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The Pegasus Scandal : Big Brother Version 2021

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Remember George Orwell's legendary book "1984"? Of course you do! While it was published in 1949, it was set almost 40 years in the future, in a dystopian reality where freedom of speech was unknown. In this world, the notorious "Big Brother" ruled with an iron fist, and a very firm constraint on basic human rights (talk about a strong grip!).

This book is widely regarded as one that was ahead of its time, and one that very accurately displayed the dark possibility of what the word "government" could come to signify in the future, and while Mr. Orwell's book is truly a masterpiece, the one glaring error in the book is its title. This is because, dear reader, his book should be called "2021."

I know that a lot of you may be very confused right now, especially as to why I am being so extreme and pessimistic. However, when you read what I write about today's

debate, you may change your mind. Today, I will be talking about Project Pegasus, the project that has grabbed headlines all over the world. **This will be an article full of discussions on ethics, the future, and who might be listening to your conversations.** So let us begin with the most basic question possible.

What is Pegasus?

Pegasus is spyware created by the Israeli company NSO. This is an exceptionally advanced spyware that is virtually undetectable. In 2019, a technology reporter from the Big Apple took a picture of this spyware being revealed at a security exhibition in Paris, and that started this whole fiasco of international security, privacy, and espionage.

They had managed to make a portable “Base Transceiver Station” which can pretend to be a bona fide cell tower, get all nearby phones to pass connections through it, and then hackers can control any of the traffic through the faux “cell towers”. Through these “towers”, they can go through your emails, calls, and even listen in on your private conversations! What's worse, they can also secretly film you, so the “safety of your own home” may not be that safe anymore!



The reasoning for Pegasus' creation:

Pegasus supposedly exists as a tool for counterterrorism and law enforcement purposes. It would tap into the phones of people and listen to their conversations. By doing this, it can technically be possible to figure out terrorists' plans, and counter it effectively. However, such power can turn out to be too much for humans, and whenever there is something so powerful in play for any worldwide situation, it becomes far too tempting, and people might use it for less than ethical things as well.

NSO, however, maintains its stance that they sell only to governments, for counterterrorism purposes, however, it will not tell the world who they have sold to.

The best example of ethical and unethical uses of Pegasus are when it was supposedly used to track down the Mexican drug lord El Chapo in 2011, which is very ethical, but it is also rumoured to have been a component in planning journalist Jamal Khashoggi's death. This aptly conveys the two sides of Pegasus, shows you why we need to think harder before using it.

How can Pegasus enter my phone?

You must have seen ads all over the place telling you not to click the links that come in emails from the bank, but sent from a different email ID, and tell you that the bank never asks you for your account password, and that you can be hacked if you give away any details. Due to this, you must have assumed that Pegasus assumes a similar form of a suspicious link, or a fake phone call, but it is much more sinister.

Pegasus is just a fake cell tower, so a fake Whatsapp missed call is all it takes to completely destroy your privacy. What's worse, they can even delete any evidence of that missed call, so you won't even know that there's something wrong, but by then there will be a group of hackers tracking your every move, recording your every word, having fun reading your messages, and listening to every word you say.



They will be able to do everything from figuring out your routine to understanding your political allegiance, and possibly even make a psychological profile of you! This is all completely terrifying, I know, but let's look at the positives and negatives before reaching our conclusion.

The positives of Pegasus-

While Pegasus is a controversial project to say the least, there are most certainly some clear positives to it. Firstly, Pegasus is truly a godsend for counterterrorism forces. The ability to record videos and harvest audios of anyone through just their phones will assist counterterrorism forces to know where the terrorists are, what they look like, what their plan is, and so much more. That way, they will be

able to stop terrorists before even a single life is lost, saving the day!
Pegasus can also help convict criminals in extremely difficult cases.

Once again, the power to record audio and video comes in handy and will give people a quick and easy way to convict criminals, and let justice prevail! However, we have read "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely", and misuse of such far reaching powers is a slippery slope.

The negatives of Pegasus

While there may be arguments to the effect that Pegasus will ensure that justice will prevail, there are some glaring negatives with it as well, that are far too great to be overlooked. Firstly, where has privacy gone? There was a time when privacy was held at the top of anyone's priorities, and now, in recent years, cybersecurity is of prime importance.

In this age, is it really ethical to snoop on people for ages? Do people not deserve the safety of their own homes, at least? By putting them under constant surveillance, you are quashing their voice, as there are things they'd say only around people they trust, but the moment some third party comes into the picture, there is no way they are only around trusted friends, they are also around someone they don't even know!

Tying back to 1984, the one person who dares to go against Big Brother is caught and beaten. If there is even a possibility that someone in the world can become a dictator like that, this power of Pegasus can really backfire.

Secondly, the biggest criticism of Pegasus has been that it is being misused for spying on political rivals. This is completely wrong, though not very shocking, as politics very regularly becomes a dirty game.

Why is this wrong? Simply because it is a blatant breach of privacy, only to satisfy human greed. In a democracy, people elect who they want to lead them. However, by spying on political rivals, and possibly spoiling the plans they have to help the people, or painting them in a bad light, you are manipulating their choice, and they aren't actually choosing who they want to!

The Verdict:

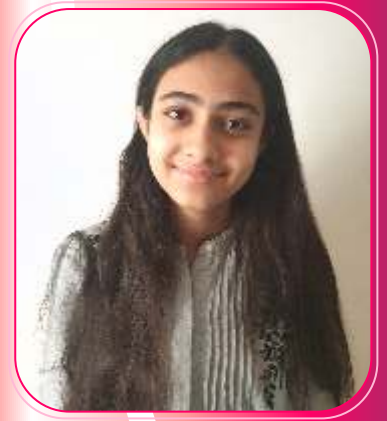
I have combed through all the facts relating to Project Pegasus by NSO, and the wait is finally over! I have come to the conclusion that Pegasus should not continue (for now). Right now, it just seems completely unethical to strip humans of any shred of privacy, no matter what the end goal is.

We live in an age of technology, and that already threatens our privacy enough. Adding something undetected that can record every aspect of your life just rips off the last curtain between your private life and the rest of the world. Privacy is a basic human right, and is even a fundamental right in India. Therefore, no matter what, privacy cannot be taken away completely, ever!



Quit India Movement Day

-by Mehar Gaba, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



"I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours"

-Mahatma Gandhi, in his speech on the launch of the quit india movement on August 8th, 1942

We have recently celebrated our 75th year of independence. The struggle, strife, effort and toil put in by the people of our country to gain independence is laudable. We celebrate the 8th of August as the memorable Quit India movement day. Every year on 8 August, the anniversary of Quit India Movement is marked and observed by paying tribute to freedom fighters who laid their lives for the country and its people.

The Quit India movement, also known as the august movement or the bharat

chodo andolan was launched on the 8th of August at the Bombay session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). It was launched at Bombay's Gowalia Tank Maidan, this maidan now houses a monument dedicated to the movement.

The Indian National Congress, through this movement made a strong and ardent appeal for the British to leave the country. All Indian citizens wanted an 'orderly British withdrawal' from India (which was never done, not even when the British declared us independent five years later).

What were the main reasons for the Quit India movement?

The biggest and most prominent reason was that the British were planning on pulling our entire country into the second world war to fight for the United Kingdom, without our very own consent. More than 87,000 Indian soldiers were martyred in the course of the war.

Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the war cabinet, was sent to India in March 1942 to discuss and secure support of India's participation in the second world war, something we didn't want. This was known as the Cripps mission.



The Cripps mission failed. India was already in an economic crisis, a war to be fought would just add onto the burden of the people.

The movement also failed because the declaration brought by Sir Cripps also granted India Dominion Status after the war. The congress denied discussing any terms unless India was to be given total freedom.

After this meeting the sentiment of Full Independence and Anti-Britain gained immense popularity across all the country's people. Mahatma Gandhi gave his famous speech during this movement the 'do or die' speech (Karo ya maro).

It is believed that within hours of this speech almost the entire Indian National Congress was imprisoned without trial. Several national leaders such as Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Mahatma Gandhi himself were imprisoned. Their unfair and merciless imprisonment acted as a catalyst in eventually securing India its freedom.

The British responded to the movement by declaring the Indian National Congress as an unlawful association. Everyone involved was imprisoned, all offices of the Congress were raided. About 10,000 people were imprisoned for carrying out peaceful protests. The then viceroy and governor general of India, Lord Linlithgow adopted measures of using brutal violence on the protestors to control the movement. This movement backfired since more people were now showing their sympathies and taking part in the movement. The people were so inspired that under the leadership of Aruna Asaf Ali (one of the remaining AICC members) the tricolour was proudly hoisted in the presence of a large crowd.

Most citizens of the country participated in all ways possible. One such participation method was the 'underground radio'. A radio operated by the then young leaders was a broadcast by which the people could hear unfiltered news. The broadcasting equipment was shifted regularly to avoid being caught by the British. On the 14th of August 1942, about a week after the movement was launched this broadcasting radio network went live under Dr. Usha Mehta.

Though the movement proved to be a success, many lost their lives in the struggle. One such incident was when the police opened fire on peacefully protesting students. On August 8th 1942, a group of seven students attempted to hoist the Indian flag, displaying their affiliation towards the movement. They were, without any hesitation, shot dead.

We have come a long way in terms of struggle, development and growth in all forms. And though we must look at the future of our country, we must also always remember the struggle it took to make India the way we know it today.



Neeraj Chopra: *A gold medalist*

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Neeraj Chopra is the first Indian to get a gold medal in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The 23-year old javelin thrower from Haryana, India won the medal for javelin, which is a sport most of us didn't even know about until recently. The credit for that goes to Mr. Neeraj Chopra.

The Javelin throw is a sport of throwing a spear for a distance. After a short run, the javelin is thrown directly forward with an over-the-shoulder motion into a 29° sector marked on the field.

Neeraj Chopra's story:

Of course, just like all the other people present in the Olympics, Neeraj Chopra

too had to struggle a lot to reach where he did.

As a child, he was bullied for his childhood obesity, which resulted in his father enrolling him in a gym in Panipat. There he saw some javelin throwers and started participating himself realising his love for the sport.

He then visited the nearby Panipat Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre, where javelin thrower Jaiveer Choudhary recognised his early talent in the winter of 2010. Observing Chopra's ability to achieve a 40-metre throw without training and impressed by his drive, Choudhary became his first coach.

Chopra learned the basics of the sport from Choudhary and a few more experienced athletes who had trained under a javelin coach in Jalandhar. He soon won his first medal, a bronze in the district championships, and then persuaded his family to allow him to live in Panipat while developing his abilities.

After training under Choudhary for a year, the 13-year-old Neeraj was admitted to the Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula. This complex was then one of only two facilities in the state of Haryana with a synthetic runway.

There, he trained under coach Naseem Ahmad, a running coach who made him train in long-distance running along with the javelin throw. While initially at Tau Devi, he typically achieved throws of around 55 metres, he soon increased his range, and in the National Junior Athletics Championships in Lucknow in October 2012, won gold with a new national record throw of 68.40 metres. The next year, he entered his first international competition, the World Youth Championship in Ukraine.

Chopra won his first international medal in 2014, a silver at the Youth Olympics Qualification in Bangkok, and in the same year achieved his first throw of over 70 metres at the senior nationals, following this up with a world record throw in the junior category of 81.04 metres in 2015.



He finished in fifth place at the 2015 national games in Kerala, and received a callback for the national-level training camp, as a result leaving Panchkula in 2016 to train at Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports, Patiala.

According to Chopra, his inclusion in the national camp marked a turning point in his career, as he received better facilities, a better quality diet, and an improved standard of training from that available at Panchkula.

Chopra won a gold medal in the 2016 IAAF World U20 Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland and set a world junior record of 86.48 m, becoming the first Indian athlete to achieve a world record, at the same time setting a new national record.

Impressed with Chopra's performance at the South Asian Games and his future potential, the Indian Army offered him a direct appointment as a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) in the Rajputana Rifle, with a rank typically not immediately granted to athletes.

In 2017, Chopra won gold in the 2017 Asian Athletics Championships with a throw of 85.23 metres. In 2018 he became the first Indian to win the gold medal in the Commonwealth Games. In May 2018, he again broke the national record at the Doha Diamond League with a throw of 87.43 metres.

In September 2018, he received the Arjuna Award directly from Ram Nath Kovind, President of India.



Unfortunately, Chopra missed the 2019 World Championships in Doha due to bone spurs in his right elbow, undergoing surgery in Mumbai on 3 May 2019, which was the day after the qualifying competitions for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics had begun. He then went to South Africa for training.

After a 16-month hiatus, he returned to international competition in January 2020 with a winning throw of 87.86 metres in the Athletics Central North West League Meeting in Potchefstroom, South Africa, since the distance was more than 85m, he qualified for the Tokyo Olympics.

After South Africa, Chopra traveled to Turkey for training but was forced to return to India in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 5 March 2021, Chopra again broke his own national record with a new throw of 88.07 m, which ranked him third-best internationally.

He went on to compete in the Karlstad Meet in Sweden on 22 June, where he achieved a gold with a sub-par throw of 80.96 m. before winning a bronze in the Kuortane Games in Finland despite achieving a throw of 86.79 m

He attributed his reduced performance in Finland to a tendency to throw higher than he wanted, along with having to use a different javelin as his own was unavailable. Following the Kuortane Games, Chopra traveled to Lucerne to compete in the Spitzen Leichtathletik Luzern, but decided to withdraw due to fatigue.

Now, finally coming to the Olympics.

For the preparation for Tokyo Olympics, Neeraj Chopra was training under his German coach Uwe Hohn, biomechanics expert Doctor Klaus Bartonietz and physiotherapist Ishaan Marwaha.

On 4 August 2021, Neeraj made his debut at the Olympics,

representing India at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Japan National Stadium. Chopra topped his group and qualified for the final with a throw of 86.65 metres.

As a result, Chopra won the gold medal in the final on 7 August with a throw of 87.58m in his second attempt, becoming the first Indian Olympian to win a gold medal in athletics, and the first post-independence Indian Olympic medalist in athletics.



Chopra's medal gave the Indian Olympics contingent a final total of seven medals, surpassing India's previous best performance of six medals earned at the 2012 London Olympics.

Neeraj Chopra recently said "My village still does not have a playground. Whenever I stay there, I need to practice on a road."

This shows the struggle he has been through, he could not practice near his home, he had to sacrifice living with his family, in his hometown to reach the heights that he has.

This is how Chopra became the second-ranked athlete internationally in the men's javelin throw, per the World Athletics rankings for the discipline, as per August 2021.

The Olympic game has totally changed his life, he is now known worldwide and has more money and fame than anyone would have thought.



I would like to end by saying that even though most of us did not know, Neeraj Chopra had received many medals including gold medals before the olympics. Imagine how many great athletes are out there preparing whom we don't even know about?

Athletes & Mental Health

-by Arunima Singh, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Simone Biles

Tokyo Olympics have been interesting for many reasons, but what caught my eyes and provoked my thought was this particular statement by Simone Biles.

I say put mental health first," Biles said in July 2021, **"Because if you don't, then you're not going to enjoy your sport and you're not going to succeed as much as you want to. So it's OK sometimes to even sit out the big competitions to focus on yourself, because it shows how strong of a competitor and person that you really are — rather than just battle through it."**

Before going further with Mental Health challenge in sports, I would like to talk a little about Simone Biles.

Simone Arianne Biles is an American artistic gymnast born on March 14, 1997, in Columbus, Ohio. Biles began competing as a level 8 gymnast in 2007 and then in 2011 went on to dominating the junior elite level, she won her first U.S. and world all-around titles in 2013. In 2015, she claimed a record third straight world all-around title. She went on to lead the U.S. Olympic women's gymnastics team, nicknamed "The Final Five," to victory at the 2016 Summer Games, while also winning gold in the individual all-around, vault and floor exercise and earning a bronze in the balance beam.



In July 2016, Biles wowed gymnastics fans with an impressive performance, winning the all-around title and first position in the floor exercise and vault. She earned a spot on the 2016 Olympic team along with fellow gymnasts Laurie Hernandez, Aly Raisman, Gabby Douglas and Madison Kocian.

Simone Biles has a combined total of 32 Olympic and World Championship medals, At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Biles won individual gold medals in the all-around, vault, and floor; bronze on balance beam; and gold as part of the United

States team “The Final Five”. In her great list of achievements; Biles is the gymnast with the most World medals (25) and most World gold medals (19), having surpassed Vitaly Scherbo's record 23 World medals by winning her 24th and 25th, both gold, at the 2019 competition in Stuttgart. She is also the female gymnast with the most –World all-around titles

Biles went on a hiatus and did not compete in 2017, “I am taking a year off from gymnastics and am going back to training at the end of the year or beginning of next year, so I'll start training then”. Biles said, according to theHouston Chronicle. “I don't know when I'll be back for the world championships. I have to get in shape, and we have trials for worlds, but hopefully the next goal after if I make worlds' teams and championships is the Olympics again.”

In 2021, Simone Biles broke yet another record. In May, she competed at the U.S. Classic. She debuted a Yurchenko double pike vault, which no woman had ever completed before, on her way to another U.S. Classic all-around title. The new vault was given a preliminary value of 6.6, making it the highest valued vault in women's gymnastics.



In June, Biles competed at the U.S. National Championships and won her 7th national all-around title and qualified for the Olympic Trials. In addition to winning the all-around title by 4.7 points, Biles also placed first in the vault, balance beam, and floor exercise, as well as third in the uneven bars. **At the Olympic Trials, Biles placed first and earned an automatic spot onto the Olympic team.**

On Wednesday 2nd July, 2021 Biles withdrew from the all-around competition. **The gold medallist had qualified first for the final on Thursday, but she pulled out to focus on her mental health.** In the same week on Saturday, She announced that she would also not compete in the finals for vault and uneven bars, but Biles did participate in the balance beam final which was her last event at the Tokyo Games.

"It's been really stressful this Olympic Games," said Biles, who came to Tokyo as possibly the Games' biggest star. "It's been a long week. It's been a long Olympic process. It's been a long year. Just a lot of different variables and I think we're just a little bit too stressed out, but we should be out here having fun and sometimes that's not the case."

She continued to defend her decision to remove herself from competition for her own safety, "I think it should be talked about a lot more, especially with athletes because I know some of us are going through the same things and we're always told to push through it ... but at the end of the day, we're not just entertainment, we're humans, and there are things going on behind the scenes that we're also trying to juggle with as well on top of sports," she said.

Biles emphasized further by saying that she doesn't feel in sync with her body and mind and is not confident performing most of

the skills she has trained to land perfectly. While taking such a huge step towards prioritizing her mental health over a medal, her years of hard work still pays off as she lands herself a Bronze on the Balance Beam and a silver medal in the women's team final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Summer Games...



But how many sports people can really come forward and say so? Playing sports does not make athletes immune to mental health challenges. With pressures to perform in the game, media watching them like a Hawk, and then projecting that larger than life picture to public, being an athlete can be incredibly challenging for a person's mental health.

In one of the posts, Michael Phelps, the most-decorated Olympian in history has been open about his mental health challenges, including depression and suicidal thoughts, before.

In recent years, Andrew Luck, Ronda Rousey, Abby Wambach,

Demar DeRozan, Kevin Love and many more have come forward and talked about mental health issues.

Athletes are real people, and have real life challenges. In fact they might have little more challenges behind the scene which ordinary people may not even be able to fathom. **It's high time that we come forward and talk about it openly just like we talk about our physical health and embrace mental health issues too, just like we do embrace and empathise with our physical ailments.**

I would like close this article by **Ronda Rousey's Quote:-**



"It's not a weakness we should condemn. I've never shied away from talking about suicide or anything like that. It's really heavily affected [my] family, and anything that I could do to make sure it affects as few people as possible; I'd be happy to do that. I do not see why it's looked at as a bad thing."

The Mental Health of Athletes: Naomi Osaka

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



We look up at athletes as superhumans. With their incredible feats, speed, strength and for many; a squeaky-clean public image: athletes have a demi-God status. They are placed on a pedestal, however, the key thing that many people forget is that athletes are humans just like us, who do what they do because they enjoy it. They are here to play the sport they love, not be treated like robots who don't have emotions and are only meant to eat, sleep, win-repeat.

There are two or more sides to each story, and the same goes for this one. Some of the most hotly debated arguments in the entire sporting world right now are-

1. Naomi Osaka retiring from the French Open and not speaking to the media
2. Simone Biles pulling out of 2 finals of the Olympics.
3. The mental health of athletes- why is it important?

1. **Naomi Osaka- A 4-time Grand Slam winner, one of the greatest tennis players of today and a squeaky clean, controversy free public image- until the 2021 French Open.** The French Open, and almost all other sports tournaments require all athletes to participate in post-match media conferences.

Naomi Osaka was one of the first people to refuse to participate in these media conferences citing the mental pressure that media conferences put on athletes. For putting her mental health in front of media interviews, she was fined USD 15,000 and was even threatened with disqualification from the tournament! She decided to withdraw from the Tournament.

Normally, you would expect that her sponsors would get annoyed and drop her as a promoter, but to give them credit, they backed her! **Her sponsors Mastercard and Nike (among others) came out to support her wholeheartedly. It is a positive sign that we live in a time when corporates are paying heed to mental health issues**

We all know that the media can be very intrusive, negative, critiquing, and insensitive. **The most recent example was when a reporter asked World Number 2 tennis player Daniil Medvedev whether Russian athletes carry a stigma of being cheaters with them to the Olympic Games. Medvedev was shocked and insulted by this question.**

Obviously asking one of the foremost tennis players in the

world, who just played an extremely long and tiring tennis match in the blistering heat about whether his country is full of cheaters would enrage him. He said that for the first time in his life he would not answer a question, that the reporter should be ashamed of himself, and that he would request the IOC to ban him from the Olympics.

Back to the topic. It's true that the media puts a lot of pressure on athletes, and more often than not, unfairly. **If an athlete underperforms in a competition, or in this case withdraws from a tournament- they face enormous scrutiny.**

I cannot begin to imagine how painful it must be for any celebrity or athlete to open the newspaper in the morning, and find a painful headline heavily critiquing them, or just insulting them or their performance altogether.

Naomi Osaka herself faced a lot of backlash for withdrawing from the French Open stating that press conferences are a part of being an athlete. **She has spoken about the times she has faced depression even after winning her first Grand Slam. She also stated that she is an introvert and finds it hard to talk to people.**

Double standards for women and men

Ironically, one of her fellow athletes who did not support her at this time happens to be Novak Djokovic, who only recently threw a big fat tantrum at the Olympics because he was losing (and later said something to the effect of he is only human after all.) **This reminds me of the time Serena Williams faced flak (and fines) for her emotional outburst during a match, which is something for which most male tennis players get no negative reaction.**

While the Press Conferences being a part of the athlete package is true to some extent, that doesn't mean that we put an athlete's mental health at a lower level of importance. **Mental health is not something that we can scoff at and take lightly, and that holds true not only for athletes but also for all humans.** Several athletes have brought mental health to the spotlight of being a sportsman. **Being an athlete is not all medals and pomp. Star swimmer Michael Phelps has brought the mental health of swimmers and athletes into the spotlight.**



2. Simone Biles- Regarded as one of the best gymnasts in the world, with a total of 31 World Championship and Olympic medals combined (6 Olympic medals), Simone Biles is an inspiring athlete. She was also expected to pick up 6 more medals at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. **She withdrew from three finals events at the Summer Olympics this year, stating that she had to take care of her mental health, and that she had the twisties*.**

*(A mental block/condition where a gymnast thinks they are in the air but lose track of their space and how to land back on the ground).

Imagine a gymnast performing dangerous manoeuvres and losing track of their landing, leading to injury or worse. **It's all fun for a viewer to watch and marvel at the risks that gymnasts take for each manoeuvre, but for the athlete on the mat, anything less than 100% can lead to serious injuries like a paralysis.**



This move came with tons of criticism, including criticism from the incredibly controversial (and rather annoying!) Piers Morgan [British TV presenter] calling Naomi Osaka an “arrogant spoiled brat” and criticising Simone Biles by saying that “mental health issues are an excuse for poor performance in an elite sport”.

(Both of these comments were promptly shut down by thousands of people who revolted against him online. **Countless other haters went on to say that she was putting herself before her country, and a lot of other tone-deaf comments followed.**

One example is of the notorious Fox News, where Mr Clay Travis, said that she should “apologise to her team.”

However, she shut all of them down and even said that if she participated, her performance would not be to the optimum level due to the condition and would affect her team as a whole. She also stated that it was not as if she had a bad performance in the competition and then decided to quit in the middle.

She performed well during the early stages of the competition. **The sad reality is that over and above her mental health concerns, she had to justify her actions to trolls who do not themselves possess enough talent to replicate her feats, but armed with the anonymity of social media, feel confident enough to pass vile comments.**

3. How important is the Mental Health of Athletes, is it something we should be focused on?

The answer? It is of the utmost importance, and it is definitely something we should be focused on. Let me explain. If you have ever been a part of any sports competition, you would have almost always been told that winning is 50% physical effort and 50% mental effort. **Now if we remove the 50% of mental effort, that will mean only half the effort.**

The battle begins in the brain. If the athletes' mental health is not optimal, then we should open our arms and help them rather than shunning them and slapping thousands of dollars' worth of fines on them. **It's high time that we start accepting Mental Health as an important issue and a real problem.** As a society, at the level of smaller units like families and schools, mental health discussions

should be normalised. When children are taught to look up to famous athletes, a conversation about keeping oneself healthy mentally, and asking for help, should also be discussed. **We must not forget that it is not only us who have been in our homes for the past year; athletes had to train at home and had to live through the uncertainty of the pandemic as well.**

The pandemic did help bring out Mental Health being a real issue rather than a stigma, and it is actually helpful that athletes like Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles are speaking up about Mental Health because all children who are reading about them or watching them on TV can learn that it is Ok to not be Ok.

In Conclusion-

Athletes are put up on lofty pedestals and are kept in high regard. They lead their lives in the limelight, and they are aware that a single step out of the limits of expectations, or the tiniest slip up can catch the eye of the media, and it can turn into a frenzy. **The constant pressure and limelight can be too much to bear. In my opinion the quicker we humanise athletes the better they will be treated.**

We must also not forget that Simone Biles and her teammates were abused by their own team doctor. Many athletes have their own problems, be it depression, a troubled childhood and much more. **So, if you do see your favourite athlete withdraw from a tournament, underperform in a big tournament, just remember that they have their reasons, and aren't doing it on purpose`.**

In this context, kudos to Naomi Osaka for igniting this conversation – whether it is in editorials, blogs, online chat rooms or in family living rooms – Osaka has forced us to think of this question.

She is a real hero.

Everyone is going through something or the other, and just like Sir Isaac Newton rightly said, Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. **So, when you see an athlete pull out of a competition, instead of scolding them for crying for example, give them a shoulder to cry on.**

Athletes are humans too.



Human Health: Impact of climate change

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Before I start with the impacts of climate change, I would like to recap what exactly climate change is. **Climate change is a broad term used to refer to the changes in the Earth's climates, at local, regional, or global scales, and can also refer to the effects of these changes.**

In recent decades, the term 'climate change' is most often used to describe changes in the Earth's climate-driven primarily by human activity since the pre-Industrial period, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and removal of forests, resulting in a relatively rapid increase in carbon dioxide concentration in the Earth's atmosphere.

Coming to the impacts of climate change on human health:

I think it is needless to say that climate change increases the risk of illness for all biotic organisms. That is because climate change increases the temperature of the

atmosphere which results in the increase of the ozone layer level as well as other pollutants in the atmosphere. This further may exacerbate cardiovascular and respiratory disease, or cause asthma due to an increase in pollen grains.

Along with the increase in temperature climate change also means more frequent heavy rains and runoff. Health impacts may include gastrointestinal illness like diarrhea, effects on the body's nervous and respiratory systems, or liver and kidney damage.

Exposure to extreme heat

When exposed to extreme heat, one may experience heatstroke and dehydration, as well as cardiovascular, respiratory, and cerebrovascular disease.

Excessive heat is more likely to affect populations in northern latitudes where people are less prepared to cope with excessive temperatures. Certain types of populations are more vulnerable than others: for example, outdoor workers, student-athletes, and homeless people tend to be more exposed to extreme heat because they spend more time outdoors.



Low-income households and older adults may lack access to air conditioning which also increases exposure to extreme heat. Additionally, young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with certain medical conditions are less able to regulate their body temperature and can therefore be more vulnerable to extreme heat.

Rainfall

Globally, the number of weather related natural disasters reports have more than tripled since the 1960s. These disasters are again due to climate change and result in thousands of deaths.

The sea levels are rising a lot too along with increasingly extreme weather which will result in destroying homes, medical facilities and other essential services. More than half of the world's population lives within 60 km of the sea. People may be forced to move, which in turn heightens the risk of a range of health effects, from mental disorders to communicable diseases.

Patterns of infection

Climatic conditions also strongly affect water-borne diseases and diseases transmitted through insects, snails, or other cold-blooded animals.

Changes in climate are likely to lengthen the transmission seasons of important vector-borne diseases and alter their geographic range. For example, climate change is projected to significantly widen the area of China where the snail-borne disease schistosomiasis occurs.

Some infections, such as malaria and dengue, are strongly influenced by climate. Transmitted by a specific mosquito malaria kills over 400,000 people every year, many of which are children. The dengue mosquito is also highly sensitive to climate conditions, and studies suggest that climate change is likely to continue to increase exposure to dengue.



Did you know, global warming may bring some localized benefits as well, such as fewer winter deaths in temperate climates and increased food production in certain areas, however the overall health effects of a changing climate are overwhelmingly negative.

Climate change affects many of the social and environmental determinants of health such as clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter.

Forest fires in Turkey

-by Jiya Gaur, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



We often forget how real climate change is. **The alarm bells have been ringing for years together however we refuse to acknowledge them and continue to press snooze on the alerts that may change the course of life in the coming years.** It occurs right beside us in numerous shapes and forms.

It is the scungy smog that you see during a car ride that drifts in the air slowly making its way into the lungs of people. It is the disappearance of animals that we used to see and admire at wildlife parks and zoos as children. It is the unforeseen earthquake with a historical magnitude that crumbles the lives of innumerable people, slowly ripping and shaking apart families. It is happening.

An ecosystem without herbage cannot survive for long. It is prone to collapse. Considering numbers, the majority of plants consist of trees. Each tree sheds multiple benefits. The resources we acquire from trees are in such abundance that a single adult tree with leaves can meet the oxygen requirements of two to ten people.

They absorb the greenhouse gas, that is carbon dioxide and help maintain the temperature of earth. **In accordance with a report by the World Resources Institute (WRI) assessments, forests absorb 7.6 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide globally. This is corresponding to 1.5 times the annual carbon emissions of the United States.**

Keeping this in mind, trees also play a pivotal role in the water cycle and contribute immensely to the environment by soaking up thermal energy present in the environment.

Irrespective of the vast bounty of nature around us, we are slowly yet steadily destroying these treasures with our own doings. We are eradicating forests to construct ginormous settlements, infrastructures, shopping complexes and every other form of human activity. We use trees without paying heed to the fact that they have started to decrease in number.



A series of shattering natural disasters have agonized our planet during the past few weeks. Tracing the calamitous floods in China and western Europe to the sizzling heat waves and threatening drought in North America to wildfires in the subArctic, this is a time for climate deniers to rethink what is true and what isn't.

Even in the United Kingdom, well known and regarded for its gloomy and sooty weather, temperatures rose well above 34 degrees Celsius. Meteorologists are troubled by the fact that they have underestimated velocity with which climate change may be imposed upon us. A particularly vicious issue caused by this tumult in the environment is forest fires.

The product of dry and hot air combined with low humidity is the equation leading to it. The forest fires in places such as Australia, California and Siberia lasted for up to four months and are evidence of this. They are expected to be the worst sufferers from forest fires and the dent it has made. Now Turkey has been soaked in furious balls of inferno.

Turkey is going through an exceedingly rough time due to the global pandemic, the mucilage problem, wildfires and floods. Forest fires continued to rage across Turkey's south and southwestern coastal resorts, compelling the evacuation of villages and infamous tourist spots in a survivalist manner through boats and yachts.

Several parts of Turkey have been consumed in flames, demolishing not only forest covers but also homes of people. Turkey's immaculate beaches have changed form into that of a purgatory. The southern coastline has set in flames, wholly and completely. The forest fires first commenced in the southern

provinces of Mersin, Osmaniye, Adana, Antalya and Kahramanmaras. Firestorms also broke out in the southwestern province of Mugla and central provinces of Kirikkale and Kayseri.

As Turkey is burning in embers, volunteers, villagers, firefighters and Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority have been putting their lives at stake to contain the relentless flames that burn with an unabated fury.

During the first few months of 2021, Turkey had intercepted numerous warnings and cues of climate change. In the month of May, Turkey faced a drought. Exceeding temperatures in the Black sea the Dardanelles and the Marmara sea caused migratory birds such as flamingoes and blank-winged stilts to expire.

The fires caused a huge setback in Turkey's tourism sector which was already hampered due to the coronavirus restrictions and rules. Villagers who had lost everything raised their voice in concern and argued that the government was not doing enough to support them.



Land became infertile for farming, growing stock and breeding livestock in the aftermath of the fires. The government has pledged financial lifelines and various other forms of compensation to those affected while being criticized for their handling of this disaster.

Fires are common during the arid summer season however many believe that there could have been “sabotage” explaining the cause of the widespread fires. **“Those responsible will have to account for the attacks against nature and forests.”** said Fahrettin Altun, an aide to the President. Previous forest fires in Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean regions have been blamed on arson and outlawed militants.

Climate is not static. It will continue to change. We must be wary of any climate events and their effects that may multiply the way we live our life in the coming years. It compels us to act sustainably, wisely, responsibly and thoughtfully.

The weather will get even hotter and the fires will grow unless acted upon. For those analyzing every twist and turn of the climate, it feels and seems as though the worst times are near considering the current turmoil.

Even then, we must do everything we possibly can to win this battle and save whatever is left of our natural habitat. There is so much scope. This is a call for action. Let us all begin to do what we can.

The blast along with the economic crisis, political deadlock and rapidly increasing poverty are displaying a grave threat to the country's stability.

Climate Emergency

-by Naisha Arora, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



Leonardo Dicaprio very rightly said, in his 2016 Oscar acceptance speech-

"Climate change is real. It is happening right now. It's the most urgent threat facing our entire species and we need to work collectively together and stop procrastinating."

Climate change has been a topic we have been discussing for nearly three decades now and though actions have been taken, we are no closer to overcoming this problem than we were 30 years ago. **Climate change is a phenomenon known to everyone and so are the factors it is affected by- be it natural or human. Natural factors include volcanic eruptions, oceanic currents, orbital changes, etc.**

However, these cannot be controlled by us. Therefore, for the purpose of the

subject at hand, we are only going to be considering human factors/ human involvement and how it affects this issue.



Human activities produce greenhouse gases which amplify the greenhouse effect., leading to the retention of excess heat and therefore, a change in the global climate. These gases- methane, nitrous oxides and carbon di oxide amongst others, are produced by a variety of human activities- burning fossil fuels, industrial activities, etc.

China, India, Russia, USA, Canada and Germany are amongst the top contributors to climate change today. However, these are facts most of us already know. The recent development that has come about pertaining to the subject at hand is that this issue has now been declared an emergency.

An emergency is any situation which warrants immediate action to resolve the issue. Scientific American (the magazine) says "Consider the following scenarios: A hurricane blasts Florida. A

California dam bursts because floods have piled water high up behind it. A sudden, record-setting cold snap cuts power to the entire state of Texas. These are emergencies that require immediate action. Multiply these situations worldwide, and you have the biggest environmental emergency to beset the earth in millennia: climate change.”

The alarming extent and rapid growth of climate change is what has led us to live in a climate emergency today. **The United Kingdom was the first government to declare a nationwide climate emergency.** This term is believed to have been coined by Bristol councilor Carla Denyer in 2019.

Protests and demonstrations ensued, with people crowding the streets with the aim of getting the UK to be the first country to acknowledge climate change as an undeniably serious issue requiring immediate addressal. Protestors stormed the streets of London and the House of Commons, wanting to be heard to save the planet.

Surprisingly, after 10 days of protests, the UK government passed the bill to declare a state emergency in response to the rapidly increasing scenario of global warming. While this was proposed on a more local basis, the idea quickly took the globe by storm.

As of January 2021, at least 38 countries around the world including the entirety of the European Union, New Zealand, and Japan, along with thousands of towns, cities and counties have declared climate emergencies and are campaigning, making an effort, for change. One of the most noticeable means of promoting this issue, or any issue for that matter, is activism.

All over the globe, teenage activists have also been protesting and vying for a change in governmental policies in order to make them more environmentally sustainable. A notable name in this field is that of Greta Thunberg.



Greta Thunberg is a teenage Swedish environmental activist who is known for challenging governments to tackle the imminent threat of climate change and taking action to prevent further degradation of the planet.

Greta Thunberg led a school strike for the climate and demonstrated outside the Swedish parliament in order to force politicians to acknowledge and act on the pressing issue that is climate change. She describes climate change as not just an

environmental but also an existential crisis. She has inspired a multitude of students to come together and campaign for not only action but also awareness- getting the governments to include the ecological crisis as not only an issue to be seen at through the lens of the environment but an educational priority.

Having discussed what climate emergency is and how it was achieved, we now look at the impacts and goals of governments worldwide. Carbon emissions are a huge contributing factor to the issue that is global warming and being something that can be controlled by humans, have become a major agenda pertaining to climate change and the climate emergency.

A growing coalition of countries is aiming at half the current carbon emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. In order to achieve this target, fossil fuel production must decline by at least 6 percent per annum from 2020-2030. Another important term that has come up in today's discussion of climate change is the concept of 'carbon neutrality'- achieving net zero carbon emissions.

In order to attain this goal, a global Carbon Neutrality Coalition has also been created which has brought together a group of pioneering countries to develop long term strategies in order to reduce their carbon emissions to 'net zero'. As of June 2021, Bhutan and Suriname have achieved this target and are working towards maintaining carbon negativity (removing more carbon from the atmosphere than is emitted) , setting a precedent for other countries to do the same.

Most countries have set their sights on following the lead of Bhutan and Suriname by 2050 at the latest, barring five- Australia, Singapore, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and China. China has the aim to

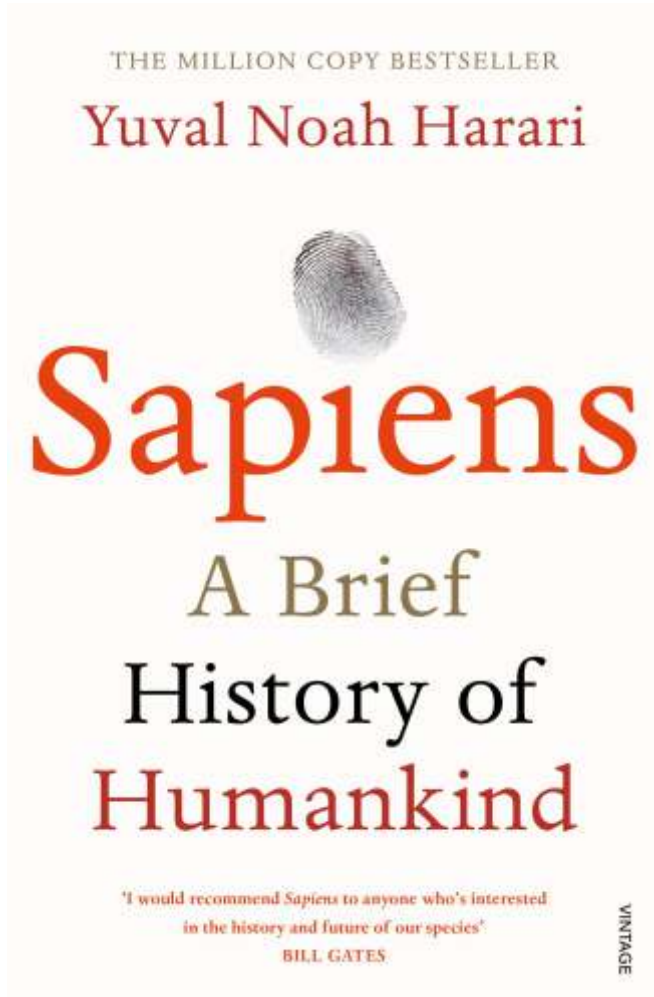
achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060. This, although delayed, will be greatly beneficial as it accounts for 25 percent of global carbon emissions. Honoring the Paris Climate Accords of 2015, India has also targeted a 30-35 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

Even today, despite these climate goals, declaration of climate emergencies and the like, not enough importance is given to the issue of environmental and climatic degradation and it is our duty, as a hyperkeystone species, to protect the earth as it spirals into the chaotic abyss of destruction brought on by subjects we neglect to give adequate importance to.



Book Review: *Sapiens*

-by Aryaman Sharma, Grade IX, SNS Faridabad



Sapiens is a beautifully written book that explains the complex human evolution in simple words. It is written by Yuval Noah Harari & has a sequel called *Homo Deus*. It was published in 2011. This book tells you how a small being with little purpose acquires knowledge and becomes the most intelligent being on the planet.

What I have understood from the book is that human history can be divided into three major parts- the Cognitive revolution, the Agricultural revolution, and the Scientific revolution. During the Cognitive revolution, *Sapiens* evolved in Africa and

started to travel to different continents. They wiped other human species and were the last to remain. **In the start humans had no impact on their surroundings but after a few years they killed many different species of animals in Australia and America.**

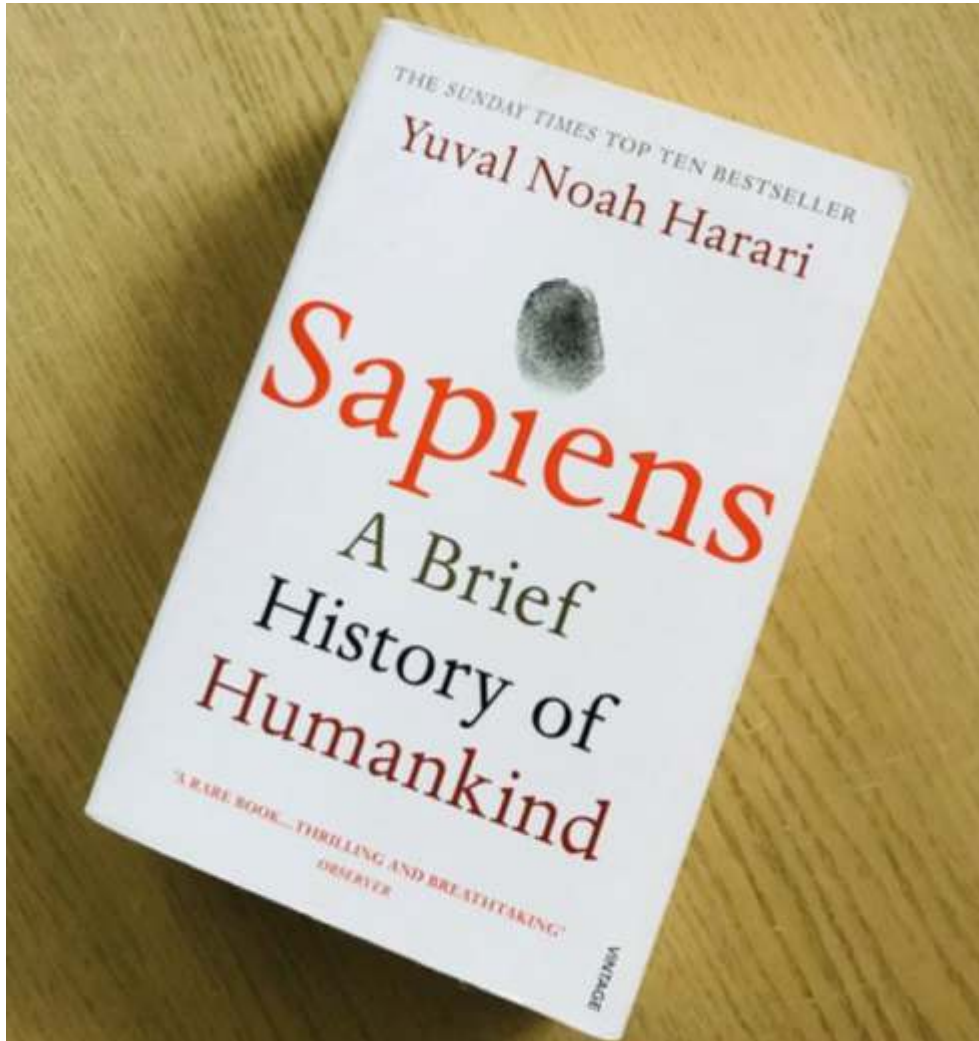
In this period humans (sapiens) were able to communicate at such a high level that was never seen before. They were able to tell about things they have never seen, taste, smell before. This was a turning point in the history of humans.

Then started the agricultural revolution and permanent human settlements were made. **From a nomad, humans became settlers. Humans started farming, and bred cattle. Gradually, villages started to form and after that kingdoms. Money was also invented after some decades. Many religions were also formed in the period.**

The third phase was the scientific revolution, wherein Europeans conquered many places in the world. There was a rise in capitalism. There was a huge advancement in science and technology. Industries were formed and many species of plants and animals were wiped out. **In the name of being "civilized", "civilization" was somehow getting lost.**

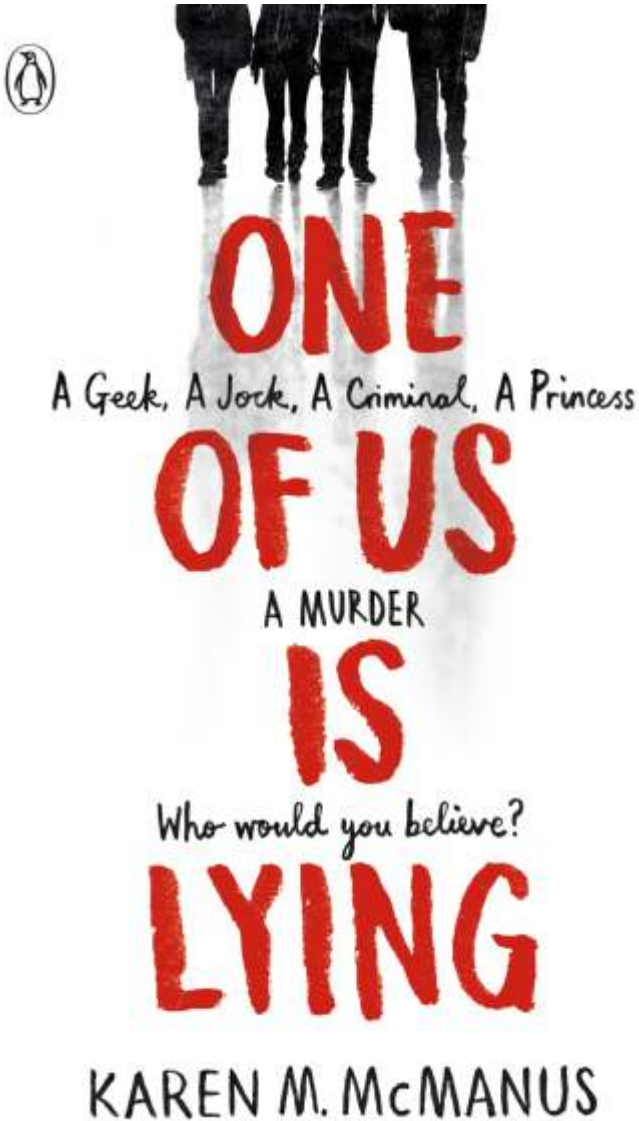
For me the book was not only enlightening but also engaging. It explained human evolution from the start to the end. It tells how the actions we take and the things we think are all related to evolution. **It explains how human collaboration takes place and why it takes place. Because of our collaborations we, insignificant and weak animals, are able to rule the earth.** At the end it tells what could happen in the future, this topic is covered more in detail in Homo Deus. There were a few times where I had difficulty in understanding the topic but overall the book was a good read.

I would highly recommend reading this book. I personally wasn't interested in the evolution of humans or any other animal, but after reading the book the whole topic fascinated me. Now I am more interested in learning more about evolution, how our brain functions, and what are the implications for the future.



Book Review: *One of us is Lying*

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Imagine this - There are five people in a room, one of them dies, and only four people exit that room alive. Pretty generic mystery plot, right? It's the kind you see in every second book on the mystery shelf of a library or bookstore. However, there are always the little details that stand out, and writing that makes a book rise up above all others.

Now, there is one such book that I think of every time I read this paragraph, and that book is Karen M. McManus's "One of us is lying".

At its very core, it follows the same plot I stated above. Four suspects, no eyewitnesses, and a whole lot of mystery. However, the plot of a book isn't its entirety, there is so much more required. **The true magic of a mystery novel comes from the characters, the little twists, the descriptions, and the adrenaline rush it gives you.** That magic is packed so hard into this book, that you get a gargantuan dose of it from the moment you open the very first page! This book is honestly really gripping, so without any further ado, let's dive into the characters.

Major characters



The main characters of the book are four teenagers in their last year of high school. The most intriguing trait each possesses is that they fit into the "classic" high school stereotypes. There's **Bronwyn, the "nerd"**, who has perfect grades and wants to go to Yale University. There's **Cooper, the "jock"**, who is a once-in-a-generation baseball talent. There is **Addy, who is the stereotypical "princess"**, but the most interesting is **Nate**. Nate is a high schooler, like the rest of them, but he's **been arrested once already, and is on probation.**

Lastly, there is **Simon Keller, the victim**. Simon is an outlier in this curious scenario. He doesn't fit into any stereotype, but has the most awe-inspiring job you can think of.

He created and runs **"About That"**, a gossip application for the students of Bayview High School. "About That", is exceptionally popular, with everyone using it as the holy grail of teen gossip. It's featured posts are the biggest talking point of every day, and the people whose secrets are exposed on it have their lives ruined in just a few days.

Simon dies while he is in detention with the other four, each of whom maintains that they were wrongly put into detention, and that they shouldn't be there. That may be the case, however, when young Mr. Keller dies, and it becomes clear that it was murder, we know that one of them desperately wanted to be there.

The book still doesn't excite you? Well then let me tell you this. Soon, a new fact is uncovered. **Simon had four posts for the next day, the day after he died, that he couldn't post. There was one post each, for Bronwyn, Cooper, Nate, and Addy.** Four posts that could ruin their lives faster than anything ever created. So Simon just dies in a room filled with exactly the SAME people who he had the inside scoop on. **Coincidence? I think not! Convinced?**

Anyway, this book really kept me hooked. And I don't mean the "I'll finish it because I want to know" kind of hooked, I mean the "reading with a torch underneath the blankets" hooked. I'm serious. Not just the plot, but the interactions between the characters, not knowing what would happen next, being flabbergasted by the secrets they all held, being left speechless by the secrets their secrets held, and so much more!

What's even better is that these characters are joined by a stellar lineup of supporting characters. There's Bronwyn's super tech-savvy sister Maeve, there's Cooper's father, who desperately wants him to go to the college with the number one baseball team, there's Addy's boyfriend Jake, who Addy thinks is great, though her sister disagrees.

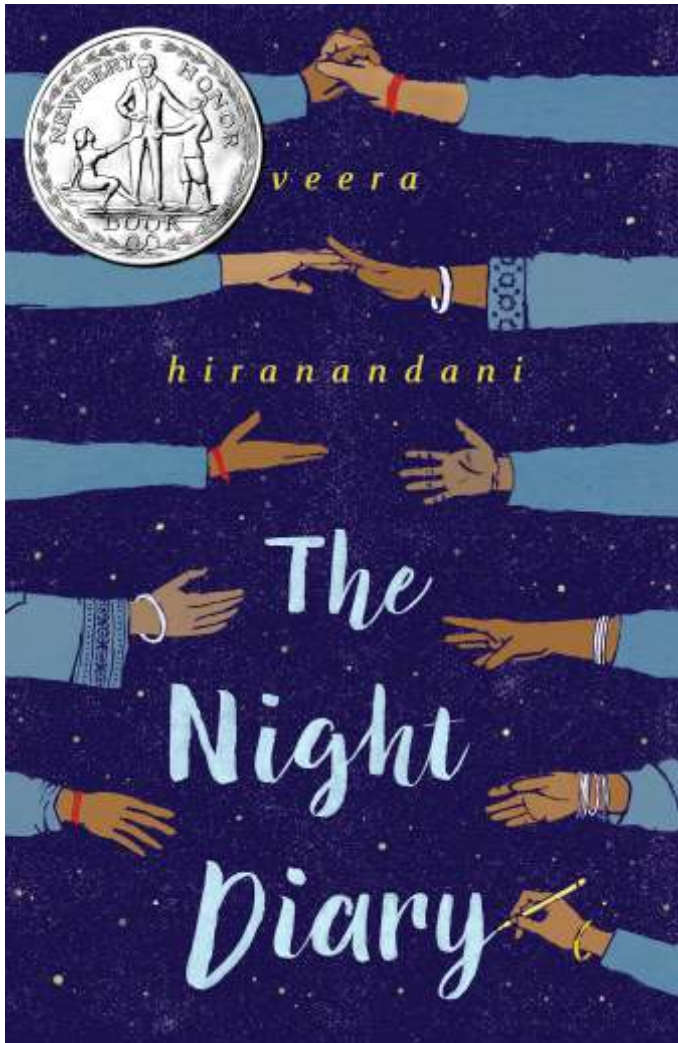
These characters may not always add to the plot, but it's almost impossible to imagine the book without them.

The last highlight I want to bring to light are the twists. **There are an innumerable amount of twists, and they aren't the kind you figure out a few pages before they come, they are the kind that make you do a double take, or even a triple take before you understand what's going on.**

I would want to recommend this book to enthusiastic readers above the age of 13, because it deals with some heavy topics, including violence and suicide. However, if you are thirteen, mystery enthusiast or not, this book is for you! **I promise you, if you read it, you will never look at murder mysteries the same way!**

Book Review: *The Night Diary*

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Books really have a great way with connecting with the reader and we are constantly seeing creative ways of books putting their story in front of us in a variety of ways. **I don't mean books as audio books; however, I do mean more modern writing styles that have come to light in these past few years.**

Whether it was the form of Story- Poetry in the Award -Winning book Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds, (A very talented author/poet) or a book like Echo by Pam-

Munoz Ryan where multiple narratives are shown as connected in some way or the other. This really piqued my interest, and I recently noticed it in a book I stumbled upon which moved me with its lyrical prose. The book is called *The Night Diary*.

THE PARTITION OF INDIA, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A CHILD

Despite the rather mystical title that has been given to the book, the book is not a fantasy book in any way. It is, however, written in the format of a story combined with letters that the protagonist wrote to her mother, which makes for an incredibly captivating read. **With topics like wars, fighting inner demons, loss and a gripping story line, this book displays the Partition of India, from a child's perspective.** The story is based on the personal experiences of her father during the Partition and her Grand-Parents.

The Book begins with a letter from the protagonist (Nisha) to her mother (Who we learn had passed away when Nisha was young) and it gives us an introduction to Nisha and her twin brother Anil. Nisha loves cooking and is an introvert. She does not enjoy talking much and prefers instead to express her views in a diary.

Her brother, on the other hand, is a good artist but is not very good at studies because the words jumble up when he reads, but others around him do not seem to understand his predicament. (Though it is not said overtly, it is heavily implied that Anil is dyslexic.)

Then we learn more about Nisha and Anil's family, which consists of her grandmother, her father (who is a famous doctor), and their cook and help named Kazi. **They live in the city of Mirpur Khas (Present day Pakistan) and are also Hindus.** Early in the book, we see the beginning of the crumbling of India as the Partition was

announced. The pace picks as we start to see sparks of communal violence because of opposing views of various leaders. It starts off with Anil being beaten up and both religions fighting with each other. The violence seems to reach a crescendo when people holding torches broke in and wrecked the family's house while they were in it.

The book then continues to share more insights into the protagonist family – we learn that the family has previously broken various societal stereotypes. Firstly, we learn that Nisha and Anil's mother was a Muslim who married their Hindu father, despite the whole community frowning down upon their relationship. We also learn that their help, Kazi is Muslim too and people have started troubling him because he works for a Hindu family.

The turmoil continues and is aptly displayed by the letters that Nisha is writing to her mother in her diary. We see an apt view of the change in each family member's behaviour and how it changed before and after the announcement of the Partition, all through the lens of Nisha's perspective. The further we delve into the book, the more we learn about the relationship between the father and his children, the doting grandmother and the caring cook Kazi.

The rest of the book covers the family's arduous and painful journey across the border, and we see what really happens to humans when the situation becomes dire. Water becomes a scarce resource (which offers a glimpse into the future of what our future could lead to).

This is a unique perspective on the Partition, because most books on this topic are written by adults. The eyes of a child see and feel things and emotions differently. For a teenager so many decades after the Partition, the horrors of that time are difficult to imagine,

but this book answers many of the questions most children would ask, starting from why communal violence took place, combined with historical information about the Partition of India and why it happened in the first place.

The book is most definitely intense - there is graphic depiction of communal violence. It may show a dark and brooding story line, however it provides a flawless connection to the real Partition that took place.

While each book attracts different readers, this one has a little something for everyone. From the incredible aspect of the blending letters that the protagonist writes to her mother with an emotional storyline, and facts for history buffs, it makes for an interesting and emotional read. It will also leave you with many questions to think about. Thought provoking, emotional, with a sprinkle of history on top, *The Night Diary* will leave you reading late into the night.



***Portraits:
I am a Woman***

-by Miraya Joneja, Grade IX, SNS Faridabad



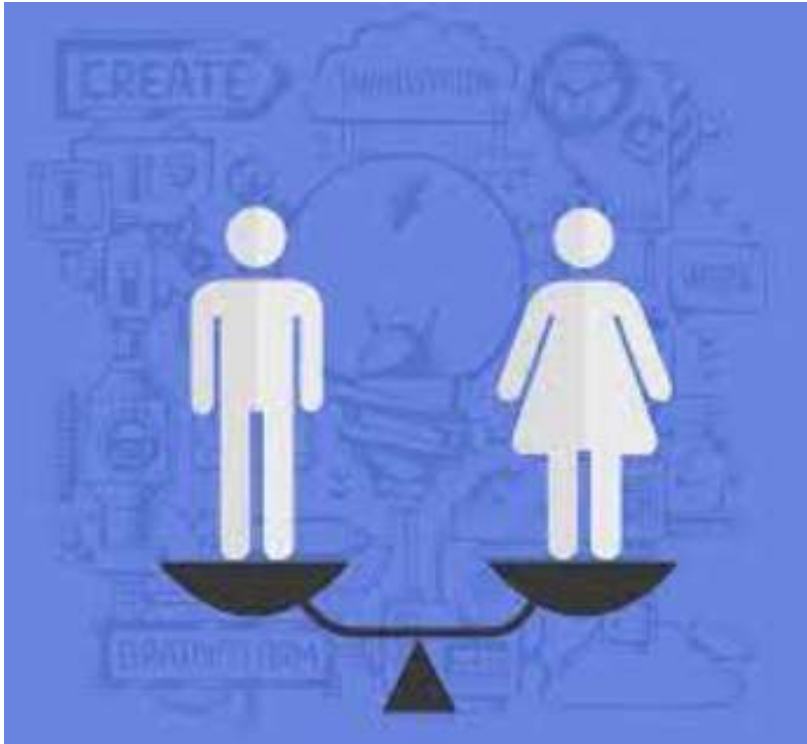
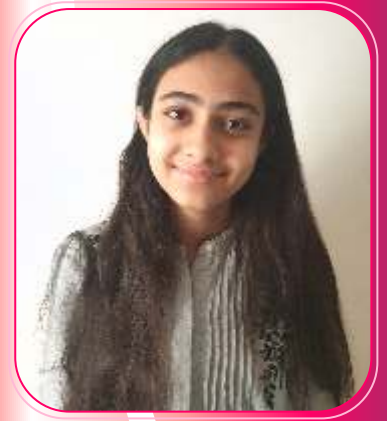


193 Member States <> One United Nations

AUGUST, 2021

Strive for equality

-by Mehar Gaba, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Achieving Gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, Boys and girls. It is everyone's responsibility.

-Ban Ki Moon

Gender equality is a way for us to get to live the lives we want to live. No matter who you are, where you come from, what you identify yourself as, what your opinions are-you matter.

The world cannot possibly develop when half its population is held back. Women are not second class citizens yet women are treated like inferiors. Gender equality is still, in the 21st century, a topic highly debated on. What is there to debate in equality for all?

Gender equality is a pressing matter for many countries. Many countries are yet to recognise their women as equal citizens. In India, gender equality has greatly decreased in Urban communities (though still existing). However, in rural areas it is still an issue of extreme worry.

“Gender disparity doesn't really exist” is something we often hear people say. Six women are killed every hour by men. 137 women are killed every day by their partners or family members.

Femicide has worsened. 45% of women living in the middle east and North Africa, 38% of women living in South Asia, 32% of women in North America, 31% of women living in sub-Saharan Africa, 27% of women in Latin America and the Caribbean islands and 22% of women living in western Europe are victims of physical or sexual violence in their own homes.

In Mali, girls are sexually violated in school. In Somalia girls are kidnapped from their schools. At this very moment 132 million or more girls do not go to school. Women earn only 77% of what men earn for the same work. Only 25% of women across the world are parliamentarians. There are only 21 female heads of states. Only 14 countries have 50% women in their cabinets.

The United Nations has never had a woman General secretary. Women perform 2.6 times more unpaid domestic work than men. Women are 18% less likely to get promoted, regardless of their qualifications. 5,000 women die every year due to honour killings.

Surprisingly some of the above mentioned violations are legal in many countries.

Where is the equality?

We all know what gender equality is- equality for all. But why is it needed? **Gender equality is good for countries. Those countries that have the most gender equality are also the countries that score the highest on the happiness scale.**

On paper gender equality may exist as a long list of opportunities provided and measures taken, but in reality it's a problem faced by everyone on several different levels, be it local, national or global. **Gender equality is also the 5th Goal of the UN's sustainable development program.**

Most women work longer hours than men but are paid less. Women make up two-thirds of all the illiterate people in the world. Less than 7% of the world leaders are women. This is something that gender equality works towards reducing and developing, giving all genders equal opportunity.

Gender equality is very beneficial for economies. **Gender equality has been conclusively shown to stimulate economic growth which is very beneficial for countries with low unemployment and less economic opportunity.**

Educating the girl child is equally important. I believe that everybody should be provided with the same opportunities, whether they take them or not, is their own personal choice.

When women work, they bring home or invest as much as 90% of their income back for their families, whereas most men are reported on getting only 35% of their income for their families. When women earn more income, the health and education of their children

improves. When women are excluded from working, economies are restricted causing poverty to continue its cycle. Poverty then bears the brunt on the women and girls of the family.

Gender equality decreases the violence against women and the girl child. **Due to lack of empowerment and resources, women and girls face life threatening risks. By educating and empowering everyone, we are giving millions of voiceless women a voice, a hope, that one day they can live their life the way they please.** Gender equality drastically reduces the rates of human and women trafficking.

Passing a law, Making an agreement, having talks on women's rights and gender equality doesn't magically erase gender disparity. Gender equality is something we need to work towards together. **Do not support gender equality for your mother, sister or friend, do it to help all the 3,822,561,000 women in the world.**

Humans of quality, support gender equality.



Influence of Pop Culture On Youth

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



We live in an unimaginably dynamic world, where from everything to what we wear to what we think of people even to what we believe is controlled by a variety of factors. **Pop culture has now become an endemic and undeniable factor in that.**

Pop culture seems to be developing into a global phenome and our generation gets to witness it, at its supposed peak. **Music, movies, sitcoms, books, comics and games influence our life more than what we see at the surface. This article endeavors to show how exactly the prevalent pop culture is booming.**

Hamlet gave us "To thine own self be true!", or Dead Poets Society telling us "Carpe Diem. Seize the day. Make your lives extraordinary!", but this is old school. Let's talk about how Star Wars gave us "May the force be with you!" or how Hunger Games gave us "I volunteer as tribute!". Its more often than never that we quote our favourite

movie, book, song, play or character. But Pop Culture goes so much deeper. It is a depiction of what our society truly is and what it aspires through be through riveting forms of art.

At societal level, it makes people more accepting and aware. There are books, pieces of poetry, movies and songs that are openly talking about racial issues. The ground-breaking book, "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas, talks about Police Brutality against minorities in the USA.

There are podcasts shining much needed light on the kind of obstacles minorities have had to overcome just to be able to obtain the dignity everyone should have.

Ellen DeGeneres, philanthropist and talk show host, came out as Lesbian in 1997, making her the first leading character to come out on a primetime network television show. With more and more TV shows, books, movies being perfectly candid about gender, an ideology evolution is afoot. This empowers everyone to embrace their true selves, without shame and with pride.

Feminism has taken on a whole another level, with the #MeToo movement and powerful women taking the world by storm. With strong and independent women like Oprah Winfrey and Emma Watson, who are actively supporting a beautiful movement of self actualisation have helped to empower so many women across the globe to speak up.

At individual level, people are becoming more accepting and open-minded as well as inclusive. They are learning that they are who they are, along with understanding the best form of expression for themselves. A whole generation, especially those born in the 10s are

growing up in an environment where they make conscious choices, free of stigmas and prejudices. This bodes well for what kind of society we will have within the next decade or so.

But like everything else, pop culture has a flipside. Children have impressionable minds, and they subconsciously pick up on things they see in movies or read in books or listen about in songs. This has been proven to damage their thinking and development.



The maturity of what to follow and what not to follow comes much later, and before that, they may have already been negatively impacted. This is visible through a plethora of examples:

1. Movies and TV Shows inadvertently tend to promote violence and angst. Exposure, accidental or intentional, to such kind of visuals can scar the child for life, impact their perception of society and change their outlook on life. It might even normalise violence for them, and advertise that there is nothing wrong with angst. This is likely to make them aggressive, which goes without saying is extremely unhealthy for young minds.

2. Artists in the music industry often lead unhealthy lives, which they talk about in their music. Their overly laid-back attitude

about how to live their lives rubs off on these young minds in a way they can't handle. **It shows them that there is nothing wrong with living a life wherein you indulge in the worst of habits.** For young people, this can be a huge game-changer, and send them down a bad path.

3. In magazines and movies, models and influencers are depicted as being the ideal body type. **This instills body-image issues, destruction of self-esteem and in extreme cases leads to eating disorders just to fit into ideal body standards.** This is severely unhealthy and very hard to recover from.

Just like humans, the earth and other species evolve, pop culture does too. The main difference is that pop culture might be evolving faster than we could. This, goes without saying, can provoke parents and guardians when they see their kids whiling away listening to music and watching shows that they find bizarre.

But ultimately its just the cycle of life. Somewhere and somehow pop culture is helping young kids find some direction in their life, and evolving a world view.

And as we witness a meteoric change in pop culture, ideology and societal norms, its important to keep pace with the dynamics of the same. All three of said domains of change, drive each other. One cannot develop without the other undergoing some change.

The best we can do is hold out for the day these three domains begin to change in a way that they make our society come closer to the utopia we expect it to be.

Anniversary:

Beirut Blast

-by Jiya Gaur, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



A year later, the citizens of Lebanon continue to fight against the scars that have been etched since the calamity that took place last year on the fourth of August. **One of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history macerated the port and harmed more than half the city. The explosion transpired due to the detonation of tonnes of ammonium nitrate, an inflammable compound commonly used in the agriculture industry.** The cargo carrying the toxin had entered Beirut's port on a Moldovan-flagged ship, the *Rhosus*, in November 2013.

Thereafter, it was offloaded into hangar 12 in Beirut's port on October 23 and 24, 2014. Purportedly, this very ship was on its way to Mozambique and was not meant to stay in Lebanon. Irrespective of the fact though, the explosives never left Lebanon and were stored unsafely. Seven years later, it exploded and destroyed the commemorated

and historical city sparing no mercy.

The Beirut port explosion killed 218 people, including nationals of Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Pakistan, Palestine, the Netherlands, Canada, Germany, France, Australia, and the United States.

It wounded 7,000 people, of whom at least 150 acquired a physical disability; caused untold psychological harm; and damaged 77,000 apartments, displacing over 300,000 people. **At least three children between the ages of 2 and 15 lost their lives. Thirty-one children required hospitalization, 1,000 children were injured, and 80,000 children were left without a home.**

The explosion affected 163 public and private schools and rendered half of Beirut's healthcare centers nonfunctional, and it impacted 56 percent of the private businesses in Beirut. There was extensive damage to infrastructure, including transport, energy, water supply and sanitation, and municipal services totaling US\$390-475 million in losses. **According to the World Bank, the explosion caused an estimated \$3.8-4.6 billion in material damage.**



The explosion led to the demise of countless individuals. Nationals from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia and various other places passed away in the midst of the eruption. It wounded 7,000 people out of which at least a hundred and fifty people amassed physical disabilities, psychological trauma, desecrated 77,000 apartments and displaced over 300,000 people.

While these are just a few of the effects of the explosion, several others include damaged public infrastructures, water supply and sanitation, private and public schools and municipal services.

The explosion also resulted in ammonia gas and nitrogen oxides being released into the air, potentially with toxins from other materials that may have also ignited as a result of the explosion. Ammonia gas and nitrogen oxides are harmful to the environment as well as to the respiratory system.

The destruction is estimated to have created up to 800,000 tonnes of construction and demolition waste that likely contains hazardous chemicals that can damage health through direct exposure, or soil and water contamination. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has estimated that the cost of cleaning up the environmental degradation from the explosion will be over \$100 million.

Sources reckon that the blast has created up to 800,000 tonnes of construction and destructive waste. If this seeps through direct exposure, or soil and water contamination, it holds the ability to create newfound issues for the healthcare system and individuals of Beirut.

Considering the unimaginable, apocalyptic yet real and

existent harm caused by the explosion, the Lebanese are now asking questions to which they demand answers. **Why, in the first place, was a lethal explosive stored in such close proximity to residential areas?** Why, regardless of the knowledge of the perils it presented, did the authorities not remove it?

At present, the evidence questions whether the ammonium nitrate was actually meant for Mozambique or whether Beirut was the intended destination for the substance. **Current proof indicates the fact that multiple Lebanese authorities were criminally negligent and heedless towards the handling of the Rhosus's cargo.**



The actions of the Lebanese authorities created an avoidable risk. With regard to the international human rights law, a state's failure to act to prevent risks to life is a violation of the right to life.

Other forms of evidence suggest that a few government officials foresaw the havoc the ammonium nitrate's presence in the port could create. Under the domestic law, this is equivalent to the crime of homicide with probable or unintentional homicide. This is also equal to a violation of the right to life. Irresponsibility and a lack of accountability cost lives.

The people of Lebanon were angry and took to the streets in

the form of protests that later took a violent turn due to clashes between the protestors and police. Furious and devastated, thousands gathered to commemorate the one year anniversary of the explosion.



They demand justice for the ones they have lost, chanting slogans against the political gentry, all of whom were deemed as “thugs” by the protestors. The one year anniversary of the blast does not come with ease. Behind it lies an year of unprecedented economic crises, devaluation and a political standstill.

Currently, Lebanon is facing another issue for which protests have broken out once again. They have been raising their concern against the end of fuel subsidies which would cost the fuel to be five times more than it already is. They are battling a huge financial and economic collapse, otherwise known as a humanitarian crisis. There are over four million people at risk. It is a tough time and we hope they are able to emerge victorious from these devastations.

Crash of the Wall Street Exchange: 1929

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The 1920s were a decade of immense economic and social growth. But this came crashing down when the world witnessed a lethal economy crash on 24th October 1929. This date came to be known as **Black Thursday** and spiralled America into the **Great Depression of 1930s**. The global impact of this day was massive, and this article endeavours to show what went down, why it went down, and what it subsequently gave way to.

Background:

- Fueled by post war optimism, **rural Americans migrated to cities** in huge numbers with the dream and hope of building a better and more successful life for themselves.

● On 15 March 1929, the Federal Reserve warned of excessive speculation, a minor crash happened as investors began sale of stocks at a rapid pace.

● About 2 days later, National City Bank provided 25 Million \$ in credit to stop the slide of market. This move managed to temporarily halt the slippery slope that the market was skidding down.

● There were signs of a slowdown like decline of steel production, decrease in automobile sales and high debts amongst consumers.

● The economy picked up again and the gains continued unhindered until September. When there was an initial decline in September, it was termed as the Babson Break and it wasn't considered a big deal until later.

● Around the same time, the London Stock Exchange crashed when top investor Clarence Hatry and his associated were imprisoned for fraud and forgery. This crushed the hopes of American investments in overseas markets.

On October 24 1929 "Black Thursday", the market lost 11% of its value at the opening due to very heavy trading. As a result, the prices on the Ticker Tape brokerage offices were delayed leading to most traders not knowing what the stocks were trading for.

Leading Wall Street Bankers met to solve the chaos with their leader as Richard Whitney who was the vice president of the Exchange. On October 29, some 16 million shares on the New York Street Exchange were traded in one day. Billions of Dollars were lost.

On the same day, William C Durant along with Rockefeller Family, as well as other financial giants bought lots of stocks to show to the public, that they still had some faith in the stocks.

There was a one-day recovery on the next day, but the market subsequently fell again. **In March of 1933, and onwards, the Dow began to get back on strong footing. But however, until 1955, it couldn't get back to its highest price in 1929.** Mentioned below are two notable actions of the US Government:

- 1932: The Pecora Commission was established by the US Senate with the aim of studying the reasons for the crash.

- 1933: The US Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Act, with which they separated commercial banks and investment banks.

This crash, that was central to America, produced a global tsunami. Here's how it impacted the rest of the world:

★ The USA

- The USA slumped into the Great Depression and by 1932, stocks were only worth 20% of what they were in 1929.

- By 1933, half of the USA's banks had failed and almost 15 million people were unemployed.

- African Americans were badly hit by the handing out of pink slips due to the **"Last hired, first fired"** trend at that time.

★ Germany (Weimar Republic)

- The loans from the US were recalled, which led to Germany spiralling into poverty.

○ Unemployment increased 6 times between 1929 and 1933.

○ German democracy fell apart, and Hitler saw an opportunity to take over.

★ Great Britain

○ The value of British exports halved, and the industrial areas were drowning in poverty.

○ Unemployment doubled to more than 20% by 1930. Public spending was reduced, and taxes were increased. But all in vain, for this only led to the economy declining even more.

○ There was a building boom in the suburbs, and areas like these thrived.

In conclusion, the economy is a volatile thing. It faces ups and downs and fluctuations of other sorts. **The impact of this is colossal, and thus, it poses a challenge every time there is a significant change, millions of dollars change hands and thousands of people are impacted.** The economy is a propulsive and dynamic force, and more than the money, it is about how people are immensely reliant on it.



South China Sea Dispute

-by Naisha Arora, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



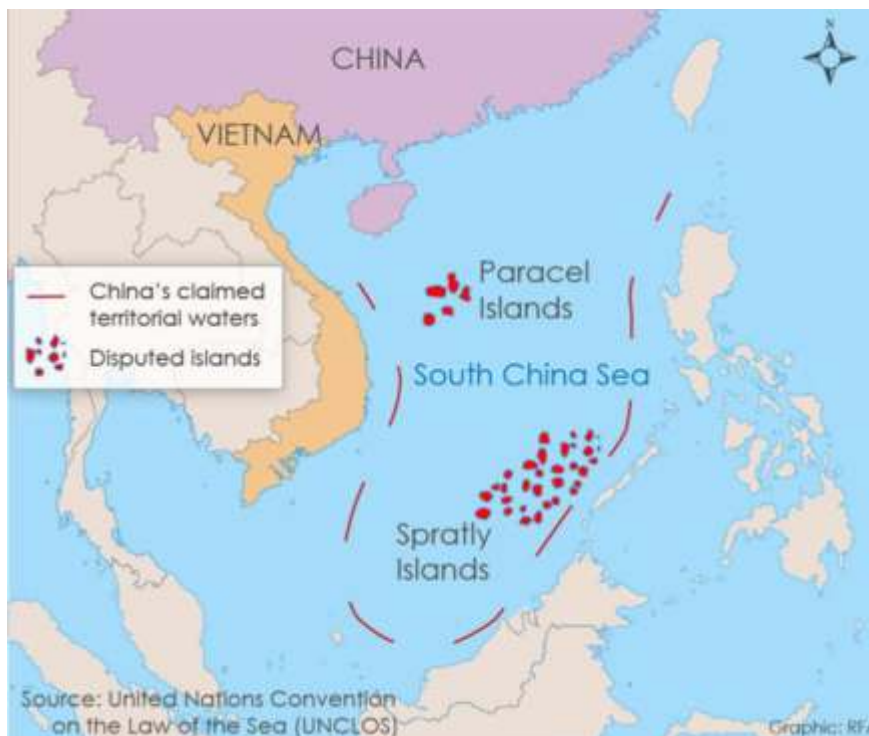
The South China Sea accounts for 1/3rd of the global maritime trade. It is said to contain vast oil and natural gas reserves beneath its seabed and is considered an important fishing ground globally. In the 1970's, countries like Brunei, Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia began to claim islands in this region due to natural resources, fishing areas and strategic advantages.

By 1982, there were six countries who were recognized to have exerted claim to the disputed territories of Parcel and Sparty islands in the South China Sea. In the same year, 1982, the UN Convention on the Law of Sea or the Sea Treaty was signed. This international agreement provides a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities that take place. It sets a basis for the conduct of maritime resources and activities, which often add to our economy today.

The main territorial disputes pertain to the Paracel islands, Spratly islands and the Scarborough Shoal. The countries which lay claim to these territories are China, Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia. These claims are based on the UN Law of the Sea and the concept of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ's).

An EEZ is an area of the sea which extends to certain nautical miles beyond a country's sovereign territory. Within this specified area, a country has exclusive rights to any and all resources present.

However, China exerts a historic claim over 90% of the South China Sea using a border known as a nine dash line. This is a u-shaped line which was etched on a map by a cartographer in the 1940's and is the basis of China's claim of sovereignty over the South China Sea. It runs 2000 km from the Chinese mainland and encompasses all island territories present in the disputed waters. China bases its claims of 'historical maritime rights' as defined by this line although it is ill defined and is considered to have no legal basis, which has led to the current and continuing controversy over territory.



Though this has long been a disputed issue, the contemporary version of the conflict started in 2009 as Vietnam began reclaiming previously occupied land, to which China retaliated by reclaiming submerged land features it had asserted ownership to during the 1980's.

2010 onwards, China started converting uninhabited strips of land into artificial islands with modified physical features to suit its then alleged needs of military establishment. In 2015, president Xi Jinping even released an official statement reassuring that the reclaimed land would not be militarised but used to obtain resources.

However, as more countries in the region sought to secure extended maritime resource zones, China demonstrated its willingness to use force to defend its historical claims and went back on its pledge of no militarisation. As the tensions in the area grew, militarisation became a common tactic for intimidation.

In 2016, Philippines contested China's claim to the sea before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea or International Court of Justice in The Hague and emerged victorious on the basis of the legal status of disputed maritime features.

The panel unanimously found China's claim of historic rights within the nine dash line, used by Beijing to demarcate its sovereign territory, without any legal foundation. It further declared China's activities (illegal fishing and environmentally detrimental artificial construction of islands) within Philippines' EEZ of 200 nautical miles infringed on its rights to sovereignty. However, this ruling was dismissed by China and it continued its activities.

Although this conflict is confined to the South Asian region, the USA has been playing a prominent role in the issue as well. It has taken a stance stating that its intention is that of protecting international laws, peace and stability. **It believes that China's intentions are to use the disputed territory for military purposes as backed up by satellite images of China having converted reefs and reclaimed land into military facilities.**

Due to the growing tensions between China and the USA, the former has continued to ramp up its military presence in the area. To protect its security, economic and political interests, USA has contested China's territorial claims and has also stepped up its military activity and naval presence in the region in recent years in response.

It also conducted freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in January and March 2018, basing its activities off of the international laws and the ruling of the Hague tribunal. This can be seen to assert USA's right to freedom and navigation within legal boundaries as decided internationally.

It has been committed to the idea of freedom between the seas, in internal waters, especially since it gets to profit from the maritime trade routes if they are not monopolised by China. Over here, a dichotomy of rivalling power can clearly be observed between the two states.

In order to prevent rapid Chinese expansion and 'promote peace and stability', USA has also signed agreements with Australia, Japan and India for peacekeeping operations, conducting regular patrols and joint military exercises related to the same.

These activities enraged China as they were within 12 nautical miles of its acclaimed territory leading to its claim of encroachment upon sovereignty while the opposing states rebut his point by citing international laws and **the fact that China has not legally or recognisably declared the South China Sea its exclusive sovereign territory.**

Presently, the Filipino president has extended peace offers to China and the latter has responded in kind by proposing an olive branch in the form of a promise to not encroach on Filipino territory. This is, however, considered a fragile peace/ political diplomatic alliance by most and are quintessential examples to the realist view of balance of power as pertaining to diplomatic political alliances. **Looking at it from a confrontational point of view, however, leads to speculation that this is in order to prevent war as the Philippines stands to lose more in a war than China due to the sheer force and size of military resources.**



Some very clear concepts of international relations and global politics can be observed through this case study of the South China Sea- sovereignty and the use of hard power.

In my opinion, the countries' claims are based on their ideologies, policies, needs and national interests, which has left the region in a state of dispute and growing militarisation.

In the end, it boils down to countries protecting their national interests and their sovereignty based on resources and using these to exert and expand power.



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AUGUST, 2021