



ALL INDIA PROFESSIONALS' CONGRESS

INSPIRE!

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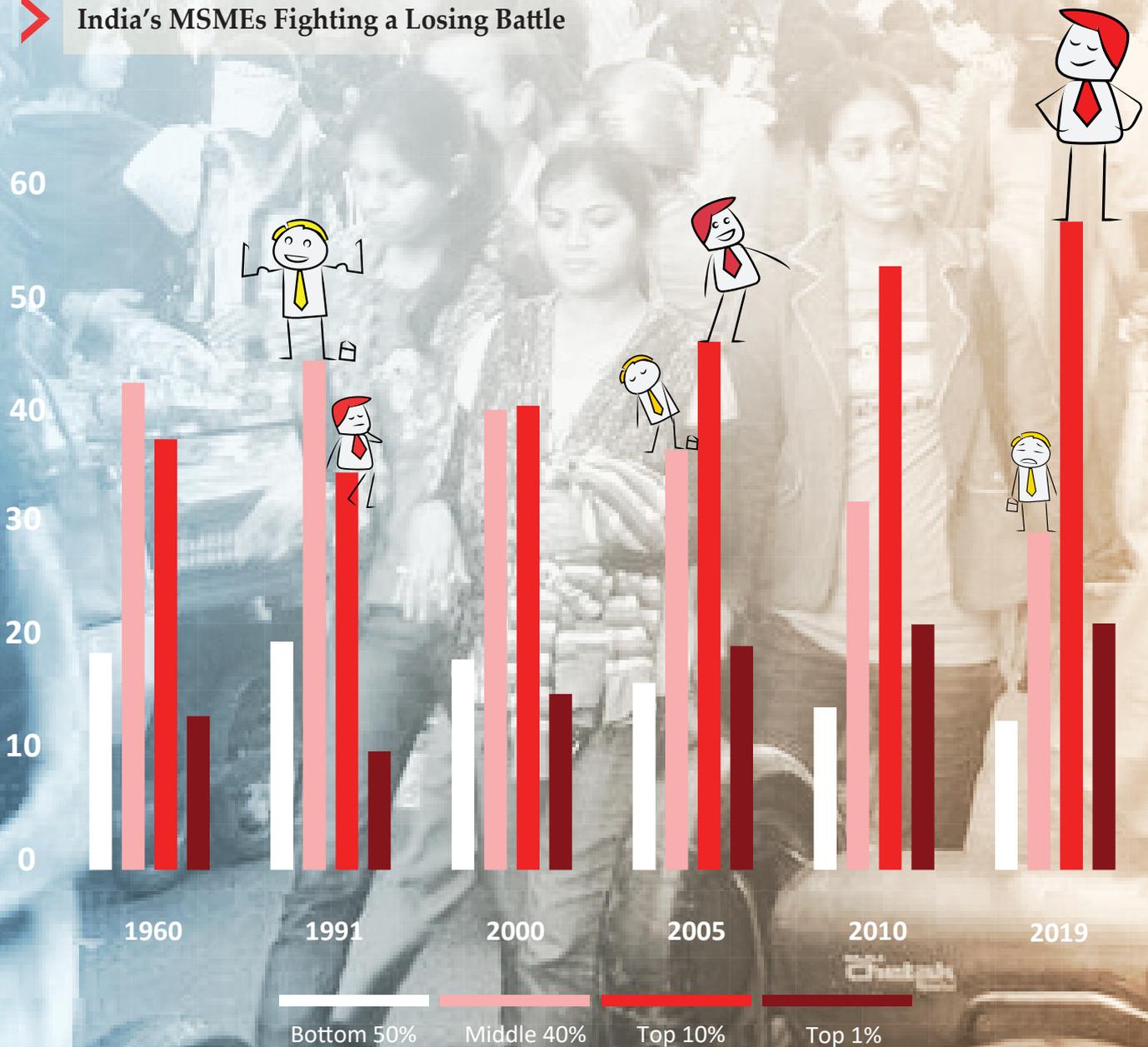
> **Significance of Professionals in Politics**
Dr Shashi Tharoor

> **Fallen Angels**
Dr Kota Neelima

> **India's MSMEs Fighting a Losing Battle**

COVER STORY

> **India's Dwindling Middle Class**
Salman Anees Soz



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Dedication



This issue of *Inspire!* is dedicated to all healthcare professionals of our country: doctors, nurses, and all hospital staff. With their tireless service to humanity, especially during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic in the past almost 1.5 years, they have set new benchmarks of humane principles for coexistence and community living. They have exemplified selfless service of the highest order, putting themselves at risk each single day so that others have a better chance to live. We salute them!

01 Note from the Chairman

Our Politics Needs Our Professionals

Dr Shashi Tharoor, MP and Chairman, AIPC



Before I entered politics myself, one of my more frequent laments had been about the abdication by the Indian educated professional classes of our political responsibility for our own destiny. My generation grew up in an India where a vast gulf separated those who went into the professions or the civil services, and those who entered politics.

“Our middle-class has neither the time for activism (they’re too busy doing professional jobs to make ends meet) nor the money or the votes to count in politics. The money flows at the top, and the votes, in our stratified society, lie at the bottom, where the numbers are.”

The latter, at the risk of simplifying things a bit, were either at the very top or the very bottom: Either maharajahs or big zamindars with a feudal hold on the allegiances of the voters in their districts, or semi-literate “lumpens” with little to lose who got into politics as their only means of self-advancement. If you belonged to neither category, you studied hard, took your exams, and made a success of your life on merit—and you steered clear of politics as an activity for those “other people”.

But the problem with that approach was that it left out of Indian politics the very group of people that are the mainstay of politics in other democracies. Around the world, the educated taxpaying professional classes are normally the ones who bring values and convictions to a country’s politics, and who have the most direct stake in questions of what a government can and cannot do. Across Europe, for instance, it’s people from the middle-class who set the political agenda: They make up the bulk of the activists, voters and candidates for political office. In most Western democracies, politics is essentially a middle-class pursuit.

India has a highly competitive society where the salaried professional class rarely enjoys the luxury of being able to take the kind of risks that a political life implies. Our middle-class has neither the time for activism (they’re too busy doing professional jobs to make ends meet) nor the money or the votes to count in politics. The money flows at the top, and the votes, in our stratified society, lie at the bottom, where the numbers are.

So members of the educated taxpaying professional class abstain from the process, and all too often look at it with contempt. They don’t show up to vote in large numbers; whereas the poor in India do vote, the middle-class disempowers itself by its disdain.

Yet it is this section of society that is also acutely aware of some of India’s most pressing needs, such as the need for sound and stable governance. They are engaged with an idea of India that is growth-driven and not merely by the divisive politics of caste and community. They demand a sustained increase in the quality of public services paid for by their taxes. Far from the shrill cries of Hindutva and the gau rakshaks, their priorities are investments in education, healthcare and urban development.

Can India afford the continued “secession of the professionals” from our politics? No—and it probably won’t, as the country’s economic transformation brings more and more people into the middle and professional classes, which will one day reach the point where its numbers will indeed begin to matter in elections. Why

shouldn’t Indian politics benefit from a healthy infusion of professionals?

It’s striking that while 12 of the last 16 American Presidential nominees of the two major US political parties were graduates of either Harvard or Yale, the products of our best educational institutions rarely venture into politics.

“Around the world, the educated taxpaying professional classes are normally the ones who bring values and convictions to a country’s politics, and who have the most direct stake in questions of what a government can and cannot do.”

In America, the commentator Michael Medved wrote that the skills and determination required to get into a Harvard or Yale are in themselves indicators of suitability for high office—“the driven, ferociously focused kids willing to expend the energy and make the sacrifices to conquer our most exclusive universities are among those most likely to enjoy similar success in the even more fiercely fought free-for-all of presidential politics.”

In India, the kids who “conquer our most exclusive universities” would for the most part consider it beneath themselves to step into the muck and mire of our country’s politics. The attitude of most Indians is that if you’re smart enough to get into a good university, you can make something better of your life in a “real” profession. Politics, it is generally muttered amongst the middle-class, is for those who aren’t able to do

“In America, the commentator Michael Medved wrote that the skills and determination required to get into a Harvard or Yale are in themselves indicators of suitability for high office.”

anything else. And the skills required to thrive in the world of Indian politics have nothing to do with the talents honed by a first-class education.

This is changing, as is the public’s expectations of what a politician should be like. An initiative like the Professionals’ Congress will ensure that more professionals with skills and qualifications, but no political background, come into politics. In that, eventually, will lie our democracy’s salvation.

So my message to professional Indians who actually have principles and ideals is this: When you think about the future of India, think also of getting involved in politics. The nation needs you. The Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, speaking of South Africa, once said he hoped his country would get leaders the people could look up to, “not people we have to keep finding excuses for”.

If well-educated, middle-class Indians—the kind of people who are the mainstay of our professions—want a return to the era when our country’s political leadership was full of people whom the nation admired, they will have to enter the fray themselves. Otherwise, all too often, we will have to pay allegiance to people we need to find excuses for.

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My own innings in politics is prefixed by one of the stories of the Indian dream that is common to probably every professional in India. It begins with a child born into a middle-class family, benefiting from the power of education, working hard to enter one of India’s many reputed colleges, graduating from one of the well-known international institutions, and relying on our traditional values of hard work and integrity to build a successful career.

My own life story gives me the faith that the Congress understands the needs of growing middle and professional classes, has the right ideals, and is the best placed to uphold the values of hard work and acceptance of difference that underpin the aspirations of the middle class for itself and for the Idea of India in the 21st century.

Many Indians shy away from politics as a profession because of the belief that the scope for professionals is limited. The creation of the Professionals’ Congress shows that that is changing. My hope is therefore that, in the near future, there will be many more educated, professional middle-class Indians in politics—and that they will do better than I have managed to do so far!

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Salaried professionals, represented by the [@ProfCong](#), are being hard hit as estimates show that 21 million salaried professionals have lost their jobs during the last 6 months. But the phenomenon began much earlier with Demonetisation: Shri [@ShashiTharoor](#) [#SpeakUpForJobs](#)



02 Note from the Deputy Chairman

India's Course Correction and AIPC

Salman Anees Soz, Deputy Chairman, AIPC & Regional Coordinator, AIPC North Zone



of middle class dreams have crumbled. Small businesses have taken a beating and millions of jobs have been lost, including those belonging to the professional class. To make matters worse, cost of living is higher as a result of government policies that seek to tax more when the economy is stuck in a quagmire of low growth, high fiscal deficits, high youth unemployment, rising inequality, and persistent banking sector problems.

Forget the government's spurious claims of an improved business climate. More wealthy Indians are looking to other countries for citizenship than citizens of any other country. And some of the wealthiest who remain in India appear to be controlling the nation by financing the ruling party's misgovernance. This is the worst of all possible outcomes.

It is here that we in AIPC have a role to play. We know that India is headed in the wrong direction. But the challenge for us is to propose alternatives that resonate with the Indian public. As I write in my essay on India's diminishing middle class, there is plenty that we can do to confront the challenges India faces. However, it will require a steadfast adherence India's founding values as well as modern and innovative approaches to governance. Our approach should focus on what works for people in different parts of the country. A highly decentralized approach that puts people first is what will see India through these difficult times.

I am confident AIPC Fellows can contribute to this endeavour. In my interactions with Fellows from different parts of the country, I am constantly amazed by the talent we have. From lawyers to environmentalists to teachers and doctors and other professionals

Congratulations to the AIPC *Inspire!* team for bringing out the next edition of our magazine. The team has worked exceptionally hard to compile timely, relevant, and interesting content that I am certain will hold the attention of AIPC Fellows.

India is going through a very challenging time. Established social norms of civility and togetherness are coming under increasing pressure. India's democratic experiment is under strain. Institutions that are critical for our progress are floundering. Inherent structural weaknesses were exposed and exacerbated by Covid-19.

It should therefore be no surprise that India's economic prospects are far worse now than they were just a decade ago. There are now more poor people in India and millions

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and entrepreneurs, AIPC is a big talent pool. The Indian National Congress is fortunate to have access to this talent pool and I am grateful to all of you for volunteering your valuable time and effort to our cause.

Once again, a big thank you to the team behind AIPC *Inspire!*. You should be proud of your effort! Thank you for letting me be part of the journey.



Around the country, our small department is fighting for [@INCIndia](#) and for the country. Keep it up AIPC Jhansi! [@ProfCong](#)



03 Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Nature's Fury and Inhuman Assaults on India's Soul

Dr Vandana R. Singh, Editor-in-Chief, *Inspire!*



'April is the cruellest month' wrote T. S. Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land*, in 1922. Almost a hundred years later, the words came back to haunt us!

As the second wave of Covid-19 hit us around April 2021, we saw our countrymen and women dying for lack of oxygen and shortage of hospital beds. As each one of us struggled to survive, unidentified bodies floated in rivers in grim disregard of an accepted civilised concept—dignity in death. Cruel indeed. Uncivilised and barbaric too.

But April '21 was the cruellest month of the year not just because Nature vented its fury. It was cruel because the widespread misery caused was clearly borne of unpreparedness on part of an apathetic government. Mysteriously, the 'system' and its failure was held responsible for everything that went wrong. System? One wondered, who makes the system, what it is. And whose responsibility is it to set it right? Who is going to systemise this 'system'?

That is a question that remains unanswered to this day. And I daresay, it is not the only one, as we wait in vain for clarity on accountability for the 'system', within the larger system.

It has been an unusual year in more ways than one. While the common man lived in a bleak present, prices of everyday commodities skyrocketed, jobs disappeared, not to mention the continuous increase in fuel prices that has gone on to become a recurring phenomenon. Small businesses shut down, some restaurant owners

wondered where their next meal was coming from, tenants sought rent waivers, while house owners struggled to repay bank loans. And in the midst of this tumultuous reality, aggrieved farmers continued their protest—and continued to remain unheard for close to a year. With the farmers being denied the simple luxury of a sympathetic hearing of their side of the story, sadly, this became one protest where the protestors faced only losses since the agitation began. Ironically, we pray to the goddess Annapurna ensuring we never have to go without a meal, but turn a deaf ear to the real-life *annadatas*, knocking at our door.

Our losses have been many, and of varied kinds. One hopes that over time these shall be a thing of the past. Financial losses might be reversed, physical distance from loved ones will eventually get covered, sooner or later children will be back in school, and gyms and salons will bring back fitness and aesthetics to the fore, and make life worth livingsomewhat. But will we be able to retrieve the lost soul of this country? That is the question that begs answers.

That India, which since time immemorial has been the melting pot of geographies, cultures, communities, languages, beliefs, and faiths. The India that has always taken pride in its diversity and where films like *Amar, Akbar, Anthony* could not only be made, but could go on to become superhits. An India, where Ustad Vilayat Khan and Ustad Bismillah Khan could freely indulge us with their jugalbandi of *mohe panghat pe Nandlal chhed gayo re* (a traditional song where village belles are complaining about Krishna, the young Hindu god and his mischief). These maestros and many others like them could keep us mesmerised, without the listeners even once thinking about, or questioning, the identity of the artists bringing alive the scene for us through their enchanting musical rendition.

The India that understood well that art and music transcend personalities and physical boundaries. And most of all, they transcend personal beliefs. That is the soul of India. And that is the soul that is today lost. That non-tangible, yet pleasantly omnipresent quality of acceptance leading to a powerful, heady confluence—one that was overarching and all-pervading. It was

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also well above narrow thought processes and shallow, divisive ideologies. That is the lost soul of India that must be retrieved, reinstated, saved, and preserved for future generations.

Thought processes must be revisited, history must be understood correctly and retold accurately, windows of the mind must be opened to let in fresh air, the past must be cherished, not for the sake of melodramatic nostalgia but as the basis on which to build a bright promising future where the only goal is to make the world a better place. A place where equality is a given, diversity is cherished, and inclusivity is celebrated.

It might be useful to remember that cages aren't made of iron, they're made of thoughts. Jai Jawan!! Jai Kisan!! Jai Hind!!



Introducing, *Inspire Interactives* - A brand new space for exchanging ideas, hosted by Vandana R Singh (@VandanaRSingh), Editor-in-Chief of AIPC *Inspire!* magazine.

[#ProfessionalsForProgress](#)



04 | Note from the Chief Operations Officer

Daro Mat! We are here...

Aalim Javeri, Chief Operations Officer, AIPC



have learnt and made corrections—sought to go back to what makes us great: Our collective potential.

I never cease to be amazed by the extraordinary level of talent that our Fellows have. The AIPC and the Indian National Congress are truly very lucky to have such a high calibre of professionals inclined and committed to working towards the advancement of our collective agenda for progress. As we have elections (as per my account, 16 between now and the next general elections), AIPC will be playing an increasing role in these efforts both at the front-end and at the back-end. But more importantly, your platform for progress is going to continue to provide more opportunities for the issues that concern India's working professionals.

It's indeed a pleasure to look back upon all that we have managed to achieve together in these few months since the first edition of AIPC *Inspire!* was published. We have made unimaginable strides and maintained consistent growth. As a department and as a unit we have been able to give more of our colleagues an opportunity to get to know one another and contribute together.

I am pleased to say that we are now becoming a medium-sized enterprise both in terms of size and operations. To reflect that, we have re-constituted the social media communications team, expanded the AIPC *Inspire!* team, and are now looking to expand our state teams with more technical capacity. With every new effort we

“*What has been of particular importance to me is the manner in which we have appointed and expanded the operations teams. A transparent interview process with a clear mechanism of candidate selection has been pivotal in ensuring merit-based promotion. Our efforts have resulted in some of the most qualified professionals now working with us at the national level in various roles.*”

Our new MSME coordinator will be complemented with the team across the country to assist in bringing your issues to the Centre. Similarly, we are looking to expand the ideas of our nation's heroes, the medical professionals, and giving them an opportunity to advance some of their concerns as an industry and body of professionals.

What has been of particular importance to me is the manner in which we have appointed and expanded the operations teams. A transparent interview process with a clear mechanism of candidate selection has been pivotal in ensuring merit-based promotion. Our efforts have resulted in some of the most qualified professionals now working with us at the national level in various roles. As I see it, their talent, capacity, and abilities will make the difference between us realising the next threshold or remaining stagnant.

Our people make us great. Our people are the key to our growth. All in all, there is a great deal more work to be done, doors to be opened, and dreams to be realised.

As your COO, it is my hope that we continue to provide opportunities that reflect your ambitions. I can feel and see a sense of uncertainty creeping amongst certain sections of our society and certain industries; let me quote our leader and say, “Daro mat! We are here.” Best wishes!

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. -M Mead

[@ProfCong](#)
[#ProfessionalsForProgress](#)



Broken leg or not, will never stop walking for progress with [@ProfCong](#) & [@INCIndia](#)
[#ProfessionalsForProgress](#)



COVER STORY



Important Issues in Focus, Up-Close

THE BIG CLOSE UP

05 India's Dwindling Middle Class A Red Flag for Our Future

Salman Anees Soz, Dy Chairman, AIPC & Regional Coordinator, AIPC North Zone



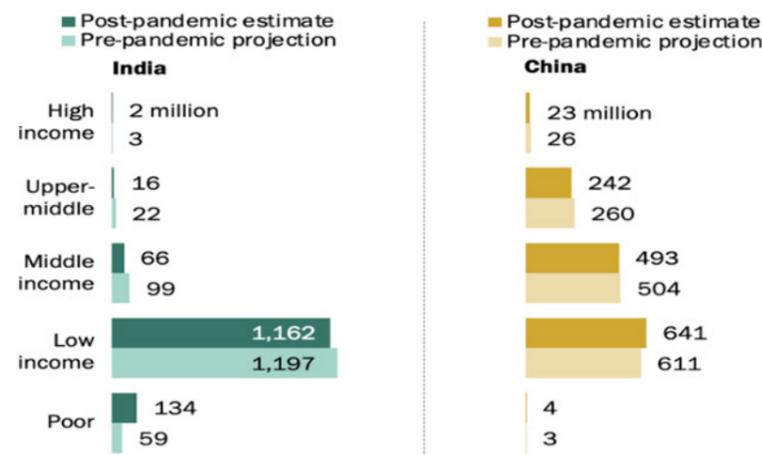
In April 2021, the New York Times reported on the devastating toll of Covid-19 on India's middle class.¹ The report starts with the story of Ashish Anand, a former flight attendant and fashion designer who borrowed money and put his life savings into setting up a clothing shop in outer Delhi. This was in February 2020, just before the pandemic struck India. Two months later, Anand shut his shop down, his dream falling apart. The New York Times published a picture of Anand's family. In the picture, the beautiful kids are eating a meal. Two refrigerators, a sign of middle-class comforts, stand in the background. A year later, this small family and millions of others in India face the prospect of slipping out of the middle class and into poverty. Anand's family now depends "on handouts from his aging in-laws. Khichdi, or watery lentils cooked with rice, has replaced eggs and chicken at the dinner table." Anand reports that sometimes his children go to bed hungry. This scene was unimaginable just a few years ago.

In 2007, McKinsey Global Institute called India's growing consumer market a "bird of gold" and the Indians rapidly joining the ranks of the middle class, the "next big spenders".² McKinsey's forecast captured the momentum and optimism of the time—they believed that India's middle class of 50 million would expand to 583 million (41 percent of the population) by 2025.³ And for a while that really did seem possible. However, this has not happened. Estimates about the true size of the middle class which can be as large as 264 million

or as small as 23 million do not even come close to this projection. Moreover, years of economic mismanagement, faltering growth rates, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic mean that the middle class that does exist has taken a battering. India could not have steered more off course. The Pew Research Center estimates that India's middle class, defined as people who live on USD 10 to USD 20 a day, has shrunk by a third—its strength of 99 million, according to Pew, decreased to 66 million in 2020.⁴

Figure 1: India's Small and Shrinking Middle Class

Estimated number of people in each income tier in 2020 before and after the global recession, in millions.



Notes: The poor live on \$2 or less daily, low income on \$2.01-\$10, middle income on \$10.01-\$20, upper-middle income on \$20.01-\$50, and high income on more than \$50; figures expressed in 2011 purchasing power parities in 2011 prices. It is assumed there is no change in the income distribution from the benchmark year for the projection to 2020. The term "post-pandemic" refers to the period since the onset of the pandemic in January 2020.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the World Bank's PovcalNet database.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹ Singh, Kara Deep and Hari Kumar. 'Covid-19 pushes India's middle class toward poverty.' New York Times. April 16, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/16/business/economy/india-covid19-middle-class.html>

² Kapur, Devesh, Sircar, Nilanjan, and Vaishnav, Milan (2017). 'The importance of being middle class in India.' From The New Middle Class: Data and Perceptions. <https://vaishnavmilan.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/being-middle-class-in-india-proofs.pdf>

³ Farrell, Diana and Beinhocker, Eric (2007). 'Next big spenders: India's middle class.' <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/overview/in-the-news/next-big-spenders-indian-middle-class>

⁴ Kochhar, Rakesh (2021). 'In the pandemic, India's middle class shrinks and poverty spreads while China sees smaller changes.' <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/in-the-pandemic-indias-middle-class-shrinks-and-poverty-spreads-while-china-sees-smaller-changes/>

“ However, the 33 million Indians who have been forced out of the middle class account for “60 percent of the global retreat in the number of people in the middle-income tier”.⁵ Among these ranks are professionals who have lost their employment.⁶ ”



Image in public domain: unsplash.com

Of course, living standards have plummeted around the world as the pandemic repeatedly disrupts economic activity. However, the 33 million Indians who have been forced out of the middle class account for “60 percent of the global retreat in the number of people in the middle-income tier”.⁵ Among these ranks are professionals who have lost their employment.⁶ Many may regain lost ground as India's economic recovery takes hold but it will be an arduous journey. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were serious questions about the true size and influence of the country's middle class.

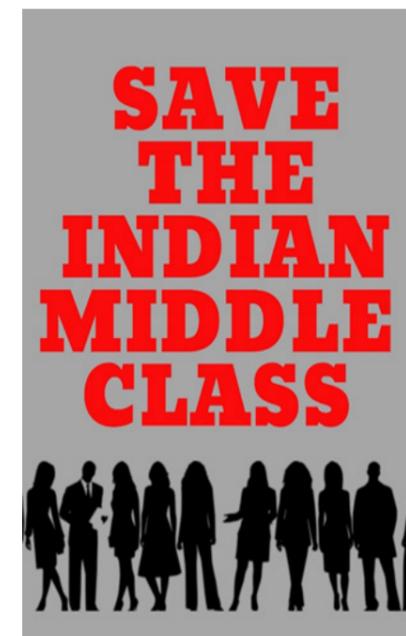
In 2018, *The Economist* referred to this as “India's missing middle”.⁷ Talk of the size, purchasing power, and growth of the Indian middle class was more hype than reality, as companies with disappointing returns found. Simply, only a small part of the Indian market can match the consumption behavior of its global peers. As *The Economist* points out, “Even for someone in the top 10 percent of Indian earners, an annual Netflix subscription can cost over a week's income”.⁸

is growing, it means that the economy is growing, material comfort at the individual and household levels is rising, and there are opportunities for upward mobility. Economic historians have long discussed links between the middle class and economic development.

The middle class was a driving force in the economic development of Western Europe.¹⁰ Similarly, “the great English middle class” of the 18th century is cited as one of the reasons England was the first country to industrialize.¹¹ The role of the American middle class in creating demand-side growth in the 1950s' post-war boom is well-known. Economist William Easterly (2000) finds that countries where a “middle class consensus” exists tend to grow faster.¹² According to Easterly, a “higher share of income for the middle class and lower ethnic divisions are empirically associated with higher income and higher growth.” Furthermore, “a middle class consensus is also associated with more education, better health, better infrastructure, better economic policies, less political instability, less civil war and ethnic minorities at risk, more social 'modernization', and more democracy”.

The Middle Class: Important to Economic Growth

Consumption is one of the most visible attributes of the middle class and forms the backbone of domestic demand. Globally, middle income households have the largest contribution to aggregate consumption.⁹ In India, it is unsurprising that ownership of a television, vehicles (perhaps, a scooter), refrigerator, etc., are emblematic of making it to the middle class. Beyond consumption, a robust middle class is desirable for many reasons. For an emerging economy like India, a growing middle class is a good proxy/indicator for economic health and successful policy. If the middle class



⁵ Kochhar, Rakesh (2021). 'In the pandemic, India's middle class shrinks and poverty spreads while China sees smaller changes.' <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/in-the-pandemic-indias-middle-class-shrinks-and-poverty-spreads-while-china-sees-smaller-changes/>

⁶ 'Unemployment crisis: Over 60 lakh white collar professional jobs lost during May-August.' India Today, September 18, 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/business/story/unemployment-crisis-deepens-over-60-lakh-white-collar-professionals-lost-jobs-during-may-august-1722971-2020-09-18>

⁷ The Economist (2018). 'India has a hole where its middle class should be.' <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/01/13/india-has-a-hole-where-its-middle-class-should-be>

⁸ The Economist (2018). 'The elephant in the room: India's missing middle class.' <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/01/11/indias-missing-middle-class>

⁹ OECD (2019). 'Chapter 4. The rising cost of the middle-class lifestyle.' From Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e2352f43-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e2352f43-en>

¹⁰ Easterly, William (2000). The Middle Class Consensus and Economic Development. World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18849/multi_page.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹¹ Easterly, William (2000). The Middle Class Consensus and Economic Development. World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18849/multi_page.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹² Easterly, William (2000). The Middle Class Consensus and Economic Development. World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18849/multi_page.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Globally, the middle class is best recognizable by its ownership of “cash, credentials, and culture”.¹³ These very characteristics are channels through which the middle class promotes economic growth. With that said, credentials or accumulating human capital through investments in education and health is the most significant way the middle class spurs growth. An analysis of cross-country data by the Asian Development Bank (2011) found that the presence of a strong middle class positively helps economic growth by increasing levels of human capital in the economy.¹⁴ Even if India’s middle class is unable to consume Netflix, Starbucks, or take vacations at the same rates as middle class families in the developed world, its place in the cogs of the economy is invaluable.

India’s Middle Class: Slow Growth, Rising Inequality

Over the decades since Independence, the Indian middle class has evolved. In colonial India, the middle class was a thin stratum of people, created by the British, professionals meant to serve as “cultural mediators” between the British rulers and the Indian population at large.¹⁵ This class was not necessarily the economic middle. Today, the terms middle class and middle income are generally interchangeable.

So, how large is India’s middle class actually? There is no one definitive figure. Among policymakers and academics, there is little agreement on the parameters

“Pre-pandemic estimates show that China’s middle class rapidly ballooned from 3.1 percent of its population in 2000 to 50.8 percent in 2018, Brazil’s from 30.3 percent to 51.4 percent, and Russia’s from 28.2 percent to 71.5 percent.²¹ In the same period, India’s middle class grew from 1.2 percent in 2000 to a comparatively paltry 5.7 percent in 2018 (based on Pew estimates and the USD 10 to USD 20-a-day definition).”

”

to measure the middle class and its size. The Indian middle class can vary depending on whom one asks and what they are looking at—wealth, income, or self-identification. For instance, the Pew Research Center says 66 million people form the middle class while Credit Suisse’s wealth-based report found that only 23.6 million Indian adults qualified as middle class in 2015.¹⁶ The Government of India, citing the number of people filing taxes, came up with the figure of 28.7 million in 2011.¹⁷ Perceptions differ, however. When surveyed, 50 percent of Indians self-selected as middle class.¹⁸ However, there is broad consensus that the Indian middle class is much smaller than imagined. For comparison, China’s middle class is at least 400 million strong.

Some may argue that comparing the Indian middle class with the standards and income of the “Western middle class” may be unfair. For instance, Martin Ravillion (2009), the economist who came up with a dollar-a-day poverty line, argues that people living on USD 2 to USD 13 per day in the developing world could be considered to be members of the middle class.¹⁹ However, Christian Meyer and Nancy Birdsall (2012) at the Center for Global Development find that USD 10 per capita per day seems to have emerged as the “global minimum for the middle class”.²⁰ It is hard to imagine someone living right above the USD 2-a-day global poverty line being able to comfortably wear the characteristics of income stability, consumption, and



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human capital accumulation that we have come to associate with the middle class.

The truth is that India’s middle class has not grown at rates comparable to its global peers. Pre-pandemic estimates show that China’s middle class rapidly ballooned from 3.1 percent of its population in 2000 to 50.8 percent in 2018, Brazil’s from 30.3 percent to 51.4 percent, and Russia’s from 28.2 percent to 71.5 percent.²¹ In the same period, India’s middle class grew from 1.2 percent in 2000 to a comparatively paltry 5.7 percent in 2018 (based on Pew estimates and the USD 10 to USD 20-a-day definition). Is it any wonder then that publications such as *The Economist* argue that India “has a hole where its middle class should be”?

Another reason to bemoan this “missing middle” is that it is indicative of the existing and worsening inequality in the country. As inequality has deepened, levels of intergenerational socio-economic upward mobility have remained low in India.²² Growth in average education levels and the average income has not been sufficient to help along upward mobility.

Table 1: Change in the Size of the Middle Class in BRICS Countries (2000-2018), Based on the Pew Research Center’s Estimates

Economy	Share of Population in 2000 (%)	Share of Population in 2018 (%)	Change (%)
China	19.12	42.93	37.95
Russia	20.11	44.88	35.02
Brazil	18.54	40.56	40.9
South Africa	16.48	36.97	46.55
India	14.33	32.46	53.21

Source: World Bank (PewRes)

For instance, Asher et al. (2021) find that in Gujarat there has been “high economic growth but relatively low mobility”.²³ A similar pattern emerges in national-level data. While India’s per capita income has steadily grown (pre-pandemic), this prosperity has not been evenly distributed. Over the past three decades, the income of the top 1 percent of Indians has doubled while the share of income of the middle 40 percent has shrunk. Most Indians make far lesser than the per capita income of USD 1,900 (2020 estimates).²⁴ Inequality has only become sharper because of Covid-19. As millions of stories of distressed businesses, crushed middle class aspirations, and unemployment emerged, India simultaneously added one new billionaire every week in 2020.²⁵

Saving India’s Middle Class

As one report points out, “what is commonly referred to as the ‘middle class’ in India has nothing to do with Middle India” and the middle class is actually the upper or upper-middle class.²⁶ This path is clearly unsustainable and detrimental to India’s future prospects. India deserves a great middle class populated by professionals and others who can aspire to better living standards for their children and within their own lifetimes. The objective of public policy then, on a broad level, is fairly intuitive—fostering an economic environment where this middle India can become middle income. Much of this has to do with reducing inequalities of income,

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improving employment opportunities, increasing access to quality healthcare and education, reducing gender inequality, etc. The provision of public goods and adequate opportunities for mobility should be the focus, accompanied by an understanding of the needs and priorities of the middle class.

Table 2: Growing Inequality: India’s Middle 40 Percent’s Share of Pre-Tax Income Has Been Shrinking Despite the Growth in Average Per Capita Income

Year	Income Inequality—India			
	Bottom 50%	Middle 40%	Top 10%	Top 1%
1960	19.12	42.93	37.95	13.54
1991	20.11	44.88	35.02	10.44
2000	18.54	40.56	40.9	15.51
2005	16.48	36.97	46.55	19.71
2010	14.33	32.46	53.21	21.64
2019	13.13	29.74	57.13	21.73

Source: World Inequality Database

The middle class saves and consumes but, above all, distinctly values the accumulation of human capital which in turn creates a foundation for economic growth. It is unsurprising that core items such as health and education make up the bulk of middle-class spending.²⁷ Ensuring low costs and better quality of these core goods will help nurture the middle class and its most desirable attributes from a growth perspective. Given that local and global labour market demands are rapidly evolving, addressing issues like skill gaps and reskilling will also be critical to keeping middle class professionals competitive/nimble and able to adapt to

a changing labour market without falling out of the middle class altogether.

There can be no middle class without adequate jobs. “Nothing seems more middle class than the fact of having a steady well-paying job,” write Abhijeet Banerjee and Esther Duflo.²⁸ They go on to say that members of the middle class generally prefer “the right salaried job” over entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, India has not been able to create jobs at the pace it needs to. What we have are young Indians with aspirations but no avenues to fulfill them. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), in March 2021, 40 million Indians were “jobless but willing to work”.²⁹ Creating

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¹³ Reeves, Richard V., Guyot, Katherine, and Krause, Eleanor (2018). ‘Defining the middle class: Cash, credentials, or culture?’ Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/defining-the-middle-class-cash-credentials-or-culture/>

¹⁴ Chun, Natalie, Hasan, Rana, and Ulubasoglu, Mehmet (2011). ‘The role of the middle class in economic development: What do cross-country data show?’ ADB Economics Working Paper Series, Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28751/economics-wp245.pdf>

¹⁵ The Wire (April 7, 2021). ‘Does the Indian middle class really exist?’ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_hrgYbpPuw

¹⁶ Salve, Prachi (2015). ‘Not 264 million, middle class is 24 million: Report.’ The Wire. <https://thewire.in/economy/not-264-million-middle-class-is-24-million-report>

¹⁷ Kapur, Devesh, Sircar, Nilanjan, and Vaishnav, Milan (2017). ‘The importance of being middle class in India.’ From *The New Middle Class: Data and Perceptions*. <https://vaishnavmilan.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/being-middle-class-in-india-proofs.pdf>

¹⁸ Kapur, Devesh, Sircar, Nilanjan, and Vaishnav, Milan (2017). ‘The importance of being middle class in India.’ From *The New Middle Class: Data and Perceptions*. <https://vaishnavmilan.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/being-middle-class-in-india-proofs.pdf>

¹⁹ Ravillion, Martin (2009). ‘The developing world’s bulging (but vulnerable) ‘middle class.’ World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4816, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1327285>

²⁰ Meyer, Christian and Birdsall, Nancy (2012). ‘New estimates of India’s middle class.’ Center for Global Development. https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/archive/doc/2013_MiddleClassIndia_TechnicalNote_CGDNote.pdf

²¹ ‘How well-off is China’s middle class.’ China Power. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-middle-class/>

²² Ghatak, Maitreesh (2021). ‘India’s inequality problem.’ The India Forum. <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/does-india-have-inequality-problem>

²³ Asher, Sam, Novosad, Paul, and Rafkin, Charlie (2021). Intergenerational Mobility in India: New Methods and Estimates Across Time, Space, and Communities. <http://paulnovosad.com/pdf/anr-india-mobility.pdf>

²⁴ World Bank (2021). World Development Indicators: GDP Per Capita (Current US\$) – India. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IN>

²⁵ Yuthika Bhargava (2021). ‘In 2020, world added 3 billionaires every two days, India added one every week.’ The Hindu, March 02. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-adds-40-billionaires-in-pandemic-year-adani-ambani-see-rise-in-wealth-report/article33970268.ece>

²⁶ Hedrick-Wong, Yuva. From Middle India to the Middle Class of India: Inclusive Growth as the Path to Success. <https://www.mastercardcenter.org/content/dam/mc-cig/uploads/From-Middle-India-to-Middle-Class-of-India.pdf>

²⁷ OECD (2019). ‘Chapter 4. The rising cost of the middle-class lifestyle.’ From *Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class*. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e2352f43-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e2352f43-en>

²⁸ Banerjee, Abhijeet V. and Duflo, Esther (2008). ‘What is middle class about the middle classes around the world?’ <https://economics.mit.edu/files/10881>

²⁹ Rajvanshi, Astha (July 23, 2021). ‘India’s middle class sees gains wiped out or hang by a thread.’ Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/7/23/indias-middle-class-sees-gains-wiped-out-or-hang-by-a-thread>

job opportunities will be critical in helping young professionals move into the middle class and remain there. The supply-side of this involves improving skill sets and reducing inequalities in access and quality of education, as discussed above. On the demand side, the quality and stability of jobs matter.

When thinking about avenues for economic participation, policymakers must focus especially on women. The OECD suggests that improving female labor force participation and earnings can increase disposable incomes for the middle class across the board.³⁰ India has very poor rates of female labor force participation—one of the lowest in the world—which presents a large, untapped economic opportunity. McKinsey estimates that India could add USD 770 billion to its GDP if gender parity is achieved.³¹

Policies to make commutes safer such as better street lighting and deputing more female cops, for example, can go a long way in getting women into the workforce— particularly urban middle

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class women. Good quality maternal healthcare and maternity leave are also important to boosting women's economic participation and general health outcomes.

The Covid-19 crisis has cost India a large chunk of its middle class. One must ask—could Indian policymakers have done more to reduce the scale of this backsliding? Perhaps the availability of unemployment benefits or income support to smooth consumption for the middle class could have reduced the number of families forced out of the middle class. In the United States, stimulus payments and tax breaks actually helped middle class families see their incomes rise by 5 percent.³² Such large payouts may be difficult for India, but contingency plans that include income support for vulnerable middle income households must be seriously considered for future crises.

There is much more that can be done to grow the middle class. This includes ensuring that low and medium earners receive fair wages, that affordable housing is available, that quality education and health are accessible, etc.³³ The focus of such policies must not remain confined to towns and cities, however. While the most ubiquitous images of middle class life usually have an urban setting in television,

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advertisements, and our imaginations, a significant number of middle class households are based in rural India too.³⁴ Ultimately, any and all policy directions need to be inclusive. This may be the only way India can undo the inequalities that are stifling the growth of its middle class.

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³⁰ OECD (2019). 'Chapter 5: Policies for a prosperous middle class.' From Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/8e318c69-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/8e318c69-en>.

³¹ Woetzel, Jonathan et al. (2018). The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Asia Pacific. McKinsey Global Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-asia-pacific>.

³² Rappeport, Allen (2021). 'New stimulus package brings big benefits to the middle class.' The New York Times, March 10. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/10/us/politics/biden-stimulus-middle-class-benefits.html>.

³³ OECD (2019). 'Chapter 5: Policies for a prosperous middle class.' From Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/8e318c69-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/8e318c69-en>.

³⁴ Ramanathan, Swati and Ramanathan, Ramesh (2019). 'Many layers within India's middle class.' Hindustan Times, April 16. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india->

06

Fallen Angels

A Case for Social Journalism and Counter Communication

Dr Kota Neelima, Author, Political Scientist, and Researcher
Founder and Director of Institute of Perception Studies (IPS), Delhi



Role of the Media

Democracy promises visibility to every citizen. Visibility provides the opportunity to identify and fulfill the needs of individuals, invest and support their aspirations, design and control policy to address gaps, and protect and promote certain values. The Constitution of India guarantees visibility as a right, and the law upholds this right through its interpretation of what visibility is and how it can be supported.

“ The choice of news is heavily tilted towards favouring governments and political parties that hold the strings, of the purses and of the puppets. As a result, our media has now become a petri-dish to study state control, state insecurity, and state diversion. The media is the location to learn which way the government wants the wind to blow, and which side the corporate power wants the policy to turn. It is the place to study visibility of the privileged few and how democracy can sustain such massive inequality on a daily basis.

By nature, visibility is essentially the domain of media and its function of communication. Significantly, media also decides with every news what will receive the limelight and what will stay out of limelight. This crucial decision must be informed by a commitment to provide visibility to those who may be partially or completely

invisible to the state and the society. With this commitment, media fulfills the role it must play in a democracy, and completes the circle of governance, accountability, representation, and other expectations of the voters. If visibility for all is a right, then media is a critical link in making this right possible. Any abdication of this duty is not only a dereliction, but harms generations of citizens who have no access to be heard or seen, except through the media.

Supported by the professional mandate and democratic duty, the media can serve the unknown, unseen citizens of this country. It can choose to be unbiased, fair, and fearless. If it did that, such a media should have the support of the citizens, the principles of the Constitution, the courts, the civil society, the powerful, as well as the powerless classes. Media can make all of India visible, and especially those who cannot afford to pay for their visibility. The business and the politics will be forced to follow such an independent media.

Reality of Our Media

Our media, instead, showcases the powerful, the rich, and the influential. The choice of news is heavily tilted towards favouring governments and political parties that hold the strings, of the purses and of the puppets. As a result, our media has

now become a petri-dish to study state control, state insecurity, and state diversion. The media is the location to learn which way the government wants the wind to blow, and which side the corporate power wants the policy to turn. It is the place to study visibility of the privileged few and how democracy can sustain such massive inequality on a daily basis.

Every evening, news is analyzed so that the audience gets the context and content of the happenings during the day. These 'news debates' are held at 'prime time,' a general term to denote maximum viewership. Whatever may be the numbers, it must be noted that the audience are mere inert receivers of news and views.

The debate takes place between opposite sides, and the anchor moderates the discussion. Usually, there are winners and losers in this game, and the decision rests with the anchor. The audience does not decide the neutrality of the anchor, and must accept it as a given. In many ways, the news debate is only a popular show that caters to a pre-decided opinion but arrives at it through elaborate song and dance.

This pretense is a pity, and especially unfortunate for the audience. That is because the news debates have replaced the public sphere in the society where discussions yielded policy inputs, revision, debates, politics, welfare, and eventually, power. Public sphere was where visibility could be obtained even if ignored by the media, the government, the law, and even the society itself. That ended with the beginning of television news debates, which romanticize the public sphere and visibility of all opinion, without the dust and the grime of real life contestations. These sanitized battles yield simple pills of wisdom that can be easily consumed by the audience, who are short on time for getting into all the details. This wisdom is not just accessible, it is also justified—the television

debates promise bi-partisan and balanced opinion to which the audience can commit to with a clear conscience.

However, digested wisdom is habit-forming. And that is the most harmful aspect of news debates for the audience. In a faithful demonstration of Habermas' transformation, the public sphere has migrated to the television where the anchors replicate the conditions on the ground—except for audience participation. There is no control of the audience on the choice of topic of discussion or the anchor, or the panelists, or even how the debate is conducted. This is not merely the question of visibility and nature of television, which turns the audience inanimate; this is a source of power for the media today. A television news debate can mainstream a baseless opinion on half-an-hour of prime time. It also faces the risk of becoming a slave of whoever can pay for that half-hour of prime time.

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Media Research: Rate The Debate

Research into media between 2020 and 2021 has yielded interesting findings, especially on television news debates. This research was conducted by 'Rate The Debate', the media research wing of the Institute of Perception Studies, New Delhi. As a media watchdog, Rate The Debate has consistently isolated and identified trends, which have never been questioned, let alone studied. In the following section, I shall delineate

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“ One solution could be in 'counter-communication' or a consistent balancing of the corporate media with the independent media—countering 'corporate journalism' with 'social journalism.' A journalism of the people that makes headlines of people who will never be visible. A 'social journalism' that makes celebrities of common people who survive with great difficulty every day. This may appear too idealistic, and fraught with funding problems and in danger of audience apathy. It is not. ”

four major aspects of the research by Rate The Debate—Objective, Methodology, Findings, and Analysis. This traditional path, it is hoped, will provide the basis for future improvement and more research into media, which is urgent and necessary. In view of these findings, the fifth and last part of the segment will deal with my experiment with solutions.

Rate The Debate: Research

Objective: Television media is unstructured and impromptu, without the benefit of review or scope for guiding principles. This has been the charm and the challenge of television media across the world, and remains so. However, for any reform to take place, it is necessary to structuralize television media. The objective of the research was to map television news debates for content and intent, to suggest reforms.

Methodology: Television debates were studied for detecting pre-meditated measures that pushed the audience towards an opinion or drawing a conclusion. Motivated language, topics, and preferential treatment of panelists was studied. Also researched were markers for hate speech, media trials, and targeting of sections of population. Several indices were developed, some of which are called Prime Time Trackers, Anchor Language Analysis, Report Cards, etc.

Findings: Between 2020 and 2021, television news debates displayed worrying trends, which were evident in the findings. One, overwhelming coverage of politics that favoured the agenda of the ruling party, for example, in coverage of religious minorities. Two, support of anchors for government decisions in their language, tone, and conduct of debates, for example, in case of farm laws.

Three, consistent attempts to divert attention from crises in economy, health, defence, etc. Four, absence of questions for the government, even when the audience was suffering, for example, on Covid-19 management, on fuel price hike, etc.

Fifth, blacking out of the controversial decisions like privatization or issues in election going states like gender violence.

Analysis: The investors of power and money in media own the visibility that media provides. That includes the choice of who or what will be 'invisible' as well. This, however, does not reduce the role of such media into an image promotion unit. It still holds a nostalgic respect among the audience, who believe what they see and what they read.

It also follows that audience's awareness is also mixed with the cynicism that despite all their own pain and suffering, a common citizen of India would never be visible to the media. The scientific analysis reiterates this and provides empirical evidence of the exclusion of the citizen from the media.

Solution: Social Journalism

Visibility of citizens needs communication—the kind of journalism that can mainstream the fringe. Honest journalism must be defined as journalism that is honest towards bias, and safeguards itself against misuse. Journalists cannot tell stories that mattered to the ordinary people, when such stories go against funders of media organizations and their powerful friends. The choice for a journalist cannot be between honesty and employment. So, what is the solution?

One solution could be in 'counter-communication' or a consistent balancing of the corporate media with the independent media—countering 'corporate journalism' with 'social journalism.' A journalism of the people that makes headlines of people who will never be visible. A 'social journalism' that makes celebrities of common people who survive with great difficulty every day. This may appear too idealistic, and fraught with funding problems and in danger of audience apathy. It is not.

“ The solutions were relatively easy to find when journalism did not end with merely reporting the story or in blame games. The Hakku Initiative's research reports studied the problems and the Channel communicated the narratives of citizens. In many cases, the citizens expressed that it was the first time they were speaking on these issues. ”

Social journalism is an experiment with solutions, that had arisen from the findings of Rate The Debate. It is being implemented through the Hakku Initiative, the Hyderabad-based research organization under the Institute of Perception Studies, New Delhi. It has an outreach arm, the Hakku Channel, a YouTube Channel, which is India's only campaign-based 'non-news' channel dedicated to the narratives of the invisible Indians. The objective of this experiment is to identify issues and to consistently visibilise them through research and campaign. There have been some lessons as well as some successes in finding participatory solutions to the issues raised through such journalism.

The Hakku Initiative: Positive Disruptions

The Hakku Initiative has worked on 'normalized' problems of Hyderabad citizens, like open drains or broken roads. All cities discriminate between the powerful and the powerless citizens based on infrastructure. The cleanest and most perfect parts of the city are occupied by richest businessmen. The most central and picturesque parts of the city are occupied by powerful politicians. The rest of the citizens live at various degrees of squalor, like any other city, anywhere in the country.

The solutions were relatively easy to find when journalism did not end with merely reporting the story or in blame games. The Hakku Initiative's research reports studied the problems and the Channel communicated the narratives of citizens. In many cases, the citizens expressed that it was the first time they were speaking on these issues. Sanitation workers, for example, were followed for weeks to study their life, their families, their children, and their struggles. The series helped in highlighting the plight of several such people, some of whom eventually received support from the society as well as the local government.

Mainstream media has seamlessly supported the campaigns, which were neither political nor partisan. Visibility was achieved for issues which affected the poorest and the most vulnerable. Hakku Campaigns were 'positive disruptions' that yielded solutions.

Experiment with solutions like social journalism reveal that counter-communication is a powerful way of inclusive visibility. The experience with media reveals the importance of doubt and faith. For an ordinary citizen, doubt is more important than faith. Doubt the news debates. Doubt the media houses. And, most importantly, doubt the journalism that speaks on behalf of power.

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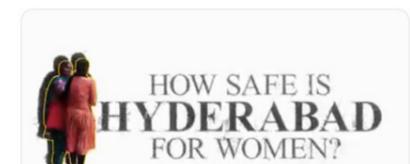
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What Equality, Justice & Freedom? [#Constitution](#) [#ConstitutionDay](#) [#AskTheWomen](#) who daily face harassment on streets, public transport, and must rush indoors by evening to be safe. [#WomenCurfew](#) in [#Hyderabad](#) youtube.com/hakkuchannel [@HakkulInitiative](#) [#HakkuCampaign](#)



The Last Stand

Are India's MSMEs Fighting a Losing Battle?

India's MSME Sector An Overview of Problems and Solutions

Rohit Joon, Coordinator, MSME and Corporate Affairs, AIPC



Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises also known as the MSME sector is an important pillar of the Indian economy and contributes greatly to its growth. The sector has been able to provide employment to around 120 million persons and contribute around 45 percent of the overall exports from India. It manufactures more than 6,000 products with a vast network of around 30 million units. With around 63.4 million units of MSMEs throughout the country, they contribute around 6.11 percent of the manufacturing GDP, 24.63 percent of the GDP from service activities, and 33.4 percent of the country's manufacturing output. The initial public offering (IPO) route witnessed 16 SMEs enter the market; they raised Rs 100 crore (USD 13.74 million) in 2020.

In June 2021, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) announced that it has collaborated with Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) to build awareness among small businesses and startups about the advantages of listing. This

sector is very important for a more inclusive growth agenda. And it is this sector which can help realize the target of the proposed National Manufacturing Policy for raising the share of manufacturing sector in GDP from 16 percent at present to 25 percent by the end of 2022.

MSMEs are divided into Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. The definition of micro manufacturing and services unit has been increased to Rs 1 crore of investment and Rs 5 crore of turnover. The limit of small unit has been increased to Rs 10 crore of investment and Rs 50 crore of turnover. Similarly, the limit of medium unit has been increased to Rs 50 crore of investment and Rs 250 crore of turnover.

Distribution of MSMEs

The sector has consistently maintained a growth rate of over 10 percent. About 20 percent of MSMEs are based out of rural areas, which indicates the deployment of significant rural workforce in the sector and marks the importance of these enterprises

“Globally, India ranks third among countries reporting gender gap in business—only 33 percent of early-stage entrepreneurs in India are women, as per “Financial Inclusion for Woman-Owned Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India”, a 2019 report of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group. The report says 98 percent of women-led MSMEs are in the micro category and these are the vulnerable businesses that folded up first in the pandemic-led crisis.”

“The sector has been able to provide employment to around 120 million persons and contribute around 45 percent of the overall exports from India.”

in promoting sustainable and inclusive development as well as in generating large scale employment particularly in rural areas. In terms of geographical distribution, seven Indian states alone account for 50 percent of all MSMEs. These are Uttar Pradesh (14 percent), West Bengal (14 percent), Tamil Nadu (8 percent), Maharashtra (8 percent), Karnataka (6 percent), Bihar (5 percent), and Andhra Pradesh (5 percent). This breakup provides a sense of where the pain of the MSME crisis would be felt the most.

About 66 percent of all MSMEs are owned by people belonging to the Scheduled Castes (12.5 percent), the Scheduled Tribes (4.1 percent) and Other Backward Classes (49.7 percent). The gender ratio among

“Non-registration of many enterprises is often attributed to the overly complicated structure created in Udyam Registration Scheme and perhaps the threshold of GST is also limited, adding to the scrutiny of income tax. MSMEs are also subject to severe problems around information asymmetry.”

employees is largely consistent across the board at roughly 80 percent males and 20 percent females.

Reflecting on female-owned MSMEs, these business-owners could potentially create 150 to 170 million jobs in India by 2030, as per a 2019 report, “Powering the Economy with Her: Women Entrepreneurship in India” by Google and Bain & Company. Globally, India ranks third among countries reporting gender gap in business—only 33 percent of early-stage entrepreneurs in India are women, as per “Financial Inclusion for Woman-Owned Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India”, a 2019 report of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group. The report says 98 percent of women-led MSMEs are in the micro category and these are the vulnerable businesses that folded up first in the pandemic-led crisis.

A breakup of all MSMEs into micro, small, and medium categories is even more revealing. About 99.5 percent of all MSMEs fall in the micro category. While micro enterprises are equally distributed over rural and urban India, small and medium ones are predominantly in urban India. In other words, micro enterprises essentially refer to a single man or a woman working on their own from their home. The medium and small enterprises—that is, the remaining 0.5% of all MSMEs—employ the remaining 5 crore-odd employees.

Problems of MSMEs

The role of the MSME sector is critical in job creation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and supply chain management. Hence, there is a need to facilitate, nurture, and support innovative business ideas and shape them into enterprises.

However, with limited entrepreneurial developments and incubation centres, the entrepreneurial ethos of the MSME ecosystem is not evolving. Utilization and reach of various schemes and credit support

Battling for Survival Voices from the MSME Sector



Inspire! Report
Development Editor: Anushree Gang

“It's all Black, Black, Black; I am Blinded,” says Mr Sanooj Stephan, an appalled paint manufacturer and trading enterprise owner from Kerala. In these uncertain and chaotic times, this is the common sentiment of a large fraction of India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) owners and workers.



“The real estate sector is a cash cow for the government. It is the largest generator of employment for people. Still, no specific benefits are extended to it. A three percent stamp duty cut by the state government of Maharashtra was a welcome move but they did it only for 6 months. The central government however has done nothing to uplift real estate,” Sanooj Stephan says further by way of enunciation, warning, “The way the central government has handled things, if they still keep sleeping and not do anything for us, then we are finished if there is a third wave of Covid-19.”

The MSMEs sector contributes to around 30 percent of India's GDP, and based on conservative estimates, employs around 50 percent of industrial workers (approximately 111 million). Over 97 percent of MSMEs can be classified as micro firms (with an investment in plant and machinery of less than Rs 25 lakh), and 94 percent are unregistered with the government. The current Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted this sector massively due to the sudden unplanned lockdown, restriction on worker movements, non-availability of raw materials, logistical challenges, and a dependence on cash-based economy.

“I had to lay off 60 percent of my workforce and my business is set back by five years due to a chronology of disasters beginning with Demonetization, GST, and unplanned Covid-19 management,” states Ms Alka Joon, a very vexed facility management women entrepreneur from Delhi. Female entrepreneurs contribute approximately 20 percent to the MSME sector.



Alka also underlines that it is not just the pandemic that caused the huge setback; the decline had begun earlier by bad government policies, commencing from demonetization. “The central government and the MSME policy makers should hear us and give relief, which will help us tackle ground difficulties,” she asserts.

Mr Farhan Chaudhary, a real estate entrepreneur who has been bracing the economic mayhem caused by the pandemic, says, “I had to leave the job because our employer did not respond to our concerns and for seven months there was no pay. I started my own work but this pandemic and the government's attitude has created a permanent hole in savings and a loss of time with no relief in expenses whatsoever.”

After agriculture, the MSME sector is the second largest job creator in India. There are approximately 64 million enterprises in the country of which 36 percent are into trading, 31 percent into manufacturing, and the rest are into services.

“The real estate sector is a cash cow for the government. It is the largest generator of employment for people. Still, no specific benefits are extended to it. A three percent stamp duty cut by the state government of Maharashtra was a welcome move but they did it only for 6 months. The central government however has done nothing to uplift real estate,” Sanooj Stephan says further

is constrained due to lack of formalization and low level of registration of MSMEs in Udyam registration, the government's recognition certificate for MSMEs. Promoting formalization and digitization amongst MSMEs and encouraging them to register has remained a challenge.

“The requirements of MSMEs are the simplification of GST and reduction of the tax rate, something that is acutely required as the sector revives and adapts to the new normal.”

Non-registration of many enterprises is often attributed to the overly complicated structure created in Udyam Registration Scheme and perhaps the threshold of GST is also limited, adding to the scrutiny of income tax. MSMEs are also subject to severe problems around information asymmetry. Lack of information about various schemes, for instance, deprive MSMEs from availing benefits offered by the government, banks, and other agencies. Access to information about market opportunities is sub optimal and unstructured. In many cases, they also lack managerial, legal, and technical knowhow and the necessary wherewithal to function effectively.

The MSME sector also comprises the micro players which simply do not have the experience or resources to use bank finance or engage in product promotion to ensure adequate returns. Real stimulus is possible only if credit flow is discernible. The '59-Minute loan Programme' that was launched by the government did ensure that loans were sanctioned at the earliest but the actual disbursement was simply not there. Further, the PSBLOANSIN59MINUTES portal as of now caters only to existing entrepreneurs GSTIN, Income Tax returns, bank statement, but doesn't cater to new entrepreneurs.

The government in May 2020 announced a slew of measures to help MSMEs tide through the Covid-19 crisis, including the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Subordinate Debt, through which the government meant to provide Rs 20,000 crore as subordinate debt. The response to the scheme has been relatively cold, however, as per officials. Business Standard, a financial newspaper reported that guarantees of only Rs 68.39 crores were issued till the time of the writing of the article in September 2021, aiding only 632 businesses. For women-owned micro enterprise, only 17

“I had to lay off 60 percent of my workforce and my business is set back by five years due to a chronology of disasters beginning with Demonetization, GST, and unplanned Covid-19 management,” states Ms Alka Joon, a very vexed facility management women entrepreneur from Delhi.

to the government, it adopted more strict measures and blocked the GST numbers of the undertakings due to any delay in the tax payments. Thus, the MSME sector did not just suffer from the natural disaster of the Covid-19 pandemic. The economy was already suffering at the hand of policy disasters and handling of the Covid-19 crisis in the utmost shambolic manner just made the situation more woeful.

“The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is a pure marketing gimmick. Many people who could satisfy the laundry list of conditions realized later that the Rs 2.5 lakh relief is only on the interest and not on the principal amount. And the waiver kicks in only after 12 months,” adds Farhan, who has seen so many people getting fooled by the marketing of the scheme only to later realize that it is an interest subsidy and not a cash benefit.



Mr Trideep Singhvi, a dejected heritage hospitality sector hotelier, says, “I would give the central government 0/10 for its efforts to revive or help the MSME sector. All their schemes and packages are a hogwash, and their scheme on loans have no truth in them.”

Trideep was expecting the government to provide a relief package for the tourism industry and expedite the vaccination drive to revive the tourism industry. “Government wants us to follow Covid-19 protocol for all our employees, but where are the vaccines for vaccinating our staff and getting back on our feet to deliver our services?”

Many MSME undertakings, in spite of going through a watershed moment, have proven to be Corona warriors and are providing free accommodation facilities in their hotels/guests houses, making personnel available for sanitization services to various residential complexes, and providing necessary help to the underprivileged and daily wage workers severely hit by the unplanned lockdown. The glaring question this poses is: If individual groups and organizations can help the underprivileged in these unprecedented times, why is the central government being a mere spectator?

The MSME sector has witnessed a very steady growth of 15 percent since 1977 but a sharp fall started to surface from 2015-16, registering a sharp negative growth rate of 8.1 percent. According to an article in *Business Line* (15 June, 2020, by Press Trust of India, Mumbai), a 5 percent fall in GDP in 2020-21 will lead to a 21 percent fall in the revenue of MSME sector with negligible profit margin, which will lead to an existential crisis for the sector. At least 43 percent of the existing MSME undertakings may disappear due to liquidity crunch and a loss of 23 million direct jobs. During April-May 2021, 1.72

“Mr Farhan Chaudhary, a real estate entrepreneur who has been bracing the economic mayhem caused by the pandemic, says, ‘I had to leave the job because our employer did not respond to our concerns and for seven months there was no pay. I started my own work but this pandemic and the government’s attitude has created a permanent hole in savings and a loss of time with no relief in expenses whatsoever.’”

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) claims to have taken measures to revive the MSME sector by an infusion of 25 percent of the working capital of the MSMEs to increase cash flow, to have automatic loans, and a Rs 20,000 crore subordinate debt package, but the central government has paid hardly any actual concern to the crisis of this sector. When it was expected that the government would provide a complete waiver in interest, it offered more interest-based loans, when they required the change of point of GST deposit

“Around 68 percent of MSME respondents have not benefitted from the government’s MSME- and startup-centric schemes like Startup India, MSME Samadhan, no or low interest loans, Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, etc., in the past 12 months.”

percent were aware of any financial schemes rolled out by the government.

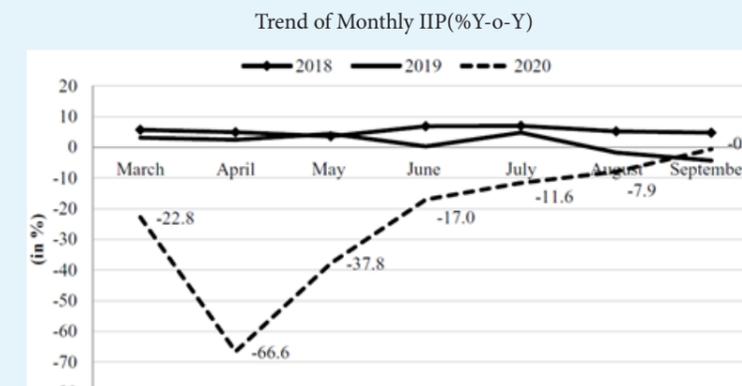
The Way Forward

The requirements of MSMEs are the simplification of GST and reduction of the tax rate, something that is acutely required as the sector revives and adapts to the new normal. Also, the government can vindicate duty and tariff rates to increase their contribution to exports. This can be encouraged by research and development through incentives and helping small industries with tech upgradation plans.

Around 68 percent of MSME respondents have not benefitted from the government’s MSME- and startup-centric schemes like Startup India, MSME Samadhan, no or low interest loans, Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, etc., in the past 12 months. The main hurdle in availing the Centre’s Rs 3 lakh crore emergency credit line was that it was restricted only to MSMEs that have existing debt or loans on their books. Now, if an MSME finds itself incapable of meeting its financial obligations, the insolvency resolution process could be initiated at default of at least Rs 1 lakh. But this may not find financial creditors coming on board and cooperating. So those creditors that are falling below the Rs 1 crore limit, or are owed up to Rs 1 lakh by larger private firms cannot invoke insolvency. Under these circumstances, bank managers would rather not lend.

Adding further to the problems with the schemes, the annual estimates from the Ministry of MSME for the number of enterprises, employment, production, and exports of MSMEs, which are barely sufficient to capture the magnitude of impact that an unforeseen and unexpected crisis would make on MSMEs, are not available anymore. This poses a major challenge for any meaningful assessment of the change in the size of the sector from time to time, particularly in times of crisis such as the current one.

crore daily wage earners, 57 lakh business persons, and 32 lakh salaried persons have lost jobs. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) figures from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is unsettling. The following graph depicts the dismal numbers for 2020 compared to 2018 and 2019.



Source: 2020 report of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. “Covid-19 and Its Impact on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in India”. By D Indrakumar (Deputy Director, National Institute of Labour, Economics, Research & Development (NILRED); published in *Manpower Journal*, Vol-LIV, Nov3-4, July-December 2020).

The various steps taken by the central government to revive the MSME sector have been concentrated towards the more organized and bigger MSMEs, thus defeating their entire purpose and proving to be inadequate and ineffective for the majority of unorganized undertakings in the sector. Since the majority of the undertakings operate on cash, immediate liquidity and cash flow-based measures are required to equip them to reemploy the huge workforce (directly or indirectly) relying on them. Expanding of procurement of raw material under government contracts, preference in bidding/tender process, increase in subsidies in water and power supply, extending of interest free loans, are the expected steps which the undertakings look forward to for their revival.

If the central government wants to make its “Make in India” policy a reality, now is the time to show some seriousness towards this policy and provide actual subsidies and contracts to further this mission. But through its brashness in the handling of the current situation and the performance of the economy, it appears that the government is intending to eradicate the MSME sector totally and let oligopolistic behavior prevail. This will lead to an uncertain, very dark future for the MSME sector and the economy as a whole.

(The team of AIPC Inspire! thanks Mr Sanooj Stephan, President, AIPC Chalakudy Chapter (Kerala); Ms Alka Joon, Secretary, AIPC South Delhi 1 Chapter (Delhi); Mr Farhan Chaudhary, Fellow, AIPC Pune Chapter (Maharashtra); and Mr Trideep Singhvi, Fellow, AIPC Jodhpur Chapter (Rajasthan) for their contributions to the story. We are grateful.)

(Anushree Gang is an Investor, M&A & PE Advisor, and Traveller. She’s also a Fellow of AIPC Jodhpur, Rajasthan.)

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This brings out the need for policy makers to put in place reliable statistical data collection systems. It is imperative to gauge the size of the sector in terms of enterprises and employment. The system must cover the entire country and it must be done periodically.

The need for a more relaxed and informative taxation system also cannot be stressed enough. The limited data that is now available clearly shows that the dissemination of the schemes has to be more widespread and vivid, and, as a matter of fact, accessible to each entrepreneur who is a part of the MSME sector. The schemes rolled out by the government should help in boosting the economy but not just for moral support.

MSMEs possibly create the highest rate of employment, are an integral part of the supply chain, contribute significantly to exports, and are the booster for the GDP. They are intertwined with the rural economy too. Hence, as one of the growth engines of the Indian economy, this sector needs very special attention and care, especially given its current state of acute crisis.



The govt's mindset should be: the success of India depends on the **MSMEs**.

But we see pictures of the Prime Minister with the largest industrialists, have you seen his pictures with small & medium industrialists?: Shri @RahulGandhi
#TamilNaduWelcomesRahul



SUGGESTIONS FOR MSME CRISIS:

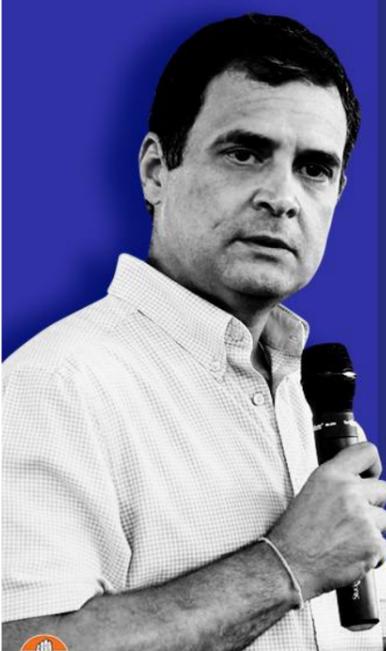
- Announce ₹1 lakh crore “MSME Wage Protection” package
- Establish a credit guarantee fund of ₹1 lakh crore
- RBI actions must reflect in actions by commercial banks
- Measures need to be supported by an expansion & extension of RBI’s moratorium
- Lack of access to available credit for MSMEs must be addressed

- CONGRESS PRESIDENT, SONIA GANDHI



Indian National Congress @INCIndia www.inc.in

“
डी-मोनेटाइजेशन किसका हो रहा है?
• किसान-मजदूर, छोटे दुकानदार, MSME
• सरकारी कर्मचारी, ईमानदार व्यापारी
मोनेटाइजेशन किसका हो रहा है?
• केवल नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के चार-पांच मित्रों का ”
श्री राहुल गांधी



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Parliamentary Processes

How the Opposition Did Not Stall the Monsoon Session

Ravindra Garimella, Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha
Former Joint Secretary (Legislation), Lok Sabha Secretariat



actions of the government. These devices are also very useful to the members in ventilating public grievances.

Apart from questions, several parliamentary devices are available in Rules of Procedure in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to members for raising urgent matters of public importance requiring immediate attention of the government. From Rules point of view, parliamentary devices can as well be termed as procedural devices.

In a democratic polity, elected representatives of people personify the collective voice, will, and thought and aspirations of the people whom they represent in Parliament or State Legislatures. Members as representatives of people bring up matters of public interest concerning them on the floor of the House. The Indian Parliament has been on the forefront for achieving this objective. It is not only a forum for enacting laws (legislating is one of its functions), but its critical importance is also that it provides a very effective debating forum.

In modern times, Parliaments all over the world have been assuming added responsibilities in response to the growing hopes and aspirations of the people. They are devoting more and more time in the deliberation of issues pertaining to redressal of grievances of the people.

A number of parliamentary devices are available to the members of the Indian Parliament too under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, as well as by convention, to enable them to raise issues, elicit information, and obtain decisions of the government on a variety of matters affecting the public. These devices afford ample opportunities to the members not only to review the working of the executive but also to constructively criticize the policies, programmes, and

Only when these procedural devices available under the Rules of Procedures of both Houses of Parliament are able to be put to use gainfully will the Members of Parliament really be able to perform their parliamentary duties and meet their obligations to their constituents. But for this, members need to be wholly and fully oriented in parliamentary procedure.

Different procedural devices have different timelines for tabling. Each procedural device has its importance. Under which Rule a particular matter can most optimally be raised, in other words, which procedural device can be taken recourse to, would depend upon the urgency, criticality, and nature of the matter sought to be raised (see [Appendix](#) to this article on the *Inspire!* website for a comprehensive and clear "Snapshot of Procedural Devices under Rules of Procedure").

The Opposition Was Keen For Discussions Throughout

The Opposition parties made concerted efforts in both Houses of Parliament during this year's Monsoon Session (July-August 2021). I wish to dispel here the misconception in some quarters that the session was in a way washed away due to the Opposition parties. On the contrary, well before the session, the Indian National

Congress (INC) meticulously listed and identified topical issues to be raised, such as, rise in the prices of petrol and diesel, and other essential commodities, inflation, Covid-19 mismanagement by government during the second wave, the Rafale issue, the ongoing farmers agitation, and unemployment, to name a few.

“ On the contrary, well before the session, the Indian National Congress (INC) meticulously listed and identified topical issues to be raised, such as, rise in the prices of petrol and diesel, and other essential commodities, inflation, Covid-19 mismanagement by government during the second wave, the Rafale issue, the ongoing farmers agitation, and unemployment, to name a few.

It was also worked out under what procedural device the matters needed to be raised, and accordingly, notices were given.

The other Opposition parties too worked out a similar strategy. It was indeed a fortuitous development that on the eve of the monsoon session, that is, 18 July, 2021, immediately after the conclusion of the all-party leaders' meeting, a meeting of leaders of all Opposition parties from both Houses of Parliament was held, which was chaired by Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha. In the meeting there were focused deliberations on issues to be raised, the strategy vis-a-vis the modus operandi, and to achieve common approach in both Houses of Parliament. Such a meeting was the first of its kind.

Joint Statement by the Opposition Parties

The Monsoon session of the Parliament was deliberately derailed by the Government which has scant respect for the institution of Parliamentary democracy. At the outset, in the all-Party meeting convened by the Government, the combined opposition had unanimously conveyed that they proposed to discuss important national issues and matters of public concern which include:

- **Pegasus spying and snooping scandal:** which has serious implications for the national security;
- **Farmers' agitation:** resulting from the three anti-farmer laws which were pushed through by the Government using its brute majority in utter disregard of the Parliamentary conventions;
- **Inflation:** the rising prices of essential commodities, food grains, petrol, diesel and LPG which has burdened the people, especially the poor and the underprivileged causing acute hardships and making life unsustainable for the vulnerable section of society;
- **The deteriorating economic situation:** continuous decline of growth, rising unemployment leading to loss of income and wages and the failure of the Government to make meaningful intervention and allocation of resources to stimulate growth for the revival of economy and jobs.

The Government stonewalled the Opposition demand for discussion. It has become abundantly clear that the present Government does not believe in Parliamentary accountability and was running away from debate on Pegasus which resulted in a deadlock. The Opposition had been repeatedly requesting the Government to sincerely engage with the Opposition parties to break the impasse, but the Government remained arrogant, insincere and obdurate. It is the Government, which is squarely responsible for the stalemate, has refused to accept the opposition's demand for an informed debate in both the houses.

The Government used its brute majority to push through its legislative agenda in violation of established procedures, conventions and spirit of

Parliamentary democracy. To divert attention from its own conduct and actions, the Government has unleashed a state-sponsored, malicious and misleading campaign by blaming the combined Opposition for the disruption of Parliament.

What happened in Rajya Sabha yesterday was shocking, unprecedented, sad and an insult to the very dignity of the House and humiliation of the members of the august House. Without any justification or provocation from the Opposition, outsiders who were not part of Parliament security were brought in to manhandle the Opposition leaders and members, including women Parliamentarians who were only protesting against the Government's conduct, highhandedness and muzzling of the voice.

The Opposition strongly condemns the authoritarian attitude and undemocratic actions of the Government. We remain committed to continue our struggle against the assault on Parliamentary democracy and agitate the issues of national importance and people's concerns.

Statement By:

1. Sh. Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha
2. Sh. Sharad Pawar, NCP
3. Sh. T. R. Baalu, DMK
4. Sh. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, INC
5. Sh. Anand Sharma, INC
6. Sh. Ramgopal Yadav, SP
7. Sh. Sanjay Raut, SS
8. Sh. Tiruchi Siva, DMK
9. Sh. Manoj Jha, BJP
10. Sh. Elamaram Kareem, CPI(M)
11. Sh. ET Mohd. Basheer, IUML
12. Sh. Binoy Viswam, CPI
13. Sh. NK Premachandran, RSP
14. Sh. Thomas Chazhikadan, Kerala Congress (M)

Joint Statement by Opposition parties to say the monsoon session of the Parliament was deliberately derailed by the government

This convergence among INC and other Opposition parties continued all through the session, with daily morning meetings in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

The initiative which came from INC leadership and Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha, got a phenomenal response from leaders of other Opposition parties. All through, there was committed determination by INC and other Opposition parties to raise topical issues on the floor of both Houses of Parliament through various procedural devices, have structured discussions, and have the government's response thereto.

It would be significant to note here that on 19 July and 20 July, 2021, news of the Pegasus snooping scandal flooded the media. That was a major turning point. INC and other Opposition parties felt that this was a very serious issue, adversely impinging upon the privacy and fundamental right of liberty of every citizen of the country, and that too in the knowledge of government. It was, therefore, thought to be imperative to first discuss this matter in the House and then seek clarification and accountability from the government on the floor of the House. This desired discussion was never admitted.

“ This desired discussion was never admitted. That was the reason for the deadlock. The Opposition was ready for discussions on all topical issues all through the session.

That was the reason for the deadlock. The Opposition was ready for discussions on all topical issues all through the session.

It is a matter of fact that on the very second day of the monsoon session, that is, 20 July, 2021, when a Short Duration Discussion on Covid-19 was slated in Rajya Sabha, the Opposition rose to the occasion and participated in the discussion, which was initiated by Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha. Further, despite the deadlock, the INC and the entire Opposition fully participated during the discussion on

Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021 (enacted as Constitution 105th Amendment) regarding state governments' power to prepare their own state OBC lists.

Thus, the foregoing account counters the perception that the Opposition was responsible for the session washout; in fact, right from the beginning, the Opposition desired and was prepared for discussions in the Parliament.

(Ravindra Garimella is an author and consultant on Parliamentary and legislative matters. He has also been a visiting Fellow at the University of Warwick and University of Nottingham, UK. He authored the book, "Parliament of India: Diverse Dimensions".)

BJP DESTROYS DEMOCRACY

22 BILLS PASSED IN MONSOON SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

AVERAGE DISCUSSION TIME

10 MINUTES - LOK SABHA

30 MINUTES - RAJYA SABHA

NO SANCTITY OF PARLIAMENT UNDER MODI RULE

Indian National Congress @INCIndia www.inc.in

Us Sitting Ducks Victims of Callous Disregard in Our Vaccination Drive

Santhosh D'Souza, AIPC Bangalore Central, Karnataka



It is now ten months since India's vaccination drive commenced. In the context of global efforts to swiftly protect citizens from the pandemic, the period should be sufficient to judge its handling. Before we look at where we are today, it is vital to determine how we got here.

A Vaccination Drive Hampered By Inaction

The inexplicable paralysis that struck the Modi government in 2020 doomed the vaccination drive even before it began. By December 2020, just the US, EU, UK, Japan, Australia, and Brazil locked up 1.7 Billion vaccine doses for their citizens. When the Modi government finally acted in January

2021, the purchase was puny (16.5 million doses, amounting to 1.2 percent of India's population) and far too late.

The government also conducted an unscientific authorization process. It rejected Gamelaya's application to directly conduct Phase III trials, and asked Pfizer to conduct its trials all over again in India. It did nothing to overcome Moderna's lack of interest in applying. This left Indians with just Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech. SII was handicapped by the 300 million USD grant it took from the Gates Foundation, binding it to supply to low and middle income countries globally. Epidemiologists were astonished by the approval Bharat Biotech received, effectively vaccinating people in a Phase III trial. The severely delayed process and quality issues meant that Covaxin constitutes just around 10 percent of administered vaccines. By May, the Modi government floundered in such dire straits that it informally banned vaccine exports, forcing SII to renege on international commitments.

Modi and his ministers declared victory over Covid-19 in January 2021; they might have unreasonably assumed that India would not see a second wave. Dr V K Paul, Niti

Aayog member, claimed "Most of our highly populated districts and cities have had their run of the pandemic by now... and may have what you like to call herd immunity, to an extent." The vaccine rollout tragically took a backseat to religious festivals and election campaigns.

Slow Pace

It was bad enough that the Modi government ignored professional warnings about the need for vaccination. It proceeded then to make a total mess of the drive. The first phase was to cover 3 crore health and frontline workers by April 2021, but only 37 percent were fully vaccinated by 19 April. Needless to say, the Modi government later missed its next milestone: 300 million people fully vaccinated by August, achieving only 78 percent.

Having realized that both SII and Bharat Biotech supplies were drying up, the Modi government, in a shocking abdication, decentralized vaccine negotiations and procurement in April. This move was almost certainly to deflect criticism when shortages manifested. The central government claimed it was acceding to state demands, but they had asked just for freedom to decide distribution of doses! This further crippled the states by clubbing them with private hospitals. The latter promptly bought up supplies at higher prices, which eventually remained unutilized, while state vaccination centres ran out of doses almost daily. The Supreme Court finally called the policy prima facie irrational in June and ordered the central government to explain. Rather than replying in court, the centre reversed its decision. However, two months of the chaos had done irreversible damage.

The Hype and Fake Narrative

The unedifying spectacle of BJP-ruled states sycophantically inflating vaccination



Modi Govt purchased its first 16.5 Million doses (= 1.24% of total population) in January 2021.

PURCHASES BY OTHERS BETWEEN MAY-DECEMBER 2020	
UK	150 Million (> 200% of Population)
EU	830 Million (~ 185% of Population; Germany purchased 30M)
JAPAN	220 Million (~ 170% of Population)
AUSTRALIA	34 Million (~ 130% of Population)
US	400 Million (~ 120% of Population)
BRAZIL	90 Million (~ 42% of Population)

Source: Data from Duke Global Health Innovation Centre, the US, as quoted in: Mudur, G.S, "How India Landed in Covid Vaccine Mess", 19 April, 2021, The Telegraph.

Calm, Considered Views on Burning Issues

HOT TOPIC

counts on the prime minister's birthday only demonstrates that even BJP and he feel the need to combat the widespread conclusion that they failed in handling the pandemic. The Modi government repeatedly presents a fake narrative about the vaccination drive, calling it the world's largest and fastest. In reality India lags behind many countries in terms of full vaccination as a percentage of the population—the only epidemiological metric that matters.

Besides, most countries prioritized full and partial vaccination equally. Until 27 August, India was the only large country with less than 10 percent of its population fully vaccinated. This might have been due to the Modi government realizing that they had publicly set an unattainable target for themselves. Ensuring that most of the population is partly vaccinated by 31 December, 2021, could be to deflect criticism when the deadline passes.

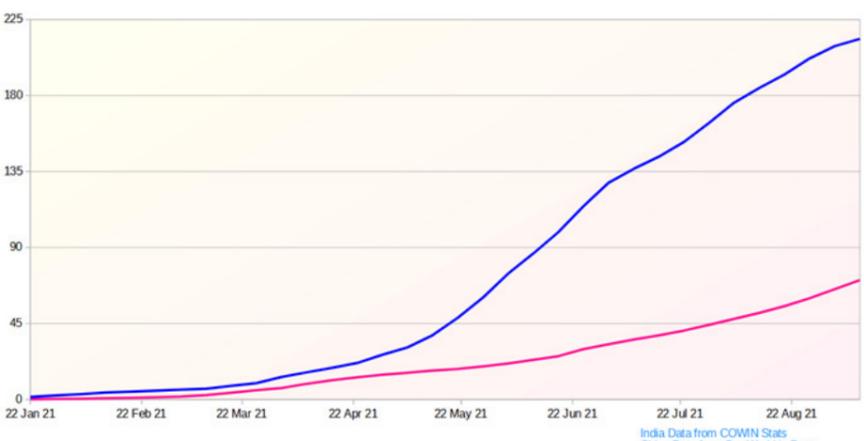
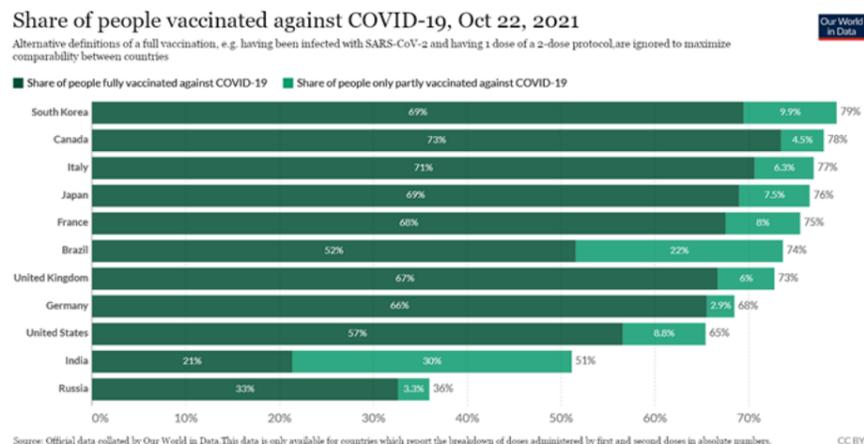
To compound the misrepresentation, the Modi government's efforts were neither the fastest nor the largest. For instance, comparing the first 100 days or so of the drive in the USA and India clearly establishes that the USA reached every single milestone from the first million to 210 million doses faster than the Modi government managed. In fact, it was not until 27 June, 2021, that India finally overtook the USA in absolute doses administered. By that time, the US was nearing 50 percent fully vaccinated, while India was still at 4 percent of its population.

Even though the population of the USA is just a quarter of India's, its drive was faster and the absolute counts larger until July 2021. Consider the one country whose

“ The Modi government repeatedly presents a fake narrative about the vaccination drive, calling it the world's largest and fastest. In reality India lags behind many countries in terms of full vaccination as a percentage of the population—the only epidemiological metric that matters. Besides, most countries prioritized full and partial vaccination equally. Until 27 August, India was the only large country with less than 10 percent of its population fully vaccinated. ”

DOSES	USA	INDIA	DOSES	USA	INDIA	DOSES	USA	INDIA
1 Million	Day 3	Day 6	15 Million	Day 18	Day 46	100 Million	Day 69	Day 85
2 Million	Day 5	Day 10	20 Million	Day 22	Day 50	110 Million	Day 73	Day 88
3 Million	Day 7	Day 14	25 Million	Day 27	Day 54	120 Million	Day 77	Day 92
4 Million	Day 7	Day 18	30 Million	Day 30	Day 59	130 Million	Day 81	Day 95
5 Million	Day 10	Day 21	35 Million	Day 34	Day 60	140 Million	Day 84	Day 99
6 Million	Day 12	Day 24	40 Million	Day 37	Day 63	150 Million	Day 88	Day 103
7 Million	Day 13	Day 26	45 Million	Day 41	Day 65	160 Million	Day 91	Day 109
8 Million	Day 13	Day 29	50 Million	Day 43	Day 67	170 Million	Day 95	Day 114
9 Million	Day 14	Day 33	60 Million	Day 49	Day 71	180 Million	Day 98	Day 119
10 Million	Day 15	Day 35	70 Million	Day 55	Day 77	190 Million	Day 101	Day 125
			80 Million	Day 60	Day 80	200 Million	Day 104	Day 130
			90 Million	Day 64	Day 82	210 Million	Day 107	Day 134

Notes:
A 210 Million count is approximately 63% of USA's population and 16% of India's population (PS: 2 doses are needed per person).
US Data was from the CDC; India Data was from MoHFW.



Vaccine Doses Administered in crores: China and India
Data as on 19 September, 2021

population actually is comparable to India's: China. China's drive has been much faster—the Modi government had managed to achieve just 33 percent of China's total count as on 10 September, 2021.

Year End Goal in Jeopardy

The consequence of the delays in 2020 and the subsequent mismanagement are that the Modi government is unlikely to meet the target it announced in the Supreme Court and publicly—fully vaccinating the eligible by 1 January, 2022.

The adult population of India is estimated to be anywhere between 90 and 100 crore. Meeting the goal would entail administering nearly 1 crore daily doses for the next three months or so (at the time of the writing of the article), a feat not achieved so far.

Equally grim is the ratio between fully and partially vaccinated Indians. As of 20 August, 2021, only 12.69 crore were fully vaccinated, while 42.57 crore received one dose. Nearly 4 crore Indians have not received a timely second dose. This is despite the government doubling the interval between Covishield doses in May 2021. No one has studied whether the vaccines are efficacious enough even if administered beyond the recommended interval.

On 21 October, 2021, India went past the 100 crore administered doses mark. For context, China had achieved that milestone on 19 June, 2021, and has, at the time of



Vaccination Drive's Stated Target: 188 crore Doses by 31 December, 2021
Data as on 19 September, 2021

writing this, administered 224 crore doses. As there is no other country on the planet whose adult population requires more than 60 crore doses in a two-dose vaccine regime, it is futile to make comparisons with any other country.

Moreover, the success of each country's vaccination drive depends on the percentage of its population that has received both shots: that determines how safe its population is from infection and severe symptoms.

By that metric, the numerous mis-steps of the Modi government meant India lagged behind practically every other large country. Achieving the landmark was tinged with grief. If only the Modi government had, instead of declaring premature victory, acted scientifically, procuring vaccines in the second half of 2020, millions of Indians might have been saved from the need for hospitalization, gasping for oxygen and even dying in the second wave.

“ Consider the one country whose population actually is comparable to India's: China. China's drive has been much faster—the Modi government had managed to achieve just 33 percent of China's total count as on 10 September, 2021. ”

Meanwhile, the third wave still looms and the scientific community worries over the virus mutating further and completely escaping the vaccine. The rest of 2021 is going to be quite tense on the pandemic front—the health and economic well-being of all Indians is at stake.

(Santhosh D'Souza combines professional interest in technology with a passion for science, history, mythology, and current affairs.)

“New variant is a serious threat. High time GOI gets serious about providing vaccine security to our countrymen. Bad vaccination figures can't be hidden for long behind one man's photo.”

- SHRI RAHUL GANDHI

India's Vaccination Equation

- PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE: 31.19%
- LAST WEEK DAILY AVERAGE: 6.8 MILLION/DAY
- REQUIRED VAX RATE: 23.3 MILLION/DAY
- TARGET: 60% OF THE POPULATION WITH BOTH DOSES BY DECEMBER 2021

(Note: As of 28/29 November, 2021)

SANSAD KI BAAT

ON VACCINATIONS:

A NEW & MORE INFECTIONS VARIANT IS SPREADING THROUGH THE WORLD. WHEN WILL MODI GOVT FULFIL ITS TARGET OF FULL VACCINATION BY DECEMBER 2021?

AT CURRENT RATE:

ONLY 39% OF INDIANS WILL BE VACCINATED BY DEADLINE

Code Red There's No Backup Planet; Act Now!

Dr M S Madhusoodanan, AIPC Trivandrum, Kerala



The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6-WG1) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provides for the most rationalized physical understanding of the climate system, by combining the latest advances in climate sciences and multiple lines of evidence from paleoclimate, observations, process understanding, and global/regional climate simulations. Although it has been known for decades that the planet is warming, AR6 clearly shows that recently observed changes in the climate system are “widespread, rapid, intensifying and unprecedented in thousands of years”.

The entire world is increasingly experiencing the effects of climate change, and India is

no exception. For instance, the 2021 South West monsoon was near-normal, taken as a whole. However, its variability—110 percent in June, 93 percent in July, 76 percent in August, and an astonishing 135 percent in September—was accompanied by an unusual pattern of extreme localized precipitation and drought events.

Climate Change: Evidence and Policy

The IPCC, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, provides scientific information on climate change, its implications, and future risks. The fifth of its Assessment Reports was instrumental in the scripting of the historic 2015 Paris Agreement, a binding treaty on climate change. The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6-WG1) provides new estimates of the chances of crossing the global warming level of 1.5°C in the next decades, and calls for immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to stay below that threshold. Anthropogenic climate change is already affecting every region on Earth in multiple ways. At 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health.

AR6: General Observations

- CO₂ concentrations are currently the highest in at least two million years. Humans have emitted 2,400 billion tonnes of CO₂ since the late 1800s. In fact, emissions have grown far more rapidly than expected in 1988, when the IPCC was established.
- Most of the emissions are of anthropogenic origin.
- The previous decade was warmer than any period of time in the past 1,25,000 years. Global surface temperature was 1.09°C higher in 2011-2020 than between 1850-1900.
- Sea-level rise has tripled compared with 1901-1971. The Arctic Sea ice is the lowest it has been in 1,000 years.
- Each additional 0.5°C of warming will increase heat extremes, extreme precipitation, and drought. It will weaken Earth's carbon sinks in plants, soils, and the ocean.
- Many of the impacts, such as sea level rise and melting of glaciers, will continue for many years.

AR6 on India

- Floods, intense cyclones (particularly in the Arabian Sea), and other weather extremes are occurring in several parts of India with increased intensity.
- Higher temperatures and changes in spatial and temporal distributions in the rainfall pattern will severely decrease crop yield and could affect the food security of millions of Indians.
- Migration could potentially arise from immediate and delayed impacts of climate change which India has to address. Some inhabitants of impacted areas have the capacity and will choose to migrate while others are compelled to stay back. Both will be adversely impacted.



Impact on the Monsoons, Himalayas, and the Oceans

AR6 underlined the weakening of monsoon rains in India and the rest of south Asia in the second half of the 20th century due to rise in air pollution. The report further added that the frequency of heavy precipitation events has increased over India, while the frequency of moderate rain events has decreased since 1950. The report shows that the observed increases in mean surface temperature have risen beyond the range of internal variability compared to 1850-1900. Heat extremes have increased while cold extremes have decreased, and these trends are expected to continue over the coming decades.

Climate models used for the assessment of projected changes in the report show significant increase in temperature over South Asia as well as in summer monsoon precipitation for the 21st century. The report further added that the exact nature of monsoon in the near future (2020-2040) is uncertain due to inherent variability, and that the monsoon rainfall would increase beyond 2040.

Snow cover has reduced over the Hindu Kush Himalayan region since the early 21st

century, and glaciers have retreated and lost mass since the 1970s. The Karakoram glaciers have remained in a balanced state of having slightly gained mass. During the 21st century, snow covered areas and snow volume will decrease over most of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, snowline elevations will rise, and glacier volume will decrease. A general wetting is projected, with an increase in heavy precipitation in the 21st century.

The Indian Ocean is warming much faster than other oceans and the regional sea level is rising. Rainfall associated with intense cyclone events is projected to increase globally, and with storm surges will make the densely populated coastal areas more vulnerable. The tropical cyclone intensity is also projected to increase in the coming years and is making India's west coast more vulnerable. The report has also warned India of more frequent and intense heat waves in the years to come.

AR6 also shows that if greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are reduced and become net-zero by 2050, the temperature will start declining and warming can be limited to 1.5°C. If Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) levels are maintained at present day levels till 2050, warming can rise by 2°C by the end of the

century. A low-emission scenario is the only way to limit temperature rise below 1.5°C.

Conclusion

The IPCC AR6 report highlights the current state of affairs of climate change, while underlining the need to initiate rapid, sustainable, and strong measures for reducing GHG emissions and other air pollutants. These include measures that India needs to take too, since our oceans, mountains, and the monsoons are providing incontrovertible evidence of the impact climate change is having. A sustainable world and livable climate are the need of the hour not only for the present populace but for the generations to come as well.

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(After his stint as a scientist at Nansen Environmental Research Centres in India and Norway, National University of Singapore, TERI, and as Associate Professor at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Dr Madhusoodanan is currently Professor and Director of Amity Institute of Global Warming and Ecological Studies.)



Inspire! Report

Development Editor: Anushree Gang



Building our Understanding of Issues

PERSPECTIVES



"I am multitasking, can I request to attend this VC as an audio call without the video?" requested a woman cutting vegetables while her four-year-old kid clung to her clothes as she spoke to her manager. This has been the story all over the country for working women during the "work from home" arrangement that most organizations had to switch to because of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and also thereafter, owing to precautionary measures.

It is immensely telling that in some industries and offices, recently several women heaved a sigh of relief when "work from home" again became "work from office" for them; they found the experience liberating and cathartic!

Strained Resources, Manifold Increase in Workload

The Covid-19 pandemic caused havoc across the globe, affecting almost all industries and sectors in the professional realm. Every family/home bore the brunt of the pandemic in a direct or indirect manner. The new phenomena of "work from home" picked up really quickly as organizations scrambled to keep their employees on job and continue work in whatever manner was possible. Many saw the change as a boon, imagining that they would be enjoying the luxuries of home life along with their work;

but for most of the female workforce, it was a troublesome scenario.

While a few companies immediately stepped up employee welfare measures like provision of laptops, audio devices, better Internet connections, and even special allowances, for most others, it was managing with what they had and some extra support that was totally unavoidable. For many women, this meant sharing the workspace (for example, the choice between the quieter bedroom or corner in the house versus the dining table) and work devices like laptops/computers, headsets, work tables, chairs, etc., with not just the male members of the family who were also working from home, but also children, who were attending school remotely.

It was like women reliving the societal set-up that millions of girls face during education, where familial and social support for them is always secondary to that for the male members of the family. The same power dynamic emerged now in the work domain as it shifted to the home space in physical terms.

As per a recent Oxfam report (<https://www.oxfamindia.org/press-release/timetocare-india>, 16 January, 2020), Indian women and girls put in 3.26 billion hours of unpaid care work every day—a contribution of at least Rs 19 trillion a year, to the Indian economy. The same report quotes a 2017 NITI Aayog report in saying Indian women spend 9.8 times the time that men do on unpaid domestic chores. In a country with a high proportion of multigenerational households, women spend on average 4.5 hours a day caring for children, elders and ill or disabled persons, compared with less than one hour by men.

So millions of Indian women embraced this mammoth challenge, made further more critical by missing house help (house helps

“ The same report also quotes the Centre for Sustainable Development at Azim Premji University saying 47 percent of female workers who lost their job between March 2020 and December 2020, that is, before the second wave of Covid-19 in April 2020, were made permanently redundant.”

are the lifeline for most working women in the country) and increased drills of cleaning and sanitization during the pandemic, struggling to meet their daily work targets. The expectations and needs at work did not decrease, though!

Household helps themselves, also a part of the female workforce in the informal sector, were one of the hardest hit. Most of them lost employment for several months and faced severe poverty conditions, with no support from the government.

Deep Impact

This strain on female professionals started showing its results in a spike in mental health issues among women, child care issues, and also domestic violence and other disturbances. In the work sphere, stress increased with increasing delays in meeting deadlines, sometimes even leading to women quitting their jobs, or leading to long working hours when they tried to make up for lost time after office hours. Thus, their overall mental and physical health suffered. As per a Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) report ('Impact of COVID-19 on Working Women', August 2020, <https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/>

[Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Working-Women-August.pdf](#)), in the USA, there were 70,000 layoffs between the months of March 2020 and April 2020 out of which 60 percent were women and the most affected were younger women as they lacked the work experience to survive in a competitive job market. In India as well, service sectors with higher concentration of women such as tourism, hospitality, and aviation are expected to have had approximately 70 percent layoffs.

The Consortium of Indian Industries (CII), which represents over 10 lakhs small firms, has reportedly said that women make up over 60 percent of the job losses (Reuters report on 3 August, 2021, 'Coronavirus Likely to Lock India's Women out of Job Market for Years', by Manoj Kumar and Alasdair Pal). The same report also quotes the Centre for Sustainable Development at Azim Premji University saying 47 percent of female workers who lost their job between March 2020 and December 2020, that is, before the second wave of Covid-19 in April 2020, were made permanently redundant. The corresponding figure for male workers was 7 percent only.

Another report quoted a survey conducted by Women in Technology, Ace India, in November and December 2020, focussing on female professionals between 21 and 55 years of age, working in IT, technology, banking and finance sectors, in which 74 percent of them believed the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted female professionals more, with 49 percent of them highlighting that the burden of household responsibilities on women had increased (*The Times of India* report, 26 Feb, 2021, '74% Professionals Believe Women Were More Negatively Impacted by Covid-19: Survey', by Sonam Joshi).

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), while most men recovered from their job losses by November 2020, women were not as fortunate and as many as 49 percent job losses can be attributed to them. Considering the

“ As per a Yale Economic Growth Centre Report titled 'Reaching India's poorest women with Covid-19 relief' (<https://egc.yale.edu/reaching-indias-poorest-women-covid-19-relief>), 176 million of these poor women are excluded from receiving any relief from the Central government which is tied to PM Jan Dhan Yojna benefits, and 70 million do not have ration card which excludes them from having any ration card benefits. Who in effect is receiving and benefiting from these schemes remains a question to be answered!!

“ According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), while most men recovered from their job losses by November 2020, women were not as fortunate and as many as 49 percent job losses can be attributed to them. Considering the percentage of women in the workforce, this means a very high number of women who lost their jobs (*Mid Day* report, 20 June, 2021, 'How Covid-19 Pandemic Hit India's Female Professionals Hardest', by Aastha Atray Banan)

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One dimension of how this impacted female professionals can be partly gauged from a LinkedIn report that said the impact of Covid-19 on the sense of financial stability and confidence levels of female professionals has been a lot more negative than that of men. Their confidence level has declined four times more than men, according to the LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Index (*News 18* report, 25 June, 2021, 'Covid Second Wave Hit Women Harder, Twice as Worried about Jobs as Men: Report by LinkedIn').

In the highly stressed business environment, and the layoffs that organizations had to resort to due to losses in business for cost cutting, women often became easy victims, wielding as they were the additional pressures of survival in their home and social life.

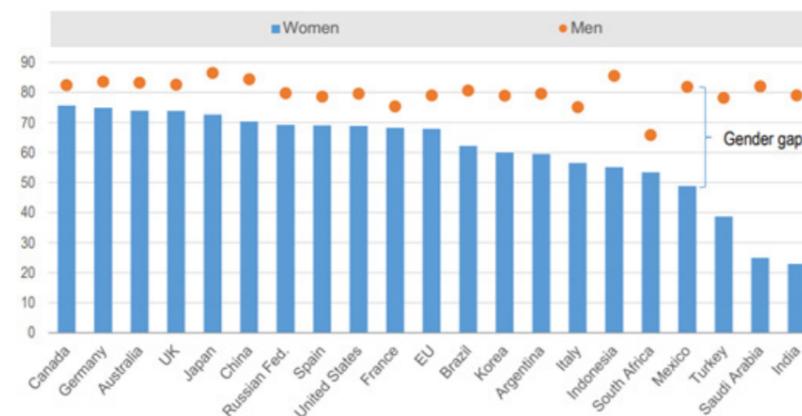
Women in the Informal Sector

Layoffs in the informal sector also hit women's employment hard: 75 percent of women working in the informal sector lost their jobs during the Covid-19 lockdown according to an Action Aid survey (<https://www.actionaidindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Workers-in-the-time-of-Covid-19-Survey-Round-II-V8-29-Oct-20.pdf>), with small businesses like street vending being totally shut to the tune of 97 percent. The situation became more grim as the remaining barely surviving female workforce in the informal sector had to resort to borrowing or debt—either of the community or of money lenders—for their basic survival, as per a survey conducted by researchers at the Azim Premji University ('Covid-19 Livelihoods Survey', <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Compilation-of-findings-APU-COVID-19-Livelihoods-Survey-Final.pdf>). If the situation wasn't already so abysmal, men in the informal sector, after the mass exodus from urban to rural areas during the lockdown, grabbed the MGNREGA related jobs as they were the victim of layoffs too! The graphic below depicts the person days worked by Women under MGNREGA in 2020-2021 compared to previous years.



Source: MGNREGA data portal (Women's Employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act)

The government made tall claims of supporting poor women working in the informal sector through various Covid-19 transfer schemes but that remained just another hollow claim and a mockery of these women. As per a Yale Economic Growth Centre Report titled 'Reaching India's poorest women with Covid-19 relief' (<https://egc.yale.edu/reaching-indias-poorest-women-covid-19-relief>), 176 million of these poor women are excluded from receiving any relief from the Central government which is tied to PM Jan Dhan Yojna benefits, and 70 million do not have



Source: OECD Report, 'Women at Work in G20 Countries: Progress and Policy Action Since 2019'

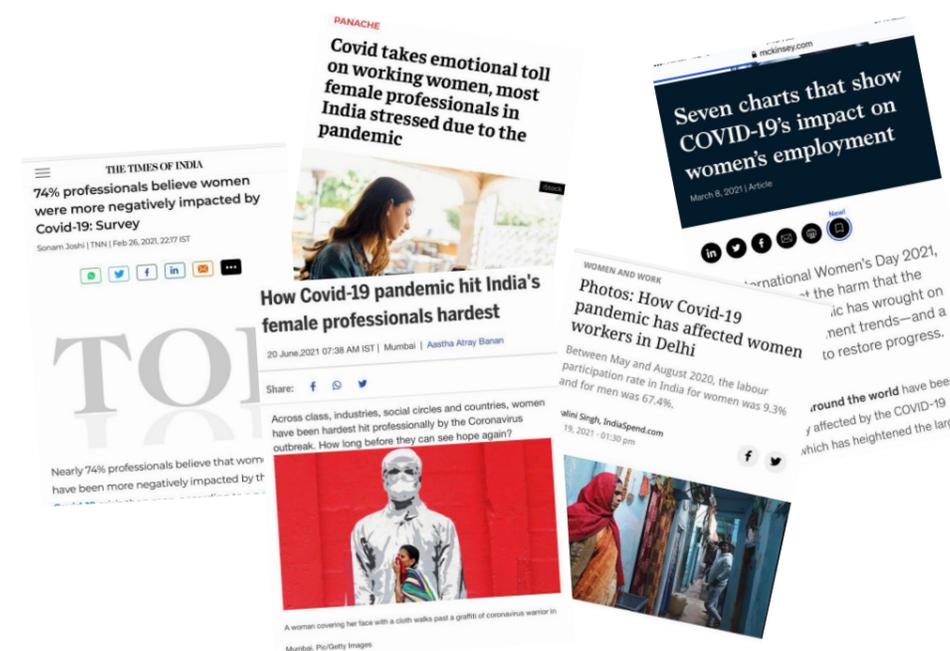
ration cards which excludes them from having any ration card benefits. Who in effect is receiving and benefiting from these schemes remains a question to be answered!

Increase in Domestic Violence

Another alarming consequence of the economic and social stress with restricted movements and cramped living conditions has been an increase in domestic violence. According to the National Commission of Women (NCW), India recorded a 2.5 times increase in domestic violence between March 2020 and May 2020 (*The Hindu* report, June 15, 2020, 'NCW Records Sharp Spike in Domestic Violence amid Lockdown', by Jagriti Chandra). The NCW also reported a 100 percent increase in incidents of domestic

violence within a fortnight of the lockdown (Oxfam report, 3 August, 2020, 'Locked Down: Domestic Violence Reporting in India during Covid-19', by Kanika Arora and Shubham Kumar). Some women's organizations reported that in the first four phases of the lockdown, they received more reports of domestic violence than they had in the last ten years for a similar period of time. Others indicated that many women were unable to report the violence, as they had less privacy and means to access help. The numbers have been alarming, especially considering that many victims wouldn't have come forward to report such violence due to various reasons. The instances of domestic violence increased to such an extent that the government had to classify domestic violence shelter and support services as "essential" services!

(Anushree Gang is an Investor, M&A & PE Advisor, and Traveller. She's also a Fellow of AIPC Jodhpur, Rajasthan.)



12 The Missing 'Lady of Justice' Gender Gap in Judiciary

Avani Bansal, Advocate Supreme Court; Vice President, AIPC Delhi
Radhika Ghosh, Law Student, Hidayatulla National Law University,
Raipur, Chhattisgarh



Introduction: An Intriguing Conversation

I was speaking to a colleague who trains judges. Reading one of my earlier pieces on the case for representative judiciary in India, she narrated to me an incident. She said all the judges of the Supreme Court had come for training and one could see that the two female judges were more or less by their self. So even if a woman becomes a Supreme

Court judge, should we assume that she will be treated alike and at par with male judges? She didn't think so, having observed and worked closely with judges for a long time. But she probed me deeper—"Why do you think that is the case? Why do most male judges have such a parochial view towards women judges?" While I was still thinking, she said, "One of the reasons could be that the wives of most of the judges, while educated they may be, do not work professionally. So judges are still accustomed to see women in a particular light."

Now, I had never thought about the gender gap in judiciary in this light. While we look at the statistics of the dismal number of female judges in India at subordinate judiciary level, High Courts and Supreme Court, we rarely investigate into how the subjective worldview of our own judges with a limited role for women in it has a deep impact on promoting and encouraging more women to join the judiciary. As many judgements in India reveal the personal view of the judges on the role of women, there is no reason why we should assume

“ These 11 female judges constitute 11 percent of the total number of judges who have served in the Supreme Court so far. At present, along with J. Indira Banerjee, there a total of four women judges in the Supreme Court. They constitute 12 percent of the total number of 33 judges currently serving.

that the same male-dominated judiciary will be encouraging of more women to sit next to them as colleagues.

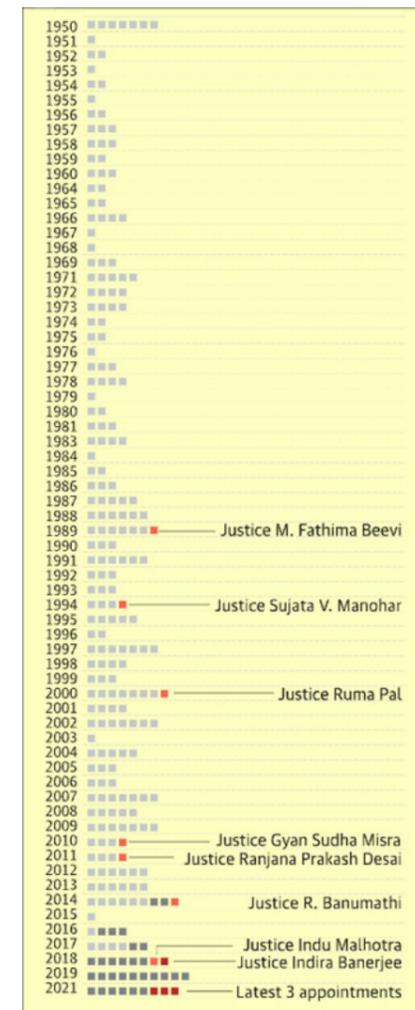
Abysmal Numbers

The Supreme Court was established in October 1950 and functioned as India's federal court until it assumed its present form in January 1950. The initial strength of the judges was only eight—Chief Justice and seven puisne judges. As the number of cases increased, the number of judges also went up. Today, there are a total of 31 judges, including the Chief Justice of India.

Since 1950, India's Supreme Court has had 46 Chief Justices and 167 other judges. Among these, there have been a total of 11 female judges in the Apex Court ever. Three of them were sworn into the Supreme Court (SC) of India as recently as on August 31, 2021. These 11 female judges constitute 11 percent of the total number of judges who have served in the Supreme Court so far. At present, along with J. Indira Banerjee, there a total of four women judges in the Supreme Court. They constitute 12 percent of the total number of 33 judges currently serving.

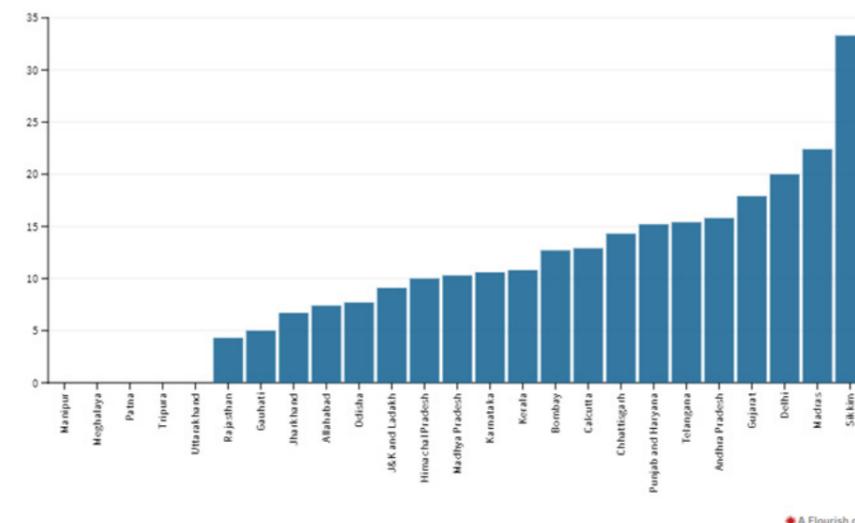
The chart on the next page shows serving women judges (in red), retired women judges (in lighter shade of red), serving men judges/Chief Justices (in grey), and retired men judges/Chief Justices (in light red) of the SC according to their year of appointment as of 31 August, 2021. The chart clearly shows: only 11 of the 256 judges (4.2 percent) who have served/are serving at the apex court

were/are women. Four out of the 33 judges (12 percent) currently serving are women.



The share of female judges in High Courts has been no better. The following graph depicts the share of women among all HC judges as of 1 August, 2021. Overall, female judges account for only 11 percent of HC judges. In five HCs, no woman has served as

Share of judges in High Courts who are women (%)



a judge, while in six others, their share has been less than 10 percent. The percentage of female judges at the Madras and Delhi High Courts has been relatively higher.

Women's representation in the judiciary is slightly better in the lower courts where 28 percent of the judges were women as of 2017. However, it was lower than 20 percent in Bihar, Jharkhand, and Gujarat.

In 17 states, between 2007 and 2017, 36.45 percent of judges and magistrates were women, researchers with the Judicial Reforms Initiative at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, a think tank, wrote in January 2020 in the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW). In comparison, only 11.75 percent women joined as district judges through direct recruitment over the same period, according to data from 13 states.

“ Overall, female judges account for only 11 percent of HC judges. In five HCs, no woman has served as a judge, while in six others, their share has been less than 10 percent.

What About Trans Women, Dalit, and Adivasi Women?

The gender gap in India is so wide that we are often talking of just 'women' representation without paying any attention to the inherent intersectionality debate. Women are not just one monolithic community in India. From all the nine women who have made it as judges in the Supreme Court, there has been only one Muslim woman, J. Fathima Beewi, and one practicing Christian, J. R Banumathi. There

“ Women's representation in the judiciary is slightly better in the lower courts where 28 percent of the judges were women as of 2017. However, it was lower than 20 percent in Bihar, Jharkhand, and Gujarat.

has been no dalit or adivasi woman, and no woman representing the sexual minorities in India, including a trans woman. The intersectional representation has to be borne in mind because women representing different communities bring in perspectives which others cannot. As the International Commission of Jurists reports—"Increased judicial diversity enriches and strengthens the ability of judicial reasoning to encompass and respond to varied social contexts and experiences. This can improve justice sector responses to the needs of women and marginalized groups."

Why Such A Gender Gap?

There are several systemic obstacles that prevent women from being equally represented in judiciary. First of all, there needs to be a clear vision of how much representation of women will be considered as adequate representation, and given that women are half of the Indian population, unless there are 50 percent women judges at all levels of judiciary, we have no reason to be complacent. Having 11 percent women at HC and SC level and 36 percent women at district court level is just not good enough. We have to be convinced of raising this bar before we start engaging in this debate.

“ Third, we need to discuss the issue of reservation for women not just in Parliament but also in the High Courts and in the Supreme Court of India.

Second, there is a need to revisit the rules that keep women out by appearing to treat them 'equally' without paying attention to the need for 'equitable and not equal treatment'. For example, to be eligible to be a district judge, an advocate must have a minimum of seven years of continuous practice. "This could be a disqualifying criterion for many women advocates because of the intervening social responsibilities of marriage and motherhood that could be preventing them from having seven years of



Picture in public domain at publicdomainpictures.net. By Mohamed Mahmoud Hassan

“ A total reorientation of the way society thinks of family and marriage is needed,” said Justice Sridevan. “It becomes difficult if you think the woman is the sole nurturer.”

”

continuous practice,” said Diksha Sanyal, a researcher involved with the Vidhi Centre studies on this issue. While Article 233 of the Constitution provides that appointment as a district judge requires not less than seven years as an advocate, it is the Supreme Court that has upheld the interpretation to mean continuous practice. Similarly, “the entire attitude towards women who work outside home must change,” said Justice Prabha Sridevan, a retired judge of the Madras High Court. For instance, she said, women who join as magistrates are transferred every three years. This reduces the staying power of women in any profession.

Third, we need to discuss the issue of reservation for women not just in Parliament but also in the High Courts and in the Supreme Court of India. “Reservation quota for women is perhaps just one among many factors that encourages and facilitates more women to enter the system. In states where other supporting factors are present in sufficient measure, women’s quotas perhaps help bridge the gap in gender representation,” noted the 2020 EPW special article.

Fourth, we need to design the system in a way that incorporates the requirements of women who aspire to be judges. “A lot of female judges join the service very late, which makes their chance of making it to the High Courts or the Supreme Court bleak,” said Soumya Sahu, a civil judge in Madhya Pradesh. Women judges are not immune to the “leaking pipeline”, the term used to describe how many employed women quit the workforce mid-career when children face board exams and parents need additional care—jobs that fall to women. “A

“

Justice Leila Seth, former Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and the first woman to become the Chief Justice of a state High Court, said in a November 2014 interview with *The Hindu*, “In most cases, male lawyers or judges especially in upper Himachal had a feudal mentality. They were not used to a woman sitting on their head.”

”

total reorientation of the way society thinks of family and marriage is needed,” said Justice Sridevan. “It becomes difficult if you think the woman is the sole nurturer.”

Possible Solutions

To address these issues, we need to think of the challenges beyond conventional solutions that are discussed to reduce the gender gap. The gender gap in judiciary is not separate from the gender gap that we see in all segments of society. So what’s needed is a bold vision for understanding the requirements of women at all levels, which means disrupting the conventional ways of doing things, including more female voices at all levels of decision making and creating inclusive spaces, where we don’t just engage in tokenism by appointment a few women.

Above all, what’s needed is self-reflection and being aware of our own mental barriers and perceptions regarding women and what they are capable of doing. Sometimes the attitude of judges towards female lawyers and judges may become apparent through small anecdotes, similar to what statistics may reveal.

Justice Leila Seth, former Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and the first woman to become the Chief Justice of a state High Court, said in a November 2014 interview with *The Hindu*, “In most cases, male lawyers or judges especially in upper Himachal had a feudal mentality. They were not used to a woman sitting on their head.”

Advocate Kiruba Munusamy shares an incident while in Madras High Court, where a judge commented about her short haircut, which she couldn’t tie. He said, “Your hairstyle is more attractive than your argument. Women having short hair and men having long hair, wearing studs have become a fashion these days but I don’t like it.” She replied that she has been keeping short hair since her school days. She also mentioned that she has migraine and can’t keep her hair tied for long, so she had it cut short. She then pointed out

to him that there is no bar council rule or code that prescribes the hairstyle of women. His response was, “Of course, there are no rules. But I am just telling my opinion.” Regardless of the judge’s comment, Kiruba was told by other male lawyers present in the court to apologise to the judge. Despite being the Petitioner’s counsel in a transwoman’s police appointment case, the advocate was mistreated, insulted, and told to shut up by the judge.

While every female judge who makes it to the apex court serves as an inspiration for millions of young women, it is time that we think systematically about getting millions of girls as judges and lawyers in various courts and levels in our legal system. This will require shattering quite a few glass ceilings and setting examples through action, initiatives, policy, laws, and attitudes, all of which begins with sombre reflection.



“Women Lawyers Of The Country, Unite, Shout With Anger For 50% Reservation In Judiciary”: Chief Justice of India [#NVRamana](#) [Video]



Women Lawyers Of The Country, Unite, Shout With Anger For 50%...



Issues Critical to Our Existence & Ideology

QUINTESSENCE

Mission Himmat Beyond the Clouds (Uttarakhand) Part 1

Aalim Javeri, Chief Operations Officer, AIPC



Reaching Out to the Last Man

I have often asked myself this question, “Why do we do it? Why do we keep attempting the impossible?”

As I was climbing higher and higher up, I could feel the air becoming thinner, my lungs, my body, seemed to be working in overdrive just to be able to breathe. I then took a pause, took a deep breath and looked up and saw them: the people I had come to meet. This is the story of my journey above the clouds to some of India’s most isolated villages in the state of Uttarakhand, as part of “Mission Himmat”.



Very early on I had chosen conscientiously to use every opportunity to explore and understand India and her people, my people. As elections are approaching in Uttarakhand we had recently formed a team to assist our colleagues in identifying and understanding some of the issues being faced by the people there. One of the conversations in the team had led to my being tasked with meeting with some of the villagers in these remote, far off villages. The idea was simple: hear them out, convey their concerns to our teams in Delhi.



I have had some experience climbing mountains, particularly in the state of Uttarakhand. I was lucky that some of my mountain climbing colleagues from previous journeys agreed to join me on this one; they were all Congress workers. They had on occasions connected with me to convey their despair at not being able to have jobs and other opportunities/facilities. I did my best to reassure them but realised that this time round, we really need to focus on seeing and understanding their pain first hand and thoroughly.

A Journey Beyond the Clouds

My plan was fluid, given weather and other challenges. I read reports of a tragic incident where some people had lost their lives just a few days earlier. I will admit that at that time the thought did cross my mind that maybe I should abandon the attempt, but I also realised that while I had that choice, the people I was meeting did not! I didn’t need to look too much into the matter to understand that the concerns of the people quite literally would be matters of life and death.



Once I met them I knew I was right. Many issues the people living in these hard-to-reach areas raised pertain to very elemental/fundamental challenges they face in their living.

One of the places that I had to cross was the now abandoned Tapovan site where so many people had tragically lost their lives in the recent past. While crossing the bridge and seeing the destruction first-hand, there was silence in my car and I could feel my hair standing on the back of my neck. But such is the nature of our work: I had a responsibility and we had to keep moving forward!

As we camped for the night, met with our colleagues in the villages and figured out the plan for the next day, I saw what appeared to be a very large rocky mountain in front of me. It essentially covered the entire horizon of what I could see. Instantly I thought, “Wow, that truly is the Himalayas”!



Astounding Beauty; Astounding Hardships

The following day as we began our journey further up, we met with some of the locals at the last village before a four-hour-long trek up to Dronagari village. One of the ladies there told me that before me, the last person she met from the Congress party was Indira Gandhi ji. She said that when she shook her hand, she was shocked at how soft they were, for such a strong lady. Instantly I realised my responsibility and duty here. I almost felt as though I was an emissary of a movement far more consequential than I could ever comprehend.





The next four hours entailed a perilous journey essentially via the side of a mountain. The road in many instances was collapsing or had collapsed because of incessant rain a few days earlier. Yet we and those people that live there kept moving forward.

Circumstance aside, there is unimaginable beauty in those areas; nature's bounty there is inspiring! While definitely the local people have to undertake hard labour, nature's benevolence lends a spirituality to every step they take; it is almost transformative to just watch these people and be amongst them. Truly, I felt as if the time had stopped.



Upon reaching one village, I was offered a very lovely cup of namkeen chai. There was a certain tradition and set of customs I needed to follow, which I did: it was an interesting experience, to say the least. My colleague from the party, the Pradhan of the village, was a very kind man who explained to me the nuances of the realities they face every day. I took out my notepad and began to record the concerns that he was sharing. He was shocked, to say the least, when he realised that I had come all the way from Delhi to talk to him and understand his problems.

INC: A Vehicle of Progress

When confronted with the difficult or the unknown, we often assume the limitations before considering all possibilities. Experiences like this one train us to focus on the latter. My trip, my mission reminded me yet again that the values of the Indian National Congress (INC) remain inextricably linked with the idea of India. The vehicle that is the INC is not one of personal ambition or financial gain, but of progress. It is a language that is universal and requires no dictionary or lessons to learn: simply an open heart and inspired mind.

Following the meeting with the Pradhan, I attended a meeting with the villagers with no electricity in what was easily -2°Celsius, shared their concerns, made some friends, and moved on to other villages. Yes, moving on to other villages meant crossing a few more mountains. I will tell you about those experiences in the next Part of this article.

We are professionals for progress, we are Professionals' Congress!



Aalim Javeri
@AalimJaveri

You may doubt us,
Constantly oppose us,
But you will never defeat us
Because we are inevitable,

We are Progress
We are Congress



Reflections, Impressions, and Expressions

KNOW YOUR AIPC

Raghuvir Mukherji, Head, Policy Advisory Group,
AIPC Maharashtra (Mumbai South Chapter)
Chandan Ghosh, President, AIPC West Bengal

In AIPC, I Found My “Why”

Raghuvir Mukherji, Head, Policy Advisory Group,
AIPC Maharashtra (Mumbai South Chapter)



Ever since I signed up as a Fellow of AIPC, I have been facing the question: Why? Do I really think it is possible for one insignificant man to bring about change? Is the Congress even in a position to take on the BJP Juggernaut electorally? Why draw the unwanted attention of the spooks in the Home Ministry and the alphabet soup of Central Security and Investigation Agencies (CBI, ED, NIA, IB, CERT-IN, FIU) to myself, and rub the powers that be on the wrong side? Why dissent, when it is being equated with sedition, and freedom of speech seems to be applicable only to those who side with the Government or spread communal hatred? My family too has asked these questions.

My wife and I came back to India in 2006 from the UK because we wanted to bring our daughter up here: so that she could play a wild Holi, drenched to the bone, full of colour and madness; so that she would not just arrange the Diyas neatly on her porch as UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sonak did, but burst a hundred crackers (our environment conscious teen has gone

back to Diyas, but that is another matter !); so that she could savour the delicious street food of Mohammad Ali Road in Mumbai and Nizamuddin in Delhi and the Charminar in Hyderabad, as also Iftar parties with friends during the holy month of Ramzan, and experience the impatient wait for the big Salman Khan movies that often release on Eid; so that she could exult when the first muddy drops hit the parched soil marking the beginning of the monsoon, and enjoy the smell of wet Earth after that; so that she could feel the joy of the Mahalaya, announcing the arrival of the Devi Paksha, the fortnight of the Durga Pujas, and feel the bitter-sweet pang of wistfulness that every Bengali and Calcuttan feels on Vijaya Dashami, celebrated as Dussehra in the rest of India, as a festival that marks the victory of good over evil; so that she could celebrate with the exuberant crowds on Park Street Kolkata, or the brightly lit, crowded and yet sombre cathedrals in Goa on X-Mas Eve; so that she could experience first-hand the vivid colours and variety of India, the million myriad experiences that make up our dazzling, beautiful country.

But while we had busied ourselves with bringing her up and pursuing our successful careers, unbeknownst to us, a deep cancer was rearing its ugly head in India's body politic, and the rise and rise of Narendra Modi marked its metastasis. Soon, the real face of sectarian hatred and Fascism manifested itself. I had always thought of myself as a socially conscious citizen; I was now appalled by the wave of lynchings and majoritarian impulses sweeping across India.

A well respected Human Rights organisation like Amnesty International had to shut shop in what was purported to be the world's largest democracy, due to harassment by the government. As a member of the privileged, educated elite born and bred in India, I wanted to do more than just cluck my tongue in impotent rage and say that the “country is doomed”.

AIPC came as an opportunity to make a difference. To quote Benjamin Franklin, “Justice will not be served until those untouched (by injustice) are as outraged as those who are.” AIPC gave me a platform to band together with other like-minded professionals. It provided some comfort to know that I was not alone, an isolated “straw in the wind”. That there were others too who were “untouched by injustice”, and yet outraged. From organising AIPC Interactive meetings, to attending Anti-CAA protests to running a viral social media campaign that said “Unity is our religion” in response to Mr Modi's divisive rhetoric, to helping LGBTQ+ citizens find a voice, to writing papers on the Agricultural laws, the Immigration Bill and the IT Intermediary rules, to providing inputs for Election Manifestos, AIPC has given us the opportunity to feel like we are part of the fight back to regain our beautiful rainbow nation from the monochromatic colour of bigotry in which the Sangh Parivaar seeks to paint it. It has given me a purpose, and a burst of hope, however mild that hope may be.

In his powerful book, Man's Search for Meaning, Dr Victor Frankl, a pioneering

psychiatrist, neurologist and Auschwitz survivor, quotes the great German philosopher Nietzsche: “Give a man a Why and he can take virtually any How.” He says how sometimes finding a purpose keeps us alive in the most difficult and hopeless of situations. In fact, he even uses it as a therapeutic tool, calling it “Logotherapy” for those who feel depressed and aimless. I feel that as an AIPC Fellow, I have found my purpose.

A quote ascribed to Mark Twain says: “Two days are important in one's life: the day you were born, and the day you find out why.” In AIPC, I have found my “Why”.

Five Mantras of Successful Political Leadership

Chandan Ghosh, President,
AIPC West Bengal



Political Leadership influences our life directly and indirectly, be it economy, health, education or infrastructure. It impacts our daily livelihood. It is therefore important that our political leaders have a good knowledge and understanding of Leadership skills.

Leaders are leaders, and as I now engage closely with some political leaders, I realize that the leadership lessons I learned during my professional journey are also relevant for political leaders. Without getting into complicated management school jargon, let me share five basic leadership mantras I learned many years ago, at the beginning of my professional career. These remain relevant today for political leaders too.

1. Review and Change: This is fundamental for organizational progress. Leaders must critically look and review every process that is in place and a great leader will allow others to do the same. What was right for yesterday may not be right for tomorrow. So, this must be continuously challenged. This calls for a

high level of engagement with the job one is doing. Challenging the process means doing different things and doing things differently. It's all about experimenting and taking risks. Also, one must keep in mind that this is about challenging the way we do things and not about challenging the individuals.

2. Aligned Goals: A shared vision or a common goal is very important. This is what drives a team. A good leader always takes others on board and invites them to join hands for a common cause. It is important for a good leader to remain positive about the future, remain excited about future possibilities. He continuously forecasts what the future looks like for the team members. A leader becomes successful only when he can build a strong team bound together by a shared vision for the future. It is important to note that great leaders will always explain the ‘Purpose’ of why they are coming together as a group to accomplish a task because they know that human beings are always driven by purpose.

3. Empowering Others: Great leaders never feel insecure about their position. They completely trust their team members and empower them by involving them in planning and problem-solving. Great leaders are always accessible and they make themselves available to the team for consultation and help if required. Leaders know that ultimately what matters is the result. Empowerment develops ownership among the team members and brings in a sense of belonging. They feel trusted and respected. This improves the efficiency of the team manifold and multiplies the chances for success. This also creates an environment for innovation and renovation that makes an organization sustainable.

4. Being Transparent and Consistent: While the team members are empowered to take decisions, it is critically important that Leaders are transparent and consistent in their operations and communication. A good leader always sets an example for the team by demonstrating how to do things well and then leaves it to the team members. They always set the highest level of ethical standards, practice the values they preach, treat people fairly by communicating the rules of the game transparently to all concerned. Even if rules are changed, it is always communicated transparently to all team members. It is important that a Leader clearly communicates to the team his expectations, sets clear achievable goals and reviews the performance regularly with all of them to keep the excitement on.

5. Encouragement: A good leader knows how to encourage his team members. The team must celebrate every success. A Leader

should always praise his people for a job well done. Never forget to say, ‘Thank You’. These two words are extremely powerful. A good leader will always be a cheerleader for the team. He remains humble and shows respect to everyone around all the time. A good leader will always be ready to give credit for successes to his team members and take the responsibility for the failures.

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#ProfessionalsForProgress

Interested in politics? The All India Professionals' Congress, a department of the Indian National Congress, is your platform to contribute to the advancement of inclusive and progressive politics in India. All of your work with the AIPC will directly feed into the social, political and economic goals and objectives of the Indian National Congress.

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BECOME A FELLOW

Whether you are a techie from Bengaluru or an entrepreneur from Kolkata or a lawyer from Lucknow, we are interested in working with you and enabling you to have a voice in the political process.

All we ask of you is a deep passion for politics and an unshakeable commitment to the Constitution's core, tenets of Liberty, Plurality, Equality and Social Justice.

Sujata Paul Maliah, Vice President, AIPC Uttarakhand
Hyder Shehinsha T.A, Secretary, AIPC Chalakudy Chapter (Kerala)
Oommen Mathew, AIPC Mumbai East Chapter (Maharashtra)



This Art Cuts Deeper than the Knife

Knife Paintinigs by



Sujata Paul Maliah
Vice President, AIPC Uttarakhand



Stunning, Seductive, Sublime Sikkim A Bike Trip



Hyder Shehinsha T.A
Secretary, AIPC
Chalakudy Chapter
(Kerala)



Alive... A Wrinkled, Withered Childhood



Oommen Mathew
AIPC Mumbai
East Chapter
(Maharashtra)

Bikram Singh Chattowal, Process Coordinator, AIPC Delhi (New Delhi Chapter)

Maruti Naik, AIPC Mumbai North Central Chapter (Maharashtra)

Bimal Kumar Bagri, Coordinator, AIPC West Bengal (South Kolkata Chapter)

Poetry

Bikram Singh
Chattowal,
Process Coordinator,
AIPC Delhi (New
Delhi Chapter)



परियाँ असुरक्षित हैं !

अखबार पढ़ते हुए

वो रो रही थी, मैं पढ़ रहा था
शायद पढ़ ही सकता था!
रूह उबाल से छलनी थी
लेकिन उबाल निकालने पर पाबंदी है।

सोचा और शांत हो बैठ गया,
मस्तिष्क गृहस्थी और पंखुड़ी
की तरफ चला गया।

शाम हुयी खबर आयी के रो रही
किसी की बेटी थी
जो अपना सब कुछ खो चुकी
बेटी थी।

खून खौला पर हाथ वश कुछ नहीं
टेलीविज़न डिबेट और प्रणाम
कुछ नहीं।

सुबह का सूरज आज कुछ मुरझा
रहा था

शायद समाज की गन्दी सूरत
दिखा रहा था।
लेकिन बेटियाँ बचाने का
शोर शराबा तो बहुत था
या, फिर से हो रहा शलावा बहुत था।

हम कब तक देख कर करेंगे अनदेखा
हकूमत-ए-मंज़र एक सवालिया निशान,
कब तक करेंगे अनदेखा?

अकह सवालो की संवेदनशीलता
है मर गयी
क्या भय की आंधी अंदर,
घर कर गयी ?

मन में आया प्रजा से दरख्वास्त करु
रोती बिलखती कलियों के
संरक्षण हेतु क्या करु।

फैसला किया...
फिर से अलख का द्वीप जलाना होगा
विराग में मुरझाई फुलझड़ियों को
गले से लगाना होगा
इस निपुन्सक समाज के उजड़े चमन
को बसाना होगा
दोषियों का सूत समेत ब्याज़
चुकाना होगा।
आएं एक सुन्दर आदरणीय
माहौल बनाएं
अपनी प्यारी न्यारी पंखुड़ियों के
रहने लायक समाज बनाएं।

Maruti Naik,
AIPC Mumbai North
Central Chapter
(Maharashtra)



Weekend

We stand smug, surrounded
By our privileges
Cloaked by our indifference
Flaring up like a candle
Slow inevitable burning out

Surrendering to a strong wind
Like weekdays of stony silence
Chasing our respective dreams
And weekends of hash tagged outrage
Fired up by guilt

Note how I
Seek refuge in the collective
Satisfied
With the note
I slip into
An outstretched hand
Looking away quickly
Without eye contact
Satisfied
With my sensitivity
To the reality around me
Unsure
Of what
My lines will achieve

Their reach limited
Shackled
By the reasons
I draw around myself
My life, my family, my friends
A neat finite universe

There were
Those who came
Many moons ago
Who decided one day
To cast off the yoke
of slavery
Imposed by men
Their rituals and customs
Continued by the accident of birth
Sold through books
That few could read
Which they said contained
Words
Spoken by "Him"

Their destiny tied to names
Badges
Designed to shame forever
Keep them
Confined to the shadows
A system of lords
Sanctioned by a benign god
Even his sanctum sanctorum
Through rules created by men
Kept the impure
Out of bounds
They were allowed to wash his vessels
though
And sweep and swab
His kingdom

The rule creators
Did visit the shadows
In the dark of the night
A convenient ally
To mask their hypocrisy
Their lust for pleasure
Nay, their lust for power

And to this day
It continues
The battlegrounds now
Where the dead
Are sent on their way
To salvation
Or damnation
All struggles finally
Eternal

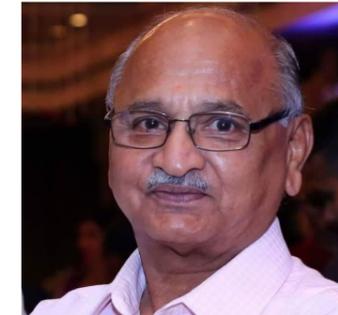
The moustache we twirl
The rituals we keep
The customs we follow
The acceptance we seek
The practices we want
To make our own
Chasing a convoluted equality
But then

No number of doctorates
On our walls
No medals for country
On our necks
Seem to matter in the end
If not break
They want us to bend

Is it too difficult
To imagine
An equal sky
For all to fly
An equal ground
For all to run
Is it too difficult
To be
Just and
To be fair

We must try harder
I must try harder.

Bimal Kumar Bagri
Coordinator, AIPC
West Bengal (South
Kolkata Chapter)



वादों का झांसा

वादे बहुत ही हुए
एक नया सपना देखा
जब वादे के मंसूबों को
समझने की कोशिश की
तब रातों की नींद और
दिन का चैन खोने लगा
वादों का झांसा दे देकर
जिन्दो को मुर्दा बना दिया।

कल क्या होगा
सोचते सोचते
मन बेहाल हो गया
नौकरी जाने का भय सताने लगा
क्या खाऊंगा क्या खिलाऊंगा
लिये कर्जे को कैसे चुकाऊंगा
चिंताओं ने एसा घेरा
जिन्दा लाश बन रह गया।
वादों का झांसा दे देकर
जिन्दो को मुर्दा बना दिया।
घमंड और अंहकार

सर चढ़ बोलने लगा
कुछ लोगों की कर तरक्की
युवाओं को बेकार बना दिया
किसानों को लाचार बनाकर
सड़कों पर दम तोड़ने छोड़ दिया
वादों का झांसा दे देकर
जिन्दो को मुर्दा बना दिया।

सात दशकों की तरक्की को
अपनी वाक् चतुराई से
लोगों को गुमराह किया
मेहनत और खून से बनी
सम्पत्तियों निलाम तूने कर दिया
लाचारी का हाल बताकर
जिन्दो को मुर्दा बना दिया।

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FELLOWSHIP PRIVILEGES

Drive the agenda at your local chapter
Network with other fellows
Engage with political leaders and influencers.
Assume leadership positions by participating
in internal elections
Contribute to election campaigns, manifesto
design, policy formulation and political
activism
Contribute to discussions and commentaries
and emerge as a political and policy thought
leader
Reclaim the political space by raising your
concerns through white papers
Raise your concerns with like minded
individuals

FELLOWSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Attend regular meetings at local chapters
Participate in outreach programs and
campaigns
Promote the AIPC and expand its network
and fellowship
Maintain a high degree of integrity and
transparency in public dealings
Monitor and report on government
programmes and schemes in your area and
nationally