

THE NEHRU CENTRE NEWSLETTER



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We're excited to share with you the sixth issue of our newsletter! It's been an incredible journey, and we're so grateful for all the support and feedback we've received. As we navigate through a rapidly changing world, our pieces bring forward insightful perspectives on pressing issues that shape our society today.

A special thanks to our guest columnists for their contributions this month and to the TNC team members who have brought everything together to make this issue what it is.

As always, we hope these pieces inspire you to reflect, discuss, and critically engage with the world around you. Your feedback is always appreciated, and we look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming issues.

We look forward to your continued engagement!

Best,
Divya Singh Chauhan (She/Her)
Lead Editor, The Nehru Centre



Researching Truth, Reimagining Democracy

Disclaimer: While we strive for accuracy and fairness, the views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Nehru Centre, its editorial team, or its staff members. The Nehru Centre assumes no responsibility for any inaccuracies, misinterpretations, or any consequences arising from the content published herein. Contributors are solely responsible for ensuring that their work does not infringe on any copyright, defamation, or other legal provisions.

CALL FOR GUEST WRITERS

The Nehru Centre (TNC) is accepting submissions from guest writers on a rolling basis for our upcoming newsletters. Please read our editorial guidelines carefully before sending us your submission. We invite submissions in the following formats in up to 900 words:

1. Opinion pieces – Arguments backed by facts and figures (not rants)
2. Socio-political, Historical, Law & policy Analysis– National or international scope
3. News reports – Curated or original reporting based on primary field research

How to Submit ?

1. Email your submissions (doc) to thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com with a short author bio & your social media handles.
2. Mention the title of your piece in the subject line and specify if it is time-sensitive.
3. For the write-ups, please use English (UK), Times New Roman, 12pt, and line spacing 1.15.
4. If selected, the editor will review your work and request edits, if necessary.
5. You will be informed about the expected publishing date once the newsletter goes live.
6. Your article will be shared on TNC's multiple social media platforms and you will be tagged (depending on social media accounts provided by you).
7. We retain the final say over headlines, publishing dates, and images used.

AI & Plagiarism Policy

We value original thought and authentic writing. While AI tools can assist in proofreading, structuring, or shortening content, all AI usage must be disclosed to the editor. AI-generated content without human oversight will not be accepted.

Terms & Conditions

1. Indicate if your article is exclusive to The Nehru Centre or has been published elsewhere. We prioritize original content and typically do not republish blog posts.
2. Copyright for material that is published exclusively is held jointly by The Nehru Centre, New Delhi and the authors.
3. If others request to republish your article, you must seek TNC's informed consent before granting permission.
4. Once an article is published, it cannot be removed/ taken down except in legal, copyright, or safety-related cases.
5. With the exception of trans writers, we do not allow any writer to change their name or write under a pseudonym for The Nehru Centre to ensure complete transparency and to avoid any legal hassles going forward. However, writers wishing to publish personal narratives can choose to write anonymously for us (editorial records will still require full author details).

This erasure, while officially described as part of a "rationalisation" effort to reduce student burden post-COVID, exhibits a discernible ideological pattern that aligns with the Hindutva worldview.

As historian Romila Thapar notes, *"Deleting pages and chapters can only be described as an entirely unintelligent way of reducing content. And the NCERT's choice of deletions explains what its motivations are."*

The omission of Muslim rulers and secular-nationalist figures from historical discourse raises concerns over communal bias and the narrowing of India's diverse historical legacy. When history is edited to avoid uncomfortable truths, the chance to critically engage with the past is lost. These erasures not only diminish the narrative but also result in historical discontinuities that distort cause-and-effect relationships.

Another controversial change has been the removal of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution from the Class 9 and 10 examination syllabus. Justified by NCERT as another content-reduction strategy, this move has been widely criticised and points to a broader trend in curriculum policy that increasingly disregards modern scientific reasoning. While there is merit in integrating indigenous epistemologies, it must not come at the cost of critical scientific foundations.

The dual trajectory of curriculum reform in India, modernising structure while selectively editing content, raises important questions about academic freedom and the purpose of education in a democracy. On one hand, skill-based, locally adapted curricula empower students and align education with real-world needs. On the other hand, selective narratives and the removal of contentious topics risk producing an uncritical and homogenised worldview.

Historian S. Irfan Habib, a noted scholar of modern Indian history, states: *"The attempts to politicise school books is nothing new but a longstanding agenda of RSS and the Hindu far right. However, the scale is alarming."*

When entire events are erased from textbooks, what we lose isn't just information, it's understanding. How can one truly grasp the impact of Gandhi's assassination if not told who killed him, or why? How can we reckon with communal violence if episodes like the 2002 Gujarat riots are simply left out?

The systematic deletion of such material doesn't just impoverish education, it risks producing a generation that cannot meaningfully interpret the world they live in. And while these gaps may be enforced within India, elsewhere in the world, at universities, in libraries, and research institutions, scholars will continue to study, discuss, and preserve the very histories we choose to ignore. In doing so, we isolate ourselves from our own legacy and a shared global conversation.

History isn't just a list of events; it's context, connections, and consequences. These are the building blocks of critical thinking. Therefore, history should remain a space for debate, not dogma. To teach a version of history that is narrow, partial, and exclusionary is not just a disservice to students but is a loss to India's future.

.....

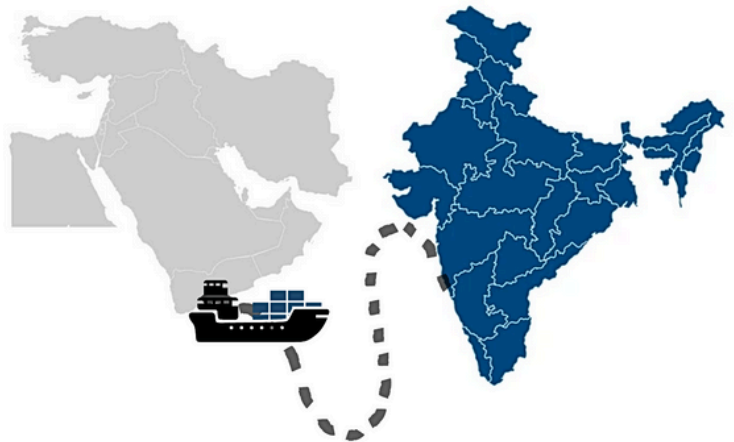
ANALYSIS | FOREIGN POLICY

INDIA IN WEST ASIA: BETWEEN PRAGMATISM, PRESSURE, AND PRINCIPLE

By Amartya

The evolving geopolitical arrangements in West Asia demand India's more resilient and proactive approach, embedded in its longstanding foreign policy of strategic autonomy and non-neutrality. India shares a historical and cultural connection with West Asia, dating back to the Indus Valley Civilisation and the Dilmun Civilisation. These early maritime trade routes are some of the earliest historically documented, underscoring the deep-rooted ties between India and West Asia (Chen & Liu, 2025). Moreover, India's link with the Gulf had deepened during the British Raj, intensifying its economic and strategic interest in the region. Post-independence, Indian foreign policy moved away from playing a larger role beyond its territory. As a result, it was an era where India acted as a leader of anti-colonial struggles in the Global South, which positioned it as a moral power with a limited or no strong presence in and around the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. However, the situation today is quite different. India has emerged as a key actor and middle power with strong strategic and economic interests in the West Asian region. With US-China strategic competition growing, India has a critical role to play. However, whether Indian foreign policy has successfully created a larger space for India's interest in the region is a realm worth analysing.

After India's independence in 1947, its foreign policy, shaped by Jawaharlal Nehru, was the foremost champion of non-alignment amid the rivalry between the US and the USSR.



Non-alignment policy was carried forward keeping in mind the newly independent state's freedom to manoeuvre (or strategic autonomy) in a world divided into spheres of influence. Nevertheless, non-alignment did not necessarily mean neutrality, as was clear from India's strong stance against colonialism in the Global South. India was the single biggest non-Arab and non-muslim state to recognise Palestinian statehood as the initial round of hostilities arose owing to the illegal occupation by the state of Israel. India's unwavering support for a two-state solution, a testament to its commitment to peace and justice, remains, to this day, its central proposition on the conflict. During the Cold War, India's role in West Asia remained limited to its support for the rights of indigenous people against Western Imperialism. Today, India's engagement with the region is more crucial than ever, not least because of its enhanced economic and military might.

India relies heavily on energy supplies from West Asia, and its needs are expected to grow, possibly surpassing China through 2024 (Verma, 2021). Findings suggest that West Asia accounted for 44.6% of India's crude oil imports in August 2024 (Kimani, 2024).

Additionally, there is a significant chunk of Indians working across West Asia, constituting over 9.25 million as of July 2024, according to MEA. India's diplomatic challenges are multi-faceted, with such critical dependence in the region. It shall be noted that Indian foreign policy is already constrained due to the US sanctions on Iran, China's growing presence in West Asia, and India's strategic partnership with Israel. Recent hostilities between the US-Israel coalition and Iran have proved India's stake in the region cannot be ignored. The Strait of Hormuz, which allows 20% of the global flow of oil and other energy supplies, became the central focus during the conflict with Iran threatening a blockade. India, China, and most of Asia rely heavily on the Strait and the Red Sea, and any such disruption may lead to higher energy costs.

India's policy towards Iran has been mixed. Although India relies on Iranian energy supplies, it has complied with US pressure to reduce its dependence on the Islamic Republic. When the US-India civil nuclear deal was well underway, India had voted against Iran's nuclear programme in 2005. India was also supportive of the JCPOA, an agreement that Trump 1.0 withdrew from in May 2018, which promised to reduce sanctions on Iran (Madan, 2018). In 2024, India abstained from voting on Iran's nuclear programme. Let us not forget India has been building a port at Chabahar in Iran and maintains pragmatic ties under the Chabahar Framework. India has developed a strong economic partnership with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Nearly half of India's LNG is imported from Qatar and the UAE (Verma, 2025).

Furthermore, in the strategic front, Indian defence firms have signed MOUs with Saudi and UAE firms.

The present 'Link West Policy,' formerly developed as the 'Look West Policy' under Manmohan Singh, is a step towards enhancing India's engagement with the region. Under the initiative, India has championed the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, a proposed trade route that would connect India with West Asia and Europe, and India-Israel-US-UAE (I2U2), a strategic partnership aimed at fostering economic and security cooperation among the four countries. These initiatives aim to facilitate multi-sector engagement, including food security and transportation. Indian presence in the region is strictly limited to economic and strategic affairs and barely addresses the complex political dynamics at play.

Under PM Modi, Indian foreign policy has claimed to be more pragmatic in the region, demonstrating the regime's break from the traditional position of non-alignment and solidarity in the Global South.

More recently, India's silence on the genocide in Gaza and Israel's blatant aggression across the region is a significant departure from its core foreign policy principles. In June, 147 countries, including US allies, voted in favour of an unconditional ceasefire in Gaza. India abstained, following which India's opposition parties condemned the GOI's position – a shift away from the usual show of solidarity in foreign policy matters. Shortly after, domestic opinion over Israel's bombing of Iran was divided, with opposition and a few state governments publicly supporting Iran's rights to self-defence. Meanwhile, the Union Government distanced itself from the joint statement of solidarity issued by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

On the other hand, although India received solidarity from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attacks, West Asian states have been cautious in balancing between Pakistan and India. On the Kashmir dispute, India has not received any substantial support from the Arab countries over its territorial claims, even though it has always advocated for a bilateral settlement.

Notably, China's increasing presence in the region and the intensifying US-China competition need to be weighed heavily as far as India's diplomacy is concerned. Chinese presence and its "all-weather friendship" with Pakistan mean navigating very challenging waters for Indian foreign policy. China has rapidly developed a strategic port at Gwadar in Pakistan, not far away from Chabahar, where India is building another port, in partnership with Iran. For India, ignoring the political affairs and solely focusing on economic and strategic engagements might look pragmatic in the short term. Still, India's long-term position as a reliable and stable partner for the region will depend on how well it situates itself vis-à-vis West Asia's messy geopolitical terrain.

Contemporary challenges in West Asia are immense. However, shunning non-alignment for pragmatism seems ironic, for they go hand-in-hand. Today, the discourse on non-alignment does not sufficiently address one of its key elements: non-neutrality. As explained by India's first PM, non-alignment does not mean neutrality. The policy helped India gain acceptance, emerging as a powerful ally for post-colonial states, generating goodwill and trust across the Global South, and assisting its global positioning even today. Despite a strong emphasis on economic and strategic engagement, India lacks a broader West Asian strategy and deals bilaterally with countries.

Finally, its interests cannot be secured unless it reaffirms its commitment to the people of the Global South - Palestine's right to self-determination is crucial in the context.

To what extent India can ignore the contested political landscape of West Asia, marked by foreign interference, widespread unrest, fundamentalism, and regime instability, and only focus on economic and strategic engagement depends on how far its foreign policy will be able to resist American pressure and counterbalance China. But more importantly, beyond just economic and strategic goals, re-establishing its commitment to self-reliance, non-interference, and the region's population is essential for a lasting relationship with the area.

.....

GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

NEHRU'S STRATEGIC PATIENCE: KASHMIR, GOA, AND TIBET

By Taha Ali*

Jawaharlal Nehru consistently turned time into a tool of policy rather than a sign of weakness. In the early decades of India's independence, he faced thorny disputes: Kashmir, Goa and Tibet where rash action could have meant disaster. Instead of rushing, Nehru often delayed resolution, framing India as principled and law-abiding while quietly buying time to strengthen India's position. In each case his tactic was similar: invoke moral high ground and legal norms in public, keep adversaries guessing privately, and navigate India's limited power with patience. What looks like hesitation was often a calculated manoeuvre to turn temporal distance into leverage.

In Kashmir, Nehru used delay to assert legal principle while avoiding an immediate showdown. After the 1947-48 war, he took the case to the UN, championing Security Council resolutions that called for a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's fate. On the surface this put India on the moral high ground, Pakistan's invasion would be judged by an impartial international body. Meanwhile, Nehru quietly stalled the practical implementation of the plebiscite. In private correspondence, he admitted the Kashmir referendum was "still far away" and advised not to publicly acknowledge that it might never happen. By this approach India claimed the mantle of multilateralism, insisting on legalism, even as it gradually integrated Jammu & Kashmir under its own administration. New Delhi pointed to elections and its secular constitution in Kashmir as proof of popular will, portraying the status quo as reflective of democracy. The net effect: international pressure remained on Pakistan, but India kept the final settlement on ice until conditions, withdrawal of foreign troops, inter

This delay also managed domestic politics. Nehru knew that rushing a plebiscite or military action in Kashmir risked inflaming communal passions and endangering fragile governance; by handling Kashmir through UN resolutions and periodic talks, he deferred a volcanic issue while maintaining India's claim. In short, Nehru used time to frame India as the fair arbiter and Pakistan as the spoiler, even as he slowly consolidated India's hold over the region.

Road to Goa's Liberation

In Goa, Nehru's patience reflected a similar mix of moral and strategic calculation. India inherited a colonial enclave still held by a stubborn NATO ally in the 1950s. Nehru repeatedly declared that Goa must ultimately join India. He famously called Portuguese rule a "pimple on the face of India", but he avoided immediate force. This stance asserted India's moral consistency, as an anti-colonial democracy, it would not attack an unarmed population. At the same time, the ambiguity served strategic ends. The Portuguese knew India was powerful, but Nehru's public aversion to military action kept them guessing if India might intervene despite its protestations. More importantly, waiting allowed global politics to evolve. In the 1950s NATO protection for Portugal was strong; by 1961, anti-colonial sentiment and changes in international alliances left Portugal more isolated. When Nehru finally moved in December 1961, he justified it as the only choice after years of diplomatic pressure had failed. Until then, his delay had let India claim the moral high ground of peaceful protest and avoid a war with a NATO country, while gradually preparing military plans in secret. In Goa as in Kashmir, Nehru traded time for better leverage, refusing to hastily shed his principled image even as India strengthened its hand behind the scenes.

Nehru's approach to Tibet and China similarly blended principle with prudence. When communist China absorbed Tibet in 1950, India had few good options. Nehru maintained that Tibet's future should be decided by Tibetans, not by outside powers. A stance he repeated in Parliament by insisting "the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and of nobody else." This claim to self-determination gave India moral cover to criticise the Chinese invasion without claiming Tibet as India's fight. India quietly signed the Panchsheel Treaty in 1954, accepting Tibet as part of China in order to secure peace, yet continued to host Tibetan refugees and support the Dalai Lama after the 1959 uprising. In every step, Nehru delayed any confrontation. He refused Chinese demands to hand over the Dalai Lama, but also avoided mobilising troops against China or stirring up armed resistance in Tibet.

Indian diplomacy protested at the UN against China's actions, and India provided a base for the Tibetan government-in-exile. A move designed to claim moral legitimacy ("we stand with the persecuted, not the aggressor") without provoking war. This ambiguity served hard-nosed ends: India bought time to build its military and hoped for a future thaw in relations, while clever rhetoric kept China from branding India as an instigator. As Nehru's foreign secretary noted later, critics faulted India for inaction "as if Tibet had been India's to be given away." In fact, Nehru had no intention of starting a Himalayan war. By delaying confrontation, he managed severe constraints, a relatively weak army and a perilous northern frontier, while subtly positioning India as a principled champion of Tibetan rights on the world stage.

In effect, he waited out Tibet's fate, using the Panchsheel principles to avoid open conflict and to claim India's voice was always on the side of the oppressed, not on imperial conquest.

Across these crises, Nehru's calculated use of delay served consistent purposes. It let India claim the moral high ground, stressing democratic, legalistic solutions in Kashmir; non-violent, anti-colonial justice in Goa; and human rights and self-determination in Tibet all while the underlying questions remained unresolved. This moral posture bought international legitimacy and domestic unity: Indians could rally around peace and principle rather than costly wars. Delaying also preserved strategic ambiguity: adversaries (Pakistan, Portugal, China) never knew if or when India would act, which sometimes drew them to negotiate or hesitate. And critically, time allowed India to address its constraints – building up forces, waiting for Cold War alignments to shift, or avoiding internal backlash – before taking decisive steps. By the early 1960s, when he did choose force in Goa or later challenged China, India was stronger than in 1947 or 1950, vindicating Nehru's patience.

Nehru's foreign policy was less a tale of indecision than one of deliberate pacing. He wielded delay like a weapon, reinforcing India's image as a rightful, ethical power and leveraging international forums to keep rivals off balance. His timing reflected a shrewd reading of global politics and India's own limits: winning battles of persuasion and positioning long before, and sometimes instead of, battles of arms. To critics he could seem hesitant, but in fact Nehru treated the calendar as part of the strategic terrain, proving that sometimes the surest power comes from waiting for the right moment to strike or to yield.

.....

**AUTHOR BIO: Mohammad Taha Ali is a postgraduate from the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia,*

GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

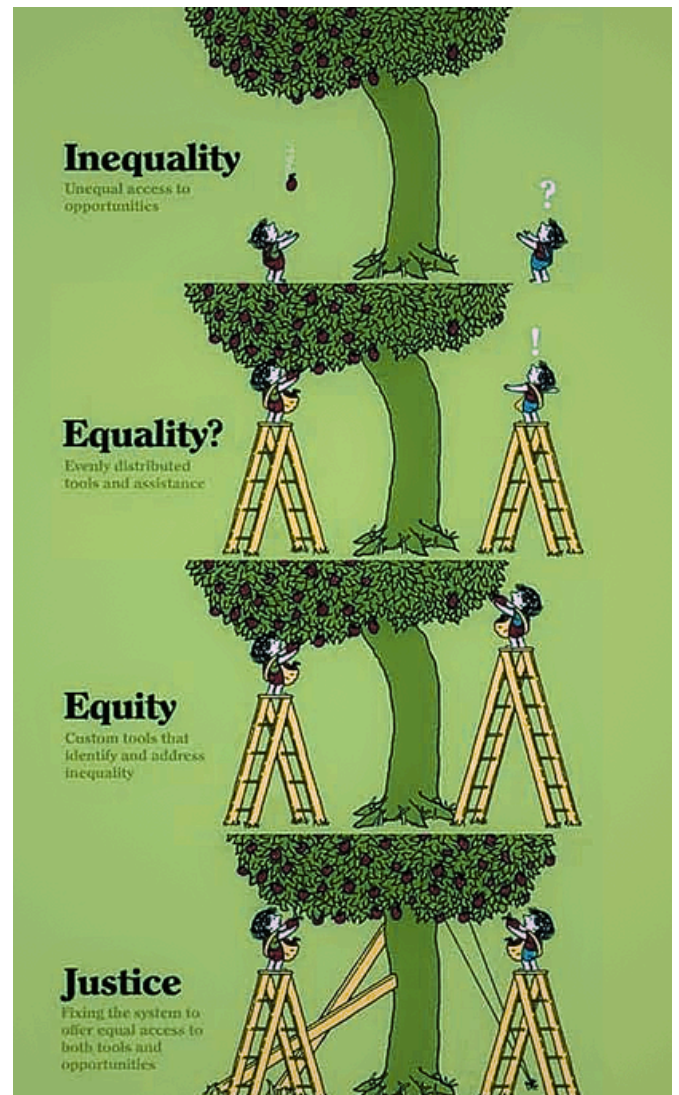
MARRIAGE EQUALITY VS MARRIAGE EQUITY

By Nipurn Panwar*

Life in conflict stricken Manipur isn't equally gloomy for everyone. The intersection of disorder with caste, class, race, gender and sexuality has produced different outcomes for "legally" equal people. For Hanjabam, growing up in Manipur was tough for more reasons than one. "In the '90s, when militancy was at its peak, we carried a burden of trauma. There was hardly any dialogue among peers. I was also struggling with my sexuality," says Hanjabam, who identifies as gay.

The boat flows in the same direction for people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ in other parts of the nation too. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" had probably struck a chord with the LGBTQIA+ community in 2008, which has faced systemic discrimination and social exclusion for a long time, when the Delhi High Court decided to strike down the colonial era provision of IPC- Section 377. It had declared 'consensual' sexual activity within the same gender an "unnatural act" and hence a crime. The Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court judgment in 2013, leaving the community more vulnerable. It was in 2016 when Navtej Johar, an award-winning Bharatnatyam dancer, filed a writ petition in the Supreme court challenging the validity of section 377. It stirred debates around issues of privacy, fundamental rights and dignity. In 2018, the Supreme court unanimously scraped section 377, which the CJI described as "irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary".

Although the decriminalisation of homosexuality stirred hopes for the larger issue of marriage equality to get solved, the Supreme Court's judgement in 2024, declined to legalise same-sex marriage, leaving it to the Parliament to legislate on the subject.



Source: United Way NCA

The Bench ruled that there is no fundamental right to marry, and the court cannot intervene. This passing of the baton to the parliament has led many problems to remain unsolved.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare estimated gay community's population in India at 2.5 million in 2012, but the survey conducted by organisations like Ipsos gauge the number of non-heterosexuals at around 17%. The comparative instances from around the globe present us with an idea that infringing upon even a single person's right can be detrimental. From the neighbouring country of Nepal to the Western nations like Norway, many have progressed on the path of marriage equality.

Post the 2024 Supreme Court's pronouncement, the Indian government has issued directives ensuring LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, including equal rights for ration cards, joint bank accounts, anti-discrimination measures etc. Steps include banning conversion therapy, enabling sex reassignment surgeries, and addressing mental health and intersex care.

Tackling such a socio-political issue doesn't end with mere institutive measures. Crafting a policy for civil unions would not just be a step towards inclusivity and dignity, but would also cater to the 'delicate' and 'sticky' social fabric of our country. Empowering the community would not merely be an addition to the productive labour of this nation, but can be a liberal-democratic tool of soft power too. The idea of a "Vishwaguru" would be critically questioned if a pertinent segment of the society is not entitled to a basic right like the right to choose a partner.

Despite its flaws, the institution of marriage remains highly relevant in Indian society. It not just gives you 'social legitimacy' but also is considered to be an important part of adulthood. It helps in navigating familial and social relationships. This would directly impact the mental state of an individual too. If ostracised, that individual would lack social as well as economic capital. The notion of patriarchy is equally detrimental to some "men".

This statement might sound controversial at the outset, but I would like to present my case. Imagine a biological male in a middle-class household of Western U.P. who identifies as a gay person. The burgeoning pressure on him to get married, to lead a "settled life" and give birth to a "legal heir" would be immense. This gendered division of roles, mandated by patriarchy, puts males at the helm of being a "breadwinner", even if that person doesn't wish to assume that role.

The conception of social equity is well highlighted by philosophers like Aristotle and Rawls. For Aristotle, 'Epieikeia' or fairness translates into a non-strict mode of justice where he ascribes to the fact that strict adherence to laws can sometimes lead to injustice. Rawls' idea of 'Difference principle' reverberates that social and economic inequalities are only 'just' when they benefit the least advantaged people of the society. Such a discourse can clearly be argued in favour of granting the right to choose the partner.

Thus, it is not about rights but justice, not equality but equity. Institutions are supposed to be dynamic and flexible, because their rigidity dampens the process of societal progression.

.....

**AUTHOR BIO: Nipurn Panwar is an avid learner who is a student of political science and economics at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. His research and writing skills have been honed through his experience at the NITI Aayog and as a Dissertation volunteer at the college. Nipurn's interests lie in gender and intersectionality, political discourse, and the study of marginalization.*

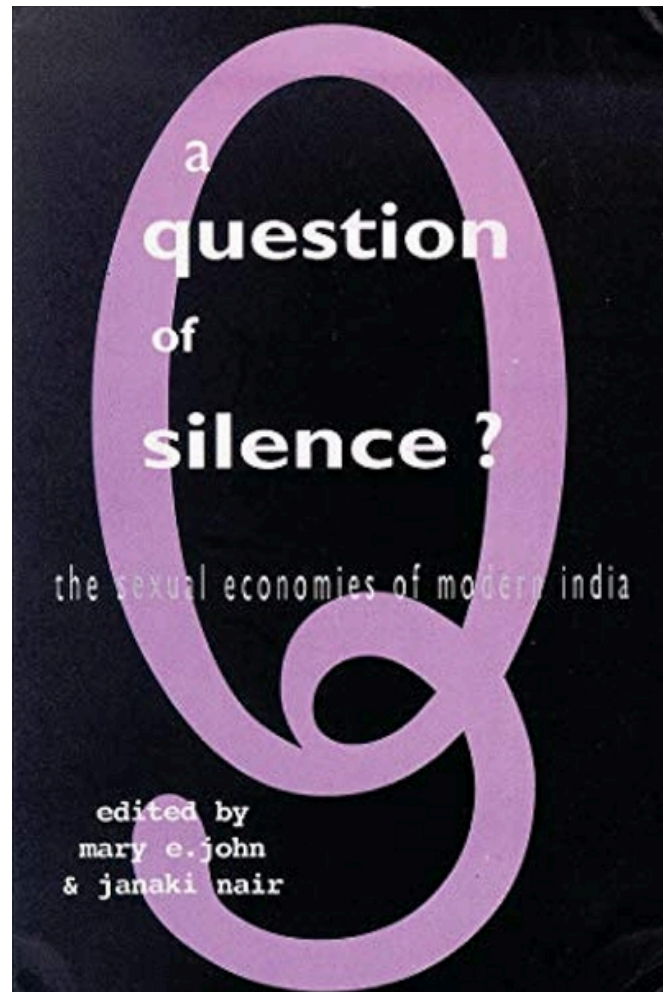
BOOK REVIEW

A QUESTION OF SILENCE: THE SEXUAL ECONOMIES OF MODERN INDIA

By Soumya Singh

A Question of Silence: Sexual Economies of Modern India was first published in 1998 by Kali for Women, considered India's first publishing house dedicated to issues centred around women and gender grounded through/in avowedly feminist politics. In line with other press publications, the book is an exceptional collection of articles on a wide array of issues centred around the theme of sexuality, brought together by editors Mary E. John and Janaki Nair. It is not possible to consider individual articles separately in this brief review; therefore, a few of them are only briefly indicated when they reflect acutely upon some of the central themes scrutinised in the book.

The book sets quite a few tasks for itself, two important ones being creating scope for studying sexuality beyond the essentialised anomalies represented by studies around erotic temple art, and to study sexuality as an issue undergirded with materiality, another attempt to demystify notions that may emerge out of essentialised concepts such as Indian sexuality. In line with the first task, as the introduction itself clarifies, the book does not attempt to give into searches for any unmediated instances of pre-modern Indian sexualities or so, as that has problems of method among others, and is rather oriented towards issues such as generation of knowledge around sexuality, histories of its control, surveillance and representations, its interconnections with other conceptually significant arenas such as the feminist and queer rights movements and the political stakes of it all.



So is Kumkum Roy's exploration of the 'form and content' of the Kamasutra in the period of its writing (2nd-4th century AD) and the nature of its modern translations and appropriation, besides considering other issues such as the politics of languages and the technologies of transmission. On the latter two issues, Roy discusses how modern interpretations of the text are overlaid with tropes of naturalised and non-contextualised desire or female nature that seek to give a status of antiquity and ahistorical stability to some of the themes associated with the text and often result in justification of sexual violence, mechanistic representations of female sexuality and the valorisation of the heterosexual dyad.

On the issue of the materiality of the terrain of study, among others, V Geetha's ethnographic study of women battering emphasises the need to understand the 'structural constituents' of sexual hurt, particularly determined by caste, class, as well as legal and civic structures. Similarly, Samita Sen's article analyses the history of how provisions of criminal law pervaded the supposedly private domain of marriage/family to establish notions of legitimate and illegitimate sexual relationships, as a reflection of the colonial government's necessity to control and organize Indian social life in a particular fashion suited to its needs, accentuating the modern/political life and constructed nature of an issue frequently relegated to the domain of tradition.

In fact, the emphasis on the constructed nature of entities so familiar to the modern reader, is the defining focus of many articles; the modern Indian women by looking at particular historical moments such as the Indian nationalist campaign against indentured labour (Tejaswini Narayana)', the celibate hero overdetermined by middle classed hindu majoritarian impulses, engaged in consolidating the fragmented nation (Uma Chakravarti) and ethnographic studies of female sexuality that is 'organised and discursively produced' through social relations, space and time as once colonial/national and tradition/modern (Kalpana Ram).

The articles engage themselves with themes such as law (Samita Sen *ibid*), medicine (Anandhi S.' articles on birth control debates in colonial Madras), political movements (U. Vindhya on participation of women in the revolutionary movement in Andhra Pradesh), media (Susie Tharu's work on the politics and writings of Gujarati writer Saroj Pathak to

consider how sexuality emerges as a site for articulating citizenship, Ravi Vasudevan's work on Bombay cinema in the post-Independence years focusing on representations of sexuality situated in a modern imaginary and commodity culture and Mary E John's piece that studies the Miss World pageant as a site for the institutionalisation of heterosexual desire and norms) and the idea/time of colonialism and modernity - ever present in most readings.

Insights from and into disciplines such as anthropology, demography and psychology that extend across the texts. For instance, Prem Chowdhry's study of the violence originating around inter-caste marriages in Haryana that revolves significantly around the issue of controlling female sexuality also discusses the impact of political and economic changes in increasing defiance against cultural codes as well anxieties around transfer of property that determine violent reactions is much needed medicine against simplified assumptions in anthropological studies around marriage and kinship that mostly reify, romanticize or descend into cultural relativism.

In a time when narratives of a golden age, the virile Hindu male and glorification of tradition(s) seem to be enjoying an unprecedented resurgence, the book's self-proclaimed objective (among others) to counter them through skilful, in-depth and nuanced academic analysis remains pertinent twenty-seven years after its publication.

.....

INDIA'S LANGUAGE DEBATE IN CARTOONS

By Mihika Singh



By K. Shankar Pillai

The cartoon depicts post-independence Hindi imposition, non-Hindi regions being force-fed the “Hindi tonic” by leaders from the Hindi heartland.

By Satish Acharya

The cartoon shows how appeals to national unity/”motherland” are used to suppress linguistic diversity.



By E.P. Unny

The cartoon depicts the irony of how the language debate becomes so intense and politicised that instead of promoting communication, it results in silence.



GET IN TOUCH



the_nehru_centre



The Nehru Centre India



thenehrucentre



thenehru_centre



thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com