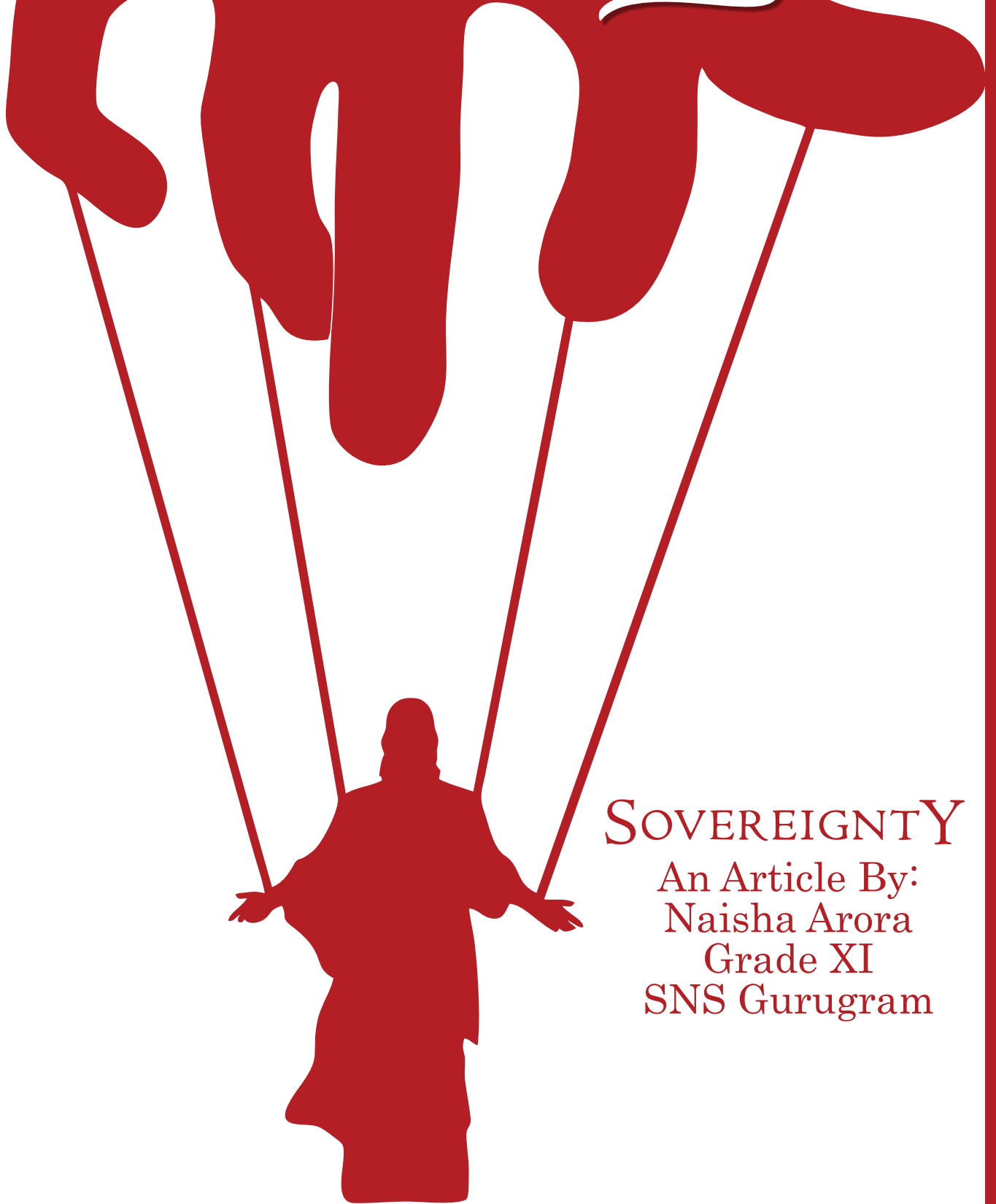


E Pluribus Unum



SOVEREIGNTY

An Article By:
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193 Member States<> One United Nations

Sovereignty

-by Naisha Arora, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



The renowned French political philosopher Jean Bodin defined sovereignty as “**the absolute and perpetual power of the commonwealth**”. The concept of sovereignty, however, was formally inducted into the wider framework of global politics through the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which established the principle of sovereignty through the following:

- A state must accept and recognise the borders of other states
- States will not interfere in the domestic matters of other states i.e. the principle of non interference
- Governments are free to do as they please within their respective territories.

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OCTOBER, 2021

Preceding these notions, the Peace of Westphalia also introduced the concept of a state, which came to be defined as a nation or territory considered an organised political community under one government, known to have territory, population, government and most importantly, sovereignty.

Throughout the years, various different definitions and interpretations of sovereignty have come up but they all centre around the concept of the state and state power. In today's times, we see diametrically opposing views pertaining to the relevance of the concept of sovereignty in global politics.



Sovereignty can be considered an outmoded theory due to several arguments, a number of which stem from the liberal ideas of cooperation, trade and the emergence of non- state actors. Certain widespread issues, termed global issues, require cooperation between states and in order to combat such problems that arise, states must allow some flexibility in their absolute authority for the

greater good. This can be seen to show the importance of cooperation as compared to the restrictive notion of state sovereignty.

Another concept central to liberalism is that of free trade which is seen as benefiting states as well as ensuring peace and preventing war. **However, in order to maintain trade relations, states must keep in mind the international sphere, political alliances and survival while executing any decisions.**

Liberals also directly oppose the historic notion of states being the only recognised actors in international politics, citing the role of various non state actors such as IGOs, NGOs MNCs, etc. This automatically reduces the importance of sovereignty as such actors continue to rise in role as well as importance, perhaps even more so than the historically defined states.

One of the most prominent challenges to sovereignty today is globalisation- the integration of world economy and interconnection of global markets. It continues in tandem with transnationalism which diminishes the difference between the local and the international spheres, exchanging information across the globe. **This free exchange of information across borders is an essential part of today's society as it brings any issues to light and mobilises action.**

The CNN effect and the boomerang effect both highlight the role of the media and its sway in international politics. Local issues now have the opportunity to reach wider forums as well as garner international support and recognition through the media. International pressure is then created on the state which is often forced to take immediate action. While the concept of internal

sovereignty legitimises structural violence and coercion, resolving issues in this manner frequently results in a backlash from the global community.

Therefore, states opt to forego their claim to sovereignty and absolute power in favour of maintaining peaceful international relations.

This can be seen through the case study of the Dongria tribes battling Vedanta Resource(a mining giant) over the preservation of Niyamgiri Hills. Although this issue was confined to the small state of Odisha, through media and news coverage, it achieved international recognition, which forced the Supreme Court to take up the case and seeing the facts, rule in favour of the Dongria tribes, ordering the immediate arrest of all activities in the area by Vedanta Resources.



Furthermore, the modern concept of humanitarian intervention clearly shows how state sovereignty loses value in the contemporary global scenario. Humanitarian intervention is

considered necessary in scenarios where the state cannot protect its citizens. In such instances, other developed countries come together to form coalitions and alleviate the suffering of citizens within the borders of a sovereign state.

However, it is, in this manner, uninvited and therefore infringes on the sovereignty of the state. Liberals argue that governments or dictators should not be able to hide behind the notion of 'state sovereignty' in order to defend actions deemed as violation human/individual rights.

Originating in the post Cold War era, the idea of humanitarian intervention led to the establishment of ICISS (The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty) which further put forth the idea of 'Responsibility to Protect'. This allowed the use of sanctions and military intervention by the international community in cases of dire human rights violations such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Military intervention is used as a last resort but is seen as an inherent challenge to sovereignty as it results in a power conflict, challenging the authority of the state. For example, NATO intervention in the ethnic cleansing taking place in Kosovo allowed Milošević to be shared by the international criminal tribunal with war crimes and end the ethnic massacre of Albanians, demonstrating the effectiveness of humanitarian intervention.

Realists, on the other hand, claim that sovereignty still retains its relevance in today's times and remains an important concept guiding global politics. Realism conveys the importance of states as central actors in international politics, citing Article 2 of the

UN Charter. The Domestic Jurisdiction Clause recognises states as the primary actors and primary decision makers in any and all global scenarios. While non- state actors might have a growing role in global politics, states continue to be the most legitimate actors. Even despite the notions of globalisation and transnationalism, the ultimate power to make decisions rests with the state.

A realist paradigm directly distinguishes between domestic and international politics, highlighting the importance of sovereignty and highlighting the importance of military matters. Realists also draw ideology from Hobbes' theory of social contract which describes life in the 'state of nature', in a system of anarchy as nasty, brutish and short. Hobbes puts forth the absolute necessity of an overarching sovereign body in order to live in contentment.



Realist viewpoints also propagate a balance of power due to the security dilemma wherein the quest for security of one state leads to the insecurity of another. However, due to the self- entered nature of states as a whole, in the long term, a balance of power is not sustainable as states will inherently try to defend their own sovereignty. They will abide by nationalist principles and therefore

look out for the interests of themselves and their citizens over globalisation or international cooperation. This self seeking nature of states is what leads to the fragility of political alliances and trade relations. It leads to power conflicts pertaining to military, economic and political spheres.

We see the conflict over the South China Sea reflecting the notion of power and fragility of alliances perfectly. China exerts historic sovereign claim to territories in the South China Sea, whereas other neighbouring countries like the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, etc. continue to argue their claims as well. China has also established military bases on artificial islands created in the South China Sea, so as to increase its security and defend its sovereign territory. In another instance, North Korea exerted its claim to sovereignty by testing its nuclear weapons which furthered the security dilemma faced by states.



The last argument which condones the contemporary relevance of sovereignty enters once again around the concept of humanitarian intervention and the 'Responsibility to Protect'. Both these concepts are, in fact, not opposed to sovereignty in the

slightest, considering it the first step to being about change. The Domestic Jurisdiction Clause is one held in high esteem by the UN and all affiliates while considering any sort of military intervention which infringes on the sovereignty of a state.

Ergo, military intervention is seen as a last resort, when nothing else seems to work. Often, the citizens and the government come to mutual decisions regarding domestic disputes within the scope of a sovereign state, which is also why the 'Responsibility to Protect' does not apply to all internal matters.

Even taking the best case scenario where humanitarian intervention does not infringe on sovereignty, the consent of states is required to be able to proceed with the same. A minimum number of states have to be signatories to a resolution to conduct an operation targeted at military intervention in another state, which further proves that a state continues to be the primary actor in global politics.

For example, the US invasion of Iraq (despite the action being rejected by NATO) caused these humanitarian interventions to be seen in a negative light as it breached Iraqi sovereignty and cast doubt upon the entire notion.



In conclusion, I believe that both perspectives have valid arguments in order to support their claims.

Sovereignty in the modern world has definitely changed notions and evolved as a concept. However, that does not mean that it has lost all relevance.

While sovereignty continues to be overshadowed by liberal ideas of globalisation and non-state actors, states still retain their credibility and authority to make sovereign decisions pertaining to their territory.

Therefore, the concept of sovereignty may be a little outdated but it still retains its relevance, even in the contemporary political scenario.



Art and Propaganda: In Nazi Germany

-by Rashmita Gandhi, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



Throughout history, propaganda has been used by the powerful to persuade. It is exploited in times of fear and terror to unite people under a specific cause of action or belief. World War II is one of the most notorious times involving the development of propaganda and its power to persuade a society to accept a belief or rise to action. Germany's government disseminated its messages of propaganda through a variety of different mediums.

One extremely powerful form of propaganda used was art. Art is not just paint to a canvas; it plays an important role in human communication and is not only an expression of the artists themselves, but also a reflection of the period in which it was created. And because art is used as a tool for communication and expression, it is often censored or manipulated to coincide with political beliefs.

Germany used art to promote its political agenda. The society utilized rhetoric to politicize art and to exploit deep-rooted concerns shared by large segments of the populations, namely, that an erosion of traditional values threatens a familiar way of life. Nazi Germany identified how multifaceted and influential the power of art as propaganda could be.



The Nazi Ideology, established on a deep seeded hatred for the Jewish population, promoted the rise of the Aryan race. Racial inferiority, forced labor-camps, stripping of individual rights, segregation, and blame were imposed on anyone that the Nazis deemed inferior.

Hitler and his associates preached the belief that "Jews were the root of all evil and that Germany could be saved from collapse only by total removal of Jews and the Jewish influence". This mentality provided the Nazis with grounds to murder approximately 6 million people, but not immediately. Hitler did not announce his convictions spontaneously and receive overwhelming acceptance

from the people of Germany, while the rest of the world fell ignorant to his tyranny. The genocide did not spring from a mere hatred for the Jewish race and a cadre of loyal followers—it was a slow and deliberate process involving several factors. Leadership, political will, and manipulation of popular sentiments are needed to fan hostility into organized killing. The Holocaust was the work of extremely skillful propagandists.

Propaganda tries to create conditioned reflexes in an individual by training them so that certain words, signs, or symbols even certain persons or facts provoke unflinching reactions. So by blaming Jews for cultural decline, the loss of the war, and racial impurity, Germans associated the word with various negative aspects of German lifestyle. The most fluid and suggesting word in the Nazi vocabulary became “Jew.”



They were able to condition the population's responses to the word. This word not only defined a specific race, it was embedded

into the German mind loaded with symbolism. Jews represented impurity and anti-German behavior. Nazi propagandists labeled all Jews as deformed and criminal and compared them to handicapped people and Gypsies, whom they also described as monstrous and dangerous. **Nazi ideologues linked homosexuals, communists, capitalists, and liberals with purported Jewish conspiracy; they described eastern Europeans, the British, and the Americans as nothing but cover groups for alleged Jewish interests.**

The “Jew” was, therefore, a compilation of stereotypes and falsities that the Nazis promoted as the problem in Germany and as the converse of the Aryan race.

The words Hitler used to describe the two races were in exact opposition of one another: love vs. hate, construction vs. destruction, good vs. evil, etc—Jews were the antithesis of the Aryan race. This set the foundation for leading the masses to use Jews as a scapegoat and unify Germans. **By channelling all negativity and damnation towards one specific group, Hitler was able to deflect the crisis in Germany onto a specific population.**

How did this radical and outlandish scheme manage to succeed? Propaganda responds to a need. The propagandist does not create the need, but feeds upon something already embedded into the culture of a society and builds upon it. **Propaganda then becomes a mixture of the actual satisfaction given to the people by the reforms and later, exploitation of that satisfaction.**

Proponents of Nazi ideas focused their attacks on people who were already suspect in the eyes of many Germans. They then echoed and enlarged familiar hatreds and linked them to current anxieties and concerns. Nazis accused the Jewish race for the

downfall of Germany and the loss of the war, and the people were satisfied with this because the responsibility could be displaced. Maybe it says something about us as humans!

The Nazi Party revolutionized political messaging in Germany, drawing upon advertising techniques and new technologies to win over audiences. Its innovative approaches to propaganda and insights into mass psychology continue to be applied today by populist and extremist organizations.



While 2016 is not 1933, looking back at how the Nazis used propaganda and the latest technologies to sway millions of people and to promote their radical goals may help us confront problems today. Learning how the Nazis used propaganda and why audiences responded positively to their messages can help prepare future democratic societies to better resist and counter dangerous speech.

Hitler was the spark that lit the fire within Germany and gave the people hope.

Misguided hope, but nevertheless, he inspired the masses to blame the problems of the country on a movement and on a people. Art was used as propaganda to reassure attitudes felt by the public and to continue to drive a hatred for the Jewish race and eventually mobilize the killing of over 6 million people in the Holocaust.

The tactics used during Hitler's dictatorship are unsurpassed. The Nazi used all platforms of culture propaganda and with tremendous success.



The Great Wall Street Reboot: The Rise of “Investors for good”

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Cushy offices, designer suits and the single goal of making money. That is what people think Wall Street is. This however, is changing because of a certain type of investor called the Activist Investor.

Who is an Investor?

Very simply put, an investor is a person or a group that puts a certain amount of money into a company or a fund for a certain percentage of returns/profit from their investment.

Who is an activist investor?

An activist investor works a little differently. An activist investor may be individual or with a group or fund, but will invest in a certain company for a small or fairly significant share of the stock with the intention of affecting change in the company. Effectively, they use their newfound significance and power in the company to “force” them to bring a change in the way said company works or in their policy/ environmental or ethical policies etc, sometimes by bypassing normal advisory processes.

How they work

Step 1- Find the company with a problem

The first thing they will do is identify a company which they believe is in need of change because their current policies or technology is in danger of harming the planet or other people.

Step 2- Start buying shares

The next step is pretty obvious and that is to start buying shares of stock in the company. They get enough shares to know that they can wield enough power in the company to catch the eye of the board.

Step 3- Get seat(s) on the Board of Directors

Once they have the required shares to have enough power they can try and nominate their own members to the board. If they succeed in doing so, they will have more power when it comes to decision making and voting on important issues in the company.

Step 4- Use media and their board seats to pressure the company to change

Let us consider the example of climate change or labour rights. Say a big company is accused of not being climate or worker-friendly, or activist investors are trying to bring about a change in the company, and the media catches wind of it, it is likely that the news will spread like wildfire! Activist investors try to use the public eye and the media to their advantage to further strengthen their case and change the public's view of the company. This can cause the stock to drop or put increased scrutiny on the company's actions, with the result of strengthening the activist investors' plan.

Step 5- If it goes well, they will change their ways

The last step is like the last stretch of a race. A runner always puts in all their energy at this stage. This is the time where the activist investors use their seats on the board and try to convince other board members to help pass a resolution for whatever change has to be brought into the company. If successful, they would have brought about whatever change they want to.

Why are they important?

Now you must be wondering why exactly activist investors are important, because any large protest can put pressure on the company too? Well, not exactly. You see, while protests and public uproar can pressure a company to a certain extent, they can't really change the policies of the company in any way.

Sometimes change can only be brought about from the inside, and activist investors have a certain amount of power as insiders in a company. This enables them to actually bring about changes in the company from the inside.

Considering the example of Climate Change once again, when it comes to big companies whether they are Oil Companies, car manufacturers or tech companies, each one of them has a fairly big carbon footprint, and who better to bring changes in a company than the investors themselves?

What this will do is keep companies in check, in a manner speaking. Something akin to a constant reminder that their investors will know if they push limits.

One example is that of Engine Number 1, an activist investment group that caused the mammoth oil company Exxon Mobil to become more climate conscious and think of better climate goals and ideas for the future despite heavy resistance from Exxon, by getting 2 seats on the Board of Exxon

Is this taking matters into their own hands? Is this even legal?

The SEC regulates Wall Street; and the question one may ask is - do its Regulations allow activist investors' actions or does this fall within the realm of market manipulation? For starters it is very easy for any famous person or even an activist investor to say something against a company which ultimately makes the stock drop.

For example (This information is just an observation) After Elon Musk called Dogecoin a "hustle" during his appearance on the Saturday Night Live show (not pointing fingers here), Dogecoin dropped in price, but when he tweeted about it later, the price of Dogecoin rose again.

Countless people chose to short stocks (including activist investors at times) because shorting* stock is legal in America.

In the end, some may argue that the main reason activist investors are doing what they are doing is for a cause or a reason. **Technically by just buying shares and getting a seat on the Board of a company they aren't really doing anything illegal, just unconventional.**

(*Shorting a stock- It is essentially betting that the price of the stock will fall, borrowing it and selling it and then buying it back at lower cost once the price has fallen, therefore making a profit.)

They (investors) have the power to bring a company up and take it down. Whether it was GameStop or AMC, we know that the stock market can go up and it can go down any day, but it's the companies inside the market that actually matter. Maybe activist investors have been ushered in as a wakeup call to Wall Street that someone shall always be there to hold them accountable.

Whale Hunting: Tradition vs Modernity

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The world has experienced significant progress in almost all aspects of life, however, there are some aspects that are still significantly lacking. One of those lacking aspects is traditions, since several of these traditions have not changed to fit with the times. These include the **Faroe Island's whaling tradition, and China's Dog Festival**. These traditional events are very controversial today, where conservation has been held at the top of the world's priority lists.

I understand that this is a very polarising topic, and therefore, I am being even more mindful of the fact that I need to be impartial in this article. I will begin with a general set of arguments both for and against these traditions, and then dive deep into a few examples. Lastly, **I would like to emphasise on the fact that I do not mean to offend anyone with this article.**

1-The traditions should remain!

The most important argument in the favour of these traditions is that **they are an essential part of any community's culture and history, and that taking them away, or banning them is ruining the history of the community, and no one should be allowed to do that.** These traditions are all important to people, and they should be allowed to exist as a sacred part of people's lives.

Let us consider the fact that Faroese people consider grindadráp or the hunting of pilot whales, as a part of their cultural heritage. In the spirit of accepting that the world is diverse and is made up of cultures and traditions that change more than there are changes in landscape, the case for continuing with such traditions may appear to be strong.

Labelling some traditions as “harmful” is offensive to those traditions, and the people who follow them. This is again attacking culture, whether or not that is the intention of people who are against these traditions.

The argument is often made that it is such age-old traditions that keep communities together, or differentiates them from others, thereby contributing to their sense of identity, in changing times. However, it is equally important to be able to initiate a dialogue and for both sides of any such debate to be heard and represented.

A very important argument propounded by supporters of grindadráp is that the Faroe Islands do not possess land that supports agriculture, and fishing and related activities are the only accessible source of food. Their claim is that this activity is carried out in a sustainable manner, and that it is but natural for the food chain to

be followed.

Another argument is that this practise is more humane than regular animal husbandry; and if someone has an in-principle opposition to killing animals, then they must oppose all such activities.

2-Down with such traditions!

There are several arguments for why the traditions need to go, and I will cover all of them now.

Firstly, these traditions were made in a completely different time, when many of today's concerns didn't matter, like global warming, or endangerment of species. It was a time when activities like hunting were the most predominant (and essential) for survival. Humans also perceived the role of animals in a very different light, and not the way we do today!



The argument that the Faroe Islands are geographically isolated and must depend on such hunts for food, is not valid in today's scenario. There was a time when the geographical location was a hindrance to access to food, but better connectivity has ensured that the Faroese do have access to food items from other parts of the world, thereby ensuring that these hunts are not the sole source of food.

Furthermore, these traditions don't just exist in isolation without having an impact on others, but some of them also harm the environment. This September in The Faroe Islands, the shore was practically drowned in obscenely large pools of blood from dolphins that they had hunted. I will discuss the details of the tradition shortly, but the gist is that the Faroe Islands have a tradition of hunting aquatic mammals.

Secondly, it would be ignorant to say that traditions are just traditions, and that we cannot do anything about them. These are no more than a cruel relic of the past. The fault doesn't lie with the people who made the tradition –the time when they began the activity was very different from today's environment and societal structure. However, the rigidity of people is real at fault, since these traditions can actively harm the environment.

The Faroe Islands

In the Faroe Islands, the activity of hunting pilot whales (grindadráp), and also other aquatic mammals like dolphins is still prevalent. The practice is currently considered sustainable, but even though that is true, there are many ethical questions, especially with the method.

Firstly, while it is sustainable (for now), is it correct? While

hunting itself, is already a controversy, the way that that this hunting takes place is actually a horrifying aspect. **The whales/dolphins are all herded into one area, and then they are slaughtered with knives. Post that, they are dragged onto the shore, where all parts of their bodies are evenly distributed amongst the people who participated in the hunting process.**



Long finned pilot whales possess a complex vocal repertoire and create their own dialects, making them highly intelligent creatures and this process is shocking.

As recently as September 2021, a massive hunt on The Faroe Islands caused a huge uproar from activists worldwide, because **more than 1400 dolphins were murdered in a single day!** The administration claimed that they thought that it was a much smaller pod of dolphins that they had herded, however, they were wrong.

Seeing pictures from they day was terrifying, as the only things visible were people, dead dolphins, and a sea stained with **blood!** Pilot whales are intelligent and have strong social ties. Ironically, it is these strong social ties that stop them from

abandoning their injured / captured fellow creatures, which means that the rest of them also follow and end up being killed.



The issue with this practice is the fact that people who engage in this whaling are exceptionally ignorant towards the effects and the backlash of their doings. They keep on repeating the fact that it is sustainable, but never directly engage with the backlash they face, and have not even tried to try and discuss with conservationists, which is really shocking.

While this practice continues on the Faroe Islands and Greenland, hunting of pilot whales was common in other countries like Japan, Norway, Ireland and the Caribbean. The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission has come up with some half-hearted restrictions such as the manner in which hooks may be inserted into the blowholes of whales, but such "restrictions" are not worded firmly enough to prevent the torture of these creatures.

Studies have shown that the levels of Mercury found in the bodies of pilot whales make them an unhealthy food item. This is another counter to the argument that "our people have always eaten this item and this is essential for us."

There was a time when whale meat was distributed equally among the local community, but today even if such free distribution takes place, the products are often sold by such recipients, making it a commercial activity and not the altruistic pursuit it was claimed to be.

Lastly, it is inexcusable to hide behind tradition to support cruelty. Surely, technology has evolved enough to empower humans with equipment that kills animals in a humane manner. To continue with torturing creatures in the name of tradition is not an argument that can be supported.

“The only constant is change” is an adage we have read and heard. There is definitely a case to be made for tradition to evolve in a manner that is not unjust to anyone involved.



Her Eyes

-by Anvi Behl, Grade IX, SNS Faridabad



One day, I was walking home alone, picturing halcyons whilst preaching meliorism. As I lent a piece of bread from my hands to a despondent young girl Who seemed anything but affluent, and everything of an age last.

With a calm sigh of perhaps refusal, she looked away. Caught in somewhat of an unfamiliar melody, I sat down next to her, Simply asking, what had happened. Her silence - as it sank in introduced itself as quite an acquaintance to me.

Seating closer in supportive effort but also just the right distance away, I looked into her bright blue eyes. A deep darkness caught my attention as I observed. The same kind of dark, as in a night sky sprinkled with stars shining generously upon a chaotic skyline. But something about her dark, didn't seem irenic or warm as a starry night view.

Something about her dark, managed to wet my eyes.

Looking further deep, into her young eyes - amazed by the depth behind the beaming blue. I saw a story of the past. A story where she herself had once, an ocean of gratuitous cheer. Now entirely empty, it seemed responsible for the girl's unexplained hypothermia.

A story where her own mind spent too much time, Distributing water from her ocean of smiles to parched pleading souls. And somewhere along the way, her altruism ended up depleting her waters, depleting her delight.

While all she could do was watch in onism and a rare feeling of powerlessness. Somewhere in there, was sullen resentment for she shared her love and empathy- but no one ever returned a single nod in gratitude.

Zooming out of the dried pebbles of agony that her eyes were, I held her hand, offering to take her home, to the homes of depleted rivers. My home. Spoke her helpless sight in alamort, as she patiently walked with me.

As I walked her to the terrace, a shy smile on her face, opposed by vestiges of her wretched past, became clearer and clearer. In hesitation, she asked "Why do you desire to help me?" I replied with a simple warm hug. "Silence paints the best portrait when you gaze at something so overwhelmingly beautiful" - I thought to myself as I noticed glows of healing in her wonderful but lost eyes - this time, not lost in melancholy, but indeed, lost in the gratitude of receiving love for the first time.

Alexander Fleming: *The Father of Antibiotics*

-by Uday Soni, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Everyone has heard the story of how a messy scientist named Alexander Fleming accidentally discovered penicillin and cemented his name in the history books, forever known as the father of antibiotics. The story of the scientist's untidy habits leading to a mold growing in petri dishes has been embellished to no avail. This story serves as quite an interesting little fact, but it is far from the entire tale.

Alexander Fleming was born in Ayrshire on 6 August 1881, the son of a farmer. He moved to London at the age of 13 and later trained as a doctor. **In the year 1900 Fleming served in the voluntary London Scottish Regiment in the second Boer War.**

The regiment was never deployed and the troops spent their time honing their swimming and shooting skills. After coming back from South Africa, Fleming joined St.

Mary's medical college in Paddington, where he quickly became the top marksman in their rifle club team. Interestingly Fleming's first choice of profession was to be a surgeon. He was so valued that the club captain actually convinced him to pursue research instead of surgery.

He qualified with distinction in 1906 and began research at St Mary's Hospital Medical School at the University of London under Sir Almroth Wright, a pioneer in vaccine therapy. In World War One Fleming served in the Army Medical Corps and was mentioned in dispatches. After the war, he returned to St Mary's.

His time in the war led him to conclude that the chemicals used as antiseptics at the time, such as carbolic acid, were only efficient at treating certain wounds like surface cuts. He noticed that in deeper wounds these chemicals actually did more harm than good as they ended up killing the body's own immunity agents such as leukocytes. Fleming and his mentor Sir Almroth Wright both advocated that deeper wounds should only be cleaned with a saline solution and let nature take its course.



Before his famous discovery of penicillin, Fleming made another discovery earlier in his career while studying nasal mucus. He discovered that when he mixed both the nasal mucus and some bacterial colonies, the mucus completely killed off the colonies in a few weeks.

He concluded that this was because of an enzyme that was naturally present in the mucus and was part of the human body's innate immune system. He found this enzyme to be present in many other bodily secretions including tears, saliva, skin and hair. He also discovered that this enzyme, called lysozyme, was also present in egg whites which meant that huge quantities could be isolated with relative ease.

Unfortunately, Lysozyme was mostly effective against harmless airborne bacteria rather than anything dangerous. Today, it is mostly used as a food and wine preservative.

Despite the lack of effectiveness, Fleming saw the discovery of lysozyme as proof of concept. This set him upon the path to penicillin. Fleming set out to find a better alternative to lysozyme in his research. Thus, he started studying the properties of a bacterium called staphylococcus, a nasty piece of work that could cause abscesses, sore throats, and boils.

Fortunately for Fleming (and the rest of the world), the bacteriologist was not exactly a tidy man. In August 1928, he went on a family vacation with his first wife, a nurse named Sarah McElroy, and their only child, his 4-year-old boy named Robert. He grouped up all of his Petri dishes which contained bacterial colonies and left them near an open window in his lab. In some versions of the story, this felicitous carelessness was ascribed to one of his assistants, not

to Fleming himself. When the doctor returned on September 3, he noticed that one dish had been contaminated with mold spores. This annoyed him at first, but then he saw that there were no bacterial colonies near the mold.

The latter had killed all the bacteria it came into contact with and inhibited its growth. Fleming isolated the mold and identified it as a rare strain of *Penicillium notatum*. He gave his new creation the unfortunate name of "mold juice" and it wasn't until several months later that he decided that a rebranding might be in order and came up with penicillin.

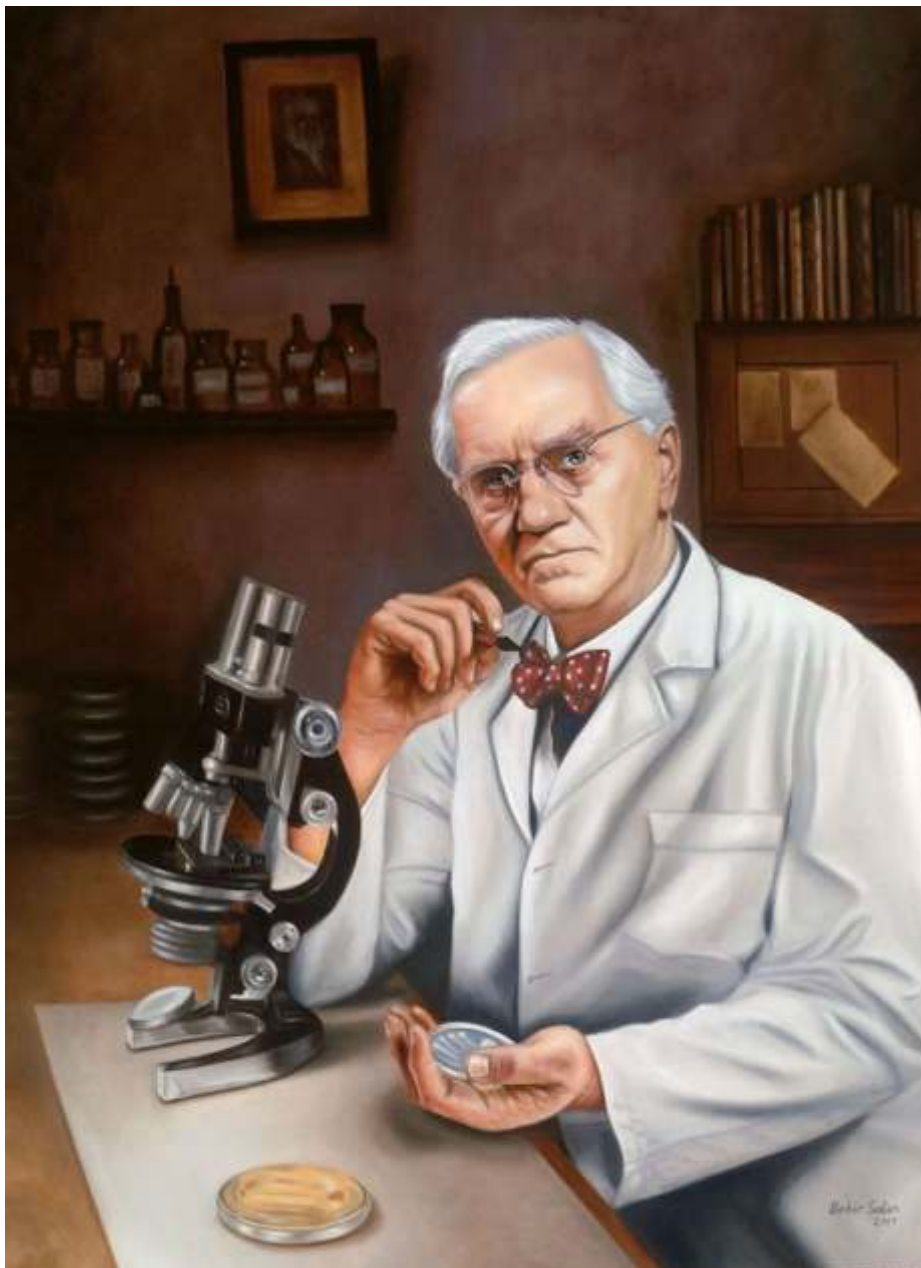
In June of the following year, Fleming published his findings in *The British Journal of Experimental Pathology* to a very lukewarm and uninterested reception. Back then, people could not yet see how antibiotics could change the medical world and this included Fleming himself.

For a long time, it seemed that mass production of the drug would've been nigh on impossible. Thankfully the breakthrough was made by two fellow scientists, Australian Howard Florey and German refugee Ernst chain. By the 1940's the drug was being mass produced by British and American pharmaceutical companies, particularly the Northern Regional Research Laboratory (NRRL) in Peoria, Illinois, a subsidiary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Fleming wrote numerous papers on bacteriology, immunology and chemotherapy. He was elected professor of the medical school in 1928 and emeritus professor of bacteriology at the University of London in 1948. He was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1943 and knighted in 1944. In 1945 Fleming, Florey and Chain shared the Nobel Prize in Medicine. Fleming died on 11 March

1955.

Penicillin has been hailed as a miracle drug in the past. **The circumstances of its discovery and the stories surrounding the life of the man who discovered it has definitely done a lot to lend to this miracle drug status.** Now due to over prescription, a growing number of bacteria have developed a resistance to it, a risk that Alexander Fleming warned against in his speech when he won the Nobel prize in Medicine.



Origins of Halloween

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



What is Halloween?

Halloween is a famous holiday. It is celebrated on October 31st each year. Children dress up in costumes (usually scary) and go house to house, knock on the door and ask "trick or treat". People then give them "treats" which include candy or may scare them by performing a trick. On this day one sees people dressed up as various characters.

Origins of halloween

Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The new year was celebrated on 1st November by the Celts. Celts lived 2000 years ago in the regions which are now known as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and France.

New Year marked the end of summer and harvest and the beginning of the dark winter. This time of the year was associated with human death.

Celts believed that on the night before their new year, the boundary between the two worlds; the world of the living and the world of the dead, becomes blurred. On the night of 31st October, they celebrated the famous Samhain festival which is during the same time as when the ghosts were believed to have returned to earth.

Hence on 31st October people around the world celebrate a festival known as Halloween and that is all thanks to the Celts and their festival of Samhain.

Why do we wear costumes on Halloween?

Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for Druids, or Celtic priests to make predictions. Since a lot of people entirely depended on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort during the long, dark winter for them.

To celebrate the event, Druids used to light huge sacred bonfires, where the people would gather to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities. During this celebration, the Celts usually wore costumes consisting of animal bodies and attempted to tell each other's fortunes.

When this celebration would end, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening from the sacred bonfire. This was done to help protect them during the

coming winter.

Why is it called "Halloween"?

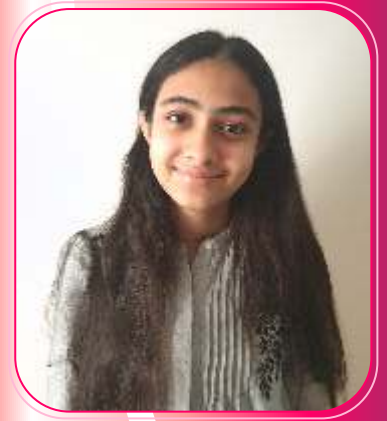
The word "Halloween" literally means "hallowed evening". The early European celebrators called it "all hallow's eve".

All Hallows Eve (31st October) and all saints day (1st November) both gave honor to saints. In fact, Hollow means saints. Hence the names were eventually combined and shortened to be known as "Halloween".



The Race to Space

-by Mehar Gaba, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Going into space has, for the longest time, seemed like a novelty- not anymore. Multitudinous people have only recently been to space. The first person to go into space was Yuri Gagarin back in 1961. Till forty years ago, outer space was reserved for the most powerful of nations, the most dominant of governments, today however, there is a democratisation and commercialisation of space.

In the last few months lots of you would have heard of several space flights going to space for relatively short periods of time than before.

Richard Branson, the owner of the Virgin group, has made it the goal of his company, Virgin Galactic to open space for everyone. He's not alone. Other Billionaires such as Elon MUsk and Jeff Bezos are also playing an active part in the space tourism

business as a new race takes off. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) too has said that they are looking to open the International Space Station to paying guests. **At present, the three major companies in the race to space are Virgin Galactic, SpaceX and Blue Origin.**

Virgin Galactic has been said to have started the launch of a new space age. **The company aims to provide suborbital space flights (flights that only intersect the atmosphere of the gravitational body from which the flight is launched without going further into space.** The gravitational body in this case is, of course, Earth) to space tourists. Branson had originally hoped to see a maiden flight of his enterprise in use by 2010. Due to a test flight going wrong and crashing, killing the pilot, the program was delayed for several years.



SpaceX has since its beginning worked on several different space projects and missions. The company's main aim is the **colonization of mars.** SpaceX's first space tourists travelled aboard the Crew Dragon. Aboard the vessel were billionaire businessman Jared Isaacman, geoscientist and science communicator Dr. Sian Proctor, physician-assistant Hayley Arceneaux and engineer Chris Sembroski. **None of them were professional astronauts.**

Blue Origin is said to be opening the promise to space for all. The spacecraft chosen for the maiden flight was the New Shepard spacecraft. The New Shepard spacecraft, named after Alan Shepard, who in 1961 became the first American in space, is an autonomous aircraft that was launched from the company's Launch Site One facility.

The crew included Jeff Bezos who was joined by his brother Mark, 82-year-old former pilot Wally Funk and an 18-year-old teen who was the youngest person in space. Blue Origin also sent to space another spacecraft that had in its crew 90-year-old actor, William Shatner who is the oldest person to have gone to space.

The most widely accepted boundary of space is known as the Kármán line which is 100km above the mean sea level. Branson's Virgin Galactic flight reached a height of 86km while the SpaceX flight flew as high as 367 miles (590 kilometers) - farther from the planet than anyone has traveled since the Space Shuttle era. Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin flight reached about 106 km high.

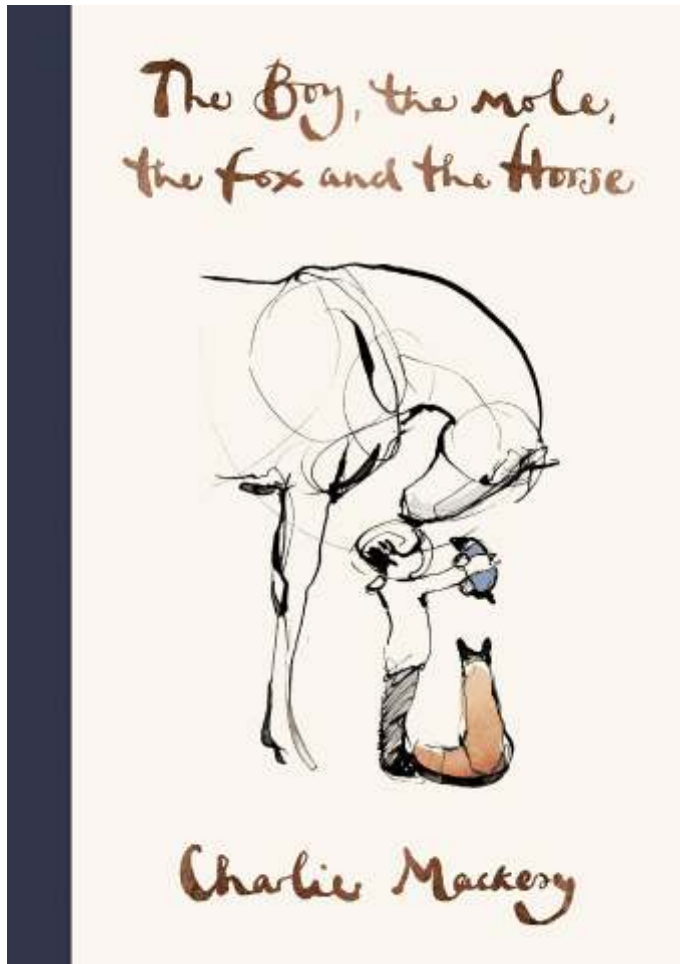
Though the commercialisation of space is increasingly rapidly, space travel is only available to those who are the richest of the rich. The prices for any commercial space travel start from twenty thousand going up till fifty thousand or sometimes even two million.

Since the last few months space travel has been in the limelight. Many people have shown their disapproval of the whole idea, saying that the commercialisation of space and using it as a medium to earn money, rather than expand research is wrong. Others have shown dissatisfaction for different reasons. Some such people who came ahead and voiced their opinion were Bill Gates and Prince William, Duke of Cambridge.

Book Review:

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



People always have complicated questions and existential crises, whether they are about your purpose, or something about the world; and that is an undeniable fact. Until now, there has been no substantial way to ask these questions, and google cannot do the job here! Well, step aside, Google, 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse' is here!

This book is not at all story oriented, but is actually the only advice you will ever need! It is a very unconventional book, so it deserves an unconventional review! So here I begin from a review of the visual aspect of the book, and then go onto the content.

The book has a very raw approach that instantly connects you to it. Rather than the regular "formal" fonts, the font in this book is handwritten by Charlie Mackesy himself! That makes the book feel much more relatable, as you can see someone's handwriting, and it can remind you of something that you wrote yourself!

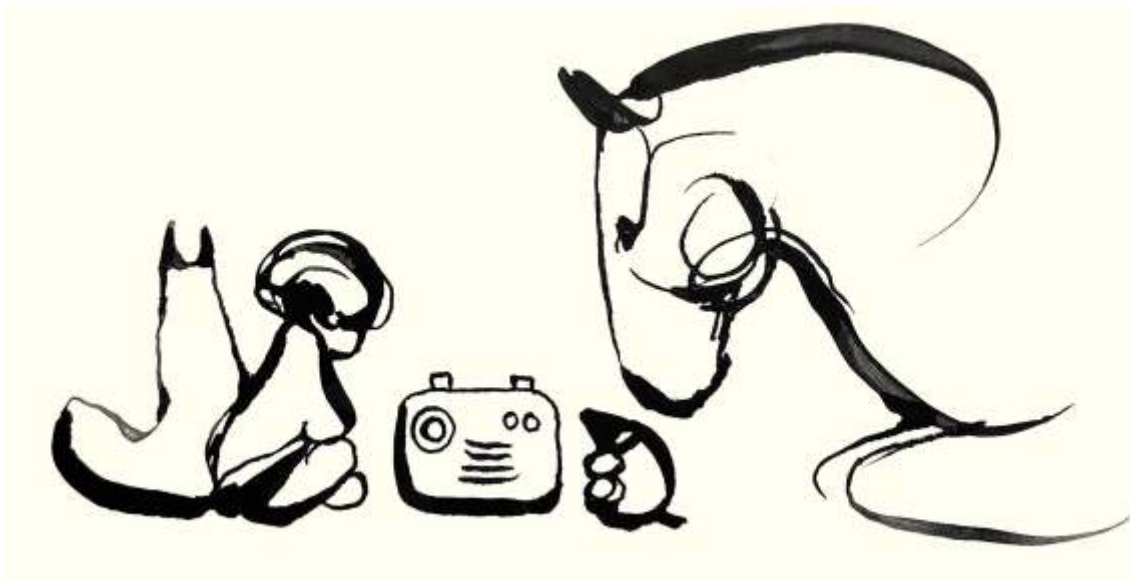
The drawing style is also something I would like to draw attention to. It is again, a very natural drawing style. It feels like it was made exactly for the book! The soft lines, the smooth curves, it all just gives you this warm fuzzy feeling that you don't get often! The highlight of the drawings for me is the mole. He just looks so cute, definitely like he would be someone you would want in your corner at all times! The drawings are also important, and are, as Mr. Mackesy puts it so immaculately himself, "Like islands, places to get to in a sea of words."



My favourite drawing, however, involves all of the titular characters! The horse gently nuzzles the boy, while the boy is cuddling the mole, and the fox is happily sitting beside the boy. This is a beautiful encapsulation of the friendship that they have all

developed throughout the book, and once more, the way they are drawn really elevates the sketch, the way salt elevates food! "Enough with the visuals already!", I can already hear you already hear you say, and I shall oblige.

Let's move onto the substance of the book. It is the story of four unique characters, **the lonely and under confident Boy, the foodie Mole, the hurt and reclusive Fox, and the gentle and wise Horse.** I feel like the four characters all represent the different qualities in all of us! **The Boy** represents our insecurities, the **Mole** represents our light-hearted, cake loving side (because- let's be honest- who doesn't love cake?), the **Fox** is our fragility, and the **Horse** is the wisdom that we all possess, but don't always know exists within us.



The book very loosely follows a storyline, where the boy meets the mole, they free a fox who is tied up, and then meet a horse. Through the book, you see how they all grow, accept each other's differences, and also learn a lot of things!

I would recommend reading the book front to back once, just to see the progress that the book takes, but after that, I can guarantee

that you will open it again, and this time, you can read it any way you want to! Trust me, even if you open any page you will feel better, and you may even find the answer to any question you had, I'm serious!

Now, I've told you what happens in the book, I have introduced you to its stars, and it is time for me to tell you about my favourite moments!

The first one involves dogs! The page goes- *"The greatest illusion", said the Mole, "is that life should be perfect"*, with some odd smudges around the page. Your eyes dart to the footnote, where the author writes, *"My dog walked over this drawing-clearly to make a point"*. This is such a great moment in the book, with both an important message, and a great backstory to the page as well.

It's true, perfection is an illusion that has captured many people, who end up spending hours redoing their work because of minor flaws, never realising that there's no such thing as perfection! They then give up trying to attain perfection, and feel awful about not being perfect.

Similarly, Mr. Mackesy could have redone the page, however, he decided to keep the page, because he believed in what he had written, and he wants others to believe it too!

The next moment is when there is a huge tea stain on a page, that is probably a ring from a teacup. *The boy asks if it is the moon, and the mole responds, "It's a teacup stain, and where there's tea, there's cake"*, in his regular lovable cake-loving self. A few other dialogues I love are:

1. *"I'm so small", said the mole. "Yes", said the boy, "but you*

are enough”.

2. “What's your biggest discovery?”, asked the mole. “That I am enough as I am.”, said the boy.

3. “Often the hardest person to forgive is yourself.”

4. “What is the bravest thing you've ever said?”, asked the boy. “Help.”, said the horse.

These few moments perfectly sum up the book. It will make you smile, make your heart melt, make you feel good, teach you things, and answer all of life's questions. During the past year and a half, when the world has faced a deadly pandemic, this is one book that has brought solace and joy to millions of readers.

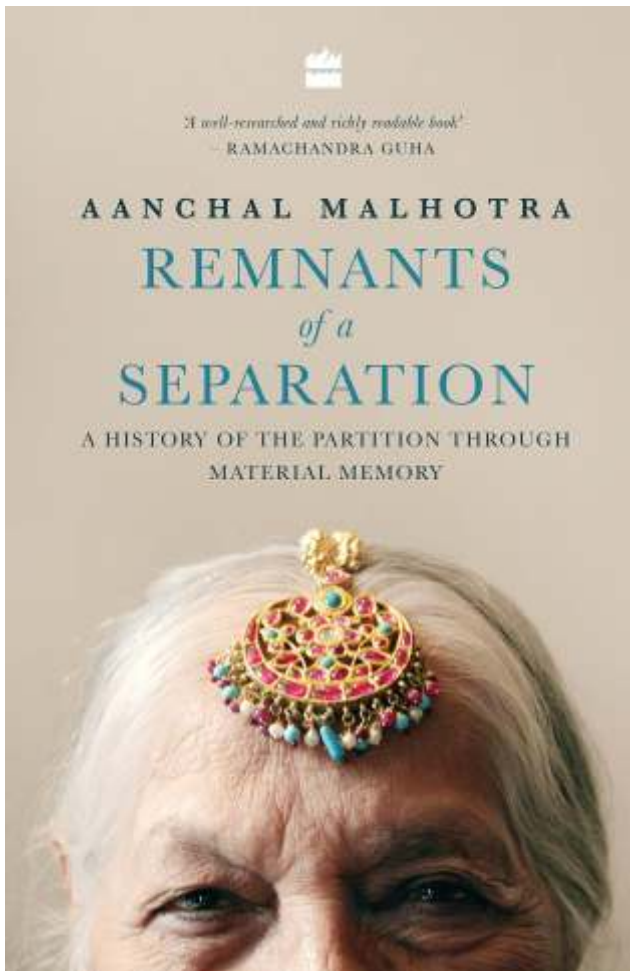
If you aren't convinced yet (which is impossible!), the book ends like this- **The End Look how far we've come.**

So the next time someone says books are useless, throw this to them (actually, don't because it's hardcover, and can hurt them, and then it will be hard for you to forgive yourself{see '3'}), and show them the true knowledge they have been missing. **Douglas Adams may have thought that 42 was the secret to life, the universe, and everything, but he was wrong! The true secret is...**

'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse', so read it, and you are sure to get the feeling that you are speaking to an old friend or a kind grandparent - someone who loves you for what you are!

Book Review: *Remnants of a Separation*

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



When I first saw the book, it seemed as if I faced a rather daunting task, reading 500 pages of a book pertaining to a difficult and emotional subject. I thought that the book would just be one long story of an experience of the partition (I have nothing against those books, but it was just a type that I had already read).

However when I actually opened and started reading this book it had an incredibly deep meaning, a moving collection of stories and interactions and made for a thought provoking read. In addition, the stories in the book are told through the

medium of objects (and people) - as the title suggests, the book is a history of the Partition through material memory; and this is what makes the book unique.

There are some wounds that remain in one's memory, those that time does not fade away; and the Partition of India created innumerable such wounds that had a profound impact that has lasted for decades. The horrors of the Partition have been brought to life on screen and in many books. I shudder to imagine what trauma people who experienced the Partition must have gone through. The author of this book, Ms Aanchal Malhotra, has used sensitivity in her interviews with people from India and Pakistan.

One aspect I noticed was that, even though India and Pakistan have had their differences, wars, disputes and much more, the one thing which binds them together is the loss that both countries faced during the Partition. India used to be one country but because of the Partition the country was split into two.

So much damage, trauma, pain and suffering was caused just by the British drawing one line (The Radcliffe Line) on a map. In an effort to highlight the experiences of those living in India and in Pakistan, Ms Aanchal Malhotra interviewed people from both countries and showcased so many similarities, as in the end the experiences were very similar on both sides of the border.

This makes a reader realise that lines can be drawn on a map, but these borders cannot make old memories fade away.

Another aspect which was more about human nature is about the various attachments we hold to certain objects. For a stranger an object dear to person A may not be dear to them as they

don't know the story behind the object (Each object we use in our daily lives or own has some story behind who they may have previously belonged to, and how you got the object...) or the emotions attached to it.

For Example- **The Author's Grandmother had with her the one item that her mother had brought with her when they left Pakistan to come to India in 1947. It was a Maang-Tikka or a pendant.** As the author describes it as a special heirloom that had everything from red rubies to gold, pearls and diamond. It was the Grandmother's Mother's wedding gift from her husband.

To an ordinary onlooker it may have seemed as if the mother brought the pendant to India only because of its monetary value, while that was partially true and because **when the family moved to Delhi they didn't have any money the thought of selling the pendant had crossed the mother's mind, the emotional attachment and the history behind the pendant was too much to part with it.** Moreover it reminded the mother of their old house in Pakistan.

2. Arza Haq- Another example from the book itself, except this time the person in context Mrs Azra Haq moved from India to Pakistan during the partition. Mrs Haq's father worked in the Government.

Once on a visit to meet the Maharaja of Bikaner, **Mrs Haq who was 18 at the time asked for a present of Pearls from her Uncle in Bikaner, and the Uncle asked the Maharaj who sent her pearls.** When leaving she took them with her because they were easy to carry and were small (They were earrings and other jewellery) and most importantly because of the fond memories she had during her time

in Bikaner. Today, Ms Haq is nostalgic about the memories of her life in India.

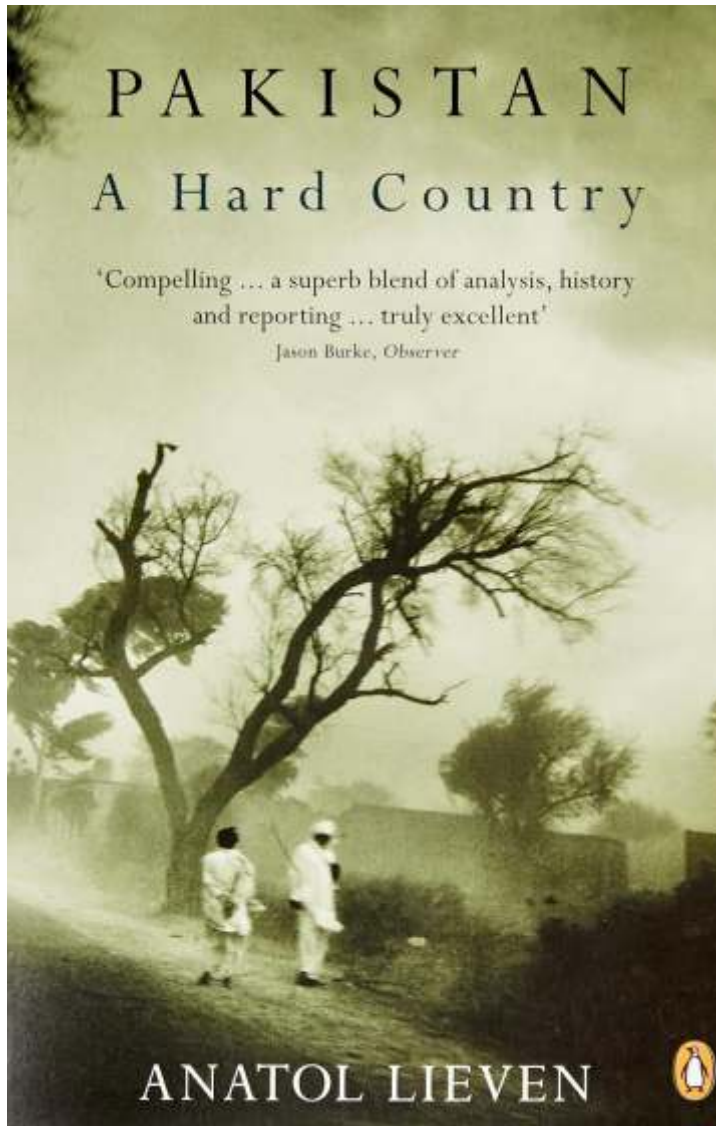
There are many other similar short stories where the author eloquently writes about her interviews with various people who crossed the border on either side to get to India or to Pakistan. **It not only highlighted the stories of the objects that the people carried with them but also the horrors of the Partition and the trauma and pain associated with it.**

The book made for an interesting read and I especially enjoyed the fact that these chapters or short stories and anecdotes of various people really brought the book together. **In most of the stories, the people who were interviewed, speak of their attachment to their "soil" and how this soil shapes us into the person we become.**

The emotions of the people, the interesting object brought with them and simply the way that Ms Malhotra brought the whole book together and the amount of time she took to travel to various places whether in Pakistan or in India and the time took to make the book reflects in its quality both in the text and the way the stories have been woven together. **Emotional, poignant, nostalgic, evocative – do read this book.**

Chapter Review: Understanding Pakistan

-by Anshika Kansal, Grade IX IGCSE, SNS Gurugram



Pakistan is known to be a country with a troubled past and present, and the introductory chapter of the book 'Pakistan a Hard Country' has done an exceptional job when it came to capturing the essence of the struggles as well as the misinterpretations this country has had to face.

Chapter 1- 'Understanding Pakistan' starts off by stating that Pakistan is a one of the many south asian countries that will be recognised for its excellent ability to recover from horrific happenings.

The author, Anatol Lieven goes on to compare the rate of resilience when it comes down to natural disasters. He has utilised the example of the dire flood that hit our protagonist country in the summer of 2010, with the numerous ecological disaster that have hit the southern part of India almost uncountable times at this point.

The difference between the two being Pakistan claimed that it had become weak and might remain in the same frail condition for an inconclusive amount of time. States in south India on other hand have adapted so well to these conditions without altering their development. I found the use of this example to be quite admirable as it acts as a strong base for the points which have been forward by the author.

From the title it is possible to make the mistake of determining that it is a novel which it going to display the often overlooked hardships of living in Pakistan. It is truly a brute and at times a corrupt nation which is overflowing with oppression.

However, the start of this book shows a brand new perspective of the millions of innocent lives that inhabit the nation. The author was able to capture this outlook by visiting a few families that populate Pakistan which is where he had gained the knowledge to compare the catastrophes that had struck.

The chapter is exceedingly gripping as it doesn't go on to call Pakistan a 'savage', 'high-risk' or a 'fearsome' country instead he has

put down factual evidence for why no country wishes to be its ally.

Next the chapter puts forward why its western relation have been completely obliterated because of their role in heroin trade as well as the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers.

The author has unintentionally captured its society's narrow-mindedness by explaining the how hypocritical their mind set are, he has accomplished to do so by explaining the way Pakistan decided to leave it's native languages behind and made the verdict of adopting an entirely new and unfamiliar language.

Yet till this day if a daughter makes the decision to go against her father's will and marries a person outside of their kinship the father would be bound to kill his beloved child. **Although the statement in which he has mentioned how the crime of murdering their own daughters has been normalised the reasons he has written for the life of a female child to be hypothetically ended can be her having having an affair or becoming pregnant without being married to that individual first.**

As a reader I found this particular statement that felt like an accusation to be quite disturbing. However it is possible that he is merely comparing or perhaps informing his readers the unfair circumstances a women's life is often ended for.

Throughout the chapter Anatol Lieven was keen on backing up the cause which led to Pakistan following or believing in certain things, such as the British deeply criticising their policies, an Indian-muslim himself forming a pact with the British to aid in the construction of the plan for the India-Pakistan partition. This further led to Pakistan being brainwashed to believe it was a villainous

country and was supposedly compelled to fight for a non-existent throne.

Most of the research done on Pakistan focuses on its negative side but, never on the several political movements that went on to be successful which have been largely focused on under the heading of 'THE GENESIS OF PAKISTAN'.

Overall the novel 'Pakistan a Hard Country' is a must read for this who are incredibly invested in the history of Pakistan as the author Anatol Lieven hasn't backed down from all the insights possible to his curious audience.



Book Review: *Murder On The Orient Express*

-by Aadi Chopra, Grade IX IGCSE, SNS Gurugram



It may be old, written in 1934 to be precise, but this remains one of the best written thriller/murder mystery novel of all time. This book is the pièce de résistance of the bestselling author in history. This is the return of infamous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.

Beginning with Poirot getting on the hugely famous Venice-Simplon Orient Express escorted by a French General in return for a previous favour, if you could call it a

favour, for the French Army. Upon boarding the Orient, he has some interactions with some of the passengers with whom he shall be travelling.

There are various characters, most of whom Poirot starts analysing. Among them, a British military colonel, a British governess, a Russian princess and a flamboyant Italian. The one who makes the biggest impression though, is a certain Mr. Ratchett. He also calls upon Poirot for protection in a hotel meeting prior to them boarding the Express.

Unfortunately, the journey has a small hitch, wherein the Orient gets stuck in a snowdrift for a long time. In this period, there is murder. The title sort of gives it away but yes, murder. Mr. Ratchett (later revealed to be the man behind the horrid Armstrong Case), is murdered in the night.

The plot deepens with the discovery of 12 stab wounds, all delivered in a different way, all passengers are looking innocent as equal amounts of evidence piling up, that is equal amounts of no evidence. **Each one provides an alibi. So, all 12 other passengers can't be proved guilty. However, not a single person has left the train since the murder was committed while the Orient was stuck in a snowdrift, so if the murderer had escaped, they would have clearly seen the footprints in the thick snow. But there are none.**

So, one by one, passengers are called in to give evidence to Poirot and his friend, member of the board of the company that runs the Orient Expresses, Monsieur Bouc. As the plot thickens, all those around Poirot get more befuddled. **After the intense interrogations conclude, Monsieur Bouc and Poirot retire to think of a solution.**

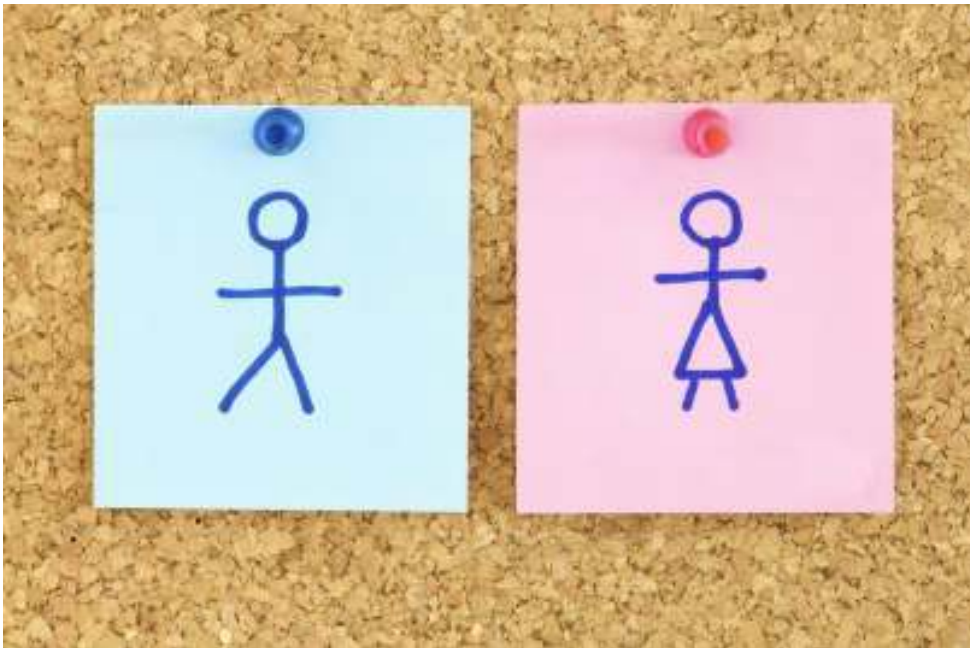
The solution, which Poirot proposes at the end of the book is so ridiculously simple that as a reader you kick yourself because the book has been engineered in such a way that if the book was 5-10 odd pages longer, you'd get the solution. You are mere inches from working it out and when proposed by Poirot, it all clicks instantly and you feel like you should have known.

In fact, Poirot poses two theories in the end, and while reading you feel that both of them are equally feasible yet only one is right. The structure of it is such that that cliffhanger feeling is avoided just in time and there is a solution but it comes a touch too soon. It seems impossible yet so easy you don't believe you didn't get it sooner.

In my view, it's absolutely fantastic. A timeless classic that is the reason the phrase 'must-read' was coined. There is a reason why it has been subject to various filmic interpretations, a recent 2017 blockbuster of the same name. After all, it is the best of the murder mystery genre, and of course one of the best-selling books of all time. Just buy it.

Why do girls choose the colour pink and boys, blue?

-by Amara Sood, Grade IX IGCSE, SNS Gurugram



As the famous Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk said in his book *My Name is Red*,

"I hear the question upon your lips: What is it to be a colour?"

Colour is the touch of the eye, music to the deaf, a word out of the darkness. Because I've listened to souls whispering – like the susurrus of the wind – from book to book and object to object for tens of thousands of years, allow me to say that my touch resembles the touch of angels. Part of me, the serious half, calls out to your vision while the mirthful half sours through the air with your glances."

Even as life on Earth has evolved, colours remain not the only but one of the few constants. The existence of colours has nagged scientists, artists, philosophers, and even the ordinary person for eons, but most would probably agree that whatever it is, its

beauty made manifest.

One of the first rules or better known moral conducts we ever learn as a child is "blue is for boys and pink is for girls," but what significance does this rule have? Who decided this? Why does it exist? And why do we have to abide by this rule?

Across the internet, the colour pink is believed to be associated with love, kindness, and femininity. The mention of the word "femininity" makes me wonder since colours are nothing but the reflection and absorption of light.

Colour preference starts emerging when children start learning about the world around them. Influence persuades them toward a particular colour even if that influence is not direct, i.e., even if no one says it directly to them, this rule is embedded in their brains through the society around them. One of the most common examples is the girl and boy sections of a store where blue is dominant in boys and pink in girls.



The classification and segregation of these colours first became popular in the 19th century when pastel colours were popularised for babies. These colours were chosen not based on

gender but on the way they complemented hair and eye colours. Blue was for babies with blue eyes and/ or blonde hair and pink for babies with brown eyes and/or brown hair.

Soon after, blue was the colour assigned to girls as it was perceived as a dainty colour and pink for boys since it was a more robust colour. This is indicated by baby books, cards, clothes, newspaper articles, and many more dating back to the early 1950s. So, then how did pink become for girls and blue for boys? It seems that the public and society reassigned these colours because pink is close to red, a romantic colour, and women were believed to be more emotional than men.

Old Disney movies also serve as a source to understand this change better. What colour was Snow White's top? Blue. In the original version of Peter Pan what was the colour of Michael's pyjamas? Pink. I'm certain most of us remember Sleeping Beauty's dress morphing from blue to pink and back again in the dancing scene. Keeping in mind the release date- 1959, this reflects shifting norms. This might have resulted from a debate at the studios about whether pink or blue best symbolised femininity.



During the 1960's women's liberation movement, participants challenged the assignment of these colours, and they threw gendered colours out the window, but this didn't last long as manufacturers realised it could be a way for them to capitalise on selling the same content in different colours for each gender. They popularised this rule through mass advertising in hopes of maximising profits.

The establishment and gaining attention of gender reveal parties reinforced this rule through cakes, balloons, and various other decorations. Even though parents have started shifting towards more gender-neutral colours, this rule is constantly reinforced in our society since blue and pink are still dominant.

Most scientific studies prove that both genders are more attracted to primary colours (Red, Blue, and Green). When given the option between blue and pink, children thus, tend to choose blue. Still, girls choose the colour pink significantly more than their male peers. Studies also reveal that you can start seeing girls prefer pink since they are as young as two! While it was first believed that something innate attracted girls to the colour pink, more research shows that girls prefer pink simply because somewhere along the line, they are told to.

A survey conducted by social scientists at the University of Wisconsin shows the different reasons college students believe are behind a particular colour preference. In the data, just under 15% believed that there was a biological explanation for this phenomenon. About 55% thought the influence of environmental factors such as seeing pink on other females affected this. A quarter suspected that both; biology and socialisation played a role.

While there have been many possible biological explanations for this phenomenon, one was published in the journal *Current Biology*. It said that female adults "prefer colours with a reddish contrast" more than males.

The paper also proposed the idea that girls preference for pink may have evolved from hunter-gatherer times when women needed to recognise the red leaves which could be consumed. **Based on the various theories, the biological explanation is that girls like pink because they are traditionally seen as caregivers and empathisers training to figure out people's emotions.**

Though, if these explanations were valid, we would expect to see the colour preference since infancy, whereas a study conducted by the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* showed the opposite. **The data revealed no evidence of bias for colours in infants.**

Assigning colours to babies supports sexism and defends the role children are supposed to fit into. **Boys are supposed to grow up to be macho and strong, whereas girls are intended to be fragile and docile.**

The existence of only two gendered colours also enforces the norm that there are only two genders you're allowed to claim.

Possibly, some cell-based genetic change occurs in children that shifts colour preference, but no one has been able to prove it yet, and until then, these norms are completely invalid and shouldn't be applied to society. **We should create an environment where children can choose the colours they like, free of influence to reinforce their opinions and preferences.**

More than a few parents disagree and refuse to stand by this code, and some even take progressive steps towards abolishing this rule present in society.

To make this world less stereotypical, less sexist, and overall less prejudiced, we should come together and stop pushing gendered colours on children. After all, there are seven colours in the rainbow: VIBGYOR, so let's not neglect the VIGYO!



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