

E Pluribus Unum

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT



GAZA

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The Israel Palestine Conflict

-by Kabir Kaul Dutta, Grade XII, SNS Noida



Introduction:

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an ongoing struggle since the mid-20th century. The conflict has been one of the most enduring conflicts in the world and yet there is no solution that has been found yet. This ongoing conflict between the Jews and the Arabs over a piece of land between River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea is nearly hundred years old.

The Creation of Palestine:

From 1882 to 1948, Jews from around the world gathered in Palestine. This movement came to be known as Aliyahs. In 1917, Britain took control of Palestine after

the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War 1. The land had a Jewish minority and an Arab majority and there was rising tension between the two communities. This tension grew even more when the British were asked to make Palestine a "National Home " for the Jewish community. **For the Jews, Palestine was an ancestral home but at the same time Palestinian Arabs also claimed there right over the land and opposed this move.**



Bethlehem in the early 20th Century

Between the 1920's and the 40's the Jewish population grew in the Palestinian state due to the fear of being prosecuted in Europe as a result of the holocaust during World War 2. At the same time the violence between the Jews and the Arabs, and against British rule, also grew.

In 1947, the United Nation voted for Palestine to be split into a separate Jewish and Arabic States, with Jerusalem becoming an international city. This plan was accepted by the Jewish Leaders, but was rejected by the Arab community and was hence never implemented.

The Rise of Israel and the 'Catastrophe':

On the other hand in 1947, the British left and the leaders of the Jewish community declared the creation of the state of Israel. Many Palestinians objected to this decision, resulting in a war. Troops from the neighbouring Arab countries also invaded Palestine. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were even forced out of their houses in what is known as Al Nakba, or "the Catastrophe".

The war ended in a ceasefire the following year and Israel took control of most of the territory. Jordan occupied the land which became known as the West Bank, and Egypt occupied Gaza. Jerusalem was divided between Israeli forces in the West, and Jordanian forces in the East. Since there was never a peace agreement each side blamed the other hence several wars continued to rage.

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present



Later in 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza, the Egyptian Sinai peninsula, as well as most of the Syrian Golan Heights in another war. Most of the Palestinian refugees and their descendants live in Gaza and the West Bank, and also in the neighbouring states like Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Neither they nor their descendants have been allowed into Israel saying that this would overwhelm the country and threaten its existence as a Jewish state.

Israel still occupies the West Bank, and even though it is pulled out of Gaza the United Nation still regards that piece of land as part of Israel's territory. The Israel state claims the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, while at the other hand Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. The United States of America is one of the countries which recognises Israel's claim to the whole of the city.

The Current Situation:

The tension between Israel and the Palestinian state is often heightened, and has caused a lot of destruction and violence. Gaza is ruled by the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Israel and Egypt tightly control Gaza's borders to stop weapons getting supplied to Hamas. Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank say they're suffering because of Israeli actions and restrictions.

According to Israel, it is only to protect itself from Palestinian violence. Things have escalated since the start of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan in April 2021, with clashes between the police and the Palestinians. The Gaza Ministry of Health has said at least 232 people have been killed by Israel's military campaign, including 65

children. The number of wounded is more than 1,900. The state of Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, which rules Gaza, agreed to a cease-fire following pressure from the U.S. and its allies to end violence. This recent conflict has claimed the lives of more than 200 people, mostly in Gaza. The United States, with Egypt, Qatar and several European nations have persuaded both Israel and Hamas leaders to end their military campaigns.



The Israeli airstrikes in southern Gaza on 12th May, 2021

War and its Perils:

It is the common people who are affected the most due to such conflicts, whether it's the Kashmir crisis or the Rohingya crisis or the Syrian civil war, there are ordinary people who lose their loved ones and possibly everything that they have. The Rohingya crisis has resulted in more than 25,000 people getting killed with nearly 700,000 refugees fleeing abroad, while during the Syrian civil war we experienced the death of more than 207,000 people, including about 25,000 children. As people living fairly comfortably, it is difficult to imagine their plight. As citizens of the world, we need to understand that war has never benefited anyone, and it never will!

Colombia Protest

-by Jiya Gaur, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



"They have pushed us to hunger." - Natalia Arevalo, 20, a protester in Bogota.

The streets of Cali, Colombia's third largest city seem to be a fictional dystopian society these days. Marks of the protests which took place during the last few weeks remain evident, reminding people of the unfortunate events that took place there.

Places that once used to be bus stations are now burnt-out shells, petrol stations have been deserted. The horrid stench of faces and rubbish wafts through the air. What began as a protest fueled by the anger against a new tax reform introduced by President Ivan Duque has much deeper roots than we can imagine.

The question therefore arises, what was the cause of these protests?

The global pandemic has carved its way into every country across the globe,

destroying and dismantling economies, uprooting lives of the people and being an invincible menace in several ways. The gross domestic product of Colombia saw a monumental plunge in the year 2020 marking it as the deepest crash in half a century.

Unemployment swiftly increased, leaving most of the population jobless and with little or no means for survival. According to the country's National Statistics Department, the poverty rate increased from 36 percent in 2019 to 42.5 percent in 2020.

The pandemic has taken an unimaginable toll on the economy of all countries, disproportionately impacting low income and middle class people, just as in Colombia.

The tax proposal, which has now been withdrawn, originally aimed to raise around \$6.3 billion. It was predicted to eliminate deductions and exemptions by expanding on individuals and business, apply sales tax to more products and increase taxes on low and middle income classes. It is crucial to break down the flaws of this reform.

Firstly, the proposed reform would have lowered the extent at which salaries are taxed, drastically affecting anyone with a monthly income of 2.6m pesos (\$684) or perhaps even more.

Secondly, it would have eradicated many of the current privileges savoured by individuals.

Finally, the surge of taxes would completely demolish and tear down the already dwindling economy of low income and middle class individuals amidst the outbreak of the coronavirus. Regardless of pleas from unions who organized the protests, the government

insisted the reform was pivotal in alleviating Columbia's economic crisis. It is important to note that inequality and poverty have been long standing problems in Colombia that worsened with the pandemic.

These very reforms were announced by president Ivan Duque and fueled a wave of angry protests that began to sweep across Colombia on the 28th of April, 2021. Owing to continuing protests, death and international condemnation of illegal human rights abuses against protestors by the police, the government decided to withdraw the tax proposal.

Regardless of the fact, the protests continued due to the fact that the government took far too long to revoke the proposal, leaving thousands of Columbians on the streets to protest and fight against the way the government has run the country for the past two and a half years.

"How bad must a situation be for us to march in the middle of a pandemic?" said Jhon Ramirez, a protester in Zipaquirá, near the capital, Bogotá.

Tracing the uprising of the protests is necessary to understand the seriousness of the situation and why the protests are still going on. The first and foremost reason the protests are still happening is due to how widespread the grievances are.

The feeling of discontent is among thousands of Colombians. You will find student organizations, labor unions and transport unions on the streets raising their voices. They have been unhappy with the work of the ruling government for more than two years now. A cry for Colombians voices to be heard resulted in violent

clashes owing to widespread police brutality and violence. The police's heavy-handed response in cities such as Bogota and Cali have caused a tremendous uproar and outrage amongst international groups such as the UN, EU and US.

Verified and compiled video footage from Amnesty International says it shows security forces using noxious weapons, firing tear gas and thrashing protestors. Yet another reason causing rage amongst the people is the downplay of violence. President Duque is said to have given minimal screen time to the police brutality, choosing to focus on the "extreme vandalism and urban terrorism" of demonstrators instead.

While the truth cannot be denied and the fact that protestors blocked roadways, lit buses on fire and attacked officers is true, the blame cannot be laid down on only the protestors, blatantly ignoring the widespread human rights violations by the forces and police. According to Colombians, the government's attempt to minimize the conversation regarding police based violence has created more resentment.

They feel that instead of engaging in fruitless conversations among the government, the private sector and civil society, Duque should address all of the protestor's complaints including those of police misconduct.

As of 21st May, 2021, 42 people have died in the protests according to Columbia's Ombudsman Office. Human rights groups believe that the death toll could be higher. A state agency independent from the government said that about 89 people were listed as "disappeared". As per a compilation by human rights organization Temblores, at least 2,387 cases of police brutality have

been reported. Marcelo Agredo Inchima of mere seventeen years was among the first casualties that resulted in the protests when social media videos of police brutality kindled fury across an already maddened nation.

On April 28, Agredo and his brother joined the anti-tax bill rally not knowing that he would soon become the nucleus of the movement. **Startling social media footage shot from a balcony in the Mariano Ramos neighborhood shows Agredo kicking a police officer on his motorcycle.** People begin to scatter in panic as Agredo attempts to flee from the situation but the police officer grabs his gun, taking the life of the young teenager.

A second social media video of the same situation taken from another angle shows Agredo running and falling to the ground. The people around him frantically attempt to move him but to their dismay realize that he is no longer alive.

These protests began as opposition over the now withdrawn tax reforms. They have not remained that way anymore. They have transformed into a cry to end police brutality and fight against the oppressive system that they are tangled within. Looking at a global view of the situation, the world has condemned violence in Colombia.

The UN called for calm ahead of the rallies planned for Wednesday, saying that the security forces should use firearms only as a last resort when facing an imminent threat of death or serious injury. The European Union also condemned the deaths of 19 people- 18 civilians and one police officer and said that it was a priority that security officers desists from the use of unreasonable force. Amnesty International too has asked for an “end to repression of protests and

militarization of cities.”. President Duque's government, however, has adopted a resistant stance against the protestors with Defence Minister Diego Molano terming the violence as “systematic, premeditated and financed by criminal organisations” and has urged public forces to be “ruthless towards those who use vandalism”.

On the other hand, President Duque has asked the Colombians to refrain from violence and has promised to create a space to listen to the citizens and construct solutions for the situation, a call to action that echoed his government's vow in 2019 which civil society groups and unions claim is yet to be implemented.

On a final note, the vast majority of protesters are peaceful and as in every such situation, human life, dignity and nobility should reign over damage to private property.

Now, for Colombians, the fight still continues and they ask the same age-old questions as rightly said by Maria Luisa Sanin Pena and Daniela Meza considering the situation: “If the police are there to protect us, who will protect us from the police? If the State is there to protect us, who will protect us from the State?”

Martin Luther King Jr: The Life and Assassination

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



*“ If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl,
but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”*

~Martin Luther King, Jr

History itself is evidence that he lived his life by those very words. Here is his journey, one of great struggle and perseverance but immense success.

Martin Luther King, Jr, born on 15 January 1929 as Michael Luther King, Jr, belonged to a family of pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. At the young age of 15, he graduated from a segregated high school and went on to get a BA degree in sociology from Morehouse College (from where both his father and grandfather had graduated). After completing his degree, he went on graduate with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania. For his excellent performance at Crozer, he had got a fellowship in Boston University, where he received his PhD and wrote a doctoral thesis.

In 1954, King became a pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. At this point in time, he was already a member of the executive committee of National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.

In 1955, he was given the title of President of Montgomery Improvement Association. In the very same year, the local chapter of the NAACP chose him to lead a boycott of the city's segregated buses after Rosa Parks' refused to surrender her seat to a white passenger.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott began with the demands of courtesy, hiring of black drivers and a first come- first seated policy. Although African Americans comprised of nearly 75% of the town's population, the city refused to comply with these demands. As to make sure that this boycott was sustained, Black Leaders organized carpools.

The African American taxi drivers of the city only charged 10 cents (equivalent of bus charge) for African American riders. Black leaders also took the initiative to keep African American residents mobilized by holding regular meetings. Eventually, the Supreme Court ordered Montgomery to desegregate its buses, apropos of which King became a national figure. The boycott in total had lasted 381 days.

After this, he co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to further the noble cause of racial equality without the use of violent means. He had learnt this principle as a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, who was a great advocate of non-violence (ahinsa).

In the month of May in the year 1957, King delivered his first

national address, "Give us the Ballot", at Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at Lincoln Memorial in Washington. This speech was aimed at fully enfranchising the Black residents of the Southern States. King fully understood that it would take bold leadership and tenacity to fully integrate the Blacks into American society and was willing to go all the way.

In 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower sent Congress a proposal for civil rights legislation. This resulted in the creation of Civil Rights Act of 1957. The new act established the Civil Rights Section of the Justice Department and empowered federal prosecutors to obtain court injunctions against interference with the right to vote.

It also established a federal Civil Rights Commission with authority to investigate discriminatory conditions and recommend corrective measures. The final act was weakened by Congress due to lack of support among the Democrats.

In 1958, King along with some Civil Rights Leaders went to meet President Eisenhower in Washington. Here they discussed issues pertaining to racial discrimination. This meeting was cordial, however no concrete decision regarding the issues was made. In 1960, King moved from Montgomery to Atlanta to focus on the Civil Rights Movement. In the same year, he was arrested at a sit-in demonstration. He was sentenced to four months of hard-labour. He was released on a 2000\$ bond. In the following times, he was arrested two times in as many years.

After being arrested for ignoring an Alabama state court injunction against demonstrations, King wrote his famous letter, "A letter from Birmingham Jail", to defend non-violent opposing of

racism. In current times, this serves as tangible proof of the long road to freedom. It elaborates on the urgency of ending hate crimes against the Black community.

In August of the year 1963, King delivered his famous "I have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, where more than 200,000 people took part in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This speech is till date considered one of the best speeches ever delivered and is analyzed and appreciated even today. King was also named Man of the Year for 1963, by Time Magazine for 1963. In December of 1964, King won a Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1965, voting rights marchers are attacked and beaten by police, in Selma. After this, King peacefully led civil rights marchers to Montgomery. King addressed economic equality as well when Riots happened in Watts, LA. Subsequently, he also made a speech against the Vietnam War.



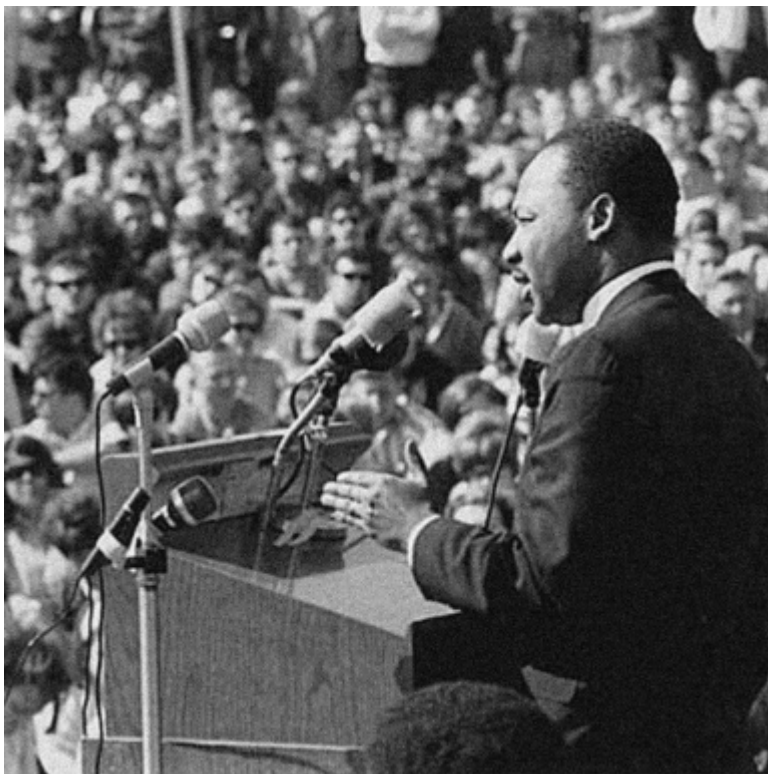
In 1967, at the New York City Church, King demanded that US needs to make more of an effort to end the Vietnam War. A few more months down the line, King planned for a Poor People's Campaign in

the form of a mass civil disobedience. This was intended to be an expansion of civil rights activities into the relatively uncharted area of economic rights.

In 1968, he led a group of sanitation workers' supporters for a strike in Memphis. This march ended with violence and looting. In this year's April, Martin Luther King delivered his speech, "I've been to the mountaintop". He called for unity, economic actions, boycotts and nonviolent protest, and a challenge to the US to live up to its ideals.

On 4 April 1968, he was assassinated by James Earl Ray at Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. On 9 April 1968, King was buried in Atlanta.

King's story is evidently one of great struggle and pain. But he did manage to further the cause of equal rights for the black community. Till this day, he is considered a visionary and a bonafide leader. He might not be here today, but his message carries forward.



Life goes on

-by Yashaswani, Grade X, SNS Faridabad



Sometimes we stopped in our tracks
To catch our breath
And to catch the pounding of our chest
We wipe the beads of sweat
As we think of how many sprints
There are left
Until the soles of our shoes
Begin to wear out
But we kept on running
With no shoes on
Because even if it might hurt right now
And maybe there'll be blisters after
We know how the final step eases pain
When we finally reach the tip of the gradient sky
It tells us that in every leap that we just took
We chose to keep going on
And that felt spectacular to the core

Nuclear Power: Weapon or not a Weapon

-by Tanvi Rawat, Grade XII, SNS Noida



The after damage caused in the factory. Source: defenceworld.net



On July 2nd, 2020, an explosion took place in the centrifuge assembly facility near the city of Natanz in Iran. There were differing opinions on the facts related to the explosion. Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, stated that there was “significant financial damage,” and said that the explosion would cost the site several months, but that no one was injured grievously.

“The damaged warehouse was designed for the final stages of advanced centrifuges and assembly of these machineries,” Mr. Kamalvandi said. Whereas the US intelligence officials had a different bundle of facts and viewpoints ; US intelligence officials told the New York Times that a large explosion had completely destroyed the independent internal power system that supplied the centrifuges inside the underground facility. They estimated it could take at least nine months to resume

enrichment there. Iran has named a suspect in the attack on its Natanz nuclear facility that damaged centrifuges there, saying he had fled the country "hours before" the sabotage happened. State television named the suspect as 43-year-old Reza Karimi saying he was born in the nearby city of Kashan.



The inside harm and condition of the factory. Source: nytimes.com

Separately, the former head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization has revealed that a blast which hit Natanz in July 2020 was caused by explosives hidden inside a table. Fereydun Abbasi-Davani told state TV the perpetrators "amended the explosive [in the table] and sealed it, using, perhaps, resin or welding the steel" before managing to get it past security staff.

The History:-

The nuclear empire was started or gotten name by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, started the actual nuclear awareness or nuclear restoration in Iran , that helped the progress of nuclear

power similar to the leadership under the Islamic Republic, believed that nuclear energy was the gateway to industrialization and the symbol of modernization.

In one of the meetings one of the chief heads said “no country has a right to dictate nuclear policy to another,” further pointing out to Americans that Iran should not be treated as a “second-class citizen.” Iran has always been rich and abundant in the terms of nuclear power and weapons which was not digested by other nations of the world.

Natanz uranium enrichment facility



I suppose, many nations have tried to halt or stop the major progress in Iran and its nuclear powers over the years . Finally, **Iran agreed to an historic accord with six major world powers on July 14, 2015.**

Nuclear Weapons and deterrence in the world:

Nuclear weapons are just a tug of war between countries, it has become like a box of chocolates with a 5-year-old kid.

The role of kids is being played by all the superpowers of the countries and other nations , the one which has more is considered to be the country which could conquer anything in a second ; and could play innumerable conspiracies with other countries in the world.

I feel like having Nuclear weapons in today's era is vital for any country, it's like an asset to the nation. Nuclear weapons have only been looked with a negative description and consequences , as many countries and people feel , it could end humanity and it is true , nuclear weapons are absolute end of humanity and substance among people as it destroys everything where it has been exploded.

The important thing to understand here is Nuclear power or weapon is more of thing that is proclaimed and exhibited to the people in order to gain superiority , power , confidence ,safety , fear and asset amongst the people and for any particular country ; but in today's century with everything so effective , smart and educated and provisions at every level no country would actually use it.

This is the theory of deterrence which claims that nuclear weapons can lead to reduced international direct confrontation, the Cold War being an example of it.

The nuclear Deal between Iran and USA - what was it?

In July 2015, Iran and six countries reached a historic agreement called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), popularly known as the Iran nuclear deal. The six major powers involved in these negotiations with Iran were known as the P5+1, which stands for the United Nations security council's five permanent members (the US, France, the UK, China, and Russia) and Germany.



The discussions among USA and Iran Source: [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com)

The deal finally came together after two years of intense discussions and aimed to restrict Iran's ability to develop and grow nuclear weapons in exchange for benefiting economic sanctions against Tehran. Tehran agreed to restrictions that would allow it to have enough enriched uranium to maintain the country's energy needs, without having the ability to build a nuclear bomb, and agreed to give access to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Aftermath: In simple words to summaries the current scenario of the Iran nuclear crisis is

● **So a deal was struck:** In 2015, Iran and six other countries reached a major agreement. Iran would stop some nuclear growth and work in return for an end to harsh penalties, or sanctions, hurting its economy.

● **World powers don't trust Iran:** Some countries believe Iran still wants its Nuclear power as a source of security and power for its nation and are just making erroneous statements, whereas Iran denies that.

● **What is the problem Currently:** Iran re-started banned nuclear work after former US President Donald Trump pulled out of the deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Even though new leader Joe Biden wants to rejoin, both sides say the other must make the first move.

The Relationship between Iran and USA post the incident

The White House was quick to distance itself from the incident. Jen Psaki, Biden administration's press secretary, said "the US is not involved" in the attack in any manner. "We have nothing to add to speculation about the causes," she added, at the press briefing on April 12.

Psaki also noted that the US was committed to negotiate in Vienna which both sides have agreed upon. "We expect the diplomatic discussions to continue ... They will be difficult and long," she said, adding that the US has not received any indication of change in Iran's participation in the negotiations. Notably, the last

time when the nuclear production facility in Natanz was targeted in September 2010 using the Stuxnet malware, it had emerged as a joint Israeli American cyber operation. The malware attack was secretly approved by the then US commander-in-chief, Barack Obama, the NYT had reported.

What happens now:

Iran Natanz has a great history of nuclear energy and resources; it has great potential to grow and make progress in its nuclear as well as uranium energy used in various other things. Even the country withholds its strength to make this an expansive process ahead which would help in their country's assets.

I feel that in future either Iran would sabotage or mindlessly not follow the policy made by the following countries; or would smartly work apprehensively with the USA following the policy as it helps it's country economically.

Iran would not appreciate Israel's inputs but these two countries have always been in a cold war unironically , whereas I feel the USA is the main orbit which is leading all the things ahead for both the countries ; but Iran should work on its assets especially after this massive explosion.

Country Research: *United Arab Emirates*

-by Maanya Malhotra, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The United Arab Emirates, often simply referred to as the Emirates, is a country in West Asia, located at the East end of the Arabian peninsula. It has an area of 83,600 Km sq and a population of 97.7 Lakhs as of 2019

It is composed of a federation of seven emirates consisting of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain. Amongst these, the capital of the UAE is Abu Dhabi. Bordered by Oman and Saudi Arabia, it has maritime borders in the Persian Gulf with Qatar and Iran.

The UAE is mostly an arid land, characterised by vast sand deserts consisting of sand dunes, oases, rock mountains and valleys. In some places, marshes-mangroves and salt plains can be found. In contrast to this vast desert land, the UAE displays

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modern architecture at its best. UAE gained its independence from the United Kingdom and on 2 December 1971 and was admitted in the UN just seven days later. Its form of government is Federal Presidential Elective Constitutional Monarchy and the current President is Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The Prime Minister Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, since 2006. The country has a GDP of US\$ 647.650 Billion and a per capita income of US\$ 70,441 as per 2020's estimates. In HDI rank, it comes in at 31st in the world.

The UAE has 100,000 active military personnel and 180,000 reserve military personnel. It enjoys amiable-diplomatic relations with over 60 countries, some of which include China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and India, among many others.

Some notable organizations of which UAE is a member are the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries among many others.

As per the last census, the UAE's population comprises of 11.6% Emirati Arabs, 59.4% South Asians, 7.4% Egyptians and 6.1% Filipinos amongst 12.8% others. The official language of the UAE is Arabic and the official religion is Islam.

The UAE is renowned for its touristic wonders it holds with the most popular as Burj Khalifa(Dubai), Sheikh Zayed Mosque(Abu Dhabi), Louvre(Abu Dhabi) Ferrari World(Abu Dhabi) and of course Burj-al-Arab and Atlantis in Dubai.



The most popular destinations are Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and over 15 million people from across the world visit Dubai every year. Dubai is home to the Burj Khalifa, which at 830m, stands as the tallest building in the world and can be seen from 60 miles away.

The Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) is an annual event and is a shopper's paradise for a whole month. The best of the best brands is available at attractive discounts. The Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi is one of its kind theme adventure parks and is home to the fastest roller coaster in the world, The Formula Rossa.



The Louvre in Abu Dhabi is a haven for art-lovers and attracts thousands of people every day. The Burj-Al Arab is claimed as the only 7-star hotel in the world, with Michelin Star Restaurants and private butlers, as well as rooms that make one feel like royalty. The Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi is an architectural wonder and is one of the largest mosques in the world and attracts people of all faith and religion.

The UAE is also home to the biggest financial and banking co-operations in the world and exports serve as gateway to Europe. The UAE's top exporting partners are India, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia and Oman. **Its main exports are Crude Oil, Natural Gas and Dried Fish.** The UAE has an abundance of petroleum and natural gas resources, the export of which has fueled the growth of the emirates.



The National Emblem of UAE is a Falcon with the UAE flag at the heart of it, with seven stars around it. The Falcon is a representation of strength and heritage while the UAE flag with 7 stars around it represents the unity of the seven emirates.

The rapid growth of the UAE accompanied and bolstered by the resource development has made it one of the most developed and progressive countries in the world.

An Equal Word?

Covid-19 Vaccine Inequality

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The Covid-19 Pandemic has made vaccines the need of the hour. All of us are waiting for our turn to get the Covid-19 vaccine. Even though India is manufacturing a domestically developed Covid-19 vaccine, as well as being a manufacturing hub for others, and so are many other countries like the UK and the USA, there are many, many countries that are yet to have a sure shot at vaccination of their citizens.

The virus has not spared any part of the world, yet when it comes to a cure, there is unfortunately an inequality in terms of access to vaccines. Every day one reads news of many parts of the world, typically the already underprivileged parts, that are yet to receive vaccines.

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MAY, 2021

What are these Vaccines? Why are they important?

These vaccines are designed to combat the Sars Coronavirus. All research so far indicates that these vaccines are extremely helpful to fight this virus. Once you get the two doses (Or one dose if you are taking the J&J vaccine), your body is trained to detect the virus and fight it off quickly.

Now, this does not guarantee never contracting the virus; however, it does reduce the symptoms, comorbidities and decreases the chance of hospitalisation. These vaccines help you build your immunity against the Virus and give you a better shot at fighting it.

No vaccine yet has 100% efficacy but most of them have shown great promise. The Pfizer vaccine has a 95% efficacy, and the Moderna vaccine has a 94% efficacy. The vaccines available in India, for example Covishield (AstraZeneca-Oxford) has an efficacy of 90% when the second dose is taken after a 2–3-month gap, but without a certain gap, an average of 67%. The Covaxin (Bharat Biotech) has an efficacy of around 78%. The Newest vaccine approved in India is the Sputnik V which has an efficacy of over 91%

What are the main vaccines in India? (Disclaimer: Vaccines listed are Not ranked in any particular order)

1. Covishield (Oxford-AstraZeneca)

2. Covaxin (Bharat BioNTech)

3. The Sputnik V Russian Vaccine was also recently approved and has only just begun circulation.

Some Vaccines approved in the United States of America are-

1. Pfizer- BioNTech, 2. Moderna, 3. Johnson & Johnson - Janssen

History of Vaccine Distribution-

Before we can start looking at the vaccine inequality and the distribution, let us take a look at the history of vaccines and how they were distributed, and if they were successful. India held extremely successful vaccination drives that eradicated Smallpox and Polio. The Polio vaccination drive is said to have vaccinated 127 Million children on one single day in January 1997. Could similar success follow in India's Covid-19 Vaccination Drive?

How and why is there inequality in the distribution?

·One main issue is with the production of Vaccines. India boasted that they were the fastest country to inoculate (vaccinate) 100 Million people, which is fairly good for a developing country; but for a country with a population of 1.2 Billion, not so much. As of 19th May 2021, India has given around 180 Million Doses, but only a mere 3% of India's total population has been fully vaccinated.

As per a report by the New York Times, that is only 13 doses per 100 people. To achieve any form of herd immunity, a far larger percentage of the population must be vaccinated. **More than a Billion people around the world (1.48 Billion People) have already been vaccinated (First dose) and 360 Million people (and counting) worldwide have been fully vaccinated.** The only problem is that vaccine makers are finding it hard to keep up with the number of orders.

·The bigger issue is that bigger countries with more resources (The US, UK and even India) snapped up big deals for millions of doses early on, leaving other countries in the dust. Just do the math - the doses given in the US, UK, China and India make up

more than half of the doses taken worldwide) The total doses given around the world are 1.48 Billion, and the doses the USA, India, China and the UK used equal around 993 Million. Which is practically almost the 1 Billion Doses out of the 1.48 given.

What about a country like the Democratic Republic of Congo being one of the lowest vaccinating countries, vaccinating around 12,000 people (According to Our World in Data).

·This is not because countries do not want the vaccines but because they do not have the vaccine (or cannot afford them yet) or have not yet received the vaccines they ordered / were promised to them.

The Haves and Have nots: Which countries have and do not have the vaccine.

The poorer countries, like an example of the DRC which has a population of 90 Million but have vaccinated only 12,000 people (Roughly). Another example is South Sudan which have only vaccinated 6.5 Thousand people so far, and Madagascar which has only vaccinated only 3 Thousand people so far- which is 0.01 doses per 100 people.

This inequality has also been called a Vaccine Apartheid because the richer countries are getting the vaccines, but the poorer ones are being marginalised. This has been a message to bigger countries to give vaccines to countries that cannot afford them.

Is there a responsibility for richer countries?

·The United States of America, one of the richest countries in

the world, has vaccinated almost half of its population so far [43% and Counting- (According to Bloomberg)] with around 270 Million Doses already given.

So more than half of the population (60% according to the CNN) of the United States of America have gotten at least their first dose of the vaccine. The US Government struck deals early on with vaccine makers like Pfizer and Moderna, which ensured their giant surplus of Vaccine Doses.

·US President Joe Biden recently announced that America shall be sending 20 Million Doses of the Covid-19 Vaccine around the world right away and aims to send around 80 Million doses by the end of June. **This move by President Biden has come slightly late as countries like India which are running terribly low on vaccines and others that did not or could not strike deals early on with vaccine makers are suffering.**

With India's steady rise in Covid cases, will we be able to hold out till June? What about countries like Papua New Guinea where only 0.2 out of 100 people have received the vaccine? The richer countries which have spare vaccines and can afford to give them need to step up. **According to Bloomberg, the United States of America has 18% of the World's Vaccine doses, but only 4.3% of the World's Population.**

·Sure, if they choose not to give doses to other countries, thinking they will be insulated as long as their citizens are vaccinated, but Covid-19 shall stay in the world until each country vaccinates a majority of its population to gain herd immunity. If larger countries with more resources do not help the ones who need it, the Coronavirus shall remain on our planet for eternity.

Vaccine Diplomacy-

·Countries like Russia and China have taken advantage of the lack of vaccines in the world and are doing 'some good' with a secret hint of 'diplomacy' in them. **Using what can be termed as 'Vaccine Diplomacy', China is giving doses of its Covid-19 Vaccine to donate doses to some countries.**

While this sounds like it has been done out of the kindness of their hearts- it will not hurt for them to make a quick buck on vaccines and gain a few 'allies' while they are at it. Yes, they have donated doses of vaccines to countries with a dire need of them such as Afghanistan which have only fully vaccinated 0.1 % of their population. They received 400,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine donated by China.

·About the profit aspect I was talking about, the Dominican Republic was given a kind donation of 50,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine and purchased 10 Million doses of the Sinovac vaccine from China. **Algeria received its Chinese vaccine doses free of cost and promised to support the Core interests of China.**

There, so it was not completely free, was it? Russia sold more than 5 Million Doses to Bolivia, and later in the year there was a discussion about a Russian Nuclear Plant in Bolivia. Again, these vaccine doses came at a cost.

The worst part for the United States here is that they are losing the Vaccine Diplomacy race, and countries which the United States considers as 'not favourable friends (to put it kindly)' seem to be getting ahead of them.

What is a possible solution to this inequality?

Well, firstly this starts off with a magic wand called **cooperation!** This means that countries must put their squabbles, disputes, wars, arguments aside and must step up and look at the bigger picture.

The WHO has formed a group called COVAX (which has 172 member countries) to help get all countries the Covid Vaccine. Their website states that they aim to provide doses for at least 20% of countries' populations, help rebuild economies, split the vaccines diversely etc.

They have sent millions of vaccines to various countries. The US which had not initially joined COVAX donated 4 Billion Dollars (2.5 Billion given for 2021) and Covax raised around 6 Billion dollars in funding. However, they still need an additional 2 Billion dollars. Even the deal for 1.1 billion doses from India (long term) has slowed down due to the recent second wave in India.

But the heartening news is that they are making progress in vaccine distribution. **Vaccine Maker Astra Zeneca being sued by the European union for not supplying doses because India used those. AstraZeneca has been unable to deliver the doses requested by the EU on time and the EU is yet to receive Millions of doses of the Covid-19 Vaccine.**

Bigger countries ARE stepping up now and are donating vaccines to other countries. So, it is moving a bit slowly, but its pace is increasing!

Can the WHO do more?

Yes, even though the WHO has formed the COVAX group it needs to do more by putting pressure on the larger nations to donate spare doses of the Covid-19 Vaccine to other smaller countries who have received little to no support.

Vaccines for Children?

Only once the larger countries step up and vaccines become easily accessible to all countries can we move on to the next important part of the Vaccination Process. The set of people who have hardly received any Vaccine doses and were at the bottom of the Vaccine Priority line and have been for most countries- Children.

The United States and Canada have recently approved the use of the **Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine for children aged 12-15. India has also moved to Stage 3 testing for the Covid-19 Vaccine on Children.** The vaccination of Children is critical as there are roughly 2 Billion Children in the world.

Conclusion- There most certainly is a Vaccine inequality, however the world is working to bridge the gap between the inequality. This is a sad state of affairs, especially when the world is already in the grip of a pandemic. Resolving the health crisis in one part of the world while allowing poorer parts to languish will be of no help, because of the interconnected world we live in. **The intention must be to save ALL of humanity. In times of crisis, we must rise above differences and borders and come together as one world, one people, for global vaccination equality.** Until then, at an individual level, we must wear a mask, stay safe and follow all Covid-19 precautions, and get the Covid-19 Vaccine if we are eligible!

Covid 19 in India: The Rise and Impact

-by Arunima Singh, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



India, a country with a population of more than 1.3 Billion has seen the deadly coronavirus spread drastically across the country to a great extent that has affected the people in extreme terms.

The first mild cases were detected last year, January 2020 and as the number of Covid-19 cases grew Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced nationwide lockdown on March 25th. Later in April 2020, 1,000 deaths were confirmed in India and in June the cases reached to 5 lakhs, and then escalated to more than 1 crore near the end of the year in December. Since then, the virus has been spreading at great speed, affecting people of all ages and in all regions.

Now, in 2021 the pandemic has taken over severely and cases peaked where

more than 3 Lakh new cases of the novel coronavirus, along with 4,077 deaths due to the infection were recorded in just 24 hours on 15th and 16th of May.

Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan stated, "This is a tragic time in India given the pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic is probably India's greatest challenge since independence," "When the pandemic hit first, the challenge was largely economic as a result of lockdowns, now the challenge is both economic and personal, and there will also be a social element to it as we go forward," he added.

Healthcare authorities, doctors, the government have all been trying to get this second wave of the virus under control but this time there are less implementations being made and they may prove to be less affective, it is seen that throughout the country the marking of containment zone has been less strict. Earlier an entire apartment or colony would be quarantined while now just a floor or a house is defined as a containment zone.

In the previous year it was noticed that Nationwide lockdown was enforced when the number of covid cases ranged from 4,000 to 5,000. All public facilities were closed, localities were quarantined and public transport was no longer available.

This impacted the economy greatly and India's growth in the fourth quarter of the year 2020 went down to 3.1% according to the Ministry of Statistics.

The Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India said that this drop is mainly due to the coronavirus pandemic effect on the Indian economy. The pandemic "magnified pre-existing risks to India's economic outlook".

Unemployment rose from 6.7% on 15 March to 26% on 19 April and then back down to pre-lockdown levels by mid-June. During the lockdown, an estimated 14 crore (140 million) people lost employment while salaries were cut for many others.

More than 45% of households across the nation have reported an income drop as compared to the previous year. The Indian economy was expected to lose over ₹32,000 crore (US\$4.5 billion) every day during the first 21-days of complete lockdown, which was declared following the coronavirus outbreak.

Currently, there are several predictions and evaluations that have been made about the upcoming waves of the virus in the coming year. The number of deaths predicted by this September is estimated to be around 1,241,388. At the same time, experts say, "If we take strong measures, the third wave may not happen in all places or indeed anywhere at all. It depends on much how effectively guidance is implemented at the local level in the states, districts and cities everywhere."

Professor Manindra Agarwal from IIT Kanpur, told the news channel said that phase 3 of the pandemic will be localised and won't affect many people due to immunity from vaccination.

India had administered nearly 187million coronavirus vaccine doses by Wednesday, May 19. This includes 9,685,597 healthcare workers who have had their first dose and 6,667,071 who have got their second dose as well. As many as 14,634,130 frontline workers have had their first dose while 8,256,235 have got their second dose too.

The greatly spread frenzy about lack of oxygen throughout

the country has waned. **Mohammad Ameen**, who heads PATH India's Primary Health Care, Technology and Innovations section, is hopeful that the country's **"severe medical oxygen supply crisis is expected to ease by mid-May with output rising by 25 per cent and transport infrastructure ready to cope with a surge in demand"**.

"India is importing around 100 cryogenic containers to transport large quantities of liquid medical oxygen. The Union government has said one lakh portable oxygen concentrators would be procured."

The central government is also working with states in setting up oxygen plants in all districts of the country. "This is a very sustainable solution," Ameen says. Hopefully, these measures will take care of the demand of oxygen which is estimated to be rising at the rate of six-eight per cent every day.

On an ending note, after the huge spike in cases and deaths due to COVID – 19 all over India, the government is taking strong measures and is importing resources to health facilities all over India. India has the expertise in medicine, public health, research, and manufacturing to lead the nation through the COVID-19 pandemic.

To capitalise on these attributes, the country's leaders must respect scientific evidence, expert commentary, and academic freedom, and not provide false optimism.

Hope is important, and recognising successes is vital, especially during a pandemic.

Reduced Inequalities

10th Sustainable Development Goal

-by Jiya Gaur, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



*“Sustainable development is the peace policy of the future”
- Dr. Klaus Topper*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals were adopted by all United Nation Member States in 2015 as a ubiquitous call to action to end poverty, inequality, protect the planet and establish world peace and prosperity by 2030.

With the pivotal aim to transform the world for the better, the United Nations has 17 sustainable development goals ranging from no poverty, zero hunger, gender equality, climate action and reduced inequalities. Taking into consideration the 10th sustainable development goal that is reduced inequalities, we must understand the aim, target and purpose of it.

Inequality is a universal challenge faced by least-developed, middle-income,

and developed countries alike, but which can be overcome by political will at national and international levels, as rightly said by the United Nations deputy chief. Reducing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind are fundamental to achieve Sustainable Development. While we have made progress as a society, inequality within and among communities has a detrimental impact on people and continues to persist.

The 10th Sustainable development goal of the United Nations is aspiring to encourage social, political and economic inclusion of all members of society. It focuses on drawing attention to those who are at a greater risk of being alienated and excluded based on factors such as age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, origin and economic status.

The targets of the 10th Sustainable Development Goal include decreasing income inequalities, promoting universal social, economic and political inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities and ending discrimination, adopting fiscal and social policies that promote equality, improving regulation of global financial markets and institutions, enhancing representation for developing countries in financial institutions, responsible and well-managed migration policies, special and differential treatment for developing countries, encouraging development assistance and investment in least developed countries and reducing transaction costs for migrant remittances.

People's opportunities and quality of life are based solely on their economic and financial status. Five years after the implementation, the 2030 Agenda has decided to focus its attention on the enlarging economic inequality that is causing wide social disparities and gaps. While we have made sustained progress in

addressing this concern, most countries have been eluded. Sources suggest that economic inequality has been rapidly increasing for the past 30 years while declining in multiple low income and middle-income countries.

Countries such as India and China where income inequality has grown since 1990 are home to over 71 percent of the world population causing economic gaps. An Oxfam report suggests that in the past 10 years since the financial crisis, the number of billionaires have practically doubled.

In the year 2018, the 26 richest people in the world held as much wealth as half of the global population which consists of 3.8 billion impoverished people. While it may not seem to be a matter of great importance, it has dreadful consequences as the people at the top of the economic strata are exacerbating the income inequality even further.

Despite the raging economic inequity in some countries, there has been a considerable decline in many others including Latin America and the Caribbean. The continents of Africa and Asia have had varied trends with far more similarities between evolving countries and developing landlocked countries, metropolitan and rural areas rather than within regions.

It is believed that the roots of this issue lie in the fact that too much of the world's wealth is held by a very small group of people resulting in social and monetary discrimination.

Furthermore, the increasing recognition of the multi-dimensionality of poverty means that the two concerns of social and environmental justice are interlinked. While progress has been made

in addressing poverty and disparities, there has been relatively less development in terms of recognizing the other important dimensions of poverty including the swiftly increasing impact of the environment.

Those living in extreme unfortunate conditions are the forest to act within their communities against climate and environmental change however their effort and work is often gone unnoticed and unheard.

In your society, who you are, matters. While international and national income inequalities exist, there are also imparities that subsist within communities, households, families and individuals. Taking into consideration women and girls, progress has been rather slow.

Equality of men and women was a core principle highlighted in the Un Charter in the year 1945. Undeterred by the tenet of the charter, even seventy-six years widespread gender inequality continues to exist. While in several ways certain gender disparities have reduced and shown progress, gender-based inequality still perseveres. Change has been incremental. At the current rate of development, the global gender gap will not come close for another 100 years.

The Secretary-General warned people about the fact that change is coming too slow for the women and girls whose lives depend upon it. Sources state that women and girls put in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day making a contribution to the global economy of about \$10.8 trillion a year, greater than three times the size of the global tech industry. Gender equality is pivotal for sustainable development.

Groups such as those of indigenous people, the practitioners and inheritors of countless unique cultures are said to be nearly 3 times as likely to be living in extreme poverty as suggested by the International Labour Organization.

Based on data from twenty-three countries that accommodate more than 80 percent of indigenous people, ILO states that indigenous women face the biggest issues. Researchers also considered that even when indigenous people are in salaried work, they earn around 18 percent less than the rest of the workforce. Geographically, Latin America and the Caribbean consist of the highest population of indigenous and tribal people.

The 'Spectre of poverty' hangs over tribes and indigenous people endangering their quality of life. Migrants, refugees, ethnic and other minorities continue to be victims of discrimination, bigotry, xenophobia, alienation, marginalization, and a lack of legal rights and guarantees.

A history of injustice continues to prevail over them. A report formed by UNDESA stated that as per the progress made during the years 1990s-2010s, it will take what seems like more than four decades to bridge the ever-increasing gap between minorities.

People living with disabilities are often said to be the most vulnerable in cities today. Despite the existence of several obstacles to achieve the goals for persons with disabilities, many governments in cities are working towards the success of these SDGs.

While social protection has been significantly extended globally, persons with disabilities are said to be up to five times more plausible than average to experience catastrophic health

expenditures. Inclusion, accessibility and availability of opportunities for people with disabilities is essential to make sure inequality and ableism does not exist and no one is left behind.

As the COVID-19 global pandemic continues to deepen its course and brings a calamitous and distasteful entry into the history of humankind, it threatens several health systems, businesses whether large or small and compels millions to stay at home, it leaves society's most susceptible and vulnerable groups hanging by a thread leaving the limited progress that has been made on gender equality, racism, discrimination, rights of indigenous people and women at risk.

Coronavirus has caused a drastic reduction in the salary of workers and increased the amount of global unemployment once again causing financial concerns. Refugees, migrants, indigenous people, people with disabilities, senior citizens and children are particularly at jeopardy. With a rise in hate crimes and racism the pandemic has made it unsafe for people of colour to step outside without fearing the consequences of doing so. COVID-19 has accentuated the economic inequality and fragile social net in our society.

It is time to join our hands together and fight for justice and equality. Regardless of our polarity, we deserve to be treated in the same manner. We must support those in need, raise our voice against cases of injustice, rebuke others for their derogatory statements and be inclusive of those who may be different to us. We have exactly nine years to turn our promise into action.

About life on Mars: Nasa's latest project

-by Tamanna Chandna, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter has a new mission. Having proven that powered, controlled flight is possible on the Red Planet, the Ingenuity experiment will soon embark on a new operation's demonstration phase, exploring how various functions could benefit future exploration of Mars and other worlds.

What ingenuity is:

The Mars Helicopter, Ingenuity, is a technology demonstration to test powered, controlled flight on another world for the first time. It hitched a ride to Mars on the Perseverance rover. The Ingenuity Mars Helicopter was built by JPL, which also manages this technology demonstration project for NASA Headquarters.

It is supported by NASA's Science, Aeronautics, and Space Technology mission directorates.

Perseverance Landing

Perseverance successfully landed on the surface of Mars with help of the sky-crane on 18 February 2021, to begin its science phase, and began sending images back to Earth. It will search for signs of microbial life on the red planet, Mars.

Ingenuity Detaches

Ingenuity reported back to NASA via the communications systems on Perseverance the following day, confirming its status. Detached from the Perseverance, Ingenuity had to rely on its own solar-powered battery to run a vital heater to protect its unshielded electrical components from freezing and cracking during the bitter Martian night, where temperatures can plunge as low as minus 130 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 90 degrees Celsius).

It's transition from conducting a technology demonstration to an operations demonstration brings with it a new flight envelope. Along with those one-way flights, there will be more precision to move around, greater use of its aerial-observation capabilities, and greater risk overall.

This change also means Ingenuity will require less support from the Perseverance rover team. "Since Ingenuity remains in excellent health, we plan to use it to benefit future aerial platforms while prioritizing and moving forward with the Perseverance rover team's near-term science goals." said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

Education:

The seen and unseen impacts of Covid.

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



The Covid-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, but in no sector was it more affected than education. **Students were stuck at home, many without resources like textbooks, a stable internet, or stationery.**

This forced the world to reinvent the education system, changing examination methods, using various applications and websites, getting familiar with sharing screens, and so much more. By the end of 2020, almost every student was an expert in scanning notebook pages and formatting PDFs. This is what this article will focus on -the impact of Covid-19 on the education system.

The Timeline

·Let us start at the beginning, when the Covid-19 outbreak was officially deemed a pandemic, and the world slowly began shutting down. In India, a lockdown was announced in March 2020, and most schools were indefinitely shut.

From there, **teachers rose to the challenge and began preparing to learn a completely new method of teaching - one where you talked, taught, and interacted, all from behind a screen.** Slowly, students were introduced to these new methods of learning, and we all started exploring them. At this point, schools officially started online.

·Now came the bigger challenges. **All students and teachers had to stay on a screen for at least 8 hours a day, and then do more work after school hours, which often resulted in headaches.** From there, schools slowly began progressing towards online examinations, and began getting students to submit assignments online, all focussing on the final target of keeping the same schooling schedule in mind.

After online examinations, school continued as usual, and slowly, as the world started opening up, so did schools. **Many began calling students to school twice or thrice a week, to see if physical interactions would make a difference, and for some time, school continued as a hybrid between online and offline learning.**

·This slight sense of normalcy, however, was short lived. After a so-called "second wave" of Covid in 2021 sent India into the same state of shutdown that the previous year had begun with. This sent the entire education-that had begun normalising-back online, and

all sense of normalcy disappeared. School managed to continue online for a short period of time, but this wave of Covid-19 was much more aggressive than the first, and soon, governments of various states began shutting down schools, as several teachers and students had gotten infected. This sent everyone into a state of panic.

•Questions began coming up- Will this school year be cancelled? Will the government delay the standardised “Board Examinations”? Will the syllabus be altered? Questions like these were on everyone's minds, everyone was worried, and everyone's future was uncertain.

Then, the Central Board of Secondary Education cancelled its Board Examinations for grade 10, and other boards followed suit. Uncertainty still looms over the status of Board examinations for grade 12. 10th graders were told that they were going to be assessed on their year-round performance, which some people liked, but others hated. From there, we have reached now, where education continues online, with negativity surrounding everyone.

The effects

The pandemic has had a lot of effects on education, so let us go through them, one by one.

The Positive Effects: The first positive effect is how it taught humans to develop new ways of teaching and learning. Education has been going in a majorly horizontal development over the years, with barely any progress. However, the pandemic made humans develop an entirely new method of learning, which involved using pre-existing tools like video calls, and merging them with new

applications and websites to create the optimum virtual learning environment.

Next, it ensured that students missed fewer days of school. There have been several occasions in which a student missed school because of an unavoidable family functions or the dreaded pollution especially in Delhi NCR. Instead of this, students can now attend at least a few classes online, missing fewer classes, and not developing gaps in understanding.

Lastly, it opened new methods of learning, including interactive quizzes, collaborative applications, and so many more ways to use technology in its best form.

The Negative Effects: We have seen the positive effects of the pandemic on education, and it has had great effects on education. However, all coins have two sides, and for a wholesome verdict, we must look at both sides.

The first and foremost negative effect it has had is on the health of teachers and students. What time used to be spent in a mixture of running around or reading and writing has all become endless hours of people glued to a screen. This has caused had many adverse effects on the eyes and the brains of students and teachers alike, with splitting headaches and insomnia becoming more and more prevalent as the days went by. This not only caused pain and discomfort, but also decreased productivity, as students and teachers were in too much discomfort to concentrate on their classes.

Next, there were a lot of negative effects on the mental health of students, especially those in their final year of school. This

was because their future was uncertain, and they did not know if and when they would be able to go to college, and how their future, would play out. Their lives were turned upside down, and they were anxious about their future. This coupled with all the negativity, death, and panic around them caused a lot of mental health issues, which affected them greatly.

Furthermore, there was lack of physical exercise, which is necessary to keep the body and brain active. This created lower attention spans in class, as children did not have the necessary physical exercise to concentrate.

One of the biggest positives of school is meeting friends, interacting with peers in the classroom and on the sports field. A human connect is what has been missing since the pandemic began.

For many children in government schools, going to school also meant getting a nutritious mid-day meal. For them, missing out on school has also taken away their access to this meal.

Then there was the cancellation of the board examinations, which is a very important topic, so I will be covering it in a little more detail than the rest of the affects, as this topic itself has its own pros and cons.

Looking beyond urban / privileged student life:

There is an entire generation of learners who not only lost a year of education but will most likely never manage to return to school. UNICEF, on the 8th of December 2020, issued a press release that highlighted the negative effect of closed schools on the marginalised members of society. It stated, "In spite of everything we

have learned about COVID-19, the role of schools in community transmission, and the steps we can take to keep children safe at school, we are moving in the wrong direction—and doing so very quickly”. This quote was based on the data that 320 million schools worldwide are currently closed, that will be terrible for countless children.

Many students from economically weaker sections of society in urban areas as well as many in rural areas had little or no access to technology, which is essential for online education. We have all read news articles about multiple children sharing one mobile phone for their online learning, while living in cramped homes. Many parents lost their jobs and could not even afford sufficient internet connectivity for their children's education.

This should force us to rethink our education model and policy. Is this new model of education only for the privileged classes of society? Who is responsible for the education of those who cannot afford this model? **Since it is likely that such pandemics may recur, it is the responsibility of the government and us as a society to think of a new policy that is more inclusive.**

Lastly, the Constitution of India assures all citizens between the ages of 4 and 16 a fundamental right to education. The fulfilment of this right is the responsibility of the government. In the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, their efforts have fallen short.

There were many private drives by individuals and institutions, including one by our school, that collected old devices like laptops, iPads, mobile phones to give to people who did not have any of their own, in order to let them attend school, but steps like these were not enough to fill the large void in learning that was

created (and persists). The lack of fulfilment of the fundamental right to education was one of the bigger issues with online learning.

The cancellation of the Board examinations

The cancellation of the board examinations occurred because the health crisis had not decreased, and no one wanted to unnecessarily risk the lives of students for the sake of standardised testing. This had a whole host of effects, which I shall discuss in detail.

The Pros

This decision had a lot of pros, **the first** and foremost being **the realisation that the world can survive without standardised testing**. The need for standardised testing has been a long-debated topic, and while some say it provides a level playing field for all children across backgrounds, others say that it is unwise to test everyone on the same parameters as everyone is different, and some people understand topics well, but do not do well in tests.

This decision showed that **people can be tested on ways other than a standardised test, which has essentially reopened this huge debate**.

Next, there was the display of the fact that health is paramount, which not only sent a powerful message, but also ensured that everyone's priorities are right, and ensured no unnecessary risk to anyone.

Lastly, it ended the uncertainty surrounding students' futures, and ended all the anxiety they had been facing thus far. This was immensely helpful to their mental health.

The Cons

The cons associated with this decision are also as numerous as the pros.

Firstly, even though part of their anxiety levels were assuaged, this decision also managed to cause a lot of chaos in the lives of students and teachers alike. Judging children on their class performance after a year of grooming them for the board exams is the same as changing the rules of a game after the game has begun. This was a big blow to a lot of students who may not do very well in classes, but work very hard and succeed in standardised tests. This also increased the workload of teachers, as they had to comb through a lot of old assignments to grade children on.

Secondly, this decision created a lot of confusion for college admissions, as some colleges take percentages into account of students. Without these percentages, what would they use to judge student performance?

Lastly, this was a big mental blow to some students, who had worked for an entire year for a goal they could no longer achieve. This just added to the uncertainty of their already uncertain lives.

So, was it right or wrong for these tests to be cancelled? The answer, it was right. These cons are equally valid, and also very important; but **health is paramount, and nothing supersedes it. This was not only a good decision, but also a powerful message in its own way.**

The conclusion: Did the pandemic help or hurt the education system?

This question is very deep. It has many layers, but these layers can be peeled off. So please bear with me and my symbolism as we peel off the layers of the multitude of effects that the pandemic had on the education system.

Well, I personally think that it helped the education system, and I must say, the facts agree with me on this one, because no matter what the pandemic did to us, we persisted, and then we succeeded. When it shut the world down, schools opened through a new medium.

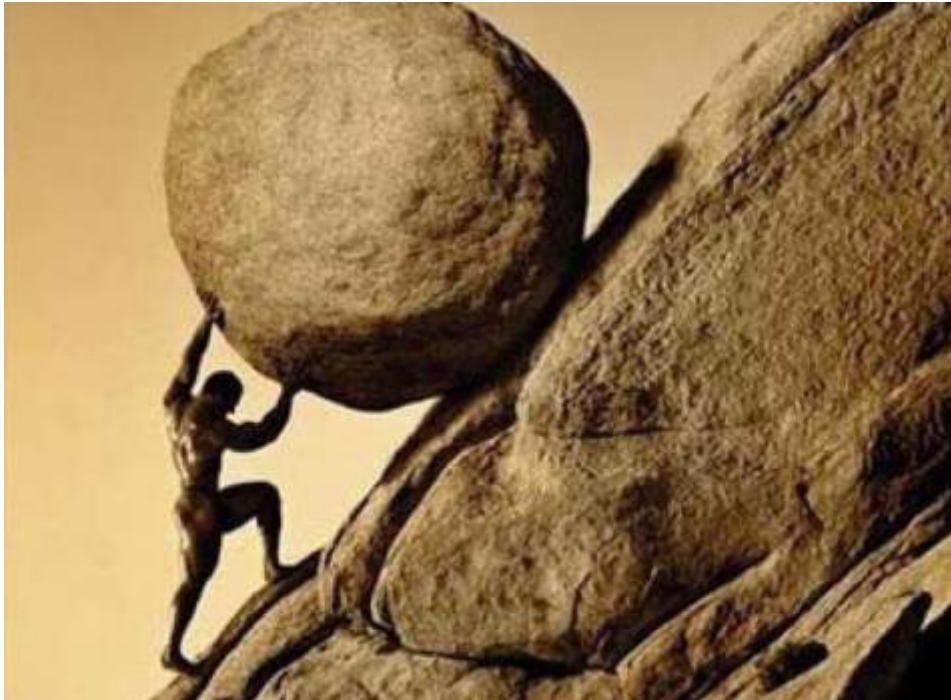
When it continued to hurt the world, we took some strategic decisions, and cancelled the standardised tests. When it got more aggressive and threatened more people than ever before, we acknowledged the importance of breaks, and schools temporarily shut down.

While none of the replacements we made for the traditional schooling system were enough, they did show us that we can make the best of both worlds, combining the best of offline and online schooling to create a school system better than anything we have ever seen! This pandemic may have slowed humanity down, but in the sector of education, largely thanks to the determination of teachers and students across the world, humanity has succeeded in overcoming yet another obstacle!

If nothing else, this pandemic's interaction with education has displayed how resilient humans are, and always will be, but the larger lesson that this has taught us is that education is far from being inclusive. We need to think of policies that make sure no student is left behind.

Sisyphus

-by Khushi soni, Grade XI, SNS Gurugram



Jack and Jill were sent up the hill
to push a big, fat boulder.
The boulder fell down and spoilt Jill's gown
and Jack was called Sisyphus thereafter.'

The sweet sound of notifications woke him
he flexed his cheekbone
'hashtag woke up like this'

"oh my god I honestly love your feed, can you maybe dm me?"

"how are you so perfect?"

"let's meet"

“can we take pictures of our cool things
in our cool outfit
of how our smile perfectly gets
into 3 by 3 glass squares”

the widening of his smile was
proportional to his likes
like every morning he chanted
“I love my life, I love my life, I love my life,
I love my likes, I love my likes”

his life quickly became his likes
McD suddenly didn't fit his feed
now he had salads of flaxseeds
For he had finally pushed his popularity to the top

Now he held coffee mugs with pinkies up
“sorry mom can't hang
gotta make a boomerang”

gotta take pictures
in front of brick walls
with yellow light bulbs
please tag me

tweets, facebook, snapchat, Instagram
funny captions.
But thoughts like cryptograms

or absolutely no thoughts at all
the reality is
he doesn't know him self

he doesn't like salads
or bright yellow bulbs
he doesn't read

he is not even friends with that guy
but he wants to be
at least till that guy has 'that'
or until someone else has that

he wants to have that
he wants to be that
but he doesn't know what that is"
like everyone else he is an imperfect person

trying to act perfect in front of other imperfect people
he has 15k followers but no real friends
no one to be with on the weekends
no functions to attend

just late night visits to clubs and pubs
for his Instagram stories
Facebook top fan
comes home to an empty bed on the weekends.

Who cares if there are no functions to attend,
pubs and clubs make for fine Instagram stories
15k followers are no small feat of glory!

worrying about if his filter was quite right
all day long, the whole night
he had no friends but that's okay, right?

Because he loved his life, he loved his life, he loved his life,
he loved his likes, he loved his likes, he loved his likes,
he had no life, he had no life, he had no life

but the camera clicks
he posts pictures of him eating with chopsticks
"Lemme know which edit is better"
wink emoji, heart emoji

he loves his life, his likes, his comments
he loved to be liked, online
he was living online
few fire emojis and double taps
made him happy

waking up, is it too lonely
the light of his screen is like a safe house
keeping him safe but harmed
making him oblivious"
searching for friends! add friends! send a request!

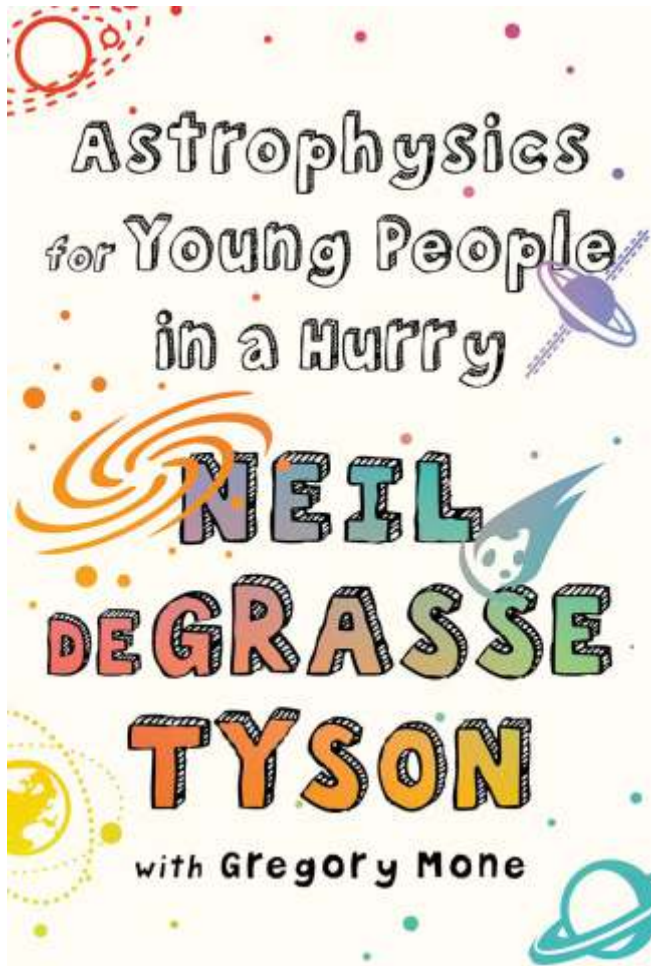
What friends?
Hey Siri, add friends
siri: "playing episode 1 season 1 friends"
"Siri, call MY friends"
"404 Error: Not found"

"Who cares about friends anyway."
he mutters, tossing the phone away.
The sweet sound of notifications
wake him once again on the next day.
he flexes his cheekbone 'hashtag woke up like this'

Book Review:

Astrophysics for young People in a hurry

-by Abhimanyu Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Astrophysics is a massive topic, from the Big Bang, which occurred almost 14 billion years ago, to dark matter, dark energy, and cosmic perspective. We are usually left with more questions than answers if we try to understand any topic. Well fear not, because **Mr. Neil deGrasse Tyson** has got your back! **The award-winning author, scientist, science communicator, and director of the famous Hayden Planetarium** had written a book called **Astrophysics for People in a Hurry**. He then collaborated with Mr. Gregory Mone, to adapt the book for younger people, and that book **Astrophysics for Young People in a Hurry**, is what I am here to write about today!

This book is one of the best written books I have read in a while. Effortlessly blending humour and fact, this book is the perfect go-to for all your intergalactic needs. Everyone knows the saying “A book is like a good friend”, and if you believe that, then this book will be that goofy, smart friend that everyone wishes they had.

I understand that to many of the people who just read the previous lines, they are still trying to make sense of the fact that a book about astrophysics (AKA terrifying topic that everyone fears) could be funny. To all those people, here is a joke that is bound to crack you up:

Mr. deGrasse Tyson, while talking about a dwarf galaxy being ripped apart by larger galaxies, writes:

The Milky Way has engaged in at least one act of cannibalism in the last billion years, when it swallowed a dwarf galaxy. The shredded remains of this galaxy can be seen as a stream of star orbiting the centre of the Milky Way. These cosmic leftovers are called the Sagittarius Dwarf System. But given that they were so rudely eaten, we should have named them Lunch.

If this doesn't crack you up, what will? Imagine a book tackling the most flummoxing questions about the universe, sprinkled with jokes. I know, heaven, right? This book may not be a thriller, or a murder mystery, but the exciting things you uncover about the universe every day will compel you to complete the entire book.

Speaking of mysteries, you are introduced to several mysteries, like the existence of dark matter and dark energy, which you will keep on thinking about for ages. Trust me, I may or may not

think about it every now and then, despite completing the book quite a while ago. **Just think about it, you are reading a book that is a mystery, a treasure trove of knowledge, an answer to life's questions, the secret of our origin, what could be better? "Yeah right!", you say, "The answer to life's questions.**

Where did you get that idea?". To that, I have just one sentence that will change your doubt into pure admiration, and that is... This book teaches you how to look back in time!

Now you may ask, "What? When did this happen? Why wasn't I informed? How can you do this?" Well, it's very simple. All you need is a high-powered telescope, and enough patience to listen to what I tell you next, which, yes, is the same thing I learned from the book. We start with trying to understand what a lightyear is.

Apart from being a word that is in the slogan for Syska LED, this is actually a measurement of distance (did you think that it was a measurement of time, because of the 'years' in the word?). One light year is the total distance light can travel in one year, which is 9.7 TRILLION Kilometres! Yes, you heard me right, 9.7 trillion kilometres is the distance light can travel in one year.

Now everyone knows that light is the reason we see things, but not everyone knows how. Basically, light bounces off another object, and goes into our eyes, where our brains process it as an image of what we saw.

So, using these two bits of information, think about what will happen if you use a telescope to look at a planet that is one lightyear away? Well, the light rays that bounced off that planet took one lightyear to reach us, so we are actually looking at the planet as it was

one year ago! If you still didn't understand this, think of it this way- On your birthday, someone sends a cake for you, though your father, but he forgets to give it to you, and only remembers a month later.

Then you will be looking at birthday wishes that someone sent to one month ago, because it took one month to reach you. In the scenario, the cake sender is the other planet, and the cake is light. Cool, right?

Through this entire discussion, Mr. deGrasse Tyson regularly brings up stories of his childhood, like the time he saw that several superheroes who wore capes, so he made a science experiment about it, with the hypothesis that a cape enables flight, and a conclusion that it doesn't.

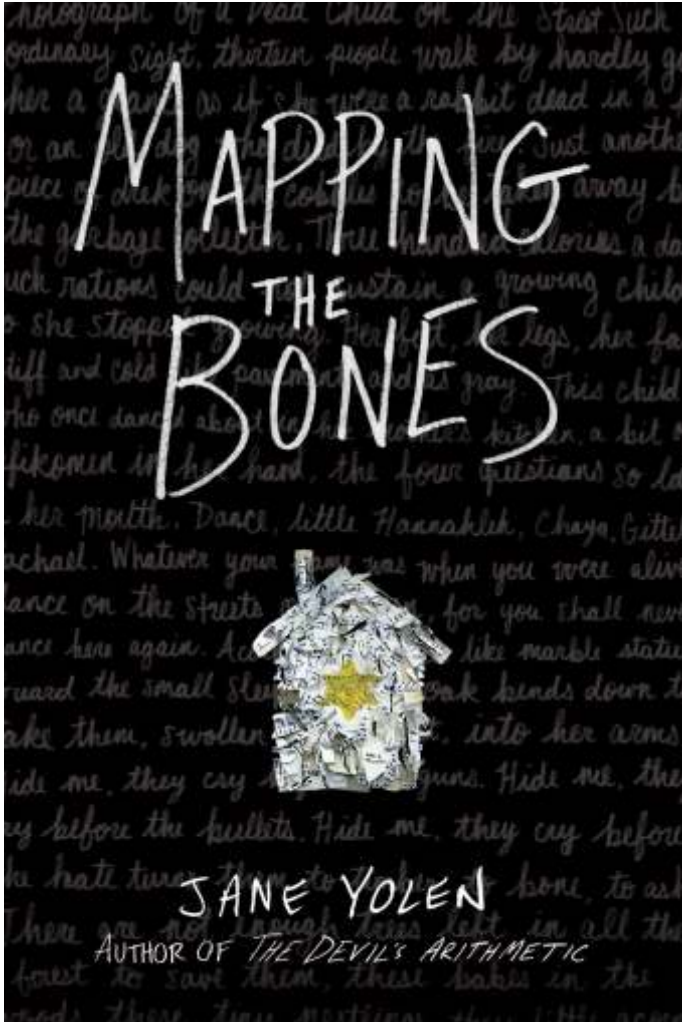
He then talks about his time working on a Superman comic, and how his scientific know how allowed him to pick the perfect place to place Krypton in the universe. From that to how, as a child, he engineered a win-win situation where he was paid for walking dogs, and used that time to see the stars, to the time he used to climb up to his roof and use his binoculars to see the stars.

Personally, I am thoroughly interested in this subject, but even those who are not, will thoroughly enjoy this book. This is astrophysics, but it's astrophysics minus all the confounding parts that confuse most people who try to understand it.

This book will change your perception of the universe completely and broaden your horizons in ways you never imagined. Filled with infographics and pictures, this book is a must read for anyone, previous knowledge of the universe or not.

Book Review: Mapping the Bones

-by Agastya Rao, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



Our world has seen many dark times, and one of the darkest of them all was the **Holocaust**. When people talk about the World War, the most inhuman part of the War are the people who were persecuted, murdered, and had numerous atrocities committed against them which violated human rights on almost every aspect.

Every generation must read about the Holocaust – not just as a history lesson, but also so that they ensure such atrocities are never repeated.

A recent book I read on this subject is "Mapping the Bones". This book is an emotional one, filled with fear, sadness and all about the grim truth of the Holocaust. What is unique about the book is an inventive way of telling the story. The story is split into 3 parts based on the old story Hansel and Gretel: Their home in the Ghetto, to a forest where they were on the run with the Polish resistance, and finally to a Nazi Labour Camp.

The story mainly revolves around two twins- a boy named Chaim and his sister Gittel. They have been forced to live in the Łódź Ghetto after the Nazis invaded Poland. Life in the Ghetto is harsh, with most people living in tiny apartments, and families of four sharing their small apartments with more people.

Food is scarce, with the common meal being very thin potato soup. Even chocolate is a luxury, with Chaim and Gittel's family rationing the one chocolate bar their dad bought for a high price from the black market. The family of 4 splits one cube of the bar of chocolate among themselves once a week.

Chaim was born with a stutter and hardly speaks. Even then, who said the only way you could express yourself is through words? Chaim has a talent for and enjoys writing poetry, and the poems he writes are extremely beautiful. He and Gittel made their own form of sign language to communicate.

This sign language is known only to them, and their silent communication is more powerful than regular words. With poverty, countless people dying every day, no medication, diseases like tuberculosis, typhoid, influenza and countless more the Nazis or Nasties as the family calls them, do not seem to care.

Another family moves in with them, which results in Chaim's family getting lesser space to live and the food being double rationed. Chaim is at odds with the Bruno, the boy from the Norenberg family that moves in with him. The family soon learns to adjust to the Norenbergs.

There is a rumour of a 'Wedding Invitation List' (the transport of some of the Jews being transported elsewhere) and a little earlier Dr Norenberg (Bruno and Sophie's father) went missing. **Both families sell all their jewellery and hatch a plan to go through the nearby forest with the help of Polish Partisans/Underground Resistance. It is after that when things go wrong.**

The parents disappear and so do the resistance members they came with. Their life spirals downwards after they are found and they as children are sent to work for gruelling hours in factories and are used as lab rats by a vile doctor at the camp.

The harrowing description of the Labour camp where children were forced to work and build weapons and ammunition for the Nazi army and be tested upon by a villainous doctor were both shocking and saddening. Reading about how so many of the children at the camp got a terrible disease were a sad eye opener into a horrific time.

Reputed author of another Holocaust book, the best-selling novel- the Devil's Arithmetic - **Jane Yolen has published 400+ books in her lifetime and is the winner of 2 prestigious Nebula Awards.** In this book, she has written extremely apt, with grim and gruesome details about the Holocaust. This story is not only written beautifully, but it is the way the story has been told is what I found particularly interesting.

Aside from telling the story in a narrative form, the author has one-page snippets titled Gittel Remembers speaking from the point of view of Gittel and from her perspective/ remembrance of what happened.

Another aspect of the book that improves the reading experience of the book are the poems that Chaim writes during his time at the camp, whether it was about the vile 'Camp Doctor' or instances at the camp that he observes- his poems which are dark, deep, and moving all at the same time add an interesting nuance of reading experience to this book.

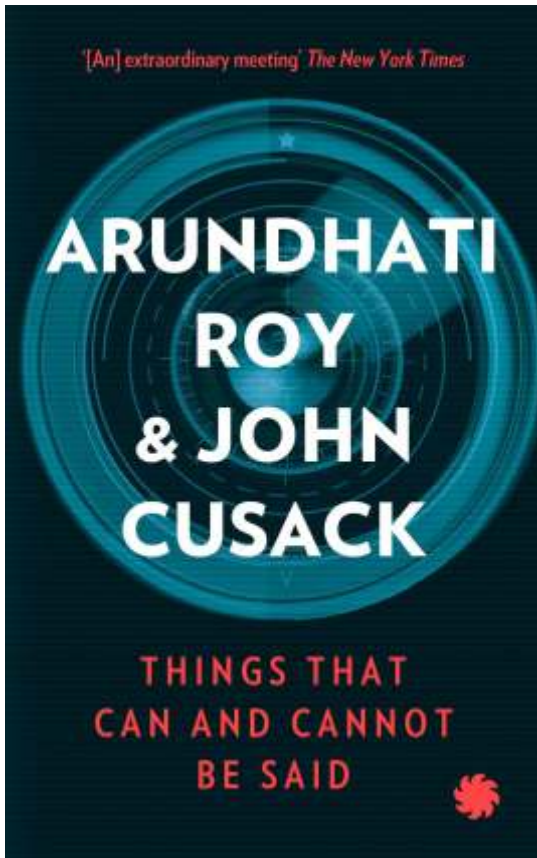
Even though Mapping the Bones is only partly non-fictional, the lessons we learn from the book should not be taken lightly and are still relevant till this date. It is important to remember and know the crimes and atrocities that took place during the Nazi Regime. **This book remains a reminder to never forget our values as humans and to never even give a chance for a brutal man like Adolf Hitler to gain power ever again.**

This was an incredibly well-written book, with the creative use of fairy tale in its storytelling. This book will make for a good read for almost every reader above the age of 12. For a fan of fiction, non-fiction and even poetry: I would recommend this book for almost every type of reader. **The book is 400+ pages long, but I assure you, once you start reading you shall find yourself lost in the journey of Chaim and Gittel and on the edge of your seats wondering what will happen to them next!**

Book Review:

Things that can and cannot be said

-by Jeiya Khurana, Grade X, SNS Gurugram



"... the world is a millipede that inches forward on millions of real conversations." (Things That Can and Cannot be Said)

In the contemporary, globalized world with democracy and democratic ideals sweeping across the world citizen participation, debates, discussions and the opportunity to take the world forward are critical in ensuring the accountability of governments and resolving the various other modern-day problems.

'Things That Can and Cannot be Said', is a compilation of provocative conversations between writer **Arundhati Roy**, actor-screenplay writer **John Cusack**, **Daniel Ellsberg**, the whistle-blower who leaked the Pentagon Papers during the Vietnam War (1954-1975) and the exiled NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden. A rather

radical account of the various happenings of the world it is an indelible account solely because of the new and unapologetic viewpoint it provides us with.

The book begins with a discussion between the authors on the post 9/11 world and the notion of American exceptionalism which is linked to the nature of the State. They comment on the cherry picking of truths and expunging of context in history to suit the interests of certain powers by scrutinizing the narrative propagated by the United States omits the support it provided to anti Assad forces (Syrian President) during its invasion of Iraq (2003).

The slim 129 pages volume investigates briefly surveillance by States, and the free movement of capital across borders which is not likewise to the movement of people. It explores critically, the role of NGOs in limiting dissent through an unapparent flow of funds from foundations and how to prominence given to human rights overshadows the concept of justice.

Despite the heavy and consequential subject matter discussed with witty and penetrating remarks, the book fell short on one account. The writing style and content is based on the assumption that the readers have basic knowledge about historical events. Thus, it becomes difficult for a reader with no knowledge on the subject matter to make sense of the conversations of the four personalities. However, this very approach of passing insightful comments in passing is also a charm of the book. The ideas and opinions presented can ignite further discussions and conversations.

In conclusion, the distinctive writing style and the humour diffuses in the conversations between the authors made it gripping and interesting read.

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