of a national or an international norm, the question of accountability and liability would throw us in a rather perplexed situation.

Nevertheless, the argument for putting a blanket ban on the development of LAWs hasn’t been faring well in the international sphere, as States have already begun to employ their resources in bolstering their military defences through the crystallisation of this technology.

While policy-makers think through the implications of the execution of this technology and its possible regulation, we are left to think of the ramifications surrounding this technology and the scenario that will come about when guns are passed over to metal with no safety switch in place.



REVERSING PERCEPTIONS: THE ROLE OF YOUTH DURING KERALA FLOOD

Sabarinath. S (2016-21)

“These days, children grow up, unaware of the concept of responsibility. All they do is bury themselves in their smartphones”. Being in my early twenties, this is what I have been hearing from my parents.

To be honest, on many occasions, I was not able to cope with the expectations of my highly educated parents. I didn’t even have to wash my own clothes, even my inner wears. I’m from a generation which is not even mature enough to take care of itself. Maybe, -this is the reason my mother won’t stop pestering me when I go back home.

Right from the clothes own to my eating habits, falls within Amma’s jurisdiction of complaints against me and my fellow millennials. So by default, even I fall under the tagline “A Gypsy of the New Gen”.

Social media has become an integral part of our life; we get addicted, without even thinking of its negative or positive potential. I am part of that society, which befriends more on social media than in person. All this changed with the catastrophe which occurred in the month of August, when almost 44 rivers across Kerala flooded, and parts of the state submerged due to heavy rainfall. The Kerala flood depicted the role of social media in a crowdsourcing data platform, which greatly aided in the rescue and rehabilitation process.

I, being a part of this initiative, witnessed the paradigm shift in the attitude of the ignorant new gen gypsies, when they quickly snowballed into a serious group with tech-savvy youth from different parts of the world coming together and taking responsibility. Being in Kerala at that time, I joined as a volunteer at Cotton Hill School, at Trivandrum. The scene that unfolded was jaw-dropping for the elders. To see the so-called ‘new gen’, that has been estranged from the present world, taking up laborious tasks for their fellow beings, loading and unloading relief materials to different parts of the state with the help of the state administration.

Even though I was new to this endeavour, the timely jokes and the newly created intimacy of working hand in hand created a bond of friendship, which still continues, and kept us working through the days. I feel I should write this note about my generation because the experience which I gained from the relief camp in Trivandrum is unparalleled to any of the internships I have done. I am sure these would forever resonate in my mind to act upon such endeavours.

For a student like me, who expected nothing in return, tears rolled down my face when messages poured in from those who were rescued. See how the tables have turned by a generation which was less responsible or too lazy for the elders, struggling hard for the revival of their fellow beings. I am sure, amidst all these issues associated with rebuilding the state, Kerala would rise from the ashes like a phoenix, with such responsible youth behind the wheel.





CATCH 22

SITUATIONAL HANDLING OF KASHMIR.

Afnaan Omer Khan (2016-21)

It is a long-standing contention by the masses that the issue of Kashmir must be dealt with at the earliest. It is one of the key aspects in the development of the status quo of a political party; any party dealing with this would almost be guaranteed another term, despite its administrative or economic blunders. As we advance toward getting a better foothold of the military scenario in this area, we must agree on one thing—military action is not the answer to this situation.

There is a myriad of other reasons as to why a full-scale conflict would negatively affect the region. Historically speaking, the World Trade Organization has not taken kindly to engagers of armed conflict, North Korea and Iraq being two victims of such treatment. By unleashing a flurry of economic and commercial sanctions, they have limited the potency of these countries to the one thing that runs the world economy—trade. This could very well be doled out to India or Pakistan, depending on the engaging party. We can afford it to a certain extent; them, not so much. Further, a war will hurt the already volatile trade balance throughout South East Asia, causing it to crumble and also fracture the debt in this region. Moreover, it would stall technological growth which in-turn restricts GDP growth, leading to another Great Depression within half a decade, due to the sheer population of this region. In addition to this, export rates would decrease, and the sufficiency of Europe would sink, lest we forgot Africa's dependence, too.



Furthermore, the right to reply to a breach of sovereignty and compromise of territorial integrity (which would inadvertently occur due to the nature of the conflict itself) is a sensitive topic, keeping in mind the nuclear and biological capabilities of the nations involved, along with their allies. China, a country which is so heavily invested in the state of Pakistan, would not take kindly to the disappearance of its humongous capital investment into the echelons of armed conflict and a long-carried war, and would respond accordingly, in the sensitive areas of Himachal Pradesh and near the Seven Sisters. This would render the strategic separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan useless after all these years. It would allow China to penetrate the compromised region with ease, with their incredibly developed SRBMs, which is further accentuated by India's weak and archaic missile defense system.

A full out war would also result in a chain reaction. This isn't so much about India and Pakistan as it is about their allies. The two biggest nuclear powers on this planet are at odds over election fixing and cyber warfare, with two trigger-happy leaders sitting at each end. The last thing they would need is incitement. Russia has a nuclear arsenal of 8700 ICBM, according to a report by the special rapporteur of the General Assembly. You need about 200 of such ICBMs to affect the entire planet long-term. The dangers are real.

To conclude, I'd say that the best way to avoid this is to let the world run dry of Pakistan. Not only will their dependence increase (because of their lack of export), but also the insurgencies. The state will wipe itself out, and there's nothing we can do about it except to watch and wait. India will emerge victorious at the end of it, which can be attributed to sound policy and decision making. At the end of it, India will hold its head up high and claim its territory; a territory which is regulated by constitutional mandate. We will not give up on this.

IT'S COMPLICATED

Sudarshan Satalkar (2016-21)

'War is the only solution to all these problems', says an outraged uncle, sipping his tea and shaking his fists at the news of the latest acts of violence against our troops in Kashmir. It does not matter what the repercussions of such a war would be, he just wants war.

'We, as a nation, are a bunch of cowards; how long will we allow these Kashmiris to get away with this?', his friend says in agreement. This conversation is a microcosm of the mentality that majority of the people in the country have. We, as humans, tend to see life as a zero sum game, and are also wired with an idea of vengeance and an appetite for violence. The current situation in the nation is worrisome- any person who is a pacifist or an advocate for peace is branded as a 'traitor', a 'coward' or an 'urban naxal' (quite ironic, if I might add). We, as a nation, have decided to see the world in absolute binaries, and are refusing to look at any issue with the complexity it deserves. The media is of no help either; the fourth estate of the country is a sad excuse of a press which feeds on jingoism and paranoia. We are never going to accept the fact that in most matters, there is always more than meets the eye; things are always more complex, and they cannot be subject to the simple terms 'us' and 'them'.

The issue of Kashmir is no different; the recent attacks are no doubt condemnable, but they do not give people a licence to bash Kashmiris, or to ask for a conflict with Pakistan like a bunch of war-mongers. A soldier will always ask for peace. It is always the old men in-charge who want war. The issue of Kashmir is an extremely complex one and should be treated as such.

The outraged uncle is not going to fight against Pakistan, nor will his friend, but that is not going to stop them from asking for it. People who disagree with me will call me naive at best and seditious at worst. My naive mind can only hope that this issue is resolved in my lifetime.





LOADING... MANDATE 2019

Chakradhar Reddy (2015-20)

Alas!??? Here comes the election season where you finally meet your genie who promises to make your wishes come true. Whether the wishes come true or not is a discussion for another day. Nonetheless, it's a very exciting time, with maximum focus on citizens of the country. Let's begin with our election luncheon. For starters, let's talk about who are in the fray— Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of the Opposition Party Rahul Gandhi. However, there are leaders of regional parties who aren't given equal recognition like Mayawati, K Chandrashekhar Rao, Chandrababu Naidu and Mamata Banerjee who have expressed their desire for competing at the central level either for a third front or a UPA-led coalition. Lok Sabha election 2019, whether we like it or not, is going to be a presidential election just like it was in 2014, except in a few states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Now the question is who is likely to be next *Pradhan Sevak* of the country.

Well, whether you like him or not, Modi is definitely the strongest leader in the country as of now. What does he offer to a voter? Is it a stable government, a temporary end to the family rule over the Prime Minister's post, a corruption free government at the top level, or a secured foreign policy? The answer to all the above is a *most likely* yes; that is what the last 5 years have taught us.

We will now analyse the opposition. "Rahul Gandhi"— the name itself tells us where the accreditation comes from. Nevertheless, his party will definitely play a major role in the upcoming elections, being the government in both, the state of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan which were previously under the BJP, following the 2014 elections.

Rahul Gandhi is the representative of dynasty politics in India. Will an India, who aspires to be a super power, go back to the same old dynasty that it voted out of power in 2014? Although he has considerable support from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Indian National Congress is not likely to be a player in at least two of the aforementioned states. Leaders like K. Chandrasekhara Rao (Telangana's Chief Minister) and Naveen Patnaik (Odisha's Chief Minister) believe that there shouldn't be a BJP or INC government at the centre. This is because their opponents in the state are both INC and BJP, and they are in no position to align with either.

In a nutshell, every party is fighting its own battle. Anything is possible until the counting day arrives. There's nothing we haven't seen in politics, is there? Only time will answer.

PATRIOTISM

Suhaib Ashraf (2018-23)

Nationalism and Patriotism are two very similar ideologies with a very fragile line demarcating the two. The love for one's country is a common ground for both, but to what extent is the question. Charles de Gaulle, in one of his speeches said, "Patriotism is when love of your own people comes first; nationalism, when hate for people other than your own comes first." (sic.) Both the ideologies are often confused and what people believe to be Patriotism is actually Nationalism because the idea of Nationalism is the infatuation of modern times.

George Orwell in his essay "Notes on Nationalism" describes the difference between the two ideologies in a very captivating manner. Orwell writes, "By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality." To sum it up, one can insinuate that Nationalism focuses on the state while Patriotism focuses on the people. One cannot keep bashing Nationalism because even Nationalism can be looked at as a forked road, one that takes a positive direction whereas the other, a negative one.

Nationalism was the reason for the anti-colonialism struggles in India led by people like Mahatma Gandhi, who efficiently utilised the feeling of Nationalism among the diverse demographics of the subcontinent to fight against the British rule. On the other hand, Hitler deployed the same doctrine to precipitate the Second World War. Therefore, we can say that Nationalism starts where logic ends and emotion begins whereas Patriotism takes a more logical route. The line between Nationalism and Patriotism is manifest when a wheelchair-bound man is physically abused for not standing up for the national anthem of a country. All boundaries of logic and humanity are crossed when one comes across cases like these where human beings act out of sheer emotion, which has been created for them and not by them.



2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS: INC'S PERSPECTIVE

Suhaib Ashraf (2018-23)

Madeline L'Engle once said, "Maybe you have to know the darkness before you can appreciate the light". This, in my opinion, perfectly describes the current situation in India. It is only after "An Era of Darkness" can humans essentially understand the essence of a truly democratic India. The Indian National Congress as a national party has come a long way from what it was after the 2014 General Elections. With the appointment of Mr. Rahul Gandhi as the President of the All India National Congress Committee, the INC has actually progressed as a party. The surveys conducted by organizations like C-Voter and Lokniti-CSDS specify that conditions began shifting in Gandhi's favor towards the end of 2017, and this momentum continued through 2018. The turning point appears to have been the Assembly elections in the three states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, but where the Congress evidently gave a fright to PM Modi and BJP President Amit Shah was in their home state of Gujarat. The future prospects of the Indian National Congress (INC) looks promising because they are striving to attack the BJP in the 2019 General Elections head-on. The appointment of Mrs. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as Congress' General Secretary of Uttar Pradesh will also affect the upcoming elections in the Congress' favor because Priyanka Gandhi has a connection with the people which will definitely help the INC score some brownie points in the most important state in the upcoming General Elections. However, the most important aspect of Congress' victory in the 2019 General Election would be the incompetent and un-democratic rule of PM Modi and BJP. The ruling party has time and again proved its dilettantish nature to the public at large and it's high time that we, as the citizens of the largest democracy, start looking for what is wounding us and vote this problem out of power.





ANTI-BEGGARY LAWS IN INDIA- REGRESSIVE AND RETROGRADE

Vinamra Gogia (2018-23)

Who is a beggar? What is begging? A question that has been probed for long in the minds of the people, for which the answer is inextricably intertwined and hence is strenuous to define. G. R. Madan, a renowned litterateur defines beggar as, “*A beggar is one who asks for alms or charity or performs such actions which derive sympathy from others and who give something in return.*” The answer to the question as to why beggary as a social problem has escalated over the years lies in the inception of the practice itself and to understand the reasons of this escalation, it is necessary to outline the history of beggary in India.

At the outset of the concept, there were two views on the genesis of beggary which primarily consisted of the traditional view based on the religious precepts of the past and the social view which is rooted in the individual and societal disorganizations. Under this system only the members of the upper three varnas, viz, Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya were socially permitted to receive alms, but begging was not considered to be a social anathema as the concept was bound by the moral and ethical principles laid down by the society. However, it is a travesty and truism of history that the religion which gives spiritual solace to millions of this land, bred in its wake the most fraudulent crime of beggary.



The question that now arises is why is beggary considered as a malediction in the contemporary society when the history that we are bound by has not considered it to be one. According to the 2011 State-wise Census, the total population of beggars and vagrants in India was approximately 4.13 lakhs. Delegated authorities have time and again tried to restrict the practice of begging for the greater good of the society, but little has been done to acknowledge the reasons for begging and minimal amount of effort has been put in order to answer the questions of the people suffering from this social evil. The two most significant questions that people often tend to neglect are, “*Why does a person beg?*”, and “*Is Begging worth sacrificing one’s self respect?*”. Furthermore, the laws relating to the beggary are contradictory and ambiguous. They need a healing touch of protective law, not the deterrence of a criminal sanction. Nietzsche once rightly said that, “*the individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe.*” The country that we live in, the country that boasts of being the world’s largest democracy, the country that has time and again claimed to be a welfare state has evidently, in this very context failed to follow the very basic principles of natural law and justice.

It is my humble opinion that the path embarked upon by the two limbs of the Indian system to rid our motherland of beggars should be taken via a road to rehabilitation rather than a road to oppression. There can be no second opinion to the fact that there is an imperative need to bring reforms in the existing laws that riddled with lacunae’s, in order to bring about a paradigm shift in the society.

OF BABA SAHEB, THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND THE POLITICAL MASCOT

R. Radhakrishnan (Assistant Professor)



On 14 April, when Ambedkar Jayanthi is celebrated, the event begins on a somber note in the official calendar of the Indian nation, with the usual proclamations of commitment towards social justice and right to equality, in the name of Dr B R Ambedkar, the “Father of the Indian Constitution”.

Television channels blare out and print media splashes images of Baba Saheb, in their various avatars. Political parties claiming to be carrying forward his legacy, seek to lure the common populace, especially the marginalized sections, by urging them to emulate him. However, his views on social justice and principles even are displayed in a rather ostentatious manner – statues in all the important landmarks in small towns, street corners and prominent places of national significance.

Though Ambedkar and his ideology continue to captivate the nation subconsciously, rampant lawlessness, brutalization of the Dalits, official apathy and public policies with their usual ham-headed approach, continue to affect the cause of social justice. The spirit of Ambedkar would have been left traumatized, with the appalling conditions, faced by the Dalits, even after seven decades of independence and the cold indifference displayed towards their cause by various political parties.

What perplexes the common masses, is the propensity to invoke Ambedkar and yet indulge in un- Ambedkar activities. The Ambedkarites feel that it is the Indian state and its people who have failed Ambedkar, while others and some skeptics, who question the ‘officially designated’ Ambedkarites, feel that it is the Ambedkarites who have let down both the Dalits and Ambedkar. They feel that these ‘guardian angels’, who invoke Ambedkar from their official precincts, have never walked an extra mile nor undertook any grueling exercise to exorcise the caste-based discrimination and violence.

So, with the proliferation of so many Ambedkar statues (akin to Gandhi’s statues), in our country’s landscape, one may conclude that Ambedkar has emerged as a totem, which is omnipresent yet ironically missing within the social and spiritual domains of the Indian populace at large.

While one may strongly agree that, in spite of the tumultuous times that we are witnessing, Ambedkar remains a pivotal point for questioning all kinds of inhuman treatment, inequality and injustice in any part of the world. At the same time, relegating Ambedkar to the status of an icon of Dalits and the weaker sections would be a misnomer and selective understanding of the movements for social justice.

The fact that an average politician, howsoever grudgingly, comes to our doorstep to seek our vote, in spite of his/her ‘social standing’, is also the part of the legacy left behind by Ambedkar, who envisaged the universal adult franchise.

Yet this Ambedkar Jayanthi too leaves us with many unanswered questions, about the state of the nation, the discontent within the society, empowerment of the weaker sections, rotting food grains in state go-downs, while poor die of starvation, judicial recourse in day to day existence, caste based identify seeking to call the shots with despicable incidents in Khairlanji and other places. Hence, ‘revisiting’ Ambedkar and invoking his thoughts on the 14th of April merely injects a sense of symbolism and rhetoric in the annals of the nation.



GENESIS 2.0

DEAD ARE THE CLOWNS

Ananya Rajaram (2015-20)



Meet my new *idée fixe*, Leonard Alfred Schneider a.k.a. Lenny Bruce. Comedy as a genre has contributed significantly to entertainment. But it was when I read Lenny's book "How to Talk Dirty and Influence People" that *the morose and gloomy reality within the happy and gay varnish of comedy revealed itself*. The Prophet with a potty mouth, they called him. Bruce's sardonic comedy was way ahead of its time, which is probably why it didn't sit well with people then. Bruce believed that the truth could never be offensive. The fact that people seemed to be ignorant of the bare and brutal reality of matters like corruption, dishonesty and double standards disturbed him. The thought of them being offended by the mere mention of sex or other forms of intimate relations baffled him to the extent that it pushed him into depression. Anxiety and depression are common occurrences in the current generation and has been a common ailment among the comedians and writers as early as Charlie Chaplin or even Oscar Wilde.

At this juncture, one is reminded of Patton Oswalt's set, the one in which he opened with a dig at his life saying, "I'm married, and there's nothing worse for a comedian's career than happiness, regular sex and fulfilled needs. I just can't be funny anymore." This helps establish that we live in a world that romanticizes a melancholic state of mind. Sarcasm is arguably the best defense mechanism and a way to disguise a problem in comedic fabric. This has increased evidently in today's day and age. During the reign of Lenny Bruce, Jerry Seinfeld or Robin Williams, the jokes were mostly directed towards public observations, stereotypes or the government. When it comes to the present stars of comedy like Hasan Minhaj, Sarah Silverman or Hannah Gadsby, the content is more anecdotal, and the punch line is mostly directed towards themselves, which is often self-deprecatory. This is the case with a lot of Indian comics as well, such as Biswa Kalyan, Daniel Fernandez, Abish Mathew and many others. In fact, Hannah Gadsby in her Netflix special titled "Nannette" says, "I have built a career out of self-deprecating humor and I don't want to do that anymore. Do you understand what self-deprecation means when it comes from somebody who already exists in the margins? It's not humility, it's humiliation." The common perception for a long time has been that a happy person can't write, draw or be a standup comic. Pain is a motivating factor. Don't seek help because you lose your muse when you fix your mind. Gadsby, in a set about her coming out, talks about how a joke is structured, theorizing that there is an incident and a point of tension in a story with no conclusion. Reflecting that when comedians joke about anecdotal experiences and freeze them at their tension point to deliver the punch, they freeze the story in perspective, thus preventing any chance of closure. Performing that set repetitively in-turn affects their state of mind.

It is not lost on me that most stand-up comedians come with a lot of baggage. In all probability, that load is what motivates them to take the stage. Chaplin spoke from experience when he said that to truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain and play with it. Bruce, too, would have come from a similar place; it is indeed a joy to be all alone. Maybe being a comedian is either like the process of a rock becoming a sculpture or like a fruit-bearing tree becoming timber. In both cases, anything from pain to destruction is essential to spread pleasure. Perhaps every genre of humour has a pinch of "Gallows Humour" to it.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CENTRIFUGATION

Saumya Kapoor (2016-21)



"You are what you do." — Carl Gustav Jung

Just when we think that the worst is over, the news about another icon or artist being sexually abusive rears its ugly head again, and this is nothing short of a moral conundrum for the modern society. The bone of contention is always this: should we consider the art that they make beyond the purview of punishment or boycott these individuals in entirety? There are, of course, arguments both, in support of and against the deed of doing either.

It is quite easy to believe, and rightly so, that the work of an individual comes from *within* them. How could one, then, separate Woody Allen's persona from the characters that he creates, and which are eerily remindful of Allen himself? There are no two Woody Allens, after all. Thus, if the artist is not distinct from his work, how does the audience do it for its, and ultimately the artist's aid? Another aspect which must be considered is the reassurance that this constant support provides to the person; adoration of the masses could be the opium that relieves and encourages the artist to keep doing what they are, without any remorse. R. Kelly and John Lennon are two individuals who have benefitted from this. Perhaps, by living in denial, we are also contributing to the abuse, however indirect it may be. Public backing aside, what ought we to interpret from the gesture of awarding somebody an Oscar even after it has been alleged that they are abusers? Do ingenuity and the ability to move people through one's work absolve them of their iniquities?

On the other hand, the awareness of the concept of Intentional Fallacy provides an argument in favour of such artists. What then of our right of being able to enjoy a piece of art? Does every piece of work provide an all-inclusive portrait of the artist? It is also problematic to assign a *time-period* for which an artist must be embargoed before they are accepted again. For example, it is common knowledge that both, Picasso and Miles Davis were emotionally and physically abusive towards those around them, but it has been forty-six and twenty-eight years respectively since they passed away. Though it is true that the impositions upon these individuals are moral rather than legal, there has to be an end to such sanctions. It must be acknowledged that the action of supporting an artist is of an intimate nature, and it is sorrowful that there is no black and white when it comes to decisions like this.

Ultimately, while it is foolish of us to simply call the misdeeds of artists a result of their 'demons', it is even more erroneous on our part to underestimate the might of the influence that these icons harness and ultimately convey how inconsequential those misdeeds were. Undeniably, a heavy overture is attached to the works of all such artists.



MENTAL HEALTH 101

Aditi Nagesh (2017-22)



Has mental illness been de-stigmatised completely? Not quite. Are people talking about their mental health openly? Yes, definitely; more than ever before. But it happens only in liberal circles, which happen to be atypical occurrences in India. The process of de-stigmatisation of mental illness, much like that of homosexuality, has been very sporadic, which is why its reach is limited.

When people *do* talk about it, many of them are dismissed with an “Oh, it’s just a phase. Get over it!” or “Stop being so dramatic. We all have it bad.” This kind of trivialising leads a lot of people to think that maybe it’s all in their heads. To that, I’d like to say, “Of course it is happening in your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?”

The narrative that going to therapy or taking medication somehow weakens you is sordid. The single-most toxic thing most people have been accustomed to believe is that being a strong individual begins with doing everything alone and without any help. What it’s really about is understanding when you need help and knowing how to reach out and ask for that help which is needed to function at a healthy level. Has it been said enough that mental health is as important as, if not more than, physical health? A parallel to visiting the doctor for physical illnesses may have been drawn one too many times, but it has been done rightly so. If you have a mental disorder, you treat it just the same— go to therapy, take medications, unlearn maladaptive thinking and grow as a human being. That said, going to therapy or taking medication is a personal choice. It’s okay to want to deal with your demons on your own, if that’s what works out best; more power to you(!), just as long as you don’t have a ‘holier-than-thou’ attitude towards people who opt for therapy or medications. On that note, when we say, “people should be free to talk about mental health without judgement”, we don’t mean “weaponize it and use it to manipulate others”. Somewhere along the road to de-stigmatising mental health, the concept of romanticising it caught on. Quite a number of people think that their deteriorated mental health is what makes them creative. One might even hear people say, “I wish I were depressed so I could be more creative” and justify that statement with hogwash like, “Van Gogh painted masterpieces because of his mental illness”. For all those who think this way, Vincent van Gogh knew that he was mentally ill; he wanted to change that, and so, he willingly checked himself into an asylum to get the help he needed. He painted some iconic pieces like *The Starry Night*, *Still Life: Vase with Pink Roses* and *Olive Trees*, all while getting better in the asylum. Although his demons did end up winning, he gave it his all to fight against them. Mental help doesn’t hurt your art, it improves it.

THE BEST MEN CAN BE

Aishwarya Iyer (2016-21)



We live in an era where people’s exposure to a plethora of subjects, values and opinions encourage radical changes in perspectives. Feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change are a few noteworthy examples. However, the heated debate on “Toxic Masculinity” is just catching pace with today’s times, and its attempts to be presented under the spotlight has welcomed a furore of responses from the masses.

The term “Toxic Masculinity”, conventionally synonymous to the ‘alpha male’, is described as a regressive manifestation of manhood that is strictly limited to dominance, brutality, violence and aggression, and refrains from delving deeper into the pool of emotions. Privilege, ferocity and an unhealthy hunger for power are regarded as the yardsticks for measuring the length and breadth of this term.

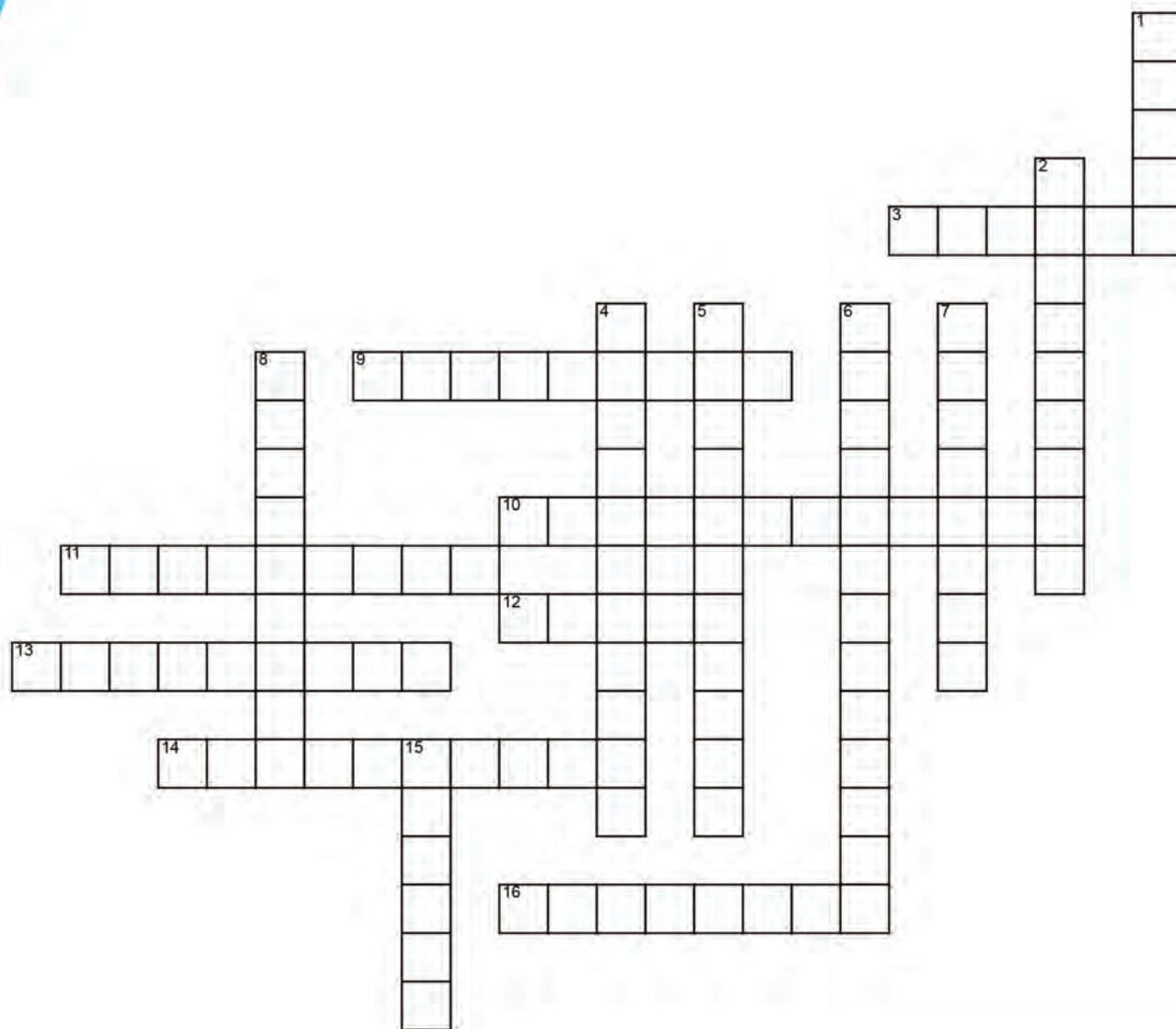
The community of the world is slowly, albeit steadily, witnessing a paradigm shift in the roles and responsibilities assigned to the sexes, with a much-awaited transition to a gender-fluid society and riddance of archaic perspectives of gender regarding jobs, fashion, technology, activities, institutions and emotions.

This anti-stigmatization of gender propels companies to grab hold of such opportunities to boost their sales while aligning their objectives with societal upliftment and dynamism. The latest ‘brand’ on the market to defy the shackles of toxic masculinity was Gillette, a company that has been primarily known as a men’s brand for beauty and personal hygiene. Gillette was involved in the production of an advertisement called “The Best Men Can Be”, a play on their age-old tagline— “The Best a Man Can Get”. It attacked toxic masculinity, which is perverse in the community, through rejection of notions of bullying, mansplaining, abusing male privilege and harassing women sexually, along the lines of the infamous #MeToo movement. The most eye-catching feature throughout the ad was men stepping in to prevent other men from indulging in such acts, showing a different take on ‘manhood’.

However, the advertisement stirred a whirlpool of emotions and was met with severe backlash from the misogynistic lot, who swore to shun the company’s products till it issued a public apology. Nevertheless, others interpreted it in a more positive light and defended the company’s stance, stating that it was time that people were given an opportunity to ponder over the meaning, relevance and repercussions of such ‘toxic masculinity’ on both sexes alike and how we could move to a rational, fluid and accepting environment for wholesome development.

I personally believe that a man is not confined to such a poisonous meaning, for the role, image and beauty of men goes beyond such boundaries. Men are intelligent, thoughtful and caring human beings who strive to be better versions of themselves, and are willing to accept rational equality. In the words of Terry Crews, “*It’s time men hold men accountable*” and put an end to toxic masculinity.

So, as a human being, I ask my male readers, what is your definition of masculinity?



ACROSS

- 3 The classic video game that Tony Stark catches an agent playing on the S.H.I.E.L.D. heli-carrier in 'The Avengers'
- 9 Who was the Scientist who described earth as a 'Pale Blue Dot'?
- 10 Which North Atlantic Archipelago is famous for not having any prisons?
- 11 The first Sultan of India who was recognized by the Khalifa. He was a slave turned Sultan.
- 12 This material looks solid but resembles a liquid in its molecular structure.
- 13 The baba who accused of sexual harassment and of violating the Gold Control Act, 1968.
- 14 Who was the first Disney Princess? (Hint: No, it wasn't Snow White)
- 16 The McDonald sauce that Rick from 'Rick and Morty' loves

DOWN

- 1 The musical instrument that's a hybrid of a flugelhorn and a tuba.
- 2 In Douglas Adam's 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy', what was the in-ear translator called?
- 4 What was a hat dealer in the middle-ages called? (Hint: The term today, in British English, refers to a dealer of small items used in sewing.)
- 5 The first YouTube trend to hit #1 in the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. (Hint: It has been performed in the air and under the water, too!)
- 6 The author of 'Taking Rights Seriously', and the successor of HLA Hart as the Chair of Jurisprudence at Oxford
- 7 A North American expression demanding that an opponent in a contest submit.
- 8 The first Indian woman to hold a cabinet rank, and the first Health Minister of India
- 15 A device that will zap you every time you try to smoke (or bite your nails, according to settings)

Smriti Rao Penjerla (2017-22)



OFFSIDE RULE FOR DUMMIES

As per the codified laws of football, there are 17 key parts of the sport that determines how the laws are made. The infamous law 11, more commonly known as the 'offside rule' is arguably one of the most debated topics among football fans. It is so widely debated on due to the complexity of how the law is phrased. The offside rule is in place to prevent 'goal-hanging', which is when an attacker stands in a position beyond the last line of defence, just before the goal-keeper. When the attacker is in such a position, his/her direct involvement in play requires the referees to rule him/her offside, which results in a free kick being awarded to the opposition. For a player to be ruled offside, the whole body or a part of the body must be beyond the last defender (excluding the goalkeeper) while being involved in direct play i.e. when the ball is being played directly to the player or the player is gaining any sort of advantage from it. One must understand that being in an offside position is not an offence in itself, but the involvement in direct play from such a position is.

ARJUN RAMPRASAD (2018-23)



100 YEARS AGO

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

April 13th, 1919; Baisakhi, one of India's most celebrated Sikh festivals, had attracted thousands of innocent and unarmed Indians to the Jallianwala Bagh park. The purpose of the peaceful gathering was to protest against the arrests made in connection with the Rowlatt Act, which had fuelled agitation amongst the populace. Chancing upon this opportunity, the military commander of Amritsar, General Dyer, arrived at the park with a small and dangerous troop of soldiers and immediately opened fire. The firing lasted for 10 minutes, spilling the blood of thousands. The aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh still haunts us today. Even though, the British government extended their condolences for the massacre, there hasn't been an official public apology issued from their side, till date.

AISHWARYA IYER (2016-21)



VASARI CORRIDOR



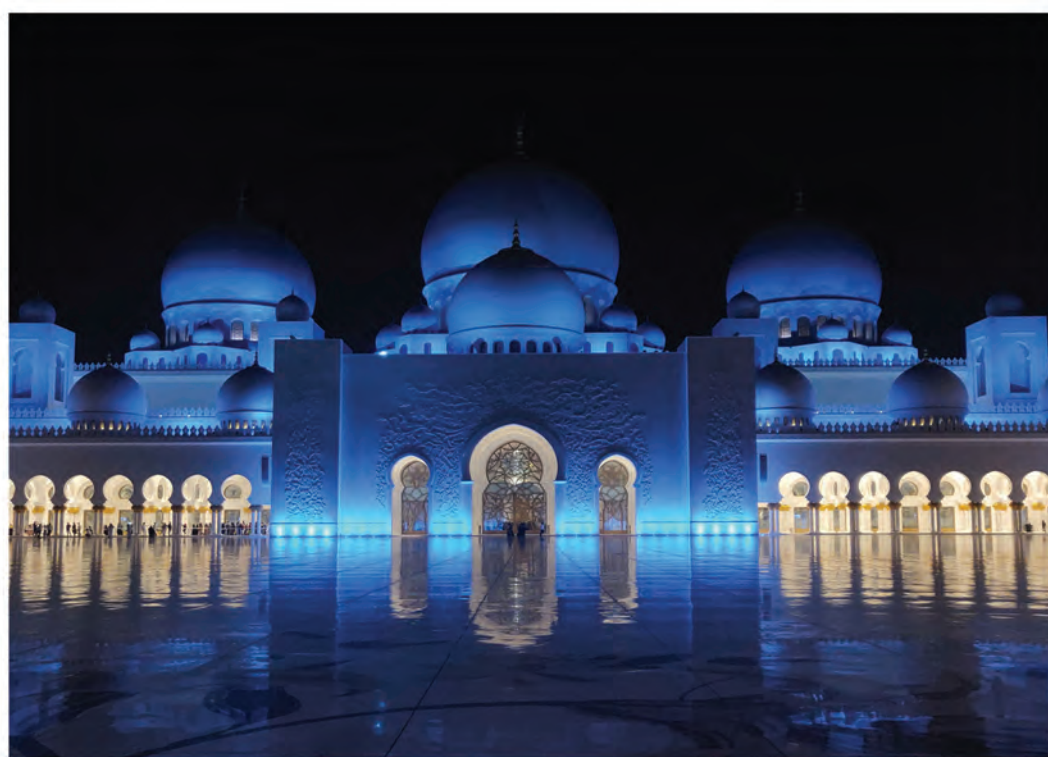
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