

## *A Handbook of*

# Essays

### A Useful Resource for

- *Competitive exams' aspirants*
- *Students in higher classes*
- *All general knowledge enthusiasts*

### **KEY FEATURES**

- ✓ *Includes essays on all the latest topics.*
- ✓ *Has all the topics grouped under apt categories like contemporary, social, economic, science and technology and many more.*
- ✓ *Has a glossary at the end of each essay.*



*A Handbook of*

# Essays

**A collection of essays on :**

- ◆ Contemporary issues
- ◆ Social issues
- ◆ Economic issues
- ◆ Political issues
- ◆ Diplomatic issues
- ◆ Environmental issues
- ◆ Education and Sports
- ◆ Scientific and Technological issues
- ◆ Popular Sayings
- ◆ Eminent Public Figures
- ◆ Miscellaneous issues



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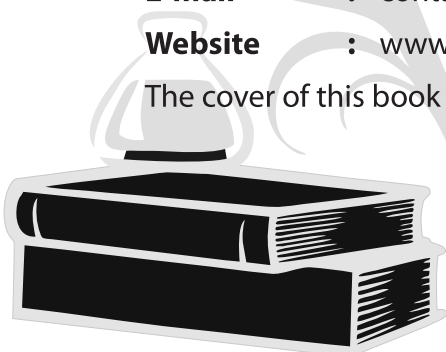
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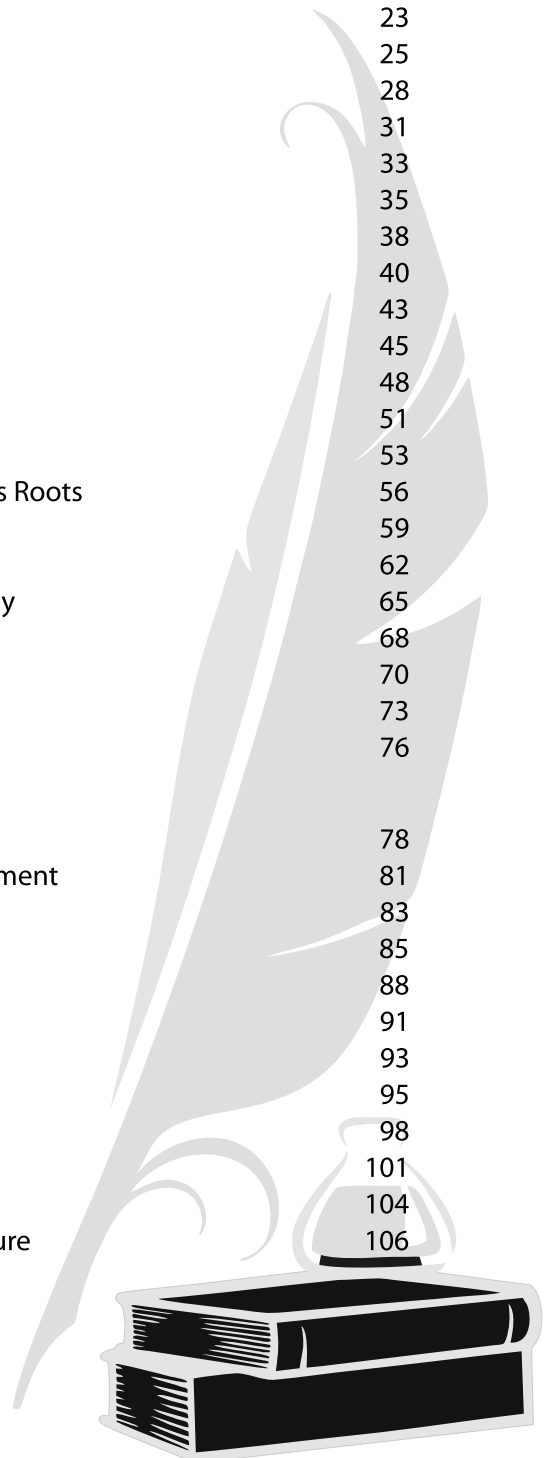
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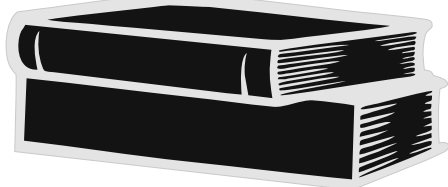
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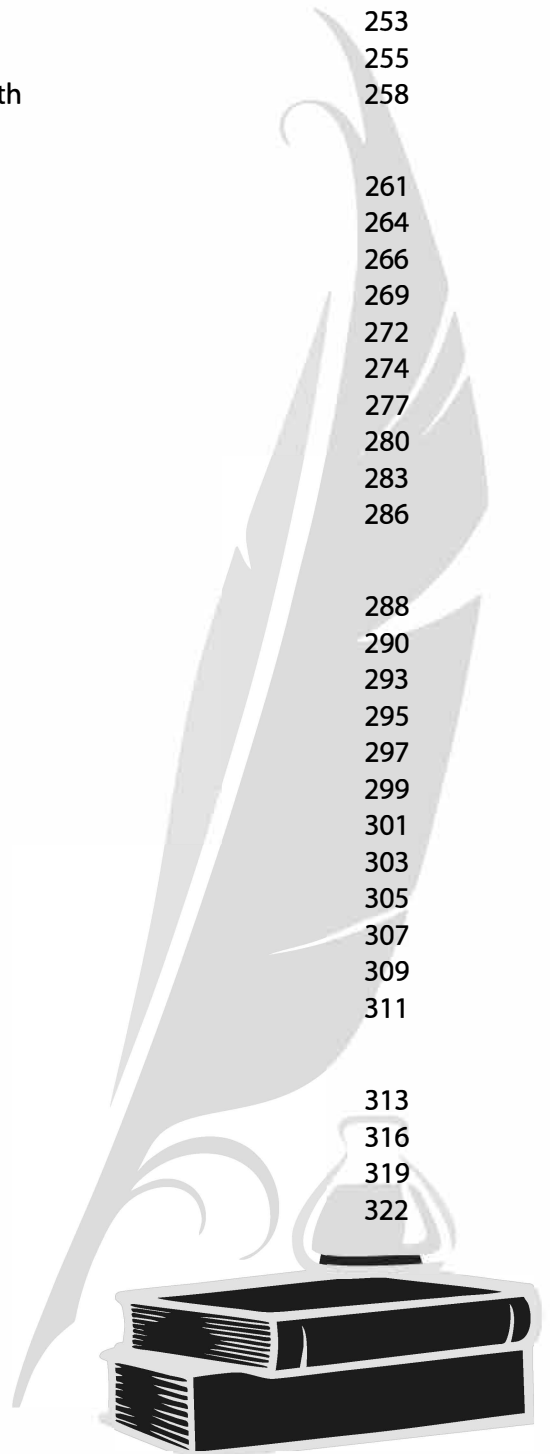
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# Preface

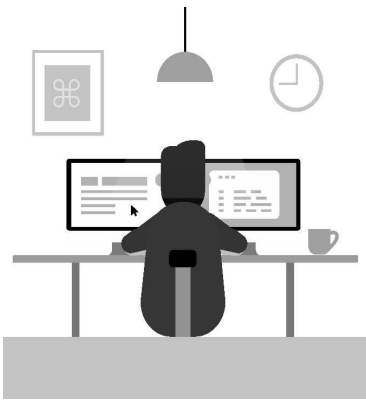
To author an essay, one needs to be adept in the style of creative writing and the best way to hone this skill is to read more. Panoramic knowledge of current happenings around the world is another key factor to writing a great essay.

A handbook of essays is a collection of writings on the topics that are handpicked on the basis of the issues prevalent in the current times. The list of topics is furcated into various categories, viz., Contemporary, social, economic, political, diplomatic, environmental, education and sports, science and technology, popular sayings, and eminent personalities. The content of the essays is written in a lucid and precise language. The word-meanings for new and difficult terms are listed in the glossary. The introductory pages of the book also have some tips on how to approach a topic for composition writing. Readers are advised to go through them carefully and draw the maximum benefit from their purchase.

Lastly, the readers are invited to convey their thoughts and suggestions on this book. We will strive to incorporate them in future editions.

**Publisher**





# How to Approach the Question of Essay Writing in Exams

## **Understand the type of composition**

Essays writing can be of four types: descriptive, argumentative, narrative and expository.

- Descriptive essays are written on topics that require you to elaborate on a neutral topic. For example: Effects of air pollution on the environment.
- Argumentative essays allow you to pick sides on a debatable topic and justify your views on it. You must remain careful to state only facts and should refrain from adopting a disrespectful or accusatory tone for the opposing side. Example of argumentative essay is: Death penalty should be banned in India.
- Narrative essays are written on account of memories and past experiences of the writer. They are composed in first person, from author's point of view. Example of narrative essay is: My first experience of adventure sports.
- Expository essays are the ones that need you to present your research and analysis on the topic presented to you. For example: How to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

## **Draft a blueprint of the essay**

Knowing the type of composition in question will help you to construct a blueprint of the content you are going to write. It is also important that you assign a rough time-limit to spend on each heading in order to finish your paper on time. Investing a little time in planning your content will greatly improve the quality of your write-up and prevent repetition or missing out of ideas. Make sure to arrange the key-points in a logical manner to maintain the lucidity of your work.

## **When to start a new paragraph?**

A paragraph should talk about one idea only. You can switch to a new para when there is a shift in ideas or thoughts. You should also be vary of the length or the paragraph; it should not be too short or too long. Writing paragraphs of inconsistent length will reduce the readability of your composition.

## **End your write-up on a conclusion**

Students often do not realise the importance of providing a conclusion to their essay. A conclusion sums up all the key-points presented in the write up and re-enforces the central idea of the topic. It is the essence of the essay which gives the reader a final thought to ponder on.

## **Vocabulary and Grammar are crucial**

Mere subject knowledge of a topic is not enough to gain a good score. It is must that you also have an appreciable grasp over the grammatical rules. Having a broad vocabulary is a plus when it comes to writing compositions. It gives you a cutting edge over other students who are writing on the same topic, using similar set of facts and ideas.



# 1

## Is Capital Punishment an Effective Deterrent to Crime?

George Bernard Shaw said, "Murder and capital punishment are not opposites that cancel one another, but similar that breeds their kind. It is the deed that teaches not the name we give it."

The execution of a person by the state as a punishment for a crime is considered as capital punishment. Criminals have been subjected to capital punishment over the ages by various methods like lethal injection, hanging, electrocution, gas chamber, etc. The death sentence is considered as a gruesome punishment and has been subjected to the controversies for years. Death penalty is considered as the ultimate punishment which can create ripples in the heart of any potential criminal. The criminal is deterred by capital punishment because he fears that it may cost his own life. It has been observed that the number of crimes which were penalized through capital punishment have reduced. For deterring the crime, the punishment must be certain and exemplary. However, the quantum of punishment must be reflective of the nature of the crime. And for this reason, in most of the civilized nations, it is awarded in the rare of the rarest cases, where the life of the criminal would be a threat to the society itself.

### **The Cause for Debate**

The debate over capital punishment is the consequence of moral and humanitarian questions that are associated with it. The naysayers argue that capital punishment has been long used to suppress the voice of dissent. Capital punishment is generally given for the premeditated murder, espionage, treason or as a part of military justice. Some crimes like rape, sodomy, adultery, and drug-trafficking attract death penalty in some countries. For example, human trafficking is a crime which unarguably results in capital punishment in China.

Death penalty serves as a deterrent in several parts of the world, ranging from the most developed nation like the US to the most underdeveloped African nations. The question 'when the capital punishment should be adopted' is debatable as the world has witnessed a great amount of awareness with regards to human rights. The other important question is 'what sort of crime or offense would demand capital punishment'. It is said that life-imprisonment is an easy way out that would give chance to criminals to reform themselves. A huge uproar is being raised everywhere against capital punishment and death sentences, terming them as immoral. The undeniable 'right to life' of an individual is also infringed by it.

### **Human Rights Issue**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, as a pledge among member nations. This pledge was aimed to promote the Fundamental Rights as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN, it was stated in Article 3 that everyone has the

right to life, liberty, and security of person. Abolitionists who were a group of reformers, interpreted this article and concluded that the death penalty is somehow the violation of human rights because a person is deprived by it of his rights to live. No one shall be subjected to cruel and degrading punishment according to the declaration in Article 5. The ruling out of the capital punishment was insisted on by naysayers because they felt it is cruel, inhuman, immoral and degrading. However, while considering all these aspects, justice for the victim was not perceived by them. It is well obvious to overlook the aspect of the victims in the fight of human rights and justice. The law upholds that victim and criminal both have the right to live, which is keeping the flame of debate ignited through years.

Various arguments are put forward against the practice of capital punishment. It is added further that capital punishment is an act of vengeance rather than retribution and as such, is a morally dubious concept. The punishment could be made more severe by the inflicting suffering on the criminals than just depriving them of life. It is also argued by some people that the crime is not deterred by the death sentence or capital punishment. The sanctity of life is talked about but the life of the victim is more important than the convict's life. The rights of the victims should not be minimized in our zeal to protect the rights of criminals. The objective of this is to give value to an innocent's life more than that of an offender.

A most common argument placed related to the victims of murder or similar criminal cases is that executing a murderer would not bring the victim back. In fact, stringent steps should be taken to ensure the prevention of crimes and the protection of the life of the vulnerable. The barbaric nature of death penalty is justified by some people because of the acts committed by the convicts are not exactly humane. Moreover, it is easier to give death penalty than life-imprisonment and it is also more humane because the lifetime torture of the criminal is ended by it in a few minutes. The former president of India, late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam wrote in his book 'Turning Point' that he used to examine each such case and established the truth against those waiting for the gallows. He observed that most of the cases are pending due to social and economic biases that are attached to them. It is generally remarked in public discourses that hanging murderers and rapists can deter future crimes.

Of course, it can be said that retaining capital punishment is preposterous because it is an antithetical process to the core objective of the criminal justice system which is to make a criminal reformed and rehabilitated. It has been rightly said that gallows are not just a symbol of death but they also represent cruelty and brutality of medieval fanaticism. However, from the beginning of time, statistics have demonstrated that capital punishment has proved to be a compelling deterrent of major crimes. Hugo Adam Bedau, a famed professor of Philosophy, said that death penalty is the legal curse of death among offenders and is utilized to deter a wide variety of heinous offenses everywhere throughout the world. At the point when capital punishment is authorized, it indicates a society perpetrating a heinous crime that has dangerous outcomes.

**GLOSSARY**

**Antithetical:** opposing; **Barbaric:** primitive; unsophisticated; **Compelling:** evoking interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way; **Core:** center; **Deterred:** discourage (someone) from doing something by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences; **Deterrence:** the action of discouraging an action or event through instilling doubt or fear of the consequences; **Discourses:** written or spoken communication or debate; **Dissent:** the holding or expression of opinions at variance with those commonly or officially held; **Dubious:** hesitating or doubting; **Electrocution:** the injury or killing of someone by electric shock; **Espionage:** the practice of spying or of using spies; **Execution:** the carrying out of a plan, order, or course of action; **Fanaticism:** the quality of being fanatical.; **Gallows:** a structure, typically of two uprights and a crosspiece, for the hanging of criminals.; **Gruesome:** causing repulsion or horror; **Heinous:** monstrous; **Humanitarian:** concerned with or seeking to promote human welfare; **Ignited:** catch fire or cause to catch fire.; **Inflicting:** impose something unwelcome on; **Infringed:** actively break the terms of (a law, agreement, etc.); **Medieval:** relating to the Middle Ages; **Naysayers:** a person who criticizes, objects to, or opposes something; **Offenses:** unlawful activity; **Penalized:** subject to a penalty or punishment; **Perceived:** become aware or conscious of (something); come to realize or understand; **Perpetrating:** commit; **Potential:** having or showing the capacity to develop into something in the future; **Premeditated:** think out or plan (an action, especially a crime) beforehand.; **Preposterous:** contrary to reason or common sense; **Quantum:** a required or allowed amount; **Rehabilitated:** reformed; **Retribution:** punishment inflicted on someone as vengeance for a wrong or criminal act; **Ripples:** a small wave or series of waves on the surface of water; **Sanctity:** the state or quality of being holy, sacred, or saintly; **Stringent:** precise; **Vengeance:** punishment inflicted or retribution exacted for an injury or wrong; **Zeal:** great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective.



# 2

## Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.” — *Malala Yousafzai*

Education is an integral part for the development of any nation. The opportunity of getting education must not be determined on the basis of gender. The nation can prosper only if the entire population is educated.

### **Need for the Initiative**

India, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is not able to avail equal opportunities for its citizens. It has been 72 years since independence and India is still a developing country with so many unsettled issues. Dowry killing, female foeticide, sex-based discrimination and other issues related with women are the major concerns for Indian government in this day and age. Women play an essential role in our community but the sex ratio in the country is still uneven due to rising problems with women. It is very crucial to save girl child and maintain the balance of male-female sex ratio.

The child sex ratio had been on the fall since 1961 and the universally low child sex ratio—940 girls for every 1000 boys, was recorded by Census 2011. It developed into a major concern for the growth of the country and government was bound to take some initiatives. Pre-birth discrimination through gender-based sex selection and post birth discrimination against girls.

“Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” is an initiative taken by the Indian government to save girl child. “Beti Bachao” alludes to save girl child and “Beti Padhao” implies to educate the girl child. The campaign was introduced in October 2014 to address the issue of declining child sex ratio and was officially launched on 22 January 2015 by Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi in Panipat, Haryana. Bronze medalist in Olympics, Sakshi Malik was made the brand ambassador of the program in August 2016. The program is a result of coordinated efforts by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The major aim of the campaign is to make sure that the birth and upbringing of the girl child leads to their empowerment. The program is a mass campaign for women and girls so that they can become proud citizens of the nation. Major steps were taken under the program to ensure the survival and protection of girl's education. The features of ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ encompass the focus on punishing the families who undergo sex-determination tests. The campaign keeps a proper record of the number of girls born in every district. It ensures decent education and a bright future for all women. It introduces

gender equality in school syllabus for every board so that the next generation will grow with a rational mindset. Preventing and stopping the practice of child marriage is one of the vital features of this campaign. It also promotes the concept of simple wedding to reduce the pressure on the bride's parents of spending a huge amount on their daughter's marriage.

The program was initiated in 100 districts with low girl child sex ratio. The program strives to improve the efficiency of services for the welfare of women. The objective of the program is to raise the awareness for women's rights and to motivate for maintaining and balancing the sex ratio. The program generates awareness among individuals regarding the respect for a girl or a woman. It also celebrates a girl's birth to prevent the violation and conservative thoughts. It also assures the seizure of the sex determination test. It ensures the safety and education of girl child for their bright future.

The Government of India has undertaken many different strategies or plans to make the campaign successful. Some efforts and schemes related to 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programs are 'Women and Child Development', 'Health and Family Welfare', 'Human Resource Development'. The Ministry of Women and Child Development took the initiative of promoting the registration of pregnancies in the first three months in Anganwadi centers. The ministry also took care of the training of new women entrepreneurs, community mobilization & sensitization, the participation of gender support and recognition & award of front-running workers and institutions.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare makes its efforts by taking some steps. Monitoring the implementation of Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 was the first step taken by the ministry. It concentrates on increasing the institutional deliveries, registration of births, strengthening PNDT cells and establishing the monitoring committees. Ministry of Human Resource Development focuses on universal enrolment of girls, reducing the dropout rate among girls, friendly behavior with girls in schools, enforcing the right to Education Act and creating functional toilets for girls. People are explained that a girl's education and marriage is not a burden to parents. The scheme provides complete financial security to the girl child.

The 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' has a wide coverage and comprehensive attitude change program through sensitization which involves multiple stakeholders and integrated approach. To cover all aspects of the program, there is 3 pronged approach through 3 separate ministries. The scheme has reinforced the gender equality and girl child education. There is a powerful saying, "When you educate a man, you educate a man but when you educate a woman, you educate a generation". The major benefit of the program has been described this saying only.

### **Benefits of the Initiative**

The program has directed strong efforts and shown positive results in saving girl child and encouraging their parents to educate them. A savings scheme called Sukanya Samriddhi Account has been introduced under the program in which the parents of a girl

child can save money for her education and marriage. This account is tax-free so that the issue of girl child considered as a financial burden can be reduced. Some other schemes like Ladli Laxmi, Mudra Loan Scheme, Ujjwala Yojana are also introduced by the government. Girls are given free education in government and some of the private schools. Women have been given the preference in getting a loan, free LPG and avail subsidy under housing schemes.

Under the program, the government has included a 50-crore scheme for safety within public road transport also an amount of 150 crores will be spent by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the improvement of safety of women in large cities. The proposal for setting up the Crisis Management Centers in all private and government hospitals in all districts of Delhi has been approved by the government and is in progress. The government has also announced to reward the villages with an amount of 1 crore that will succeed in maintaining the balanced sex ratio. Finance minister Mr. Arun Jaitley has assured that the government will focus on the campaigns for sensitizing the Indian citizens about the issues and concerns of women and the girl child. There will be a specific chapter about gender equality in the school's curriculum. Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi launched two schemes in Haryana as it has the lowest child sex ratio in the country. As a result of the implementation of the schemes, Haryana has reached its best position in sex ratio at birth. 914 girls against 1000 boys were recorded in 2017 which was comparatively higher than 2015 (876) and 2016 (900).

Women have been considered as the object of victimization since time immemorial. But the modern women are not docile and submissive like Sita but assertive and strong like Draupadi. The various schemes and campaigns initiated by the government have empowered women and are like weapons in the hands of Goddess Durga. Women should be respected and admired as they deserve the higher pedestal in the society.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Alludes:** suggest; **Brutal:** cruel; **Depleting:** reduce; **Efficiency:** effectiveness; **Encompass:** include; **Implies:** suggest; **Incessantly:** continually; **Integrated:** included; **Sensitization:** capable of sensation; **Violation:** breaking

# 3

## Skill India Initiative: Importance and Impact

The economic growth and social development of a country depend on the competency and the volume of its labour pool. The advancement of industries and commerce in the country is driven by the knowledge and skill that its people possess. A country with a higher and better proportion of skilled labourers and technologies will develop faster and be prepared to compete with other countries of the world. In this race, South Korea is at the top with 96% skilled and well-trained manpower. Japan, Germany and the UK follow suit at 80%, 76% and 68% skilled workforce. India lies on the far side of the spectrum with less than 4% skilled workforce. The reason behind this contrast is that although there's an annual addition of nearly 50 lakh people to the labour pool, only a minority of them are professionally trained. A large fraction of the workforce is thus rendered useless for industrial employment, without proper training or skill.

To offset this crisis, the Skill India Campaign was launched by the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, on July 15, 2015. In his address to the nation, Mr. Modi said, "I call upon the nation to take a pledge to make India the skill capital of the world." Since then, the government has been working tirelessly to make this campaign successful, in the hopes that the nation will utilise its skilled workforce in an efficient way.

### Objective and Features:

The Skill India program projects to impart professional training to over 15 crore youth of the country, by the end of the year 2022. The main objective of the program is to give a platform to Indian youth where they can develop their talent and become employable. The program is not restricted to cities and towns only –it also focuses on the training and educating the rural youths so that they get equal employment opportunities against their urban counterparts. Various initiatives and schemes run by the government in this direction are :

- National Skill Development Mission, 2015
- National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), 2015
- Skill Loan Scheme, 2015
- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, 2014
- Financial Assistance for Skill Training of Persons with Disabilities
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, 2016
- Craftsmen Training Scheme

- National Apprenticeship Training Scheme
- Skill Development for Minorities, 2015
- Green Skill Development Programme, 2017

### **Salient features of Skill India Mission**

- Help the youth in getting employment by helping them to develop skills.
- Promote entrepreneurship by giving financial aid to the skilled youth.
- Aid different traditional occupations like carpentry, welding, masonry, nursing, tailoring, weaving, etc., by providing proper training, support and guidance to the willing individuals.
- Emphasize on less-explored fields like transportation, real estate, gem designing, construction, textile, tourism, banking, etc., which face scarcity of skilled labour.
- To standardize and certify the training process, the program would create a hallmark called 'Rural India Skill'.
- The level of the skill development program is of the international level so that the youth can meet the international industrial needs of other countries as well.
- The program is standardized for people of different age groups in their indigenous languages, to create an end-to-end implementation framework for skill development.
- The mission also includes various basic skill development programs like :
  - language and communication,
  - personality development,
  - life and positive thinking,
  - management, behavioural and
  - job and employability.

Under the Skill India Mission, Oracle announced to build its largest, 2.8 million sq. ft., campus in Bengaluru to train more than half-a-million students each year, which will help to develop the computer science skills. It expanded its partnership to 2,700 institutes in India to achieve the goal.

### **Importance of the Program**

The Skill India Mission has played a considerable role in enhancing the job-oriented skills of the Indian youth. It has given opportunities to the masses to earn an income and sustain themselves. Most schools and colleges are now including different skill development programs in their curriculum to help students identify their interests and build their career in the fields of their choice. It has improved the Indian education system to give quality education to those who are going to write the future of the nation. Adding skill development programs at the school level has also channelized and guided the students for proper job opportunities. The mission has decreased the percentage of unemployment among the youth of the country.

## Impact on People and Nation

According to Mr. Narendra Modi, Skill India Mission is a movement for the economic growth of the country and youth, who are educated but jobless, college and school dropouts across the country. The impact of the mission in different areas is:

### Economy and Society

The Skill India initiative strives to bridge the gap between what the industries necessitate and what the aspirants have to offer. Higher proficiency in a job seeker enhances his employability, personality and personal living standards. Likewise, the industries hiring adept workers are able to generate greater profits by making efficient use of indigenous resources. The resultant of these changes is linked to reducing poverty, hunger and unemployment in the country. Skill development is the basis for the competitiveness of economies and enterprises. From a social perspective, they are a tool for promoting equal opportunities by integrating people in terms of labour, social context and citizenship.

### People and Enterprises

Skill development contributes to improving the performance of people and enterprises which, in turn, increases the pace of the development of the country. People who are getting skill training will have better wage and working conditions. They have superior prospect of employability and quality of life. Enterprises that consider labour capital as a means of competitive advantage can be more innovative and sustainable.

A success story of Skill India scheme is the “Indian Leather Development Programme” under which 51,216 youth were trained in 100 days, till February 15, 2016. Its target is to train 1,44,000 youths, annually. Four new branches of Footwear Design & Development Institute are being set up at Hyderabad, Patna, Banur(Punjab) and Ankleshwar (Gujarat), to improve the training infrastructure. The leather industry was undergoing an acute skill shortage and it implemented the government’s scheme to its benefit, thereby making the maximum gain from the venture.

The government continues to make dedicated investments in the skill development program and projects to make it a success to make India the land of skilled manpower by 2022. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, wants to make India the skill capital of the world and this can be achieved only when the nation creates a skilled and productive workforce which matches the international standards of quality.

## GLOSSARY

**Indigenous:** native; **Enterprise:** professional establishment.



# 4

## Bullet Train: A Futuristic Step or Just an Expensive Show-Off?

### India's First Bullet Train

Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe inaugurated India's first high-speed bullet train on 14th September 2017. The first bullet train of India will be passing through two states, Maharashtra and Gujarat and one union territory, Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The high-speed corridor of Mumbai-Ahmedabad is proposed with 12 stations i.e. Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Bilimora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand/Nadia, Ahmedabad and Sabarmati. Out of 508.17km, 155.642 km of the proposed alignment falls in Maharashtra, 350.530 km in Gujarat and 2 km in Dadra and Nagar Haveli. There is a 7 km under sea stretch between Thane and Vasai, besides another 15 km underground in Mumbai. The train will have a top speed of 320-350 km per hour and it is expected to reduce travel time between the two cities to around 2 hours from the existing 7-8 hours.

It is an ambitious Rs 1,10,000-crore project in which a loan of Rs 88,000 crore is taken from Japan. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is providing funds for the project at a low rate of interest of 0.1% per annum. This loan will have to be repaid to Japan in 50 years, with 15 years grace period.

The project is being implemented by the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL), which is a joint venture of Government of India and participating state governments for implementing high-speed rail projects.

### Shinkansen Technology

The bullet train is being built using Japan's Shinkansen technology but the required parts will be manufactured in the country under 'Make in India'. Shinkansen, meaning 'new trunk line', are trains shaped like bullets that run at the speed of 320 kmph. They have a reputation for punctuality and safety. The trains have never been in any accident since 1964, when they were introduced. The staff is asked to give an explanation if the trains are more than a minute late.

### Criticism of the Project

The project of bullet train has been a bone of contention among different sections of the people and government. They have different viewpoints over the fact whether bullet train is required, or the government must invest in other priority sectors. The naysayers of the project strongly believe that it will provide an feel-good perception among the wealthy. The fares of bullet train are expected to be around ₹ 3000-5000 in order to achieve the break-even point. However, Railways is mainly a means of transport of the middle class that prefers travelling in the sleeper and unreserved compartments of the general railways.

Moreover, the flight fares between the designated locations will be equivalent to that of the bullet train, making the former a more desirable option. Also, it will have an impact on inflation which might increase because the Indian Government would be repaying the Japanese Government in their currency.

However, the critics often forget to count of the good eggs in the basket. High-speed rail will have higher infrastructural investment and will assist in the creation of a higher number of jobs. India is among the top three largest railway networks in the world, from the perspective of kilometres of track and the number of passengers who travel, but we still do not have HSR. One of the major reasons for this is poor safety across Indian railway tracks. The HSR project ensures safety and will build a robust system which is devoid of any accidents. Several previous governments had tried to launch HSR network in the country but were not successful in the same. However, the Mumbai–Ahmedabad bullet train project is definitely a feather in the cap of the incumbent government. It is sad that the incessant tirade against the bullet train seems to have a political motivation behind it.

Although the bullet train is a highly capital–intensive project, it will have a huge impact on the trade and commerce of the country. With this high-speed form of transportation, the time of travel and communication will shorten. The costs involved in stocks and warehouses will also come down. This will ultimately reduce the final cost of the product. This will lead to a positive impact on inflation and gradually bring down inflation in the long run. With lowering of the cost of the products, the minimum criterion of the poverty line will also get impacted which in turn will assist in reducing people below the poverty line, thus improving India’s picture in the global scenario.

HSR is a growth multiplier as it leads to greater mobility. Unlike air travel, bullet trains will lead to de-congestion of metropolitan cities like Delhi which is currently facing a high level of congestion on roads, adding to the pollution levels. In the recent reports, the level of pollution has breached its limit and this is having a serious impact on the population. With the launch of bullet trains, the traffic will be diverted from road to rail thus helping in de-congestion and also assisting in lowering of pollution. HSR can be looked upon as a new dimension to the existing railway transportation system in the country. It will also play an important role in building the brand India at the international level. Also, it will fulfil India’s aspirations to be among the countries with a sturdy HSR network with a sound and secure infrastructure.

## GLOSSARY

**Bone of contention** : issue to fight; **naysayer** : a person who criticizes or opposes something; **illusionary** : something unreal or lacking genuineness; **break-even** : reach a point in a business venture when the profits are equal to the costs; **hailed**: considered important or successful; **robust** : strong; **devoid** : free from; **incumbent**: current or existing; **incessant** : endless; **tirade** : lecture/criticism **breached** : break; **sturdy** : well-built



# 5

## National Register of Citizens: The Debate

### Brief Explanation of NRC

The National Register of Citizens is the register containing the names of citizens of India. It was first created after the census of 1951 under the direction of Ministry of Home Affairs. Assam is the only state in the country with an NRC. The aim of the creation of NRC was to keep a track of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in the country. All the names appearing in the NRC, 1951, or any of the electoral rolls up to the midnight of 24th March 1971 are called legacy data.

### Citizenship Act, 1955

The Citizenship Act, 1955 defined citizenship by birth. It says that all persons born in India automatically become citizens of the country, disregarding their parents' nationality. The status of the parents is not into consideration even if they are undocumented or illegal.

The Assam Accord was signed in 1985. It was an MoS (Memorandum of Settlement) signed between Government representatives and Assam Movement leaders, who were protesting against the illegal immigrants in the country. It is needless to say that this was brought under consideration of the then government after a lot of agitation. This MoS agreed upon accepting the foreign nationals as Indian citizens in case, they migrated to Assam on or before 24th March, 1971. This led to an amendment to the Citizenship Act in 1986. The evident purpose of this amendment was to deny citizenship to a person if both parents were immigrants, whether legal or illegal. The amendment said that any person born in India between 26th January, 1950 and 1st July, 1987 will be considered a citizen of India, disregarding the citizenship of the parents. Any person born on or after 1st July, 1987 can be considered as Indian citizen only if at least one of the parents was an Indian. In 2003, the then government passed another amendment. The purpose of this amendment was to make the Citizenship Act more stringent. This amendment stated that any person born after 3rd December, 2003 and if both the parents were Indian citizens, or one parent was an Indian citizen and the other is not undocumented i.e. illegal, would be considered as an Indian citizen.

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh introduced the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha on 8 January 2019. The Bill sought to facilitate acquisition of citizenship by six identified minority communities namely Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who came to India before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. The Bill was to be made applicable to all states and union territories of the country and not only Assam. The minimum residency period for citizenship was

reduced from existing 12 years under the present law to 7 years. The Act provided relief to persecuted migrants who have come through western borders of the country to states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh. This bill was passed in Lok Sabha but couldn't be passed in Rajya Sabha.

According to the Citizenship Act, 1955, an illegal immigrant is one who enters India without a valid passport or with forged documents or, a person who stays beyond the visa permit.

### **Timeline of NRC**

The work of NRC in Assam gained momentum after the intervention of the Supreme Court and the process started in 2015. The applications for preparation of NRC in Assam were invited in May-August, 2015 and after necessary scrutiny and verification, the draft NRC was published on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. The final draft of NRC incorporated names of 2.89 crore people out of 3.29 crore applicants. The names of 40.07 lakh people were left out. After the publication of draft NRC, the process of filing claims and objections on the draft NRC started on 25 September 2018 and remained open till 31 December 2018. Any person, who did not find his/her name in the draft NRC could file the claim. Similarly, any person could file objections in respect of inclusion of any name in the draft NRC list. The verification process commenced from 15 February 2019 in accordance with the directions of the Supreme Court. Of the 2.89 crore people, 1,02,462 persons were declared ineligible during the process of verification carried out by the Local Registrars of Citizens Registration (LRCRs). These names were added to the list of 40 lakhs excluded people. The Supreme Court extended the deadline for publication of the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam from July 31 to August 31, 2019.

### **An Analysis of the Situation**

This complicated situation is considered a legal problem by some and a humanitarian problem by others. The legal approach defends the immigrants by quoting several examples of squatters living in slums of Mumbai or other states who have shifted to more developed states of India to earn their livelihood. However, the argument concerning the squatter moving from states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh to Punjab, West Bengal does not seem to be fitting here as we are comparing the status of other nation's illegal immigrants living in Assam with our own country's people who are relocating for their livelihood or for other reasons.

The undertone of the NRC debate is political and communal. The reason of this debate to be communal is some of the amendments which are separating migrants on the basis of their religion. This is supported by the minority status of the migrants in their native countries. The reason for this debate to be political is that most of the political parties keep the migrants separate for their own political benefits. The list of the political parties which are directly or indirectly indulged in the debate is long enough to make this situation bad to worse.

To solve this problem India will have to start a bilateral dialogue with Bangladesh. If Bangladesh does not play humanitarian and does not accept these migrants back, India may face international pressure from many organizations to keep these migrants as they don't have any place to live or go back. If that is the case, India may also have to amend its Citizenship Act in a way that it will grant the citizenship but not give voting rights to these people.

We need to understand that this problem is not being faced by India only and it is a big issue in every developing and developed country. This is a highly sensitive situation that needs a mixed humanitarian and constitutional approach. India holds a respectable and responsible position in the international community and it needs to tackle this situation keeping all factors in mind.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Agitation:** anger; **migrated:** roaming/wandering; **stringent:** strict; **persecuted:** ill-treated; **intervention:** involvement; **forged:** fake; **commenced:** started; **squatter:** a person who lives in an empty building without permission; **tackle:** handle

# 6

## Swachh Bharat Mission

The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October 2014 at Rajpath in New Delhi. Mr Modi said in his speech that a clean India would be the best tribute the nation could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary in 2019. Quoting his (Gandhi ji's) words, "Sanitation is more important than independence", Modi kick-started a national movement to spruce up roads, infrastructure, streets, rural areas, small towns and cities of the country. The mission was propagated as a national movement, with 3 million government employees and students, participating from 4,041 cities, towns and villages across the country.

### Objectives of the Campaign

The mission was introduced with two core thrusts—Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), which operates under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), which operates under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

The main objective of the campaign was to make India open-defecation free by 2 October, 2019. It aimed to construct 90 million toilets in the rural areas of the country, at a projected cost of ₹ 1.96 lakh crore. It also included the monitoring of the use of toilets.

It is widely known that open defecation results in the deaths of thousands of children every year, due to unhygienic living conditions that cause diseases. Therefore, the mission focused on eliminating open defecation from the country by educating people and creating awareness of its repercussions.

The mission focused on recruiting ground staff to train and bring about changes in the mindsets of the rural population and urge them to use toilets. It also aimed at educating people to practice liquid and solid waste management.

The economic health of the nation is directly linked with the 'Swachh Bharat Mission'. The achievements of the mission are supposed to contribute to the GDP growth of the country as well as reduce the health care expenditure.

### Aspirants of the Mission

Mr Narendra Modi introduced a few celebrities as the brand ambassadors of the mission on 2nd October 2014 to promote the Clean India Campaign through social media. The celebrities include Kapil Sharma (comedian), Sourav Ganguly (cricketer), Kiran Bedi (Former IPS officer), Padmanabha Acharya (Governor of Nagaland), and Sonal Mansingh (classical dancer).

He also nominated organizations like the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Eenu and India Today group as well as the Dabbawala of Mumbai for the mission.

## Performance of the mission

A mobile app—Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)—was introduced by the government, which is being used by the government and the people to monitor the performance and achievement of the mission. An annual cleanliness survey named Swachh Sarvekshan is done across several hundred cities to check the progress and impact of the mission. The survey, commissioned by Ministry of Urban Development and carried out by the Quality Council of India, is a considerable sanitation survey and is conducted every year. The aim of the survey is to encourage a spirit of competition for cleanliness, among different cities of the country. Following five parameters are set to evaluate the performance of each city:

- Municipal solid waste, sweeping, collection and transportation
- Municipal solid waste, processing and disposal of solid waste
- Free toilets
- Capacity building and eLearning
- Provision of public and community toilet seats
- Information, education and communication, and behaviour change.

## Outcomes of the Mission

Cleanliness is the most important factor to prevent the spread of diseases. 71 Indian public sector and 14 private sector companies supported the constructions of several toilets across the country under Swachh Bharat Mission. According to the latest data, the national sanitation coverage had risen to 92% in 2018 from 38.7% in 2014. 11 states, 314 districts and 3.25 lakh villages were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 15th February 2018, which is a laudable achievement by the Indian government.

The ODF declared that cities and towns stood at 22% and urban areas stood at 50% in door-to-door solid waste collection and disposal. The number of volunteers for the mission, working across urban local bodies, rose to 20,000, while that in rural India rose to more than a lakh. The percentage of schools with separate toilets for girls and boys rose from 37% to 91%. According to an independent survey conducted by the Quality Council of India in August 2017, the overall national rural “household access to toilet” coverage increased to 62.45%. The state of Haryana is at the top of the national ranking with 99% usage of toilets by households in rural areas and 100% usage of toilets across the state. World Health Organisation (WHO) stated in its report that at least 180,000 diarrhoeal deaths were averted in rural India since the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

### GLOSSARY

**Access:** obtain; **Brand ambassador:** a celebrity who is paid to endorse or promote a particular company’s products or services; **Campaign:** group of people working in an organized way towards achieving a goal; **Infrastructure:** the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.; **Propagated** : spread or promoted (an idea, theory, etc.) widely; **Repercussions** : an unintended consequence of an event or action; **Thrust** : push suddenly in a particular direction

# 7

## Killing in the Name of Cow Vigilantism

### Rise of Cow Vigilantism

“If we want to live in the world while being called Hindus then we have to protect cows with all our might.” These are the words of Prabhudatt Brahmachari who was an Indian guru and freedom fighter. He is not the only person who has spoken against cow slaughter in the past. Many eminent Indians like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Giani Zail Singh and others have expressed their views regarding the significance of cow protection to safeguard its position in traditions and culture. Since time immemorial, cows have been venerated in India and eating beef is considered an abominable and blasphemous act by many in the country. Raising one’s voice against cow slaughter is one thing but taking the burden of ‘disciplining’ the ones who slaughter cows for beef, leather etc., is going on a completely different trajectory. It is a way of claiming laws without any legal or constitutional intervention. Lately, cow vigilantes in India have taken upon themselves, the onerous task of protecting cows. They are not shying away from using violent or illegal means to achieve their objective.

### Motives behind the Guise of Religion

Arundhati Roy’s second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, takes up the issue of mob lynching in the name of cow vigilantism in which one of the characters says, “They accuse you of eating beef and then take over your house and your land and send you to a refugee camp. It’s all about property, not cows.” This line and another related incident that take place in the novel, reveal that there is much more to the issue of cow slaughter than what meets the eye. Many writers and journalists have condemned the act of killing people to realize political motives, in the name of cow protection. One of the notable things about these cow vigilantes is that they attack as a mob, as it has no particular face and is seemingly harmless. Their motives are veiled because they appear to be offended Hindus who have no way but to resort to violence in order to preserve the ideology of their religion.

In simple terms, ideology is a belief shared by a group of people belonging to a particular religion, ethnicity, region, nation etc. While endorsing the ideology of Hinduism (or Hindutva), cow vigilantes choose to overlook the thin line between faith and fact. When faith gets converted into fact, binaries like right-wrong, good-evil, holy-unholy etc., are created and anyone who sways away from the defined path is considered wrong, evil and culprit in the eyes of the mob. Cow vigilantes use these self-created binaries to justify their acts. As a result, the intermingling of religious ideology with political ideology becomes inevitable and some mischief-makers start using this sad equation for their personal benefits.



Sometimes, certain malevolent subjects of the society use religion to advocate a political stance. In other words, such people present themselves as a faceless mob to exercise the power of the majority over the minority. The killing of Rakbar Khan in Alwar is one such example where a young man was lynched by the people who had a premeditated plan to catch the “cow smugglers”. Dadri mob lynching of 2015 is another case where a Muslim house was attacked on the suspicion that Mohammed Akhlaq, the resident of that house, had stolen and slaughtered a calf. Such cases are a direct attack on the Constitution of India because these reveal the pompous audacity of law-breakers who consider themselves above everything else, even the law.

### **Rumour and Reality – Need for Caution**

When faith and fact become inseparable, one can observe the difference between rumor and reality. Killing members of a minority religion on the basis of rumor is not justice. It is a cold-blooded murder of democracy where no importance is given to the constitution or the law. In most cases, such killings are prompted by financial, political or other motives. The blanket of religion is used to conceal the real objectives. Many a time, the cow vigilantes get away with their crimes because of the lax attitude of the government and the legal authorities. Many journalists have claimed that the government, especially after 2014, has used ‘Gau-Raksha’ as a political tool to maintain its vote bank.

### **A Question of Identity**

When a person talks of identity, different aspects of his existence are looked into because it is impossible to define his identity in concrete terms. It is true that, for an individual, retaining his identity is important. It is also important to stay close to his roots—traditional, cultural, religious or ethnic. But, if he starts defining his whole existence through the lens of Hindutva alone, it automatically overlooks the other aspects of his being and the resultant picture is a false representation of him.

In the past, the subversion of Indian identity led to the Revolt of 1857 and subsequent protests against the British rule. Swadesi and other movements were potent efforts made by the Indians to exert their presence and selfhood. Even then, people were vehemently against cow slaughter and they channelized all energy to protect them because cows held a religious significance in India. In those times, people of the nation had united against the foreign invaders and their actions were guided by one aim—attaining independence. They did not forget the other aspects of their identity which is why they were successful. Times have changed, and India is now an independent country and the people have held on to their traditions and cultures. The cow is still considered holy. But, unlike the past where the united purpose of Indians was to rid India of the British, cow vigilantism seems like a premeditated movement to attack the people of a particular religion. Thus, a lot of alterations and manipulations have resulted in the present definition of Hindu identity.

### **Concluding Remarks**

It can be said that the cow is granted the pedestal of ‘mother’ in this country by calling the creature *gaumata*. Many states have banned beef-eating because it is considered to be a

sacrilegious act. Cow vigilantes should keep in mind that acting within the law to express one's dissatisfaction or anger is the basis of democracy. A person can raise his voice against cow slaughter, but he cannot take the matter of imparting justice in his own hands. If everyone starts playing the mob card, India will soon find itself in the state of anarchy. Moreover, it is wrong to use the power of the majority as a weapon to eliminate minority. Religion and politics are two pillars of society but when these two pillars rub against each other, society faces danger. Reigning ideology has the power to control people, but it is necessary that people do not forget the difference between faith and fact; rumour and reality.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Lynching:** killing of an accused by a mob; **vigilantism:** act of imparting justice by citizens, using unlawful means; **sacrilegious:** treating something holy or important without respect; **vehemently:** in a fierce manner



# 8

## Media Trial—How Fair is It?

### The Importance of Media

The media is known as the fourth pillar of our democracy. With its far and deep reach and its varied roles, the media plays a critical role in shaping the society and moulding its opinion. The assertive media has become more potent than ever before by playing a crucial role in mobilising the masses against the evils of the society.

In a democratic system, there must be a dynamic involvement of individuals in all the issues of locale and state. The media is obliged to keep the society up-to-date with the current political, social and monetary happenings; burning points and essential issues of the day. The end goal is to empower the people in shaping a broader view in which they are being overseen, handled and regulated by the administration and their functionaries.

Article 19 of the constitution lays out the roles and responsibilities of each institution and there remains a marginal scope of encroachment of each other's territory. For a healthy democracy, it's important that the bureaucracy, legislature, judiciary and media function independently and do not interfere in each other's domain.

### What is Media Trial?

In recent times it has been observed that cases of media trials are on the surge. Media trial is the term coined for a situation in which a case is hotly debated over media while the debate in a court of law remains in progress. In fact, in some cases even before a case could have been filed in the court of law, media might have already held a trial and convicted an accused.

The idea of media trial is certainly not a new thing in our society. The conduct of media was hotly discussed in the Priyadarshini Mattoo case. There have been various cases in which media was blamed for leading the trial of the convict and passing the 'decision' even when the court of law was yet to scrutinize the case and pass judgment. Neither investigation nor trial of a case comes under the job description of media. The trial by media is certainly an undue obstruction and encroachment in the judicial process. Before diving into the issue of the legitimacy of the media trial, it is appropriate to initially understand what really 'trial by media' implies. Trial is a word which is related to judicial proceedings that take place in courts of law. It is the very basis of a fair judicial system and it ensures that the accused have the opportunity to prove their innocence through legally available options.

There remains no ambiguity that media can create or decimate any person, movement or government at any given time. And, exactly for this reason, the practice of media trial has become a hot debate itself.

## **Media Trial : Benefits and Harm**

An era of competition and sensationalism has ushered. News channels have turned into profit-making corporate with astonishing balance sheets. The race to secure the maximum TRPs has made the news media to sensationalise the way information is served. Moreover, the race to deliver information at lightning speed to the public has lowered the sense of responsibility to verify and scrutinise the facts before serving it to the masses.

There are several cases where the media has held a trail for an accused costing him his social life, opportunities to earn a livelihood and later he was proved in the court of law as not guilty. It has become quite easy to point a finger at someone and tarnish his public life without a fair trial. The hot TV debates which give verdicts without looking into the legalities of the cases can create such lasting damage that even after being declared innocent by the law of the court, this damage can't be mended.

Media trial has not always yielded negative results only. In multiple cases, it has effectively created the required pressure which resulted in the initiation of investigations and speedy trials and timely convictions. One such example was observed when the entire nation had reacted to the Nirbhaya rape case. Media played the most crucial role in building a mass agitation, fetching quick and comprehensive responses from judiciary and legislature.

### **Towards a More Responsible Trial system**

Considering the amount of damages that media trials can do, media houses need to acknowledge their responsibilities towards the law of land and abide by the time-tested ideas of 'innocent until proven guilty'. From the above discussion, it turns out to be certain that the media had a more negative impact as opposed to a constructive outcome (with the exception of a couple of special cases all over). The liberty of media must be legitimately regulated by the judiciary. It cannot be allowed a free run amidst the court procedures.

The law regarding interference with the due course of justice has been well stated by Chief Justice Gopal Rao Ekkbote of Andhra Pradesh High Court—

“ ..... When litigation is pending before a Court, no one shall comment on it in such a way there is a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the trial of the action, as for instance by influence on the Judge, the witnesses or by prejudicing mankind in general against a party to the cause. Even if the person making the comment honestly believes it to be true, still it is a contempt of Court if he prejudices the truth before it is ascertained in the proceedings. To this general rule of fair trial, one may add a further rule and that is that none shall, by misrepresentation or otherwise, bring unfair pressure to bear on one of the parties to a cause so as to force him to drop his complaint or defence. It is always regarded as of the first importance that the law which we have just stated should be maintained in its full integrity. But in so stating the law we must bear in mind that there must appear to be a real and substantial danger of prejudice.”

The above examination uncovers the gravity of the circumstances as it perseveres in India. An ideal proposition will be that the media and the citizens of India are not

democratic enough to enable the media to hijack the legal procedure. It's certainly a perfect recommendation to permit controlled media detailing of the cases, once the media does away with its love for perks and sensational representation. The media needs to assume the job of a facilitator instead of tilting the scales for either party.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Legitimacy:** the quality of being legal; **litigation:** the process of taking a case to a court of law so that a judgment can be made

# 9

## Poverty Upliftment – Reality or mere Slogan?

### Poverty in India

Poverty is the condition wherein a person is unable to secure the basic desideratum like food, clothing and shelter, for the sustenance of life. India is among the countries housing the largest number of people living in poverty. This is the major reason for India being still a developing country. Poverty can be the cause of several impacts on the economic and social strength of a country.

### Causes of poverty

Poverty is the root cause of a series of issues that plague the country. It leads to the low level of per-capita income that does not help in bringing down the poverty percentage of the nation.

It can be argued that the main reason of poverty is corruption. Numerous scams in the country in past few years are the proof of corruption level in almost all government departments like Public Distribution System (PDS), government's welfare programs and schemes. The government has initiated programs like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and National Rural Livelihood Mission to empower the rural poor and give 100 days of employment annually.

The new government comes in power with new economic policies which affect the poor villagers and farmers. The rural economy of India plummeted due to economic reforms of the 1990s and led to a crisis in the agrarian industry. Poor farmers were left with no option but to commit suicide because of high debts. Lack of economic policies for small scale industries result in the rise of poverty rate. The models or schemes made by the Indian government are usually not managed properly and the fund raised for the development of the rural areas is not utilized properly due to a corrupt system. The youth of rural areas don't possess proper education and skill-based training which could allow them to explore areas other than agriculture. This makes them unemployed, enhancing the poverty of the nation. The rising population growth per year also causes poverty due to the imbalance in demand and supply chain.

Sometimes, it becomes difficult for the government to implement a new program or scheme to rural areas for their development because the people don't want any change and they want to live the way they have lived. It is very important to change their mentality and make them open minded towards changes.

### Consequences of Poverty

Poverty affects people's life in various ways which can lead them to death. It directly affects a person's health. Malnutrition is prevalent among people of all age groups as they cannot afford an adequate and healthy diet. Children are most adversely affected by this problem. In many rural areas, the death rate of newborn babies is on the rise due to lack of proper care and nutrition.

Poverty also causes a definite decline in the sanitary practices among poor, who cannot afford proper bathrooms and disinfectants. As a result, susceptibility to waterborne diseases peaks among them. Extreme poverty and lack of proper education makes it easier for the extremist groups to brainwash youngsters and lure them into the world of crime and terrorism. Violence and crime rates in India are increasing day by day. It can be said that all the criminal activities are the result of unemployment and marginalization, and people adopt this easy way to earn money. There are so many people who spend their life in slums in India. It is just because of lack of money that these people are unable to afford a home for themselves. Living in slums is tied to several health and safety issues.

The poverty of a country indicates the weak state of its economy. It shows lack of opportunities to generate adequate jobs and amenities. It exposes the children of the poverty-ridden communities to child labour, over-exploitation and sexual abuse.

### **Government's measures**

The governments, over the years, have undertaken several projects and schemes like Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS), National Maternity Benefit Scheme, Annapurna, Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), PradhanMantri Gramin Awas Yojana and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and more, for the upliftment of the less fortunate. The Public Distribution System (PDS) aims to distribute food and other major commodities to the poor through a public distribution shop's network across the country. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) focuses on the policy of right to work by providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year in rural areas.

In addition, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) is the initiative taken by the Government of India, which provides the cashless health insurance for hospitalization in public and private hospitals, to the poor. To avail this benefit, the people who live below the poverty line need to pay an amount of ₹ 30 as registration fee for a biometric-enabled smart yellow ration card, containing their fingerprints and photographs.

As a result of the effectiveness of these schemes, it is estimated that half of India's population that lived below poverty line, is relieved of this status. India has the fastest rate of poverty reduction in the world. Now, it is no longer the home to the largest number of poor in the world anymore. According to a report, if the poverty reduction will continue at the same pace, India can rise up to the 3rd rank, among all other countries. The government needs to be careful to ensure proper and honest implementation of its schemes and monitor their execution on every level.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Desideratum:** necessities; **execution:** the carrying out of a plan, order, or course of action.

# 10

## The 2018 Amendment of SC/ST Act

The monsoon session of 2018 held in the Indian Parliament stood out for its action to safeguard the interests of the social and financial minority sections i.e. the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The new legislation was concerned with the arrests made under the SC/ST law. It was brought by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), under Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi. The new amendment nullifies the Supreme Court judgment of making no immediate arrest of an accused.

### Initial Provisions of SC/ST Act

The Parliament of India introduced the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in 1989, which aimed to prevent the widespread atrocities committed against the lower castes. It was introduced because the existing law of Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 was found to be inadequate at that time. It is stated in the preamble of the Act that it aims to

- Prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes,
- Provide for Special Courts for the trial of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The SC/ST Act was meant to emphasize the efforts of the government in delivering justice to the target community. A range of issues was covered under this Act, which was related to the discrimination made against the people of scheduled castes and tribes. The rules and the provisions of the act were divided into three different categories that are given below:

- The provision of criminal offence was considered in the first category. It established criminal liabilities for a number of specified atrocities and extended the scope of certain categories of penalisations of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- The provision for relief and compensation for victims of atrocities was put in the second category.
- The establishment of special authorities to implement and monitor the Act was considered in the third category.

It was said by the apex court on March 2018 that the people accused of committing an offence under the SC/ST Act would be arrested after the preliminary inquiry, upon the approval of the senior Superintendent of Police. The accused would be arrested only if he is found guilty in the inquiry and FIR will also be filed for the same. The new legislation was brought by the union government in an attempt to restore the older provision of SC/ST



Act which allowed a direct police case against the accused, without any inquiry. According to the prior Act, the FIR could be filed without inquiring about the accusation and the accused would not be permitted to apply for the anticipatory bail.

### **Effects and implications of the Act**

The members of others caste and communities were not in favour of the SC/ST Act and they protested against it. The nation was called for Bharat Bandh on 2 April 2015 by various community-based organisations. The clashes between police and the protestors were sparked by this movement which led to the death of 6 people and injuries to many. Nine states were affected by the violent protests. The government was put on the backfoot by the people's reaction. This also gave an opportunity to the opposition parties to corner the ruling alliance.

Two major anti-government mobilizations and various Dalit groups/individuals have put the government under fire in the last 4 years. One of them was the protest in Una, Gujarat, in July 2016, which was done after the death of a Dalit. He was attacked by the cow vigilantes who were supposedly trying to protect a cow. The second protest erupted after the death of a Dalit scholar, Rohith Vemula, at Hyderabad Central University in January 2016.

### **Impacts of the Amendment**

Various concerted efforts were made by the ruling party BJP under the leadership of the Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, to enhance the social and political base of the party and to reach out to the poor and marginalised sections of society. The dominance of BJP government was retained nationally by the political success of this exercise. It led to the expansion of its regime to several more states.

On the other hand, there were strong arguments in support of the Supreme Court's verdict as well. The judgement of the Supreme Court should have been seen in the context of justice rather than as partisan politics. The court focused on the aim of protecting the Constitutional rights and "fundamental rights of citizens which has to be kept at the highest pedal". It was stated by the Supreme Court that the liberty of the innocents cannot be taken away and there needs to be a forum in the court to protect the interest of innocent citizens. The Supreme Court's judgment was a way to create a balance between protecting the rights of the weaker sections and the rights of an innocent person.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Amendment** : a modification; **Anticipatory bail** : a direction to release a person on bail, issued even before the person is arrested; **Apex court** : the highest court, here, the Supreme Court; **Partisan** : belonging to a faction/division; **Verdict** : decision, judgement; **Rehabilitation** : the action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness.

# 11

## Where India Stands in Imparting Education Globally

The ability to think, reason and innovate is the primary factor that makes humans more superior to any other species on the planet. This exquisite feature of humans is refined and enhanced by means of education. It serves a key role in determining the growth and development of a nation and because of this reason, education is made one of the fundamental rights in most developed countries. And it is in this context that it becomes crucial to examine where India stands in imparting global education.

The Indian education system has got accolades on several fronts but at the same time its flaws are well-exposed too. In terms of reaching out to the ignored communities and enabling remote learners to be part of the mainstream education system, the Indian education system has done a commendable job. However, at the same time, it could be only taken as its sheer failure that none of the Indian universities are in the list of top 100 universities of world. The challenge for the Indian education system is its inability to provide research-based education system. It also lacks the resources crucial to imparting world-class education.

### What is Global Education System?

Global education is aimed at enhancing one's perception of the world with a set of taught ideas. During the 1960s-70s, the intergovernmental organisations, educationalists and NGOs initiated the idea of global education, which aimed at restructuring the global society through education. It sought to raise awareness about universal challenges, thereby making people active and responsible global citizens. Global education system specifically addresses the following motives :

- Global Justice
- Human Rights
- Sustainability
- Peace
- Intercultural Communication

Towards achieving this end, the methodological approaches applied by the said education system are :

- Learner-centred teaching
- Participatory learning with compulsory student involvement
- Partnership based learning where the educator is not only a teacher but a learner as well.
- Experience-based learning
- Self-learning that involves many self-explanatory questions



## **Indian Education System in the Modern Era**

Many changes and enhancements have been undertaken by the Indian education system to make the quality of learning better. The main components of the modern Indian education system are :

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Senior secondary education
- Higher education

Eight years of education are included in elementary education while the secondary and senior secondary education is of two years each. Indian students complete their higher education in three to five years, after passing the higher secondary education (12th standard), depending on their choice of stream—Arts, Commerce or Science. After graduation, students opt for post-graduation, which is generally a 2-3 year course. The widening spectrum of distance-learning courses and growth of the Open University system are also causative of the democratisation of higher education in India.

Some of the educational institutes in India that can compete with the best educational institutes of the world and make India recognizable in International Education are :

- The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs),
- Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs),
- Indian Institutes of Science, National Law Schools, and
- Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The reservation system in the Indian education system has made education a socio-political issue. After independence, in 1947, the government took several initiatives to make education accessible for all. It aimed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of caste and gender among learners. The 86th constitutional amendment made elementary education a fundamental right for children between the age group of 6 to 14 years.

According to the 2011 census of India :

- The total literacy rate is 74.04 %.
- The female literacy rate is only 65.46% in contrast to 82.14% literacy among males.
- Rural literacy rate is 59.4% as against 80.3% among urban population.

In the light of such alarming status of literacy in India, the government has implemented following measures in the Indian education system :

- Construction of international school groups in many cities.
- Imparting free education to all children of 6 to 14 years of age under the Right to Education Act, 2010.
- Special attention is provided to raising the number of English medium schools to equip the learners for global exposure.
- English national curriculum is implemented to bring Indian education at par with the world.

## What further changes does the Indian education system need ?

Creating more entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, thinkers and experts in all fields of work and study is the major goal of the new education system in India. As a result, a knowledge-based economy will be created. It will put an end to rising unemployment and under-developed skills among youth. Some other steps that can be taken to boost the Indian education system are :

- Updated topics need to be added to the curriculum. It should be regularly revised after making a thorough analysis of existing needs and trends of the global employment sector.
- Skill development programmes should be included in the primary and higher education system.
- Classrooms should be equipped with smart learning techniques, which will help in creating an effective learning atmosphere.
- Practical classes should be prioritised over theory classes.
- More career options must be added to the higher education streams.

### India's ranking in Imparting Global Education

Developing countries such as Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and others have a better global education system than India. The government should recognize that the backbone of the nation's economy is formed by knowledge, skills and productivity of its growing young and dynamic workforce. Global education system should be reinforced in India so that more and more people can compete and bag employment opportunities at the national and international level.

#### GLOSSARY

**Accolades**: an award or privilege granted as a special honour or as an acknowledgement of merit; **Amendment**: a minor change or addition designed to improve a text, piece of legislation, etc.; **Curriculum**: the subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college; **Dynamic**: (of a process or system) characterized by constant change, activity, or progress; **Entrepreneur**: a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit; **Initiative**: the ability to assess and initiate things independently; **Literacy**: the ability to read and write; **Mainstream**: ideas, attitudes, or activities that are shared by most people and regarded as normal or conventional; **Prevailing**: having most appeal or influence; prevalent; **Sheer**: absolute; **Spectrum**: used to classify something in terms of its position on a scale between two extreme points; **Sustainability**: the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level; **Workforce**: the people engaged in or available for work.

Human beings have a tendency to find escape routes to save themselves from sticky situations. More than often, such routes often lead them into a greater mess. One of the most convenient ways to forget reality—which might be unpleasant and intolerable for some—is to lose consciousness of one’s surroundings. The loss of senses automatically separates a person from the ordeals he has to face on day to day basis.

### **Causes of Drug Addiction**

Addiction to drugs is a serious threat to the well-being of an individual and to all those who are associated with him. A number of causes may lead to this condition and it would be unfair to flag them all to ‘lack of moral principles’. We humans are highly subjective beings; a situation that can deeply influence one person may not affect the other person at all. One of the major constraints faced by the youth of the country is the pressure of supporting and feeding their families. Lack of opportunities leads to increase in the cases of unemployment. It forces people to opt for alternative means of survival, even if it means annihilation of the being from within. People search for options to escape from this vicious scenario and their helplessness leads them astray.

The problem with unchecked drug intake is that one can easily lose control of the situation. It is a recurring cycle that moves on own accord; out of the control of the person who once put it into motion. In the beginning, a person feels that he can handle the situation and can control the intake of drugs but soon finds himself in a state which is beyond control. Once a person gets addicted to a certain drug, he cannot disentangle himself from its tentacles without external help. In many cases, even the help serves no purpose and several lives are destroyed.

Usually, drug intake is seen in the light of immorality and the reasons behind drug abuse are overlooked. It is easy to raise slogans that shout, “Say no to Drugs” or “Our youth is going astray” but the complications posed by drugs are so problematic that mere slogan-raising cannot solve them. The issue of drug abuse is deep rooted and requires a thorough deconstruction on the part of the government as well as the general public.

Other reasons that push an individual into the lap of drugs include peer pressure, loneliness and mental health disorders. Human beings are essentially social beings and cannot survive in isolation. Marriage troubles, broken marriages, family stress, financial crises, etc., can lead to anxiety and depression. The sense of loneliness is sufficient to drive one to take extreme steps like taking to alcohol. In some severe cases, even alcohol stops serving the purpose of escaping reality so people start resorting to more potent means of insobriety. Peer pressure is another powerful cause that forces an individual to build a house of powder. The film Sanju nicely portrays how Sanjay Dutt was lured into drug addiction by his friend. The film also highlights the role played by one’s companions in one’s life. It is a reflection of the importance of one’s choice of friends and the influence exerted by the others.

## Case of Drug Abuse in Punjab

In India, Punjab has earned a notorious reputation owing to its problem of drug addiction. The state is on the brink of losing an entire generation to drugs. The Bollywood movie, *Udta Punjab*, narrates the interwoven stories of people from different walks of life caught up in the dark web of drug abuse. Certain villages in Punjab have lost their male population to drug overdose. Newspapers are never short of stories of deaths due to drug abuse. One of the estimates related to the problem of drugs, shows that there is at least one drug addict in two-third households of Punjab. Drug addiction is not limited to Punjab alone; it is spread across other states of the country in varying degrees and is impacting our generation as a whole.

### Curtailing the Issue

It is important to deal with the problem of drug abuse before it is too late. The Government has taken many steps in that direction. Many drugs have been banned in the country. Prescription has been made essential for obtaining medicated drugs. Unfortunately, despite such steps, drugs are easily made available in one form or the other. The exchange of drugs takes place in secret corridors using coded languages. The problem needs a strict surveillance system because it is difficult to capture culprits who sell drugs disguised as toffees. Drug peddlers don't flinch before burying their claws into a new victim, be it a child or a teenager. In addition to a strict surveillance system, more attention needs to be paid to the causes that drive one into this hellish world.

To sum up, the drug epidemic is not something that can be overlooked or taken lightly. Drugs seriously impact the working of an individual's nervous system affecting his/her potential to think, to make decisions and to arrive at sound judgments. The menace of drugs gnaws at the lives of many individuals who could have otherwise used their abilities for better, constructive things. It is time to adopt a humane approach towards the problem of drug abuse by treating the addicted people with patience and love. Apathy and disgust towards the victims of drug abuse can worsen their situations. Moreover, mental health issues like stress, anxiety and depression should be taken seriously and one should try to lend a helping hand to anyone dealing with these problems alone.

For any country, its youth is its most valuable asset. The government should try to deal with the causes that lead the youth on wrong paths by generating better job opportunities and by employing the services of the people in an effective manner. The drug epidemic cannot be controlled in a fortnight. A constant battle needs to be fought against the peddlers who make a living by burning the hopes and aspirations of many.

### GLOSSARY

**Deconstruction** : the act of breaking something down into its separate parts ; **Hellish**: of or like hell; **Humane** : having or showing compassion or benevolence; **Insobriety**: intoxication; **Notorious**: famous or well known, typically for some bad quality or deed; **Peddler**: a person who sells goods on foot; **Subjective**; based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions; **Surveillance**: close monitoring.

Talaq-e-biddat is a practice belonging to the Islamic cult of India. It is also known as triple talaq, oral talaq, and instant divorce. It is 1,400 year-old practice mainly among Sunni Muslims. The Quran explicitly conveys that a marriage should be safeguarded instead of being dissolved. The holy book does not mention anything about divorce. The concept was introduced by Caliph Umar who was one of the influential Muslim political leaders. This practice allows a Muslim man to legally divorce his wife by uttering the word talaq thrice in oral, written or electronic form. In the case of Talaq-e-biddat, Nikah halala has to be practiced. In Nikah Halala, the woman is bound to consummate the second marriage if she wishes to return to her first husband.

India is home to the world's third-biggest Muslim population which is administered by the Sharia or Islamic statute. However, 90 million Muslim women of India are exposed to the risk of a sudden, oral, and out-of-court unexpected divorce. This has been the situation since British colonial rule because of the absence of a Uniform Civil Code. This practice has been banned and boycotted in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and other Islamic nations. There is an urgent need to exclude this practice from India.

### Some Peculiar Cases

There are many cases where wives were divorced by their respective husbands on Skype, Whatsapp, e-mail and phone call.

**Shayara Bano:** The poor woman was subjected to triple talaq in October 2015 after being in a marriage for 15 years. Asserting that her in-laws constrained her to have six abortions and she had suffered much physical and mental pressure. Also, her children were taken away from her after divorce. The case gained attention when the SC admitted her appeal for declaring it unconstitutional.

**Afreen Rehman:** In the year 2014, Afreen Rehman entered into the institution of marriage through online match-making. However, in merely two-three months, she was harassed and beaten for dowry. She returned to her parents' place where she got a letter by means of speed post declaring a divorce. At that point, she filed a petition in the Supreme Court looking for its intervention into the issue.

**Gulshan Parween:** Married in April 2013, Gulshan was exposed to domestic violence for more than two years. The 'talaqnama' was served on a Rs. 10 stamp paper in 2015 by her husband when she was with her parents.

**Ishrat Jahan:** This case happened in April 2015 in which the victim got divorced by her husband over the telephone from Dubai. She had spent one and a half decades into the



marriage. "I don't accept the talaq over the telephone. I want justice. I want my daughters and son back from my husband and maintenance as well for their upbringing. That's why I went to court. I will fight till the end," she said.

### **Reasons for Approbating Triple Talaq**

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in Shayara Bano Vs. Union of India and others. The sworn statement gave reasons for justifying the practice of triple talaq.

**Provides security to wife :** As per AIMPLB, "Marriage is an agreement in which both the parties (male and female) are not physically equal. Man doesn't need a woman for his protection. On the contrary, the wife (a female) needs him for her protection. If any serious disagreement crops up between the couple and the husband does not want to live with her under any conditions and at the same time the wife is not agreeing to the divorce, the time consuming legally separation proceedings and costs involved in doing so may deter him from taking the lawful course. In such scenarios, he may fall back on unlawful, criminal methods for killing or burning her alive."

**Women get killed for not getting an easy divorce :** This argument stated that a woman might get killed for not allowing the man to divorce her. It highlights the bizarre idea; it is easy for a husband to commit a crime and hide it as well. This would lead to a rise in the instances of women being killed or burnt alive.

**Divorce from courts scandalizes women's character :** If a man is charged against his loose conduct or adultery, it may cause a little harm to the future prospects of his remarriage. However, the spouse's same charge publically against his wife may deny her the possibility of remarriage.

### **Reasons for Abolishing Triple Talaq**

Triple talaq must be nullified because it conflicts with the soul of the womanhood. It serves as the prime example of gender inequality and discrimination against women. This callous tradition can render women homeless overnight and leave them desperate with no assistance for their children. In most cases, the women were not even present when the spouse said 'talaq' thrice. It is the most inhuman practice followed by any religious sect. Moreover, there are a few good reasons to abolish Triple Talaq. It infringes the fundamental rights of woman, especially Article 14 and 15. Also, it is against the spirit of Preamble of Constitution of India.

Women would be exposed to face a very difficult life with high poverty and vulnerable conditions of living which may lead to under nutrition and no social security. Also, women are excommunicated from the community if they tend to marry outside the community and "Fatwas" are issued for them.

Union Minister of Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad shared that the bill was introduced in 2017 and the Supreme Court also banned Talaq-e-Biddat (instant triple talaq) on 22nd August 2017. Also, an ordinance has been passed for the same. However, more than

hundreds of cases of triple talaq were reported after that. This clearly demonstrates that the need for the bill is necessary even after the Supreme Court has struck down triple talaq as illegal.

### **Supreme Court Verdicts**

In August 2017, three out of five judges declared 'triple talaq' an unconstitutional practice. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill was drafted and presented in the Parliament by the Modi government in 2017. The same was approved on 28th December 2017 by the lower house of the Parliament. The bill declared instant triple talaq illegal and void in any form— spoken, in writing or by electronic means, along with three years of prison for the husband.

The government has made the triple talaq or the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) bill more effective with some amendments. However, after contemplating the political scenario the government has incorporated some changes to it.

Finally after all the toil, the Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on 25th July, 2019 and by the Rajya Sabha on 30th July, 2019. It marked the end of the age-old unjust practice of Triple Talaq and safeguarded the freedom and interests of Muslim women folk in India.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Affidavit:** official declaration; **Amendments:** change; **Bizarre:** strange; **Consummate:** make (a marriage or relationship) complete by having sexual intercourse; **Cult:** sect; **Nullified:** make legally null and void; **Ordinance:** an authoritative order



# 14

## Considerations of Privacy and the Aadhaar Verdict

Aadhaar which means 'Foundation' in Hindi, has indeed become ubiquitous for almost all internal purposes of citizenship. Currently, phone numbers, bank accounts, PAN numbers, insurance policies, etc are linked to the Aadhaar Card. This linking of multiple documentations with a unique identification has created concerns with regards to misuse of this identification. Hence, it has been declared as a breach of the right to privacy.

Under this light, the constitutionality of Aadhaar for various purposes was challenged in the Supreme Court of India. The landmark verdict defined the legality of Aadhaar and to what extent it can breach the right to privacy.

The "Aadhaar is not mandatory" status was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in 2016. Therefore, the government's decision to make Aadhaar mandatory for welfare schemes caused uproar in the opposition and in social media.

As per the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2017, an Aadhaar number is necessary for filing tax returns. Hence, those who don't possess an Aadhaar Card, effectively become "criminals" in the eyes of the law and are left with no choice but to enrol in Unique Identification (UID).

### Need for Aadhaar

In the era of digitization, our identity is also digital, which is unique to every individual. Earlier, to avail certain benefits, to get enrolled in an institution and to prove the citizenship of India, one required the Voter ID card, Driver's Licence, Ration Card or the resident certificate as authorised by the local governing body. However, fake identities were generated using forged documents. Several bank accounts, multiple PAN numbers were created for the same person using fabricated documents. Hence, it was in this light that the government founded the Unique Identification Number for every citizen of the country, which included the biometrics of finger prints, retina scan and face recognition embedded in it. The Unique Identification Authority of India, in 2009 was authorised with the duty of creating an Aadhaar card for every Indian citizen.

Soon, the NDA government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, made the Aadhaar card more powerful and useful along with all the other cards, for the purpose of identification. Aadhaar gained prominence as the government decided to make it mandatory for the citizens to link the Aadhaar card for almost all the purposes, including the Permanent Account Number (PAN), bank accounts and phone numbers of an individual by the Aadhaar Act, 2016.

The Act was highly controversial since its launch. Currently, the Aadhaar, according to the government, has streamlined the process of delivering benefits, including subsidies and other schemes for the poor. It is noteworthy that now the Government can effectively channel the benefits to the needy without the interference and corruption of middlemen. It has proved to be an effective means of reaching aid to the poor.

## Causes for Concern

However, the loophole in this identification is that all information about the individual including bank balances and phone numbers are revealed, thereby causing a breach in privacy. There have been instances wherein the individual information were leaked. There also have been cases wherein multiple individuals have had the same Aadhaar Number. This could lead to the individual falling prey to the hands of criminals.

Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 was passed on 11th March, 2016, as a money bill in the Rajya Sabha. A money bill, decision solely lying with the Speaker for its introduction, cannot be debated in the Rajya Sabha as the sole authority of the bill lies with the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Parliament. When the bill is sent to the Rajya Sabha, it is deemed to have been passed and becomes an Act. Thus, the opposition alleged that the ruling party did so deliberately as the BJP led NDA government did not enjoy majority in the Upper House. Hence the Bill was passed as a Money Bill.

## Supreme Court verdict on Aadhaar

When the case was heard by a five-judge bench panel of the Supreme Court, the Aadhaar Act was declared constitutionally valid by a 4:1 verdict. In the verdict, the Supreme Court removed Sections 33(2), 47 and 57. Section 33(1) was read down by the court.

The verdict continues to make it mandatory to link Aadhaar to the PAN number in order to file income tax returns. It was stated that the Aadhaar Card was mandatory to apply for the PAN Card for the process of verification. However, in the Supreme Court hearing by a 5-member constitutional bench, relief was provided stating that it would now not be necessary to link the Aadhaar Card with bank accounts, Paytm wallets and to procure a sim card for mobile phones. The simple “Know Your Customer” (KYC) documents would be sufficient in these cases. Hence the concerns for individual privacy were sorted out. Presently, instead of the Aadhaar Card, Voter’s ID, Driving license and other such documents used previously are sufficient for such purposes. Hence, currently the Aadhaar is not mandatory for all purposes.

Another relief was that now Aadhaar is not required for students of CBSE, NEET, UGC to appear for the examinations, and to get admission in schools. This was done within the purview of the Right to Education, as no child can be denied the benefit of any welfare scheme if he/she does not have an Aadhaar.

Striking down of Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act means that now no private company can demand the Aadhaar card from the employees for any benefit they provide them or for employment. This holds good for the customers as well. However, to avail benefits from the Government’s welfare schemes and subsidies, one’s bank account still needs to be linked to the Aadhaar Card.

### GLOSSARY

**Amendments:** revisions; **Authorised:** have the official permission of; **Breach:** violation; **Constitutionality:** being in accordance with a constitution; **License:** permit; **Loopholes:** inadequacy; **Mandatory:** compulsory; **Purview:** range of thought; **Streamline:** make more efficient; **Ubiquitous:** omnipresent.

The Ayodhya dispute is a historical, religious and singular political controversy in India. Located in the Ayodhya district, of Uttar Pradesh the main altercation revolves around the site that is considered sacred by both Hindus and Muslims. The historical Babri mosque is situated at the site of an ancient Hindu temple which was allegedly destroyed by Babur, a Mughal king (who invaded India in 1525). In place of the temple, he built a mosque in 1528. Incensed Hindus destroyed the mosque during a political rally and the fall out was a riot on the 6th of December, 1992. The verdict on a subsequent land title case that was lodged in the Allahabad High Court was pronounced on 30th September 2010.

### **Religious background of the dispute**

The disputed land is considered the Ram Janma bhoomi (the birthplace of Lord Rama) by the Hindus. According to the Ramayana, a book considered sacred by Hindus, Ayodhya is the birth place of Lord Rama who was born to the ruling King Dasharatha and his Queen Kausalya. He is also revered as an avatar of God Vishnu. In the Garuda Purana, Ayodhya is mentioned as one of the seven sacred sites where Moksha or freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth can be accomplished.

History states that Mir Baqi, a general of Babur destroyed the existing temple of Lord Rama and built a mosque which he called Masjid-i-Janmasthan (mosque at the birthplace), later called Babri Masjid or Babur's Mosque which evolved into one of the largest mosques in UP and surrounded by a sizeable Muslim population. Hindus had to worship at the mosque-temple alongside Muslims. The British installed a railing between the two areas to prevent altercations. The appearance of the mosque was first reported in a book, Sahifa-i-Chihil Nasa-ih-Bahadur Shahi, written by the daughter of the Emperor Bahadur Shah and granddaughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, in the early 18th century. The book mentions that the mosque was built after the demolition of the "temples of the idolatrous Hindus situated at Mathura, Banaras, Awadh etc."

### **Origin of the dispute**

The first instance of religion-based aggression occurred in the 1850s, over a mosque at Hanuman Garhi. In a violent response, the Hindus attacked the Babri mosque. The British government refused the demand of Hindus to build a Ram temple at the site of the mosque. Some Hindu activists smuggled the idols of Rama and Sita and placed them inside the mosque. This resulted in a communal unrest. As a result, the land of the mosque was seized and declared disputed. However, the Hindu priests were allowed inside to perform daily worship. Thus, the mosque ended up becoming a makeshift temple.

## **Destruction of the Babri Mosque**

In the 1980s, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), belonging to the mainstream Hindu nationalist family Sangh Parivar, launched a new movement to “reclaim” the site for Hindus and to raise a temple dedicated to the infant Rama (Ramlala) at this spot. The remnants of the Jana Sangh formed the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980 which became the political face of the campaign. A rally was organised on 6th December 1992 which involved 1.5 lakh members of VHP and BJP at the site of the mosque. The BJP leaders such as Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti gave speeches in the ceremonies.

The mob grew restive during the oratory and stormed the mosque shortly after noon. A police cordon placed there to protect the mosque was heavily outnumbered. Several improvised tools were used to attack the mosque which brought the whole structure to the ground in a few hours despite the state government’s pledge to the Supreme Court to protect the Mosque.

It was estimated that more than 2000 people were killed in the riots post the demolition which escalated in Mumbai, Bhopal, Delhi and Hyderabad. The Government of India set the Liberhan Commission on 16th December 1992 which aimed at probing into the circumstances that led to the destruction of the mosque. This commission was extended by various governments and is considered as the longest running commission in India’s history. The makeshift temple was attacked by terrorists in July 2005 at the site of the destroyed mosque.

## **Archaeological Excavations**

Excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1970, 1992 and 2003 at the disputed site provided evidence that a large ancient Hindu complex existed at the site. However the temple resembled a Shiva Temple and not a Ram Temple. Distinct features associated with temples of North India, such as stones and decorated bricks, mutilated sculpture of a divine couple, carved architectural features, foliage patterns, etc were discovered in the north and 50 pillar bases in association with a huge structure were also found.

On 30th September 2010, the Allahabad High Court pronounced its verdict which stated that the site be divided into three equally among the Ram Lalla, Sunni Wakf and Nirmohi Akhara. The Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha and Sunni Wakf moved the Supreme Court in December 2010 and challenged the verdict of the Allahabad High Court. On 9th May 2011, the Supreme Court also stayed with the verdict of dividing the land into three parts, but none of the parties was ready for it. On 5th December 2017, the Supreme Court of India, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra and bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice Abdul Nazeer set 8th February 2018 as the date for final hearing on the case. On this date, the hearing was further postponed till March 14. On 8th March, 2019 the Supreme Court has ordered mediation in Ram Janmbhoomi-Babri Masjid Land Dispute.

## Final Supreme Court Verdict

A five-judge constitution bench, led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and comprising Justices SA Bobde, Ashok Bhushan, DY Chandrahud and S Abdul Nazeer, declared the final verdict on Ayodhya dispute on 9 Novemebr 2019. The bench dismissed the suit Nirmohi Akhara. The court upheld the claim that the disputed Ram Janmbhoomi-Babri Masjid site is the birthplace of Ram. It ruled that the whole of the disputed land will be given to the Hindus for the construction of a Ram Temple. The bench also ordered that five acres of alternate land will be provided to the Sunni Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque. The deductions of the ASI and accounts of the travellers were both cited in favour of the Hindu party.

The verdict of Supreme Court on disputed Ramjanm bhoomi was welcomed by the people of the country and the political leaders.

### GLOSSARY

**Archaeological** : the study of buildings, graves, tools and other objects that belonged to historical people to understand their culture and society; **Commission**: instruction or command given to a person or group; **Demolition**: destruction; **Foliage**: greenery; **Mutilated**: disfigured; **Riot**: rampage; **Verdict**: judgement; **Denomination** : a religious group that has different beliefs from other groups that share the same religion.

Discriminatory policies of Myanmar's government since the late 1970s have browbeaten hundreds of thousands of Muslim Rohingya to flee their homes in the predominantly Buddhist country. Most of them entered Bangladesh by crossing the land while others entered Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand by crossing the sea. Renewed violence including rape, murder and arson, were reported at the beginning of 2017 which coerced the exodus of Rohingya amid charges of ethnic cleansing against Myanmar's security forces. A campaign was claimed by the security forces to reinstate the stability in the western region of Myanmar, but international pressure, on the country's elected leaders to rein in the violence, continues to rise.

### **Background of the Rohingyas and the Timeline of the Crisis**

The followers of an ethnic Muslim minority who practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam are considered as the Rohingyas. They are indigenous to the Rakhine state, also known as Arakan, in Myanmar and have been living there since the 15th century. The Government of Myanmar declared that Rohingyas are illegal immigrants who had migrated to Rakhine from Bangladesh post the Bangladesh war and Burmese independence. There were around 1.3 million Rohingyas before the crisis of 2015. Around 40000 of them have now taken refuge in India.

The very first crisis began on 10th June 2012, between ethnic Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Northern Rakhine. As a reaction, the Rohingyas gang-raped and murdered a Rakhine woman and the aftermath was that 10 Burmese Muslims were killed by the Rakhines. In revenge, a Rakhine Buddhist and several houses belonging to people of that community were burned by the Rohingyas. An estimated 57 Muslims and 31 Buddhists died, nearly 2500 houses were burned and approx. 90,000 people were rendered homeless. The ethnic minority was isolated by the Myanmar Government in 2015 which resulted in the migration of Rohingyas to Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand in rickety boats. The United Nations reported that around 25,000 people took sanctuary in other countries by boats, from January to March in 2015, many of whom lost their lives.

The ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas was started in 2016, by the Myanmar military, in which numerous Rohingyas were arrested, many of whom died. As a consequence, Rohingyas took asylum in Bangladesh as refugees. The Special Forces of Myanmar burned down around 1500 refugee houses in the bordering villages of the country. 423 detainees were arrested in March 2017 and around 92000 people left their homeland due to the crisis.

### **Legal status of Rohingyas**

The Rohingyas were never given citizenship by the Myanmar Government and they were denied any legal documentation. An identification card, also called the white card, was given to the Rohingyas in the 1990s which was considered as the temporary residential card.



It allowed them a few basic rights like the right to vote, however, it was never recognised as the proof of citizenship. The government cancelled these white cards in 2015 and with it, the right to vote for Rohingyas also came to an end. A census was held in Myanmar for the first time after 30 years by UN in 2014. As per this census, Muslim minorities were allowed to register as Rohingya which was validated only for those who were identified as Bengalis as per the statement released by Myanmar's Government after the Buddhists threatened to boycott the census.

### **Steps taken to handle the crisis**

The National League for Democracy led Myanmar's first civilian government in November 2015 which backed the Rohingyas. Nevertheless, their principal interest was gaining support from solely Buddhist nationalities. The following are the various measures adopted by various countries to resolve the issue:

A nine-person commission was established by the United Nations (UN) in August 2016, led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, which discussed the options for the solution of the crisis. The final report was submitted by the committee to the Myanmar Government on 23rd August 2017 which included recommendations to reduce communal tension and support much-needed development efforts in the impoverished state.

- The ASEAN has not shown any coordinated response to the Rohingya problem.
- The plan of relocating 32,000 registered Rohingya refugees was announced by the Bangladesh Government.
- The intent of taking Rohingya refugees as part of international efforts was expressed by the State Department of the United States. Around 13000 Myanmar refugees have taken refuge in the United States since 2002 and Chicago has become home to them.
- Protests were carried out in various countries like India, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh against the killing and persecution of Rohingyas.

### **India's take towards the issue**

India has harboured and sheltered around 40,000 Rohingya refugees since 2012. 1 million dollars were donated for the relief of Rohingyas by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in December 2012. Since India always considered the refugee crisis as an internal affair of Myanmar, it has never interfered in it. The refugee status that was granted by United Nations Convention High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was irrelevant to their deportation because India is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees. The Indian Government made it clear that no refugee camps were established for either Bangladeshis or Rohingyas in India. They have only made schemes of assistance for Tibetan and Sri Lankan refugees. India does not want a conflict of interests with the new regime in Myanmar as Myanmar has a key role in India's Look-East Policy.

India welcomed refugees from Sri Lanka, Tibet, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh who enjoy freedom and rights here. Around 16,500 Rohingya refugees, who are staying in India, hold United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s identity card. This identity card, however, is irrelevant in the country. Rohingyas are considered illegal immigrants to India who will be subject to deportation.



## Changes in Myanmar Government's policies

The first democratic government in Myanmar was elected to power in 2016. This government has also been reluctant to back Rohingyas and other Muslims for fear of threatening Buddhist nationalities and the power-sharing agreement maintained by the civilian government with the military. The former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan established an advisory commission on ethnic strife in August 2016, which was considered as a positive development.

Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San SuuKyi denied charges of ethnic cleansing against Myanmar. International criticism of handling the crisis was also denied by her and she accused the critics of fuelling resentment between Buddhists and Muslims in the country. Nobel Peace Prize laureate, SuuKyi stated in September 2017 that her government had taken the initiative of defending all the people in Rakhine in the best way possible. The Myanmar government denied access to the UN special rapporteur on human rights, Yanghee Lee in December 2017 and suspended cooperation for the remainder of her term. Nevertheless, in September 2018 the UN's fact-finding panel released a report recommending that Myanmar's army leaders be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and urged the UN Security Council to impose arms embargoes and sanctions.

A continuous appeal for international pressure on Myanmar's government was made by many advocacy groups such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Arakan Project, and Fortify Rights. An investigation was launched by the ICC's chief prosecutor into alleged war crimes that forced the exodus of the Rohingyas. Still, resentment of the minority group has run deep for generations. Without overhauling "a culture of pervasive prejudice" and ensuring that Rohingyas are treated as human beings, the situation in Rakhine State is unlikely to improve, says journalist and author Francis Wade.

### GLOSSARY

**Advisory:** having or consisting in the power to make recommendations but not to take action enforcing them; **Advocacy:** public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy; **Amnesty:** official pardon to people who are convicted of political offense; **Boycott:** withdraw from commercial or social relations as a punishment or protest; **Civilian:** a person not in the armed or police forces; **Commission:** a group of people entrusted by a government or other official body with authority to do something; **Deportation:** expulsion; **Detainee:** a person held in custody for political reasons; **Ethnic:** relating to a population subgroup (within a larger or dominant national or cultural group) with a common national or cultural tradition; **Fuelling:** cause a fire to burn more intensely; **Harboured:** give a home or shelter to; **Immigrant:** a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country; **Indigenous:** native, aboriginal, local; **Pervasive:** spread widely throughout an area or among a group of people; **Prejudice:** preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or experience; **Prosecutor:** a barrister or other lawyer who conducts the case against a defendant in a criminal court; **Rapporteur:** a person who is appointed by an organization to report on the proceedings of its meetings; **Refugee:** a person who has been forced to leave his country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster; **Signatory:** a party that has signed an agreement, especially a state that has signed a treaty.