

A detailed oil painting portrait of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, showing him from the chest up. He has long, wavy, light-colored hair and is wearing a white cravat and a brown coat. The background is dark and textured.

E Pluribus Unum

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY
By SHREEYA MITTAL, SNS NOIDA

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

193 MEMBER STATES ↔ ONE UNITED NATIONS

A critical analysis: The Social Contract Theory

-by Shreeya Mittal, Grade XII, SNS Noida



Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was one of the 18th century's most important political thinkers. His work focused on the relationship between human society and the individual, and contributed to the ideas that would lead eventually to the French Revolution.

The Social Contract, with its famous opening sentence 'Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains' from this provocative opening, Rousseau describes the myriad ways in which the "chains" of civil society suppress the natural birthright of man to physical freedom. **For Rousseau, the only legitimate political authority is the authority consented to by all the people, who have agreed to such government by entering into a social contract.** He also stated instead that people could only experience true freedom if they lived in a civil society that ensured the rights and well-being of its citizens.

Du contrat social; ou, Principes du ... (aim of the social contract theory)

The stated aim of The Social Contract is to determine whether there can be a legitimate political authority since people's interactions seemed to put them in a state far worse than the good one they were in the state of nature

How did the social contract impact society?

During the antebellum and Civil War periods, social contract theory was used by all sides. Enslavers used it to support states' rights and succession, Whig party moderates upheld the social contract as a symbol of continuity in government, and abolitionists found support in Locke's theories of natural rights.

More recently, historians also have linked social contract theories to pivotal social movements such as those for Native American rights, civil rights, immigration reform, and women's rights.

Pitfalls of social contract theory

Psychological Egoism and Hobbes's Version of Social Contract Theory:

Hobbes is a psychological egoist, because he asserts that when in a "natural" state, humans always act in their self-interest. There are at least two ways to understand psychological egoism. One suggests that it is not logically possible to act except in our self-interest: Even acts that are apparently unselfish, e.g., rescuing someone from drowning or donating to charity, are motivated by the

good feelings they produce in us — ultimately, therefore, a selfish motive.

Another view of psychological egoism is that although it may be possible for us to act selflessly. **Hobbes makes an empirical claim that because there are neither natural laws nor divine commands which define moral behaviour, human beings act, by default, only in their self-interest.** The resultant “state of nature,” unless mitigated by the authority of an unaccountable sovereign and social contracts to which all people are bound.



Problems with the social contract theory:

- It gives the government too much power to make laws under the guise of protecting the public.
- An outflow of this thought is a movement entitled the “Sovereign Citizens” or “Freemen of the Land.” The FBI identifies these movements as individual citizens who reject government control and “the government operates outside of its jurisdiction. Because of this belief, they do not recognize federal, state, or local laws, policies, or regulations.”. The FBI considers these movements as domestic terrorist threats.

- If we do accept the contract and wish to abide by it, we may not fully understand what our part of the contract is or ought to be.

- Contracts can be unfair for some. For example, the poor do not get the same benefits of the contract.

Contemporary Critiques of Social Contract Theory

Feminist Arguments

For the most part, feminism resists any simple or universal definition. I will concentrate therefore on: Carole Pateman's argument about the relation between the contract and women's subordination to men.

Carole Pateman's 1988 book, *The Sexual Contract*, argues that lying beneath the myth of the idealized contract, is a more fundamental contract concerning men's relationship to women. **Contract theory represents itself as being opposed to patriarchy and patriarchal right.**

This 'original pact' is made by brothers, literally or metaphorically, who, after overthrowing the rule of the father, then agree to share their domination of the women who were previously under the exclusive control of one man, the father. **The change from "classical patriarchy" to modern patriarchy is a shift, then, in who has power over women. Men's relationships of power to one another change, but women's relationship to men's power does not.**

This fact, that one form of patriarchy was not overthrown completely, but rather was replaced with a different form, in which male power was distributed amongst more men, rather than held by

one man. Patriarchal control of women is found in at least three paradigmatic contemporary contracts: the marriage contract, the prostitution contract, and the contract for surrogate motherhood. Each of these contracts is concerned with men's control of women, or a particular man's control of a particular woman generalized.

According to the terms of the marriage contract, in most states in the U.S., a husband is accorded the right to sexual access, prohibiting the legal category of marital rape. Prostitution is a case that modern patriarchy requires equal access by men to women, in particular sexual access, access to their bodies. And surrogate motherhood can be understood in terms of access to women's reproductive capacities. All these examples demonstrate that contract is the means by which women are dominated and controlled. Contract is not the path to freedom and equality.

Conclusion

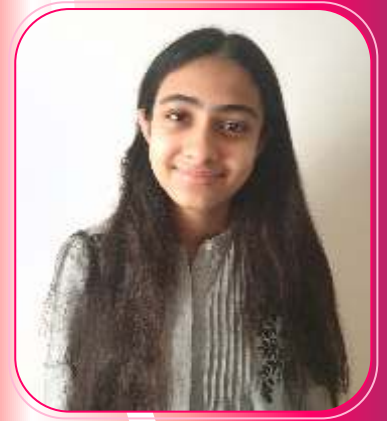
Virginia Held has argued that “Contemporary Western society is in the grip of contractual thinking”. It would be difficult to overestimate the effect that social contract theory has had, both within philosophy, and on the wider culture. Social contract theory is undoubtedly with us for the foreseeable future.

But so too are the critiques of such theory, which will continue to compel us to think and rethink the nature of both ourselves and our relations with one another.

Cancellation:

Grade 12th Exam

-by Mehar Gaba, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the education sector globally. Classes have been suspended to implement social distancing. Educational institutions, from schools to universities, have shifted to online mode of teaching and evaluation.

Most of last year, schools were only open online due to the Coronavirus pandemic. According to a 2017-2018 National Statistical Office (NSO) report, about three-fourths of students in India do not have access to the internet in their homes. Along with this about 89% of India's students don't own computers or devices that could help in their studies such as tablets or palm-tops.

Among the students who had access to means of studying during the pandemic, many were not comfortable with the online teaching methods as it is a fairly

new system. Many state boards such as West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had decided to postpone the 12th-grade boards but at that point in time, students wanted their exams to be cancelled altogether.

Taking to Twitter, students had been urging cancellation using the hashtag- #cancel12thboardexams2021. A group of students had also posted a petition on Change.org seeking cancellation of the CBSE Class 12 board exams.



Apart from not wanting to risk their health in the ongoing pandemic students have been wanting the cancellation of boards for many different reasons. **One such reason is the uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic and the anxiety and stress caused by it.**

Several students across India have also had family members who have succumbed due to covid or are suffering from it. Many students find that the classes being held online are not sufficient to

give offline exams. Due to the pandemic, many coaching institutions have been shut which has caused great difficulty to a lot many students. By holding the Board exams in June or students would face a challenge as they wouldn't receive their marks in time to apply to higher universities abroad.

Coming back to the present, The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Cancelled the Grade 12 boards on the 1st of June 2021 for the session 2020-2021. This came as a huge relief for most students across India. This decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by The Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out that the decision to cancel CBSE Class 12 Board exams 2021 had been taken in the interest of students. He also mentioned that the health and safety of our students are of utmost importance and there would be no compromise on this aspect. PM Modi also said that Anxiety among students, parents and teachers, must be put to an end and students should not be forced to appear for exams in such a stressful situation.

The news relief for some and disappointment for others. While some students were disheartened as they had studied year-round for the exams. Others took health as their priority. After the announcement, everybody had certain apprehensions. **One major concern being of the students who were planning to enrol abroad for their higher studies. Other students too were uncertain about how they will be marked.**

CBSE had framed a thirteen members committee to develop the objective criteria for the assessment of Class 12 students and the committee has submitted the plan recently which CBSE then submitted to the Supreme Court.

As per the early reports that were coming in from the government, many different evaluation methods were under consideration. The initial suggestions included-

- Internal Assesment conducted by schools individually
- Practical marks- as it is
- A weighted average of marks of students scored in class 9, 10 and 11.

Eventually, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) declared the formula for assessment for Grade 12 students. **The Evaluation will be based on a 40:30:30 formula and the results for class 12 will be out before the 31st of July.** For classes 10th and 12th, marks in the best of three papers from five papers in term exams will be considered. **Marks in the best of three papers from class 10 would be given 30% weightage, for class 11, 30%, and for class 12, 40%.** For class 12 marks obtained in the unit, terms and practicals will also be considered.

Evaluating the current students based on grades would also be discriminatory for them as no student has ever received grades in class 11th.

The grading criteria was deemed unfair by some parents and students who expressed that several board exam candidates did not perform well in their 11th-grade final exams thus, considering those marks for their class 12 results on Cbse's part. **However, those students who have been consistent with their grades are happy with this criterion of marking.**



Covid-19:

The Pandora's box of Wuhan

-by Lakshita Sharma, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



A pandemic that shook the world. A virus that made millions of families fall apart. **But, are we analysing this global crisis from the right angle?**

17th November, a landmark day in history that led to a ferocious outbreak. **The first case of Coronavirus, scientifically named as COVID-19 was a virus that made the Chinese city of Wuhan a hotspot and the origin to a noxious pandemic.**

It was predicted that SARS-CoV-2 virus jumped from bats, or an intermediary species, to humans in a random event sometime in 2019. Many still hold this view, and some have become even more confident in the pathway to believe that **its origin was actually man made in one of Wuhan's greatest medical labs.**

Some scientists had been reluctant to publicly broach the “lab leak” hypothesis in part because the administration of several countries such as the United States had asserted, without clear evidence, its confidence in the theory, as it tried to find ways to blame China for the pandemic.

The idea also collapsed into conspiracy theories, like the notion that the virus was deliberately released as a bioweapon. At the most basic level, the case for the natural origins of the virus rests on incomplete evidence, while the lab leak hypothesis rests on the gaps in that very evidence.

The possibility of a lab leak crossed the mind of Shi Zhengli, a renowned virologist at the Wuhan lab. She told Scientific American last year that she recalled being told in December 2019 about a mysterious pneumonia caused by a coronavirus spreading in the city of Wuhan and wondering if the pathogen came from her lab.



Dr. Li Meng Yah

Dr. Li Meng Yah who was the first to claim the virus leak theory has now made huge revelations concerning Covid-19. The first case of Covid-19 in 2019, which broke out in Wuhan had allegations of being man-made and cultured in a lab in China.

The brandished 2020 emails of U.S. Advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci have confirmed her theory behind the outbreak of the virus. Doctors say that the WHO team that visited the labs to study the extent of origin and investigate had not done proper research, and hence the underlying truth behind the virus is still a hidden secret.

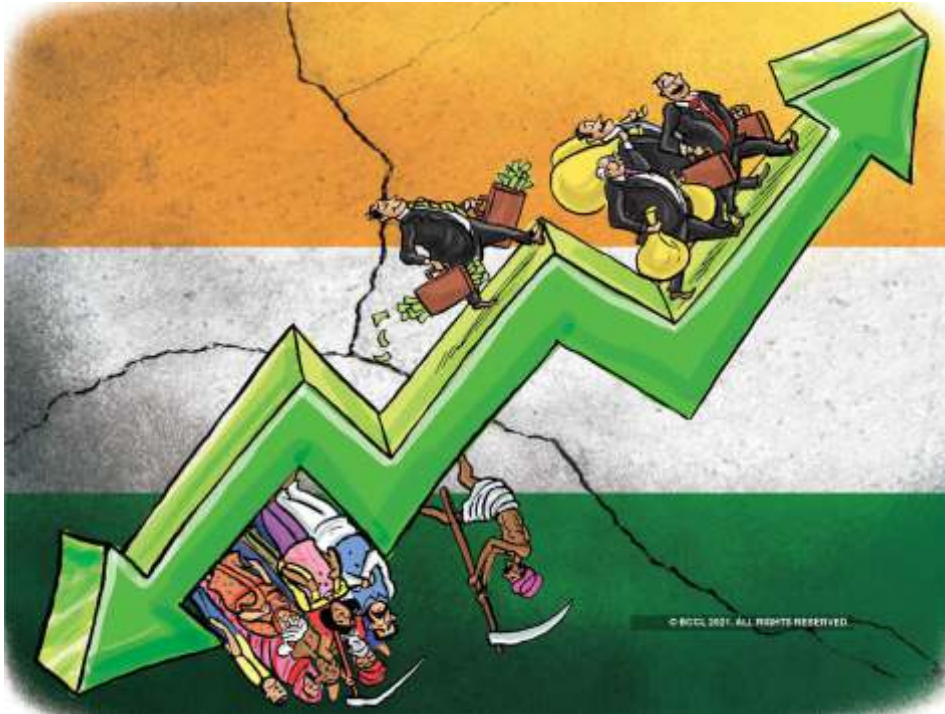
On the contrary, in July, David Robertson, a viral genomics researcher at University of Glasgow, authored a peer-reviewed paper in Nature Medicine that showed the lineage behind SARS-CoV-2 and its closest known ancestor, a virus called RaTG13, have been circulating in bat populations for decades.

Virologists think this relative, which is 96-percent identical to the novel coronavirus, probably propagated and evolved in bats or human hosts and then went undetected for about 20 years before adapting its current form and causing the ongoing pandemic.

Hence to conclude, what we can say at this point of time is that More answers about the roots of the pandemic may emerge in the coming months, but it's likely that further inquiries won't be enough to satisfy everyone. Even after the pandemic fades away, the virus that caused it may long frustrate and confound.

COVID Vs Indian Economy: Micro and Macro

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



An economy, that once portrayed the pinnacle of human intelligence and perseverance, has now, for quite some time, been in the way of the COVID19 storm that is taking down everything in its path. The whole world is going through an unimaginable crisis, wherein the uncertainty of what awaits them is eating away at their minds.

Financial Problems have been faced by people of all generations, but today, during the COVID19 pandemic, these problems have increased exponentially. In such a situation, virtually no one is left untouched by these problems. The pandemic doesn't discriminate in whose empire it cripples. Whether a person is a multi-billionaire or a worker in a cottage industry, some way or the other their business has taken a hit. And sadly there is no end to it in sight.

Zooming into the Indian Economy, which is divided into two broad categories, the organized and the unorganized sector. Most businesses in India fall under the unorganized sector and this often makes them susceptible to being swept under by challenges such as this.

The threat posed by lockdowns, recessions, supply chain interruptions and the likes, often leads to these businesses going bankrupt, or shutting down. This results in a spiraling of lots of people's lives, whose entire livelihood depended on their job.

Under ordinary circumstances, such losses are tough to recover from, but now, recovery seems more distant than ever, at least for the smaller businesses. According to a study conducted, over 82% of small businesses have encountered a negative impact during the past year.

Digitization has risen to an unfathomable level, in comparison to previous times. Small businesses often don't have the resources and/or the information required to make themselves reachable through online means. And as a result, the ones that were available were likely to have kept their head above the water when the flood came in. Unfortunately, this was a small, small number. Arun Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun and Bradstreet, stated that the rate of recovery of India's economy is quite dependent on how the small businesses will get back on their feet.

An article from UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) states that MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) can power a stronger recovery from COVID19 pandemic, due to their innovative and opportunity seeking nature. UNCTAD Acting-Secretary General Isabelle Durant suggested that

short term measures like relieving tax burdens off the shoulders of MSMEs, extending debt finance, and employment support. In addition to that, she adds that it is important for governments to invest in long term structural policies including digital and financial development and overall plans to recalibrate the economy.

Right at the beginning of 2021, S&P global ratings forecasted Indian GDP growth at 11% for the coming year. Many short-term economic indicators were bolstering people's confidence about the Indian Economy hitting the ground running in 2021, after a unprecedented economic fall in 2020. Before this could become the truth, the brutal second wave took a toll on the country. As cases increased, lockdowns were put in place, and the economic recovery was stopped in its tracks.

In 2020, the Indian Government had announced a package worth 266 Billion \$ for supporting the economy due to the lockdowns which were in place then. There have, however, been no employment schemes or financial support policies put in place since the second wave hit. Sales of goods including grocery and apparel among others fell drastically (49%) in April, according to Retail Association of India. The CEO of HDFC bank Sashidhar Jagdishan, said on an investor call that for that first time in many years, they didn't have a grip of what is happening.

Tourism Industry has faced, perhaps, the most devastating effect of COVID19. With countrywide lockdowns in place, restriction on movement and social distancing to be followed, they are barely getting any business. When the big industries take a hit like this, there is barely any hope left for the people involved in small businesses. As per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the unemployment rate grew from 6% in March to 8% in April. In lieu of

the repercussions of the second wave, the S&P has changed the GDP growth to 9.8%.

An article from Business Standard states that, matters like inoculation of vaccines, government spending boost for recovery and initiation of structural changes can mitigate the decrease in GDP.

As more people get vaccinated, more businesses can open, especially in cities which are the country's economic hubs. Structural market reforms will enable the economy to recover faster and stronger. Easy access to capital, sped up process of land acquisition for industrial and estate-based businesses, bureaucratic agility and administrative transparency can go a long way to help India make an economic comeback.

Encouraging of usage of digital means in form of e-commerce and social media can aid businesses to expand their outreach, amidst the uncertain times.

To conclude in short, this crisis that our world is enduring has taken a toll over everything. The economy is not exception to this. The financial insecurity and turmoil have put a lot of minds to unease.

The world will take a long time to recover from the wounds inflicted by COVID19, but it is time to begin taking baby steps towards recovering, and it begins with the micro, and culminates in fixing the macro.

The Tulsa Massacre: *It started with an arrest*

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The date was the 31st of May, the year was 1921, and the event was one of the largest events of race-related violence to ever occur in the United States, and even in the world at large. This was the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921...

What was the Tulsa Race Massacre?

The Tulsa Massacre is one of the biggest smudges on American history, right up there with slavery and Donald Trump's presidency, but it isn't as widely known as either of the two, which is why this is what I have chosen to write about. **The Tulsa Race Massacre was a two -day long series of riots, mobs' attacks, arson, vandalism, and any other serious crime you can think of! It occurred in the town of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and caused the destruction of the African American inhabited area of Greenwood.**

Greenwood was a very prosperous area, full of successful businessmen, which earned it the name 'The Black Wall Street'. It had been made by freed slaves, and had been almost exclusively populated by African-Americans ever since its creation.

This was a haven for these people, who had been discriminated against everywhere, and rarely had safe houses to live in. Greenwood was a place full of amenities that allowed the inhabitants to live comfortably and safely. However, the massacre that occurred there would cause property damages that would amount to \$27,000,000 in today's money, and level the town completely.



Why did it happen?

The day before the massacre, Dick Roland, an African-American teenager, boarded an elevator in an office building in Tulsa called the Drexel Building. It was being operated by Ms. Sarah Page, a young Caucasian woman. While he was on the elevator, Ms. Page suddenly screamed, and Mr. Roland ran away. Someone called the police, and Dick Roland was arrested on the morning of the 31st.

Rumors about the reason for his arrest spread like wildfire through the Caucasian people of the city. **They were finally informed of what happened in the front-page story of the Tulsa Tribune newspaper, which said that Dick had been arrested for assaulting Sarah Page.**

This was not taken well by the white people of Tulsa. There had been a rise in racist sentiments in the United States of America, and the infamous Ku Klux Klan, a gargantuan white supremacy group, was on the rise.

This was a very precarious situation, and the Caucasian population of Tulsa decided to create a mob that gathered around Tulsa's courthouse, with one demand- The Sheriff must give them Dick Roland. However, **the Sheriff, Willard McCullough, decided against that, and ordered his subordinates to close off and protect the top floor of the courthouse, where he hid with Roland.**

In an attempt to assist Sheriff McCullough and his men, a group of approximately 25 African-American men (all of them armed)- went to the Tulsa Courthouse. However, the Sheriff sent them away, saying that he didn't need their help. Meanwhile, a small section of the mob outside made a daring-yet-foolish attempt to enter the National Guard's armoury and collect arms and ammunition from there. All of this happened around 9:00 at night.

An hour later, with rumors of a much bigger attack going around, 75 armed African-American men went to the courthouse, however they saw a much bigger group than they had expected. **1500 white men, who were mostly armed, were waiting around the courthouse!** This was a huge number, with the white men being 20 times more than their opponents! A fight began between the two groups, which the African Americans began losing (mainly because

they were outnumbered). They fled back to Greenwood, hoping that the violence was over. Little did they know, the violence had just begun...

After the retreat

After the retreat, innumerable small groups of people from the giant mob began attacking the town. Several of these people were given weapons by city officials, and they used them to shoot and kill several unarmed and innocent people. *To add to this violence, there were rumors that African-American residents of other nearby towns were coming to attack the white mob in Tulsa, many more people began attacking Greenwood, and the town was set ablaze.*

Buildings were burned, and many were looted as well, leaving them ashen and empty. The sheer strength of the mob was enough to prevent firefighters from being able to help. The firefighters were threatened with guns and knives by the white mob, and had to leave Greenwood before they could even try to put out the fires. *This continued until dawn on the next day, at which point the rioters had fled the scene.*

The riot had essentially ended by the time the National Guard reached the scene. When they reached, the Governor of Tulsa declared martial law. *The National Guard began helping put out fires, and imprisoned around 6000 African-Americans, and had them placed under armed guard.*

After The Massacre

Once the massacre finished, Dick Roland was acquitted, with

the reasoning being that he had probably just tripped over or stepped on Ms. Page's foot, and not done anything serious. Deeply traumatized by the incident, Mr. Roland left Tulsa forever. Then the extent of the damages came to light.

The Red Cross estimated almost 1300 houses were destroyed! Along with that, 200 more were completely looted. Churches, hotels, newspapers, and even schools weren't spared from the wrath of the mob that destroyed Greenwood.

Along with that, there were 36 reported deaths at the time, but there have been recent studies that say that the deaths may have touched the 300 mark. This made the massacre one of the most devastating events in American history, but what you shall see now, will devastate- and anger- you even more.



Government Cover-ups

Every time there has been a huge riot, a massacre, a terrorist attack, or any tragic incident, governments tend to encourage memorial services, and publicly condemn the attackers. However, this was not the case for the Tulsa Massacre. Contrary to the past reactions to losses and deaths, the government did everything in

their power to cover it up! They prevented reporters from writing about it, got newspapers to recall any articles about the massacre, erased it from their archives, and never mentioned it again. Until the very recent past, it wasn't even a subject taught as part of any historical curriculum.

“Old sins cast long shadows” - The long-term consequences

However, on the 50th anniversary of the incident, people began taking an interest in this horrific act of coordinated violence once more. On the 75th Anniversary, there was a memorial service held in Greenwood. The 75th anniversary also marked the creation of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission, which was created to study the riot, and it found a whole lot more than expected.

They found an entire set of unmarked graves, and also concluded that in no more than 18 hours, almost 10000 people lost their homes. Oklahoma, the State where Tulsa is located, tried to pass a Bill in the State Senate to get the massacre taught in schools, however, it was rejected.

Its rejection displayed how the government was still trying to cover up the massacre, even though the State Department said that the massacre had been taught since 2004 itself.

Then, in 2018, the government finally made a small change with a HUGE impact. They renamed the 1921 Race Riot Commission to the 1921 Race Massacre Commission, indicating that they acknowledged the deaths caused as an act of massacre and not just a riot, and that the effects of the incident on the population lead them to the name change.

History is Made.

Then, In 2021, **US President Joe Biden**, on the 100th Anniversary of the attack, condemned the incident. He talked about how horrific this massacre was. He said, “**Just because history is silent, it does not mean that it did not take place**”, in relation to the massacre, and reminded the country of how horrific the incident truly was.

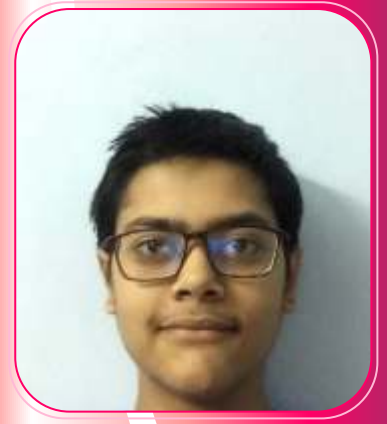
In the process of this, he became the first sitting US President to properly talk about and acknowledge the Massacre for what it was. This made history, and also turned over a new leaf in american politics. **With the Black Lives Matter Movement on a rise, this action has become even more important in the constant struggle for equality.**

Conclusion

This incident was definitely one of the worst things to occur on American soil. Apart from the infrastructure lost, and the homelessness caused, the government refusal to acknowledge this incident was a horrifying thing. **However, in a great display of progress, though it took a century to come about, Joe Biden acknowledged the incident, showing, once again, that good shall always prevail.**

Israel-Palestine Conflict

-by Akshay Bhatia, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



The Israel Palestine conflict is the world's longest conflict, starting in 1948. Recently, in 2021, there were protests and rioting and even rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Let us see what exactly is this conflict.

History

Zionism, was a movement to make a new nation where Jews could live. The British control over Palestine ended on 14 May 1948. The UNO divided the country amongst Jews and Arabs. 44 % of the area went to the Jews and 55 per cent of the area went to the Arabs. The city of Jerusalem was in the control of the UNO.

Jews lived in Israel and Arabs in Palestine. Jerusalem is a city which is holy for Christians, Muslims and Jews. For Jews, the city is holy as The Temple of God is situated

there and the place was also their religious centre. Many of the events in the life of Jesus Christ took place in Jerusalem. Muhammed rose to heaven from Jerusalem and the Al-Asqa Mosque is situated there. Hence, all three religions hold the city to be holy.

Wars

The Arab countries were enraged by the decision of the UNO and six Arab countries attacked Israel. **Surprisingly, Israel won the war and also increased its territory from 14000 sq km to 34,600 sq km.** After this war, 4 more major wars have been fought by Israel.



In 1956, another war was fought due to the Suez canal crisis, which is the most important pathway for trade. On 26 July 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser (President of Egypt at that time) nationalized the canal. **Egypt imposed a fine on the ships passing through the Suez Canal. It also declared that it would not allow any ship which was coming to Israel to pass through the canal. Israel then attacked the Sinai area, having the support of England.** A war followed, the result of which was that ships coming to Israel were allowed to pass

through the canal. In 1967, Egypt and other Arab countries attacked Israel. This led to a six-day war. Many Airports of Egypt were destroyed by the Israeli air force. In the end, Israel won the war. Israel conquered the Gaza Strip from Egypt and took the west bank from Jordan.



In 1973, The Yom Kippur War took place. It was known as Yom Kippur War because the attack took place on the festival Yom Kippur which is celebrated by Israelites. There was a surprise attack by Egypt on Israel, leading to the war. The Israelite army invaded Egypt and even reached the capital of Syria, Damascus.

In 1982, the Lebanon War occurred. The Palestinians attacked Israel from Lebanon. In return, Israel attacked Lebanon in a most inhuman way, killing almost 20,000 common citizens. This war led to the emergence of the Palestinian nationalist and militant group Hamas.

On 10 May, 2021, Hamas warned Israel that there would be consequences if it did not withdraw security forces from the Temple

Mount complex and Sheikh Jarrah by 6pm. When Hamas did not receive any reply, then it along with Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched rockets, which hit a school and residences. In reply, Israel launched airstrikes on Gaza. **By 16 May, 950 targeted attacks had either completely or partially destroyed many schools, buildings, 4 hospitals and al-Shati refugee camp.** There was a great amount of violence, resulting in injury of more than 1900 and death of 256 Palestinians.

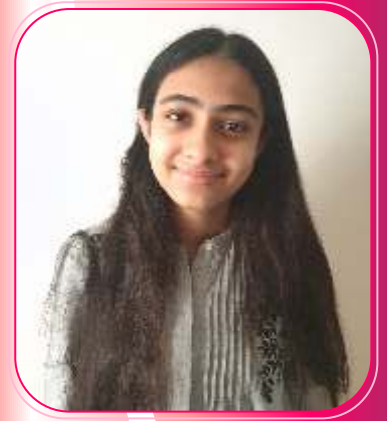
With the recent change in Israel's leadership, with Naftali Bennett replacing Benjamin Netanyahu, it is to be seen what changes occur in Israel's foreign policies in the coming future. **Let us hope for peace in Israel and Palestine.**



Democratization:

Across the world

-by Mehar Gaba, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Looking back at recent times some of the prominent protests observed in the last few years ask for freedom and equality. Be it the 202 Belarus protests, Protests against the coup in Myanmar, 2019-2020 Hong Kong protest or the 2020-2021 Thai Protests. Having a fair democracy would be one step forward for these protests.

Though a completely equitable and impartial democracy can never cease to exist, it does ensure the basic rights of all its citizens. This article is about democracy and how it is the world's most favoured form of government. **Democratization by definition, is the introduction of a democratic system or democratic principles or the action of making something accessible to everyone.** In simpler terms, it is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from amongst themselves.

The term Democracy first appeared in the ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of Athens during the period of classical antiquity. The term is also of Greek origins. 'Demos' meaning people 'Kratos' meaning strength (strength to the people). Athenians established what is generally held as the first democracy. This was established somewhere around 508-507 BCE. To go into further detail, Cleisthenes is referred to as the father of Athenian democracy.

Athenian democracy took the form of a direct democracy (Direct Democracy is where citizens themselves vote for or against specific proposals or laws. While Indirect democracy is where the citizens elect representatives to make the laws for them).

It had two distinguishing features- Firstly, the random selection of ordinary citizens to fill the few existing government administrative and judicial offices and secondly, a Legislative Assembly consisting of all Athenian eligible citizens.

All eligible citizens were allowed to speak and vote in the assembly which set the laws of the city-state. The eligible citizens however, excluded women, slaves and all foreigners. This system isn't quite equal, but a good start none the less.

The Roman Republic contributed significantly to many aspects of democracy too. Only a minority of Romans were citizens with votes in elections for representatives. Additionally, the Roman model of government inspired many political thinkers over the centuries.

Another example of early democracy is of the natives in North America, which in between the years of 1450 and 1640 AD.

Where they developed a democratic society before they came in contact with the Europeans. This indicates that forms of democracy may have invented or reshaped other democracies around the world.

Waves of Democracy are major surges of democracy that have been observed in history. **The term 'waves of democracy' was popularised by Samuel P. Huntington, a political scientist at Harvard university.** Democratisation links have been observed as links to sudden shifts in the distribution of power. This creates incentives to bring about domestic reform. **Huntington talks about three different waves of democracy.**

This first wave of democracy began in the early nineteenth century, Around the years of 1826-1828. The movement started when suffrage (right to vote) was granted to the majority of white males in the United States. Soon the present-day countries of France, Italy, Argentina, Canada, Britain and Australia's with a few others followed before the start of the twentieth century.

After the breakup of German, Russian, Ottoman and Australian empires twenty-nine new democracies were formed in the world. This was the peak of the first wave.

The reversal of the first wave started in about 1922 with the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy. The collapse majorly affected the newly formed democracies since these democracies could not stand against the rise of expansionist communism, totalitarian movements (relating to a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial.), fascist (forcible oppression of opposition) or military regimes which systematically rejected democracy.

The unfortunate nadir of the first wave came around the year 1942, when only a total of 12 democracies were left in the world.

The second wave began following the Allied victory in the second world war. It ended nearly twenty years later in 1962 with a total of 36 recognised democracies in the world. This number too, later dropped making the number of democracies in the world only 30.

This did not last for long as the third wave brought with it a surge that nobody had ever dreamed of seeing before. India too became democratic during this time. The third wave began in 1974 following the Carnation revolution in Portugal and the Spanish transition to democracy in the late 1970s.

The historic democratic transitions in Latin America took place in the 1980s. While Asia pacific countries such as the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan converted their governments to democracy in about 1986-1988. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many eastern European countries adopted the same fate along with sub-Saharan Africa in 1989.

In Latin America only Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela were democratic by 1978 and only Cuba and Haiti remained authoritarian by 1995, when the wave had swept across twenty countries. The expansion of democracies in some areas was remarkable.

Huntington points out that three-fourths of the newly formed democracies were Roman Catholics. Most Protestant countries were already established democracies.

Countries undergoing or having undergone the transition to democracy during this wave were said to be a subject of 'democratic backsliding'. Political scientists and researchers believed that the third wave would soon see its democratic form of government diminish just as its predecessors did in the first and second waves. Soon enough, following the onset of war and terror was established after the September 1st, 2001 (9/11) attacks took place. Some backsliding after this was evident. How significant or lasting the effect, remains a subject of debate to this day.

Scholars have noticed that the appearance of so-called waves of democracy largely disappeared when women's suffrage is considered. For example- Switzerland that was included in the first wave of democratisation did not grant women voting rights until 1971.

Democracy is so far the best form of government as-

- The rulers of the nation are elected by the public.
- It is a government run by and for the people.
- Democracy improves the quality of decision-making.
- Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts.
- Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens.
- Democracy is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct our own mistakes.
- Democracy ensures rights to each and every citizen.

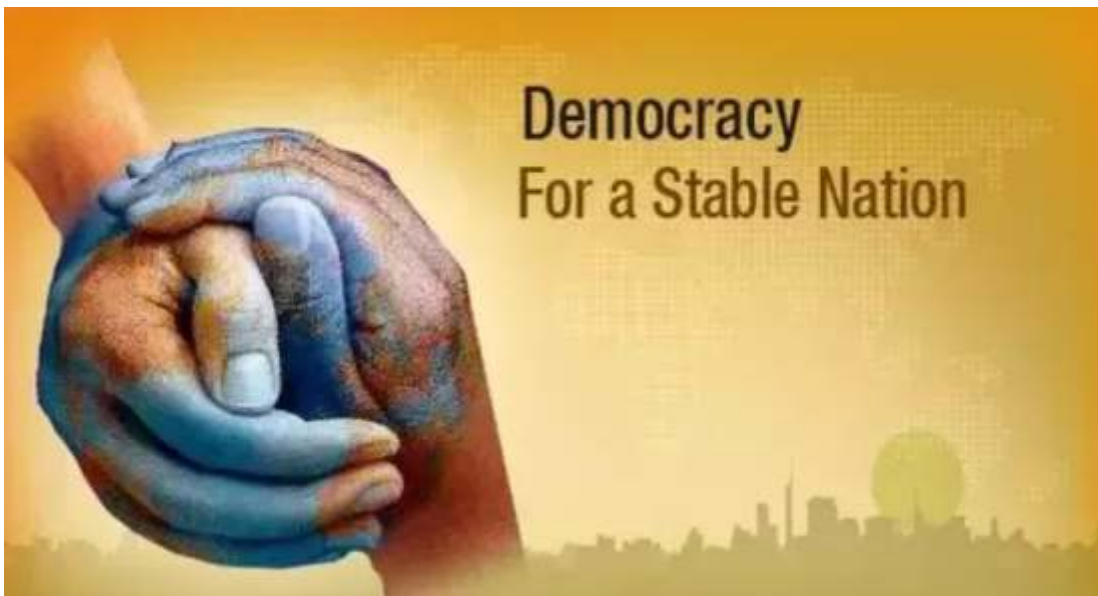
Many countries are un-democratic but try their effort best to seem democratic. One such example is China.

China is the biggest communist state in the world which controls more than 50% of the country's economy. China is not

democratic as it has only one party. China has a system of autocratic leadership (Autocratic leadership is a management style wherein one person controls all the decisions) all throughout the country. China limits the rights of its people too. The country claims to be a 'socialist democracy'.

Another example of a non-democratic country trying to be identified as democratic is North Korea. Officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Ironic, no?

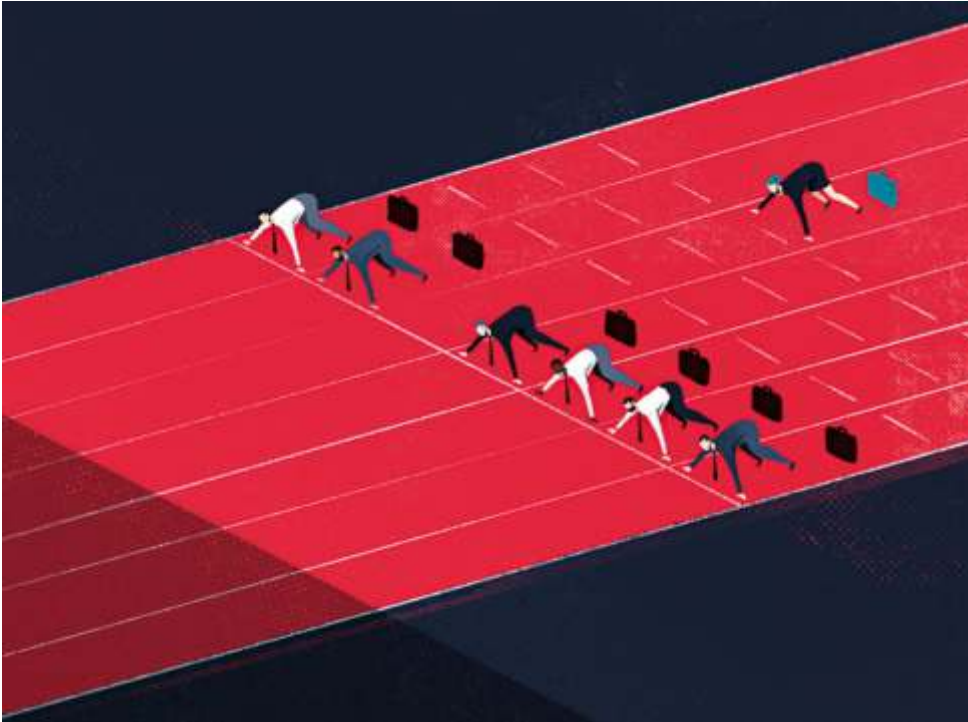
With 1,267 million inhabitants, of which 834 million can vote, India is the largest democracy in the world.



Gender Inequality :

Does it still exist today?

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Nowadays, in almost all towns and cities males and females seem to be treated equally, however this is not the case everywhere.

Firstly, there is no country with perfect gender equality thus all countries suffer some loss of human development due to gender inequality. There are various causes of gender inequality or of **males being superior to females**.

One of the causes for it within employment is the division of jobs. In most societies, there's an inherent belief that men are simply better equipped to handle certain jobs. **Most of the time, those are the jobs that pay the best. This discrimination results in lower income for women.**

Gender relationships are changing and inequalities between men and women are questioned almost everywhere – at work, in the home, and in public affairs. Yet the cold, hard facts show that **gender gaps and inequalities persist**, even in the face of startling social and economic transformations and concerted movements to challenge women's subordination.

How can this be? Especially in advanced industrial nations, why are gender inequalities proving so difficult to surpass. **Research shows that the answers lie, above all, in how people think about gender as they relate to one another.** Day by day people use gender as taken-for-granted common sense to manage their relationships with others.

Even though there is some inequality everywhere, some countries have it more than the others. In fact, there is an index that arranges countries according to their equality in terms of gender. It is called the Gender Inequality Index.

According to the **Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2020**, Yemen was the least gender- equal country in the world. In **Yemen, a country ranked last in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index for 13 consecutive years**, women have been suffering from deeply entrenched gender inequality rooted in a patriarchal society with rigid gender roles.



A Yemeni woman talked about her personal experience and said “By God, I am broken from the inside. It's not normal, I don't feel like a human being. I can't breathe properly like other human beings. We suffer from the forced niqab, child marriage, divorce shame, domestic violence and honor killings. I don't know... as if we are aliens. They [male family members] have to oppress us and we have to stay oppressed – like a puppet controlled by strings.” This shows the seriousness of the situation.

Also, since females are responsible for providing food and care in their homes, they have had to struggle with the challenges of limited access to food, water, sanitation and health care services – which has seen a steady deterioration as the conflict continues.

Despite these challenges, these brave women continue their struggle for the release of their male relatives or for their right to know what happened to them.

Now let's investigate **the case of Israel**, where the battle for gender equality continues to rage. Despite being the third country in the world to have a female head of state, **women were forced to sit at the back of the bus as recently as 2018**. In the face of gender equality legislation, religious figures continue to promote and enforce gender segregation in public spaces.

Although the Israeli Declaration of Independence sought to establish gender equality, there has been an increasing demand for enforcing gender segregation in public spaces by Ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities. There have been instances in which women have been denied access to a public bus for wearing shorts deemed “immodest.” In many situations, if women can access a bus, they are forced to sit in the back. In some universities, women are even forced

to drink from separate water fountains.



Gender inequality in India

Various international gender inequality indices rank India differently on various different factors like health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women, as well as on a composite basis, and these indices are controversial.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2011, India was ranked 113 on the Gender Gap Index (GGI) among 135 countries polled.[11] Since then, India has improved its rankings on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI) to 105/136 in 2013. That is a good sign and shows the nation is improving gradually.

Inequality is much less in cities than before (it does exist though) however in the villages or rural areas there is still a lot of discrimination and child abandonment mainly of girls.

The Truth

-by Nipun Jain, Grade XI, SNS Faridabad



The world has always been in a state of chaos. Chaos is the most basic thought in the universe. Nothingness. Zero. Then in that chaos arises a universe, a galaxy, a planet and on that planet arises life. **Life of the most basic creature. This creature, for millions of years evolves into one fine creation.**

This new creation is the start of a race so self-obsessed that it deems itself the best creation of a force as strong as the entirety, everything, the omnipresent, the omnipotent, to use their terms, the GOD. **These beings believe in this GODLY force and view it as their own.**

These puny creatures, the humans, as they call themselves, divide and fight over land, leadership and who is God's favorite. They create their own stories, their own characters, their own representation of evil and their own representation of good god.

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They fight among themselves trying to show each other who God favors, thinking that God will be pleased with all these skirmishes. Humans think they are so important that they have forgotten that God is neutral, neither good nor bad. Whom humans pray are nothing but merely their own imagination.

They start killing of their very own, deem them evil. Who survive, live to tell their tales where they are good and others evil. We never hear from the lost ones. They are hated by generations to come. They make their own way to communicate, they write down weird symbols that make no sense to tell each other what they think. They try to maintain their population yet term it as a sin.

These creatures are so shallow that the deep among them are oppressed. Who question the authorities are killed. They divide themselves and call themselves countries. Wars happen, consequences happen and happens realization and the cycle begins again. They call themselves democratic, they call themselves free. They begin to talk sense, establish logic and try to seek the truth by experiments, learn by mistakes but the believers begin to call them idiots. These believers are the ones with blind faith over their imagination of GOD.

They forget to seek the truth; they believe that they know the truth, truth of their imagination. They believe in a messiah. These are the people who call themselves the almighty's greatest creation. Is the almighty really so small, so shallow, so less creative that the best he could do is us? Us, who fight among ourselves, run after pieces of paper, make their own truth.

Question. Don't accept.

Seek. Don't repeat.

The Earth Magician

-by Gayatri Iyer, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



There are artists of different kinds - some that paint pictures with colours, others that create stories with their words and **some that create magic from the earth.**

My grandfather is one of those people who has a green thumb and has created a magical haven where birds nest in plenty, squirrels run around, and vegetables and fruits grow year-round. Since buying his house in Delhi in 2001, he has succeeded in growing several varieties of fruits, flowers, vegetables, and flowers. **So popular is his mini paradise, that a video of his garden went viral on Facebook in 2018.**

My grandfather, a stubborn and sombre man, shows his true magic in the garden. If you visit this year-round green garden in the light winter months of January to February, you will see his orange, kinno and cranberry trees bearing fruit. Come the warmer months, the gargantuan Java plum tree starts bearing fruit, showering the

ground with large, black, berries. When the heat gets unbearable, the mulberry bush, the litchi tree, the peach tree, and the mango tree bear fruit. Later in the month, the grapevines groan under the weight of the tiny green fruit bunched together.

Just when you think you were done; the pears start to grow. The vegetables grow all year round, a mixed bag of carrots, lettuce, beans, cauliflower, chillies, eggplant and tomatoes all year round. The winter months, in the peak of October to early January, is when the real magic happens.

The garden boasts flowers of every colour imaginable-, poppies, roses, passionfruit, and gerberas in every color burst from the ground in every nook, and if you look carefully, you may find the cape gooseberry bushes and the strawberries - hidden gems in the bushes. The garden is my grandfather's hobby.

As a child of partition, the scarcity of food, made him take a vow that his children would have enough to eat. Even today, whenever you visit him, he gives you a taste of whatever grows in his garden, wanting to share his love.

If you wake up early in the morning at my grandparents' house, you can't miss the frail, old man sitting on his feet and busy tending to his favourite plants. As he once said, this is his Ikigai – what he gets out of bed every morning for!

Collapse of Japan's Healthcare System: COVID Waves crash ashore

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Josep Borrell, a High Representative of the European Union, said, "Covid-19 will reshape our world. We don't know yet when the crisis will end. But we can be sure that by the time it does, our world will look very different."

In a time when humanity is facing such adverse circumstances, such a statement is quite unnerving. It is ambiguous, but terrifying nevertheless. **Japan is one of the countries who recently had a fourth wave of COVID19 crash ashore.** The first case in Japan was reported on 16 January 2020, when a resident of Kanagawa Prefecture who had returned from Wuhan, China, tested positive. On 5 October 2020, the number of confirmed covid cases in Japan exceeded those in China. **On 20 January 2021, the number of Covid related deaths in Japan exceeded those in China.**

Japan is one of the most affected countries in the world constituting about 0.44% of the world's cases. Japan is the most affected country in East Asia, with cases constituting nearly 70% of the total. Tokyo is the most affected prefecture in Japan.

Fast forwarding to the current times, Japan recently went through the fourth wave of COVID19. The medical association head of Osaka went ahead to state that the medical system in the Osaka Prefecture is collapsing making it very difficult for people to obtain required treatment in due time. The governments were all alarmed and took necessary measures to make sure that people are as safe as they can be. Clubactivities were suspended and schools were asked to go back to online mode.

On 8 May 2021, the daily cases in Japan topped 7000 for the first time since mid-January. Amidst the fourth wave, lot of people are unable to get medical care and hence their symptoms continue to worsen at a steady pace, leading to a huge number of daily deaths. Only a while ago, Toshiaki Minami, director of Osaka Medical and Pharmaceutical University Hospital, issued a statement regarding severe shortage of propofol, a drug used to sedate intubated patients.

From drug shortage, to severe spike in cases, to increased number of daily deaths and furthermore a huge healthcare collapse, has all struck Japan in the past few months. The country is facing such adverse circumstances.

Last year, the Tokyo Olympics 2020 were postponed. Now they are finally considering how to make the olympics safe for everyone in 2021. Only 10,000 people will be allowed per event to make sure all norms are followed and there is adequate social

distancing. The Tokyo 2020 organizers have set some restrictions for the athletes coming from countries hit by covid severely including social distancing norms, rapid testing, and temporary isolation. India is one of these countries, owing to the Delta variant.

However, Tokyo is facing a certain backlash from India for these “unfair” protocols.

Our world will only emerge from this crisis when and only when, the whole population is vaccinated and immune to the virus.

With inoculations underway globally, things are predicted to stabilize soon and then we don't have to be so weary of stepping out.



Aliens & the Pentagon Investigation

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) have been a part of Pop Culture for over 100 years. With the Pentagon now investigating UFO sightings, President Obama himself acknowledged that the United States Military has evidence of unknown flying objects. So, the question that arises is - what are UFOs, have they ever been found, and do aliens exist beyond the pages of fiction and screens of movies?

Considering myself an amateur conspiracy theorist (Even though I was not one of the people who stormed Area 51- more on this later.) With all the recent chatter about UFOs, I have made it my mission to dig up the history of UFOs, new and old evidence, sightings and reports of UFOs.

Early sightings – flying saucers: The first main sighting of a 'Flying Saucer' was way back in 1947 when Private Pilot **Kenneth Arnold** apparently saw 9 'unidentifiable

objects' which were travelling at high speeds. He compared them to 'saucers skipping water'- this spawned the name 'Flying Saucers' and led to thousands of movies, books and myths on our little 'green friends from space'. As the sightings of 'flying saucers' increased, so did mass hysteria and absurd theories.

·This was around 1947-98 when the Cold War between Russia and the United States had just begun. Many people in America suspected the sightings as 'advanced Russian Aeroplanes'. Now, whether these sightings were Russian Spy planes or not is not completely known, but most of the research points to it being Extra-terrestrial.

·There were numerous sightings and reports around this time of various flying saucers. These also piqued the interest of an Air Force base in Nevada, USA- Area 51.

Area 51, The U2 Spy Plane and more



In 1955 there was an old airfield that was selected to test a certain spy plane. This plane was called the (Lockheed) U2 Spy Plane

which was used by the United States of America to spy on Russia. This plane was kept in and tested at the infamous Area 51. Area 51 is it is a Top-Secret Air Force Base controlled by the USAF (United States Air Force), which is suspected by conspiracy theorists as a place where UFOs and Aliens are held.

Despite the main usage of Area 51 happening in 1955, the US Government only accepted that it existed in the year 2011. It took them more than 50 years to acknowledge its existence. Why so? Is it because they house aliens in Area 51?

Because of the good agents of the CIA, they decided that they wanted their work to be kept a secret- and a well-kept one at that! They decided to engage in spreading rumours. Because of their top-secret spy planes being tested, they encouraged the idea of UFOs flying around Area 51. Any publicity is welcome, even if it is bad publicity! In order to ensure that little to no information about Area 51 is spread to the public, it has been reported in the past that a secret airline takes scientists and other passengers daily on a nonstop flight to and from Area 51.

Various sightings of planes and other aircrafts flying around Area 51, combined with the high security levels and mystery that Area 51 is shrouded in continuously add fuel to the fire of Area 51's dark Alien Holding past.

And very recently, a few curious people decided based on a bright idea from a Facebook post that they would Storm Area 51. The very idea of 'storming Area 51' started as a joke from a Facebook event in 2019 when an enterprising man named **Matty Roberts** who said he was bored and created a Facebook event called 'Storm Area 51, they can't stop us all'. More than 2 million People RSVP'd.

Though no 'storming' of Area 51 happened, and 2 million people didn't show up- many YouTubers, Vloggers and normal people who wanted to get in on the fun showed up. **YouTuber Mr Beast made an entire video about, even in it - no storming of area 51 actually happened.**

A music festival called Alien-Stock was organised in the area around Area 51- but mostly it was just a few people in Kermit the Frog costumes. No one person actually even attempted to storm or break into Area 51, and very few people were arrested. So, it was just a mini concert with beefed up security and an Air Force base nearby.

Alien Abductions, famous sightings and more- The Bright Lights and Flying Saucer:-

Alien Abductions are usually incredibly scary whenever you hear about them, and sometimes they might even be hard for you to believe. One incident that occurred in the September of 1961 set off a spring of events and investigations into Alien and UFO sightings. **The Betty and Barney Hill Alien Abduction was the first Alien Abduction report in the United States at the time.** I shall summarise the story for you, but I must warn you, this story shall leave you with chills running through your bones.



The (possibly) Alien Abduction of Betty and Barney Hill-

It was the night of September 1961, and Betty and Barney Hill were in the car and were driving home. As they were driving back, a mysterious light kept following them from the sky, and no car was coming behind them.

When they got back home that morning both of them felt strange. They could not remember 2 Hours of what happened during their car ride. What else was strange?



(i) For one, both their watches had stopped working, Betty's dress was ripped, and Barney's shoes were scuffed. With the help of a psychiatrist, they recounted the mysterious events of the night before and remembered roughly what happened in those missing two hours. **The first thing was that no matter which turn they took, the light in the sky kept following them.**

(ii) Then when Barney got out of the car and aimed his gun at a jet-like object hovering above them, he just was unable to press the trigger. When he ran back to his car, a sound came from the boot of their car, and they were unconscious. **When they regained their consciousness, they were 56 km down the road.**

(iii) With the help of the psychiatrist, they recalled how they went up a grey ramp and various tests were conducted, and they even talked to the people who abducted them, but couldn't quite remember the entire picture.

This story freaked me out, and there are dozens of stories of alien abductions and weird bright lights that came and beamed the people up somewhere. We will never know if these stories are 100% true or a figment of our imagination. But the very possibility of them being true tells us that we are not alone in this universe.

The Pentagon Investigation



I remember the headline as clear as day, **"Pentagon to investigate UFO sightings"**. At that very moment, my jaw dropped. A country as secretive as the United States of America was going to investigate UFO sightings! The USA had been the centre of Conspiracy theories and sightings for an eternity now. **It took them 50 years to acknowledge the existence of Area 51. 10 years after they**

acknowledged its existence, one fine day they decided to investigate practically all the millions of claims they have denied for over a 100 years!

Well, that's exactly what they are doing. There are two ways of looking at this investigation-

1.The US government is finally being transparent and is showing the public the truth about UFOs.

2.The US government is going to conduct an investigation to shut conspiracy theorists up once and for all by proving them wrong.

I am leaning towards the latter one where the government plans to prove conspiracy theorists wrong, but the declassified UFO video taken by Navy pilots suggests otherwise (more on this later). The government report on UFOs couldn't find any evidence proving that the UFOs (in the Navy video- more on this very soon) was Extra terrestrial or Alien. One (farther expected) answer in the report was that it could have been built by Russia or China which are testing Hyper-Sonic technology.

Once again, the truth has been hidden behind the **Government Red Tape**. This may sound like a conspiracy theory but blaming governments which have been testing certain technology and who are 'not on great terms' with the USA seems like the easiest way out of a conspiracy. An administrator at NASA, Bill Nelson has said that NASA is investigating UFOs. So why is the Pentagon investigating these sightings now?

2. It's a bird, no it's a plane, it's NOT superman- Why investigate now?

It all started when a squad of US Navy Pilots were on a mission, and they spotted something on their radar. An object that resembled a tic tac but was supersonic and zipping rapidly from one place to another. **A total of 3 videos taken by US Navy Pilots of Unidentified Flying Objects or as the government calls them Unidentified "Aerial Phenomenon" also known as UAPs were seen and taken.**

The videos were declassified by the Pentagon and released for the public. The first video was taken way back in 2004, which was around 17 years ago and the 2 other videos were taken fairly recently 6 years ago in 2015.

These three sightings (and possibly many more hidden from public view) took the naval pilots by surprise. In a nutshell, most of the sightings were of fast flying objects shaped like a tic tac or round-ish in shape moving faster than a fighter jet.

The video taken in 2004 did not show only one UAP or Tic-Tac as the pilot who shot the video called it, but a whole swarming squadron of them. So why is the Pentagon investigating these sightings now, after hiding them away for more than 15 years?

Before we get on to that, there was in fact an investigation by US Senators which used 22 million Dollars of the Department of Defence fund called the 'Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program', created by Sen. Harry Reid, Sen. Ted Stevens and Sen. Daniel Inouye.

Now, you must be wondering what they did with a 22 million Dollar budget? Well, they collected, documented and investigated all the UFOs or UAPs (Call them what you want to).

Senator Harry Reid did a rather long, but extremely insightful Op-Ed for the New York Times on this very recently.

So maybe the government just wants to put the rumours to bed. According to me, to the United States of America it could be about a security threat. **If it's true that Aliens don't exist, then UFOs could pose big threats to the security of the United States of America.**

3. Should we even be searching for aliens and Extraterrestrial Life?

The age-old question returns - should we even be searching for aliens? We saw that millions of dollars were spent in 2007 to document and investigate UFO sightings. **Astronomers and scientists have spent countless years researching and looking for extraterrestrial life. A great example is the previously unsolved Wow! Signal.**

Way back in 1977, an astronomer named Jerry Ehman heard a sudden burst of weird radio waves while using the Big Ear Radio Telescope. **He wrote Wow! Beside the notation of the signal. This was initially thought to be Alien Contact, but sadly it wasn't.** The most likely cause was a sun-like star emitting radio waves.

I for one would love to meet aliens and talk to them. After all, wouldn't you want to be friends with the people who have the power to destroy your planet with a flick of a switch (unless Global Warming catches up to us first)? One positive of searching for extra-terrestrial life is that we may get new technology, and one negative is the fear that the Aliens may want to take over Earth.

Sure, it may cost a lot to search for Extraterrestrial life, but wouldn't it be nice to know that we are not alone in the universe?

(Actually, that could also be terrifying to know, but...)

4. Aliens in Pop Culture

Films, Tv Shows and Books like Aliens like- Aliens in the Attic, the book Tintin: Flight 714, and ET: Extraterrestrial have embraced the Alien and UFO pop culture.

Hopefully, we shall get more Alien themed movies. I wonder what a real alien would think about these movies. Can we even be sure that they look like little green men, and do they even live on Mars? I guess that only an Alien can answer that question. **The hopes of us finding an alien, hinge on our detective skills and the Pentagon Investigation!**



“Mirror Mirror on the wall”

-by Anvi Behl, Grade IX, SNS Faridabad



Mirror mirror on the wall,
You have the loathed yet somehow famed power
Of bringing me cognisance by glittering the rough edges,
And blurring the smooth centre

Some say they love you,
But the love hides bitter narcissism, with a tinge of toxic vanity
Some say they hate you,
But the hate sides a sense of diffidence, or perhaps quoted modesty, with a dollop of
abhor for not you, but for what you show me.

No one really blames you for the gushing emotion you seem to recklessly bestow, It is indeed the curse of the limitations of what you show

And the magic that you never can expose.

The divine blood of within, remains forever locked away.

Safely hidden from the world in grey tears and seemingly immortal sorrow. Or for some, shamelessly exposed with feigned muscle and counterfeit ornaments of decor.

Mirror mirror on the wall,

Whatever may be your intention,

Never shall follow my perception.

Whatever may be my vision,

Somehow fails to define the precision,

Of the color within me.

After all, it remains too prestigious to be exhibited to the world, just for jejune imitation.

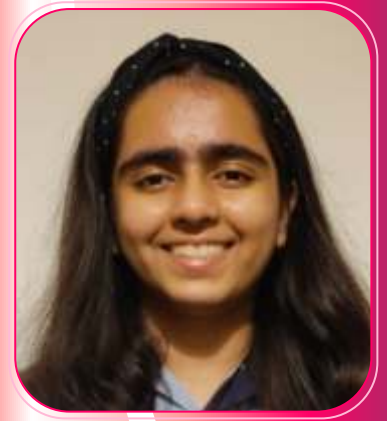
Mirror mirror on the wall,

I speak in heartfelt prayer,

Must you end your shallow, maliciously deceptive methods, touched in radiant, manipulative fraud.

Windows

-by Khushi soni, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



January 21 2019, Strangers ask "what's the score?"
Afghanistan 190 All out.

February 10, "What's the score?" Nigeria 141. All out.

April 21 2019, Sri Lanka
Sri Lanka 323 All out, and still counting

What if I told you that there is a game in which you'd never be bound by rules, there are no restrictions, no boards, so, you'd never be bored, all players are pawns so no one's more important than the next, and there is no limit to the number of players who can play?

You can play with balloons, fill them up with stuff more potent than water, you can use

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clubs instead of bats,
and if someone makes you mad, you can lop their head off with it too;
if they don't get to you first.

You want to catch the catch?

Well it's just that

the scores are measured in deaths duly charted in a glorified list while
mother's stare
with horror, waiting for the next score, Fathers no longer stand tall,
There are no survivors at all.

Shattered glass, dismembered limbs, broken dreams a cloud of ashes
settles on empty playgrounds.

silence

Do you hear that?

That is the sound of

unfinished meals, silent conversations, lives destroyed buildings
crashing down.

Windows shattered.

Hatred and terror spread around to determine whose god is more
peaceful and forgiving

But how does your god forgive this Does Jesus? Does Allah? Does
Krishna? Do you? How?

Sunday morning, Easter holiday: tainted church windows, children
searching for eggs. But before they could

find the Easter eggs in that movie, it turns black and white.

prayers left unfinished tiny shoes blown to pieces

tainted windows freshly painted.

In another part of the world, 5-star hotels are adorned with bay windows.

Those who decided to pray at home long before their prayer to their protector was finished,

They were sent back to him. Those who decided to skip church and stay in the hotels

were blessed with the same spell -

unexpected bombshells

bay windows splattered.

Terror

Trial and error

Cathedrals, masjids, mandirs, churches, Gurdwaras were built with a similar motive:

peace, love, freedom.

It's 2021

And ironies do not cease.

We're fighting for peace through destruction fighting for love through hatred

fighting wars for land, spreading ashes like sand.

They say New Zealand was avenged through Sri Lanka

treating people, their beliefs like bowling pins

enjoying putting them down

stained windows

bombers ready to sacrifice their lives latching onto their beliefs

destroying everything in their path, in fidelity to that belief

not bothering to think twice, terrorists waiting in queue for Easter

Sunday breakfast buffet

like Christ's followers.

For all the people I have mourned, I feel the sorriest for the terrorists who blew up those windows.

And I wonder, if more windows existed, would they be able to look out more?

Would it lower the scores?



“Gracy”

-by Anvi Behl, Grade IX, SNS Faridabad



I see in wonder,
How she's written of blue skies, red roses and boisterous yellows. Yet it seemed
benighted of her,
To talk of feigned matches in a room of empty fireplaces.

I see in wonder,
How the more she opened her eyes, the lesser she could see, the more hidden murk
seemed to surround.

I think in wonder,
How in times of cataclysmic thunder and unlit black skies, she managed to seize a
sconce.
And tried to white a room, bereft of opportunity.

I think in wonder,
How bi polar the outsiders' best acumen would be?
Would they falsify her well wishing colors as a phony act for implored
pity, Or would they worship her altruism as godly?

I think in wonder,
Maybe the air outside is brutally staggering, beyond her endurance.

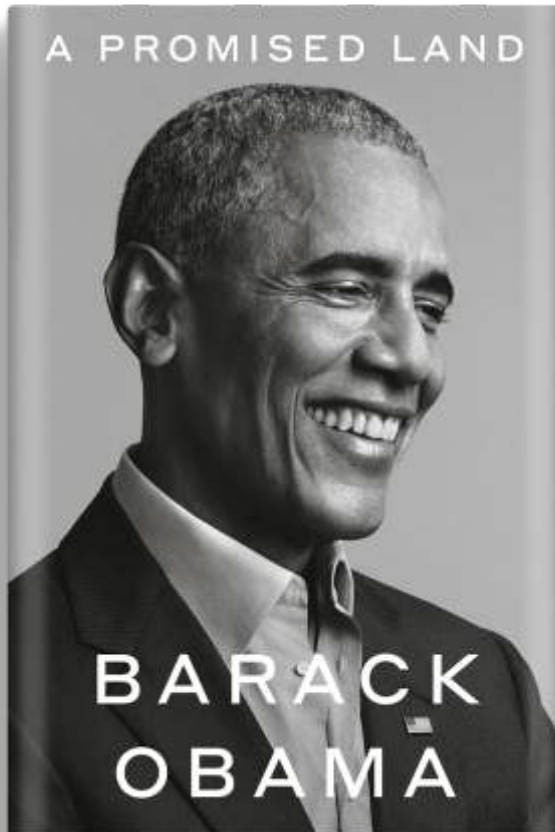
I think in wonder,
Maybe it's best for her to live in a harmless pink,

I think in wonder,
Maybe it's best for Gracy, to live only in the best of my fantasy.



Book Review: *A Promised Land*

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



When a man who has been one of the world's best leaders and orators, writes his latest book, the world steps up and listens to him. The same holds true for this book. **President Obama has written 2 main books about his life: Dreams from my Father (written when he was in Harvard Law School) and the Audacity of Hope, which he released while he was still a Senator.**

“Dreams from my father” was a memoir and focused on his early life, and the Audacity of Hope focused on his political views and ideologies (the title was a phrase from his speech in 2004 at the DNC/ Democratic National Convention). **A Promised Land, however, is the first book in his Presidential Memoir series** offers and insight into

his life from a Senator- to standing for president- to his first term as President, and the book (28 Hours long in the Audiobook version recited by President Obama himself) goes on till Operation Neptune Spear- the killing of Osama Bin Laden. This was planned as a two-volume book.

The book is beautifully written, which is exactly what you would expect from someone who speaks so well and has been at the centre of major world events for 8 years. The book offers an interesting insight into the mammoth amount of work that the President actually does. *It really highlights the good, bad and the ugly of being the President of the USA.*

There were issues like the damaged country that President Obama “inherited” of sorts, and with the Republicans and Press (not always, mainly right-wing media like Fox News) always looking for the tiniest slip up to use against him.

From the Iraq War, the new war in Afghanistan, the 2008 Wall Street Crash and Financial crash, the H1N1 outbreak, 9/11 and so much more: The president clearly had his hands full. With every problem, there was a methodical way that the President and his staff at the White House found a solution was truly marvellous.

It would have been extremely easy for President Obama to use the book as a mouthpiece to toot his own horn, to show that he was the best ever President that the USA had ever seen- but he didn't. *He acknowledges his various flaws along the campaign trails, his inexperience, and mistakes that he had made.*

He highlights his insecurities early in the book, in the first 100 pages and states that his biggest fear while on the campaign trail was

that he would make a “gaffe” or big slip up. The hard work, effort and sleepless nights that went into campaigning for President was truly inspiring. To the outside world, it may have appeared that being the President of the USA was about being the most powerful person on earth. **This book, however, focuses on the nuances that go into making even the smallest decision a reality.**

To give you an example, in the Chapter titled “renegade”, President Obama writes about the nitty gritty and historical Constitutional background of getting Bills passed in the Senate. **The promises of “hope and change” that he made to his voters was at the basis of his policies and it is interesting to read how hopes and dreams need to become the law of the country to have a real effect.**

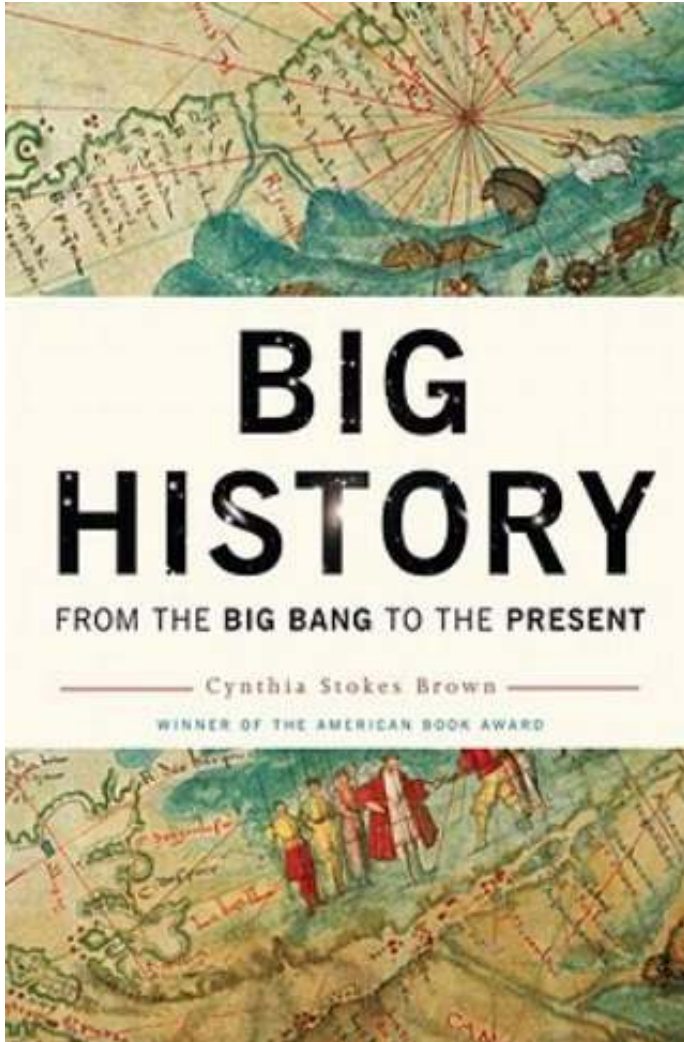
Another point of the book that really touched me and I felt was important to highlight was that he brought an aspect of humanity and emotion to the role of president. Whether it was trying to make his children live a normal life while their father was the head of one of the biggest countries in the world, or how the death and injury of each and every soldier he met stung him just as hard as it did their families, and the stress of handling one of the worst financial crises of the world, went to show that even the world's most powerful man was only human after all.

The length of the book may seem daunting (701 pages excluding acknowledgements, credits, sources etc). It does get a little stretched in the middle and may be a bit heavy to read in one sitting, it was an impressive read for me. **Those who like Biographies/Autobiographies would enjoy this book. Exceptionally well-written, the book humanises politics and grants readers an insight into the inner workings of the President's office – the politics, the policies, the ups and downs.**

Book Review:

Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



'Big History' begins with the beginning of the universe when it is no more than a single point the size of an atom and ends with the 21st-century world inhabited by over 6 billion people.

It's a story that takes place in the prehistoric period. It talks about human evolution, the agrarian age, the Black Death, the voyages of Columbus, the Industrial Revolution and global warming.

This book gave me a lot of information, so many facts, from every possible domain: chemistry, physics, medicine, philosophy, religion and more! It is good for extra knowledge other than the school's 'bookish' studies. Here is some of the knowledge I gained from it:

- what the word "Hinduism" means
- what the word "barbaric" means
- **Corpus, Callus**
- **Gondwana**
- the different emergence of humans as a species in the world
- size and importance of the **Mongolian Empire**
- how **Americas were some 3000-4000 years behind the technological development of Eurasia.**

This gives a quick history of the key events since the beginning of the universe. It also does a good job of putting our human time line into perspective.

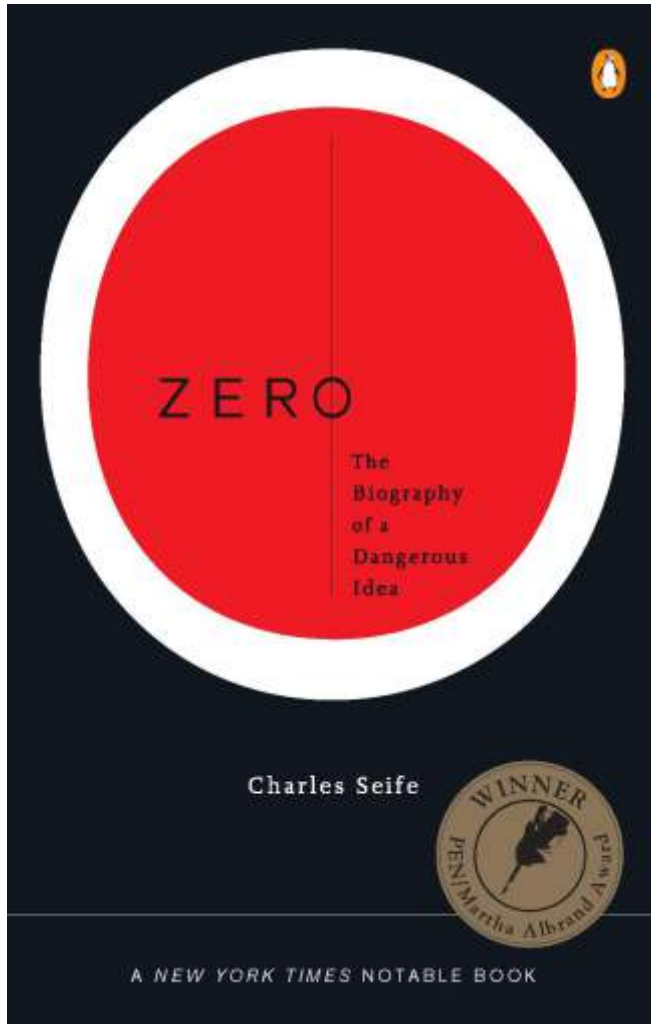
Just one drawback I found was that the choice of where to focus the detail was quite odd. For example, the Roman Empire was covered in just a few sentences, certain regions such as Japan had almost no mention throughout and both World Wars were only covered briefly. Of course, this is a generalist book and it's impossible to satisfy everyone but given the importance of the Roman Empire, the global nature of the world wars and the dominance of the Japanese economy in the late 20th century, could have been explained better.

To conclude, this is a must read for anyone who wants to know about the origin and transformation of the universe. It will interestingly give you facts with various chapters.

Book Review:

Zero: The Biography of a dangerous Idea

-by Jeiya Khurana, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



“On September 21, 1997, while cruising off the coast of Virginia, the billion-dollar missile cruiser shuddered to a halt. Yorktown was dead in the water. Warships are designed to withstand the strike of a torpedo or the blast of a mine. Though it was armoured against weapons, nobody had thought to defend the Yorktown from zero. It was a grave mistake.”

Charles Seife's book, 'Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea', begins at Chapter Zero, with the story of how a divide by zero error in the control software of the

guided missile cruiser, USS Yorktown brought it to a grinding halt. Relating this short episode Seife foreshadows the power of the number zero, an idea viewed with suspicion in many parts of the world for a prolonged period of time.

Seife sets out to trace the beginnings of zero by taking about the various number systems. Discussing the Babylonian place value number system, he states how zero began as a necessity of this system. He also explores the Greek and Roman number systems and how the Greeks in spite of being masterful in the field of mathematics, overlooked the discovery of zero.

Thus, begins a discussion on Pythagorean number philosophy, Zeno's paradoxes and Aristotelian philosophy, and how the existence of the void and zero, and the infinite and infinity clashed with the ideals of these famous mathematicians and philosopher, which consequently led to the rejection of these ideas.

A detailed discourse of the history of the error ridden calendar used today follows, which tells us about the consequences of the historical absence of zero. The acceptance of the idea of zero by Indians and how they transformed it from a mere placeholder to an actual number is highlighted.

He elaborated on how differences in the religious and cultural beliefs of the west and the east led to its rejection in the former and acceptance in the later. Seife plays with the duality of zero and infinity and expatiates on Descartes' introduction of zero into geometry with his coordinate system.

Further, Pascal's use of probability and algebraic properties of zeros and infinity in computing the benefits of being religious or

an atheist are discussed. Examining the origins of calculus, with a specific emphasis on zero's role, the author tackles numerous controversies within the mathematical community and also explores the concept of complex numbers. He also dedicated space to the philosophical and cultural changes in the west.

While the eastern philosophy readily accepted the void, and thus zero, the west led by the church and following Aristotle's school of thought, refused to acknowledge it. The author shows how the duality of the void and infinity shaped cultural changes that eventually led to the Renaissance.

The author scrutinizes the history of modern chemistry and physics. Zero's role in the formulation of modern scientific laws and theories including Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, general relativity, black holes, wormholes, and their application to interstellar space travel is discussed. Topics like string theory, the big bang and how the universe will end are also explored.

In conclusion, Charles Seife's clear, concise and informative vignettes of the vast history of the number zero, make the book an entertaining piece of work. His writing clearly shows the cultural, philosophical and scientific implications of mathematics. We understand how zero makes calculus, algebra, astronomy, quantum physics and infinite other things (again the duality of zero and infinity) possible.

Containing numerous interesting mathematical proofs in the appendices, such as a proof that Winston Churchill is a carrot, 'Zero: The Biography of a dangerous idea' is recommended to all amateur mathematicians or those interested in a quick and informative read.

Book Review:

The House in the Cerulean Sea

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Books are an abundance of joy, gripping tales, and pure, raw, enthrallment. Having said that, for me, few books have captured the perfect sides of all these aspects more than T.J.Klune's *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. This book revolves around Linus Baker, a young bureaucrat who lives in a world full of both magical and non-magical creatures.

However, in this world, the government has tried to assimilate the magical creatures into a non-magical world, by giving them professions and careers. For children however, the story is different. They are sent to "orphanages", where they are raised and taught by the Master of their respective orphanages. These orphanages are established and controlled by DICOMY, the Department in Charge of Magical Youth.

DICOMY is where Linus works. He is a Caseworker, who goes to various orphanages to observe how the children are being treated, and if their needs are properly being provided for. He is pretty much the most ordinary person on the planet; he follows DICOMY's Rules and Regulations to the T, he lives alone with his cat, he has a grumpy old nosy neighbor, and he follows the same routine every day.

He is basically a walking, talking cliché of an office worker. This makes him perfect for a top secret mission assigned by none other than DICOMY's Extremely Upper Management, who send him to the island of Marsyas, where there is a level four classified orphanage full of the 6 most dangerous magical creatures, and a Master with an elusive secret.

Linus is a generally weak person, who is proud of being assigned the mission, yet terrified of what he will find. He is to spend four months in the Orphanage, and send his reports back weekly. Linus reads about the children first.

There is a gnome with a green thumb and a morbid obsession with death, a forest sprite of unimaginable power and a kind heart, a shy and traumatised boy who can become a dog, a "sea monster"-esque creature who is kind and only wants to help people, a reserved and territorial wyver, and Lucifer, The Antichrist! Along with them is The Orphanage's Master, Mr. Arthur Parnassus, who is both wise and mysterious, but fiercely protective of his 6 children, who the world misunderstands and mistreats.

Through the course of the book, Linus sheds his prejudices and lets down his walls, allowing him to see magical creatures for who they really are, and not who he was conditioned to believe they are. With the help of Arthur, the children, and island sprite Zoe

Chapelwhite, Linus learns more and more about the world for what it truly is, and when he spends time with the children, he learns about their pasts, gets to know them, and suddenly regrets all that he has done to magical creatures in the past.

Linus was entrusted with this mission because he was always objective, however, his reports become more and more compassionate and understanding, as he slowly learns how these children live and learn. Meanwhile, Extremely Upper Management keeps reminding him of his duty, which is to decide whether or not to close the orphanage.

On the other side of things is Arthur Parnassus, who is the Master of the Marsyas Orphanage. He loves and protects the children, and raises them to carve a path for themselves, instead of treading the one society makes for them. One of the most important things he does is ban the usage of the word "Antichrist" in the orphanage, encouraging Lucifer to forget what society tells him he is. Apart from his care, he hides a dark past, and a history with DICOMY in the most unbelievably possible way possible.

Linus grows closer and closer to him, uncovering his past, writing reports, and also struggling to decide where he stands. Slowly and steadily, he makes his voice heard, and does it in the best way possible.

A real winner

Although the story may appear to be one of vivid imagination alone, this is a deeply layered narrative. One that reflects the state of the world around us - where we see people being put into categories, and being divided on the basis of those. Where some

“superior” ones determine the fate of everyone else around them. Where, often, it can be tricky or even downright dangerous to be “different”. This book was partially inspired by the Canadian “*Sixties Scoop*”, where indigenous children were relocated to white homes, to assimilate them into Canadian culture. This book is a celebration of differences.

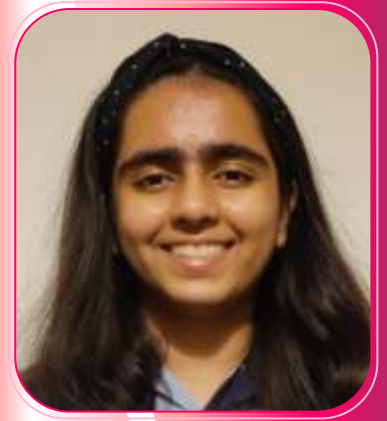
Another overarching theme in this book is the relationship between Arthur and Linus, and how it blossoms from being acquaintances to being in love. While romance has never been one of my favorite genres, this book manages to keep the romance to a bare minimum, to make sure it doesn't cloud the true essence of this book. Over and above, this book has essentially perfected the delicate balance of the different elements needed to make a book truly great.

This book is one of my new all-time favourites, and everyone, I mean EVERYONE, should read it. It has something for everyone, and the little hints and mysteries, along with the humour in the book make it a true delight to read. The highlight for me were the characters and their development. Lucifer “Lucy”, is just a six year old with a dry wit, who does his best to impress Arthur, Chauncet the “Sea Monster”, is a helpful and kind soul who wants to be a bellhop, Linus is an insecure man who is confused about where his loyalties lie, and Arthur is a fiercely protective human being who is a trailblazer in his fight for equality.

Whether you are an avid reader, or a rare one, picking up this book will be the best thing to do. With a gripping plot, an interesting layer of themes, and the most lovable of characters, this book wasn't a *New York Times* #1 Best seller for nothing. So, without wasting even a second, get this book, and ask yourself, “Why did I never read this before??”

Watch and Learn

-by Khushi soni, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



While it is generally assumed that women are chatty and speak more than their male counterparts, the truth is ironically far from this stereotype, as seen in the existing statistics available. **Conversations between women in movies are significantly lower than men, and even when they talk to each other, it is mostly about men.**

Even though Bollywood seems to have evolved with the times, they continue to influence and perpetuate existing stereotypes against the female population. **Movies like Munna Bhai MBBS portrayed women as mere dancers to objectifying music.**

While Kuch Kuch Hota Hai displayed women as undesirable if they did not fit the 'girly' societal stereotype. But Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani reintroduced the stereotype that girls with short pink skirts are gullible and witless. **Most of our favourite movies like Zindagi Naa Milegi Dobara also subtly represent them as manipulatively dominating and bossy.**

In 2015, a 32-year-old Indian man was accused of stalking and repetitively pursuing women in Australia.

He pleaded guilty and held Bollywood liable for demonstrating and encouraging men to chase and woo women and never give up until they say yes. However, the Australian court acquitted him as they found that the culture had influenced him in Bollywood and that this was common in India.

Bollywood not only objectifies and creates a false narrative for women but also promotes a culture of harassment, arrogance and glorifies acts like stalking, persistent persuasion, and never accepting a 'NO'.



"Tera Peechha Karoon Toh Tokne Ka Nahin... Haan Tujhpe Right Mera"

Our films extol toxic masculinity while portraying women as voodoo witches. To quote some of these patriarchally problematic movies through time,

- Kal Ho Naa Ho: "Che din ladki in" (2003)
- Pyaar ka panchnama: "Seriously yaar aajkal jab bhi wo mooh kholti hai, Mann karta hai mooh mein kuch thus doon" (2011)
- 2 States "Boodhi ho ya jawaani melodrama is duniya ki sari auraton ke khoon mein hota hai." (2014)
- (2019) Kabir Singh: "if you speak poetically now, I will smash your face."
- And who can forget the much loved and reconstructed monologue from Pyaar ka panchnama 2, which continued to portray women as voodoo witches.

Over the years, Indian songwriters have continued to disappoint society morally. While their catchy songs have topped all charts and are played at all parties and weddings, their lyrics stab women in the back. From old music with titles like 'Khud ko kya samajhti hai', Bollywood songs and music videos appropriate harassment and destroy women's rights to opinions and choices about their relationships. Some other examples include:

Darr: Jaadu Teri Nazar (1993)

"tu haan kary na kar tu hai meri kiran"

Josh: Apun Bola Tu Meri Laila (2000)

"Yeh uska style hoyenga. Hothon pe na dil mein haan hoyenga"

Mein Tera Hero: Palat Tera Hero Idhar Hai (2014)

"Tera dhyan kidhar hai. Ye tera hero idhar hai"

The burden of responsibility on a woman's shoulder is enormous. If she merely turns her head, it is assumed that she is in love with the stalker behind her.

Alison Bechdel, an illustrator, cartoonist and graphic novelist, created a comic 'The Rule' in the year 1985. It depicted two women considering going to the movies. One of them states that the movie must pass a test for her to watch it. This test consisted of three requirements,

1. It must have at least two female characters
2. They must talk to each other about anything
3. Besides men

While this seems like a rule asking for the bare minimum, a lot of movies fail to pass it. Movies like *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, *PK*, *Barfi*, *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*, and *Ram Leela* failed the test.

Even with the bar practically on the floor, a 2009 movie featuring 12 characters of Priyanka Chopra could not pass the Bechdel Test.

While critics might counter by saying that these movies never meant to be feminist or women centric in the first place- which is not a justifiable excuse regardless- 'feminist' movies like *Dangal*, *Stree*, *Padman* and *Pink* also do not make the cut.

So the next time you sit down to rewatch one of your favourite movies, test it using the Bechdel Rule.

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