



THE SOCIAL FACT

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NATION, STATE AND CITIZENSHIP



Sivarajavel IAS Academy 's

THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

Connecting the dots :

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

Beyond Basics :

Going beyond basics in studies for examinations is crucial to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enabling more comprehensive and critical thinking. It allows students to tackle complex questions with confidence and adapt to evolving exam formats.

Perspectives :

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with an unique social perspectives.



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CONNECTING THE DOTS

- *The Tamil Nadu government has introduced the Tamil Nadu Marriage Assistance Scheme to provide financial support to various groups in need of assistance, including daughters of low-income parents, orphaned girls, remarrying widows, widowed daughters, and inter-caste couples : **Symbolic interactionist, like George Herbert Mead, explore how individuals construct meanings through social interactions and symbols. The Tamil Nadu Marriage Assistance Scheme can be viewed as a symbol of social recognition and support for marginalized groups in society. By offering financial assistance to remarrying widows and inter-caste couples, the scheme challenges social norms and stereotypes surrounding marriage and widowed women, while also promoting inclusivity and diversity in marital relationships.***
- *In a shocking case of suspected honour killing, a 26-year-old man was hacked to death for marrying a girl from a different caste, allegedly by his own brother-in-law, in Tamil Nadu's Chennai: **Louis Dumont's purity vs. pollution is the core of this honour killing case. But it can be analyzed as a form of gender-based violence rooted in patriarchal control over women's bodies and choices. The victim's decision to marry outside his caste challenges traditional notions of honour and caste purity, threatening the patriarchal power structures that uphold these norms. The act of violence not only punishes the individual for transgressing gender and caste boundaries but also serves as a warning to other women and men who may seek to defy these norms in the future.***

- South Korean company Hyodol has come up with a way to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to beat loneliness among elders with dementia — it has invented a ‘social robot’ priced at \$1,800 (about Rs 1.5 lakh) : **Critical gerontology, influenced by feminist and critical theory perspectives, examines the social construction of aging and old age, as well as the structural inequalities and power dynamics that shape older adults’ experiences. This perspectives has a critical view on this ‘social robot’. While the robot may offer benefits in terms of addressing loneliness among elders with dementia, it also reflects deeper issues related to the devaluation of older adults’ contributions, the commodification of care, and the reliance on technology to address complex social needs.**
- A footballer from Ivory Coast has alleged that he was subjected to a mob attack and racial slurs at a football ground in Kerala’s Malappuram district. Ivory Coast footballer Dairrassouba Hassane Junior alleged that the fans threw stones at him and called him a monkey, black cat during a game in Kerala’s Malappuram : **The fans’ use of racial slurs and violence against the player may stem from a sense of in-group solidarity and the desire to assert dominance over perceived out-group members, the incident also highlights the persistence of racial discrimination and inequality in Indian society, particularly towards individuals of African descent. The fans’ use of derogatory language and physical violence reflects deeply entrenched racial stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate systemic racism and marginalization.**
- Three staff members, including the principal of a Morarji Desai School in Yaluvalli in Kolar district, were suspended by the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS) for making students **manually clean the sanitary chambers as well as the school premises: Manual scavenging, a practice historically associated with lower caste groups, reflects the entrenched inequalities and social hierarchies perpetuated by caste-based discrimination. This incident underscores the structural violence embedded within the caste system, where individuals from marginalized communities, often Dalits, are disproportionately burdened with degrading and hazardous tasks due to their social status. The incident highlights the failure of educational institutions to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment, thereby perpetuating social inequalities and reinforcing caste-based hierarchies**

- *A 77-year-old differently abled native of Chakkittapara Grama Panchayat in Kozhikode district, who was reportedly suffering from a financial crisis after being denied of his social security pension for around five months, was found dead. : The government's failure to provide timely assistance and support reflects a lack of empathy and accountability towards marginalized populations. This highlights broader issues of institutional indifference and bureaucratic callousness that perpetuate social exclusion and inequality. It also reflects a broader pattern of discrimination and neglect within government institutions. The failure to recognize and accommodate the unique needs and vulnerabilities of disabled individuals perpetuates systemic inequalities and denies them access to essential resources and support services.*
- *Ban on 'improper clothes' of devotees at Jagannath Temple in Puri comes into force: Sociologist Ruth Benedict's concept of cultural relativism suggests that cultural practices and norms should be understood within their specific cultural context rather than judged based on external standards. Applying this perspective to the ban on improper clothes, sociologists would consider the cultural and religious significance attributed to clothing within the context of Hindu worship at the Jagannath Temple. Cultural relativism encourages an understanding of diverse cultural practices without imposing ethnocentric judgments.*
- *Recently, home services provider Urban Company initiated what it calls "Project Nidar" for the benefit of its service partners affected by domestic violence (DV) in the past or present. :Traditionally, domestic violence was often considered a private or personal matter confined within the family unit. By bringing DV awareness and support programs into the professional sphere, such as workplaces or service providers like Urban Company, there is a recognition that DV is not just an individual problem but also a social issue with systemic roots. This reflects a broader societal acknowledgment of the need to address DV beyond the confines of private life and to engage various institutions in combating it.*

- *The head of Bhalki Hiremath and president of the 21st Bidar District Kannada Sahithya Sammelana, called upon the people of Karnataka for an organised fight against what he called 'the imposition of Hindi' on Kannada : Symbols such as language are powerful tools for mobilizing collective action and reinforcing group solidarity, as they carry deep meanings, emotional attachments and also a symbol of cultural heritage and collective identity for individuals. The opposition to the imposition of Hindi on Kannada can be seen as an expression of the preservation and promotion of Kannada language and cultural identity. The resistance to Hindi imposition reflects the desire of the Kannada-speaking population to protect their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness against perceived threats of assimilation or marginalization.*
- *The Delhi High Court sought the Central government's response on a plea challenging a notification stating that a married woman who wants to revert to her maiden name after divorce must either furnish divorce papers or a no objection certificate (NOC) from her husband: Feminist theorists, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, emphasize the importance of challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for gender equality. Here the requirement for a woman to obtain divorce papers or a no objection certificate (NOC) from her husband to revert to her maiden name perpetuates patriarchal power dynamics within marriage and divorce proceedings. It reflects the societal expectation that a woman's identity is contingent upon her marital status and her relationship with her husband. Feminist theorists would argue that this requirement undermines women's autonomy and reinforces unequal power relations between men and women in legal and social contexts.*



BEYOND BASICS

ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Why should we go beyond the basics?"

Ethnomethodology, pioneered by Harold Garfinkel, studies how individuals create social order through everyday interactions. Its relevance for UPSC lies in understanding social phenomena, governance, public policy, and critical thinking. Breaching experiments reveal underlying social norms. This approach is crucial for analysing governance, policy implementation, and societal dynamics. It enhances understanding of social change, diversity, and power dynamics, aiding in holistic answers in UPSC examinations.

Everyday talk-in-interaction is the medium through which our identities are enacted and our relationships are negotiated. It is often through situated activities such as talk that the practical problems of our lives get resolved, the tasks of our workplaces get completed, and the business of society gets managed. Talk-in-interaction is a fundamental mechanism through which culture is enacted, providing the very infrastructure of social institutions. Everyday talk-in-interaction is indeed the fundamental site of human sociality.

Conversation Analysis (CA) is an approach to studying everyday social interactions which focuses on how participants in a conversation collaboratively build meaning and organize their interactions through verbal and non-verbal behaviors. It closely analyses the moment-by-moment unfolding of social life through close examination of ordinary social interactions. These fine-grained studies, now done in a wide variety of social situations and institutional settings, are revealing the basic structures of interaction as experienced in concrete instances of social life.

By analyzing naturally occurring conversations, CA researchers aim to understand how meaning is constructed: This includes examining turn-taking patterns, adjacency pairs (e.g., question-answer), repair mechanisms, and other structures that facilitate conversation flow. In addition, there is a focus on the role of non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and other non-verbal cues which are crucial for turn-taking, signaling emotions, and reinforcing spoken messages.

Conversation Analysis is deeply rooted in ethnomethodology — a sociological perspective that views social reality as actively constructed and interpreted by everyday members. Ethnomethodological researchers analyze how participants themselves organize and make sense of their interactions, rather than imposing external frameworks. Ethnomethodology publicly emerged from the writings of Harold Garfinkel at UCLA in the 1960s. While rooted in sociology, ethnomethodological conversation analysis has taken hold in many other disciplines including anthropology, psychology, communications, linguistics, geography, and computer design. Practical applications are now instituted in schools of medicine, education and business.

Garfinkel was centrally concerned with the “problem of social order””. The problem of order is a central question in sociology and related fields, exploring

how and why social order exists and persists despite the potential for chaos and conflict. When Garfinkel created ethnomethodology, the dominant approach to sociology was functionalism, which views order as an inherent property of social systems. Instead, Garfinkel sees order as an ongoing, dynamic process actively constructed by participants through their shared understandings and social practices.

The genius behind Conversation Analysis was Harvey Sacks, who was a student of Garfinkel. While Garfinkel was most concerned with discovering methods of practical reasoning and the underlying assumptions and presuppositions involved in the structuring of everyday experience, Sacks wanted to build an emic science of social interaction, that is from the participants' own perspective, rather than imposing an external, etic perspective. Sacks was also greatly influenced by Erving Goffman. Goffman is well known in sociology for his work on a dramaturgical approach to social interaction. Individuals are seen as “actors” who analyze who their audience and present different selves to strategically impress that audience.

Goffman also articulated a notion of the “interaction order”—an autonomous domain of social interaction comprising the rules of communication. Sacks was also influenced by Goffman's naturalistic research methodology—observing and recording data during the actual unfolding of the social phenomenon.

CA relies heavily on audio and video recordings of naturally occurring conversations in various settings. These recordings are meticulously analyzed, focusing on turn-taking patterns, pauses, intonations, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. Researchers employ specialized transcription methods to capture nuances of spoken language and non-verbal behavior.

CA prioritizes examining the organization of talk, particularly turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and repair mechanisms. This focus stems from the understanding that conversation is a collaborative activity where participants constantly negotiate meaning and manage the flow of interaction. This means there is a central concern for the sequential organization of everyday social interactions.

Unlike psychology, which primarily focuses on individual mental processes, CA emphasizes the interactiveness of meaning-making. It assumes that meaning arises from the social interaction itself, rather than residing solely within individuals' minds.

Sacks used the phrase “order at all points” to capture the inherent orderliness of everyday conversations. This principle implies that even seemingly mundane interactions are governed by subtle rules and patterns that participants employ to achieve smooth interaction.

CA is concerned not only with how utterances are produced but also with how they are recognized and understood by participants. This highlights the dynamic nature of conversation, where participants constantly adjust their actions based on their understanding of the ongoing interaction.

By delving into the intricate mechanics of everyday conversations, CA offers valuable insights into how humans organize social interaction, negotiate meaning, and build shared understanding. Its focus on participants' own perspectives and collaborative meaning-making sets it apart from other approaches to communication, making it a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of human interaction. Rigorous scrutiny of everyday talk-in-interaction reveals the situated practices members of society employ to do a significant share of social life.

STATE NATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Why should we go beyond the basics?"

Nation and nationalism can influence state-building processes, territorial disputes, and identity politics. Citizenship laws and policies shape inclusion/exclusion dynamics, immigration, and social cohesion within states. Many direct questions in UPSC examinations are often repeated from topics such as state, nation, and citizenship. Additionally, understanding these concepts is crucial for answering indirect questions that require knowledge of these concepts to analyze governance structures, policymaking, societal dynamics, and issues related to identity, inclusion, and nationalism.

We must differentiate between state and society otherwise we will be justifying state interference in all aspects of human life, thereby affecting human liberty. Considering the two as interchangeable terms lead to the growth of deceptive social and political theories. Maclver rightly warns: "To identify the social (i.e. the society) with the political (i.e. the state) is to be guilty of the grossest of all confusions which completely bars any understanding of either society or the state." In fact, the ancient Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) did not make distinction between the state and society. For them, polis was both the city, i.e. the society and the state. The idealists such as Rousseau, a French political philosopher of the 18th century, also regarded the two as one. The distinction between the state and the society can be explained as under:

(a) Strictly speaking, the state is a political organization; it is society politically organized. Society, on the other hand, is a social organization and has within it, all types of associations (social, economic, religious, political, cultural and the like). Society is both broader as well as narrower than the state. It is broader when it is used to describe the whole community of mankind; it is narrower when it is used to describe a small group of a village.

(b) In terms of origin, society is prior to the state. Society may be said to have been born the day the human life must have begun. But the state did not begin with the society; it must have started at a later stage of social development. Human beings are social being first and then political beings.

(c) Being prior to the state, society is clearly a natural and therefore, an instinctive institution. The state, on the other hand, is artificial, a created institution; its was made when it was needed. That is one reason that we see the state as a formal and legal organization with its body, its structure. The society, too, is a body, an organization; it is not as formal an organization as the state is.

(d) The state exists for the society in the same way as a means exists for its end. The state is, therefore, a means and the society is an end. It is always the means that exists for the end; the end never exists for the means.

(e) The state is sovereign: no sovereignty means no state; the society is not sovereign; it exists without being sovereign. As sovereign, the state is supreme over all other organizations, institutions and individuals within its boundaries; as sovereign, the state is independent of all other like states; sovereignty gives the state a separate and independent existence

(f) The state has to have a definite territory. You have read that definite territory is an essential element of the state. It is, therefore, a territorial organization in so far as it stays on the definite portion of territory: its territorial boundaries are fixed, definite and permanent. Society does have a territory but its territory is not permanent; its place of operation may extend or may get limited. The Islamic society, for example, transcends national boundaries. So does the Free Mason Brotherhood.

(g) The state has general rules of conduct called the laws; the society, too, has general rules of conduct but they are called rituals, norms, habits and the like. Laws of the state are written, definite and clear; those of the society, are unwritten, indefinite and vague.

(h) The state's laws have a binding sanction. The violation of the laws of the state is followed by punishment: physical or otherwise or both. The rules of the society, if violated, lead to social boycott, i.e. social exclusion. The area of the state, we may say, is the area of that of taking action in case of disobedience; it has power is force. The area of society, on the other hand, is the area of voluntary cooperation and its power is goodwill; its method is its flexibility.

In spite of these distinctions, society and state are closely inter-connected and interdependent. Social conduct and the structure of the society must conform to the laws of the state. The state, on the other hand, must be responsive to the will of the society.

By nation, as you know, we mean a historically constituted stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and physiological make up manifested in a common culture. Nation, Bluntschilli says, is "a union of masses of men bound together specially by language and customs into common civilization which gives them a sense of unity". A nation is a culturally homogeneous social group

The state, as we know, is a people organized for law within a definite territory; it is always sovereign-supreme internally and independent externally. The nation is a group of people psychologically bound together while sharing common joys and sorrows. The distinction between state and nation can be explained as under:

(a) Nation and state are distinct entities. A nation may not be always a state; India was not a state before August, 1947. A state may not always be a nation. Austria - Hungary was a state but not a nation before World War I because the heterogeneous people did not form a culturally homogeneous people.

(b) The state is a state because it is sovereign. The nation is not a state if it is not sovereign. Sovereignty is the chief characteristic of a state; it is not a feature of the nation. A nation becomes a nation-state when the nation attains statehood.

(c) The state is a political concept while the nation is a cultural, and a psychological body. Hayes says, "Nation is primarily cultural, and only incidentally political". What it means is that nation is not a political concept, it is only spiritual.

(d) Laws bind the people together in a state; sentiments and emotions bind the people in a nation. The unity of the state is always external; the unity of the nation is eternal. In the case of the state, unity is imposed; it comes from above through laws. In the case of nation, unity comes from within, through emotions.

(e) There is an element of force connected with the state. The state's laws are binding. There is a coercion exercised by the state if its authority is defied. In the case of the nation, there is the element of persuasion.

(f) The elements of the state are definite: population, fixed territory, government and sovereignty. The elements of a nation are not definite. Somewhere common language helps constitute a nation, somewhere else, common race makes a nation. Common religion, for example, was a factor in making Pakistan as a nation; it was common language in the case of the United States as a nation whereas it was common heritage that made India a nation.

(g) A state may be larger than a nation. The former USSR had, within it, more than a hundred nationalities. Conversely, a nation may be larger than a state; a nationality may spread over two states. The Korean nationality is spread over two states: North Korea and South Korea.

The state is an important political organisation that exists within society. However, it is not the only social organisation. There are many other organisations which exist in society, e.g., family, religious, cultural economic and other organisations. All these organisations are established for the achievement of some consciously defined objectives and thus limited purposes. So, the purposes for which the state stands are not all the purposes which man seeks in society. All the organisations pursue their goals in different ways. The state pursues its objectives mainly through law and the coercive force behind it. But that is only one of the ways in which men strive to achieve their desired ends. There is no doubt, however, that the state plays an exceedingly important and increasingly decisive role in the lives of the individuals. One of the reasons for its pervasive impact is its universality. All the people in a territorial society come under the jurisdiction of the state. In their relationship with the state, they are known as citizens. Another reason for the predominant role of the state in the lives of the citizens is the expanding scope of its activities. Still another reason is the use of coercive force, which only the state can employ in the pursuit of its objectives. The police and defence forces are coercive structures of the state. Another is bureaucracy, a well

organised army of government officials who in their dealings with citizens, stand as organs of authority. Because of its universality, the state's dealings with the citizens become peculiarly impersonal; as expressed in the bureaucracy. Since the state includes all men, its prescriptions apply to all men without the many actual distinctions of value-systems and separate interests. The same law applies to all. So, whatever policies a government may pursue, there would be many citizens and groups of citizens who would be opposed to the existing laws and policies because they believe that a particular law or a particular policy does not serve their interests but those of others. Sometimes a law may compel a person to do what his conscience forbids him to do and vice versa. And because the law is enforced by coercive power, the citizen may carry the impression that the state or government is an external force denying them the freedom and liberty which they value. There may be issues of morality, private sentiments, high social values or interests of mankind as a whole coming in conflict with the prescriptions of the state. When the state extends its sphere of activity to hitherto excluded areas of social life, this may be regarded as an expropriating attempt by the state and, therefore, resented and opposed. Thus the issues of relationship between the state and the citizen have been matters of genuine concern and endless controversy

Of late, assertion of ethno-religious identities has emerged as a dominant global reality. This has, in turn, questioned the basic premises of the nationstate, which was conceived as the most authentic expression of group life and all encompassing political community. The strong faith reposed in the idea of nation-state and citizenship as means of striking equality, protecting liberty and promoting fraternity among the people of diverse socio-economic groups stands shattered. The neutrality of the state and disjunction between ethnicity and state is under question. The basic assumptions of the hyphenated concept of nation-state are contested by the emergent global reality of ethno-national movements,

assertion of minorities for their identity and rights, and a strong politics of identity and politics of representation. Now minority and disadvantaged groups are demanding their space in the structure of governance. Autonomy and self-governing rights are major agenda of the new social movements across the world. This has resulted into compounding ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world. Nation-state is Euro-centric construct, and in many situations and conditions state has been conflated with nation in their conceptualisation. The conflation of state and nation has given rise to many wrong policies of the state towards its ethnic groups and minorities. The occurrences of ethnic violence are not unconnected with the approach of the state towards different ethnic groups. This is not confined only to the case of the developing world which have attempted to emulate the model of the West for building their own structure of state and society but also in the developed world of the West which have been regarded as the citadels of the idea of nation-state. The politics of identity and ethnicity has emerged very forceful. The concept of nation and state has been the part of the grand narratives of modernity. Consequently, the project of nation and state building in third world countries has not been congruent with the European experience, for the societies in these countries have been traditional and diverse. Multiple allegiances have not been co-terminus with the loyalties to the nation-state of the western construct. Language and territory are the main basis of nation formation. There are strong tendencies to conflate state to nation and state building as the nation building. This conflation has given rise to multiple and compounded problem of programmes and policies of the state towards the ethnic groups. Religion cannot provide authentic basis of nation formation and national identity. Therefore, any effort to espouse nationalism by invoking religious exclusivity is not only alienating but also exclusionary. Any such effort in the past has not succeeded and it is bound to fail in the future also.





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PERSPECTIVES

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

By Karen Sternheimer

Recently politicians have continued attempts to police gender and sexuality through the passage of laws that seek to exclude and punish. It is important to consider why the attention to other people's gender and sexual practices are part of public and political discourses, and why some people are the target of social exclusion.

For context: while laws attempting to limit transgender rights have dominated the last decade, criminalizing same-sex relationships is not by any means new, although new laws have been passed around the world in the past few years. Human Rights Watch maintains a list of criminal codes outlawing same-sex relations around the world dating back to the nineteenth century. Many laws criminalizing LGBTQ people were passed in the middle of the twentieth century. Why?

The historian John D'Emilio's classic 1983 essay, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" provides answers to help us understand the timing of attempts to legally control gender and sexuality. Published in the anthology *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, this piece has been reprinted many times over the past four decades and continues to offer insights into the connections between gender, sex, and social exclusion.

D'Emilio's main argument is that modern-day capitalism, where people exchange their labor for wages, altered the connection between work, family, and survival. In agrarian settings, large families were needed for basic survival. As he describes, "the home was a workplace" where families were "an interdependent

unit of production”. From the production and preparation of food, managing livestock, cleaning, caring for children, and all other tasks of survival, the family unit was the central source of people’s basic needs.

Economically, it was impossible to survive outside of this setting. This arrangement meant that “sex was harnessed to production,” according to D’Emilio, as bearing many children was advantageous for survival. This helped uphold narrow meanings of gender and sexuality, as the economic realities served as a scaffold of sorts, keeping people tied to this model of family life, and in turn, gender and sexuality.

This would change with urbanization and the free labor market, as home and family gradually—over a century or more—transitioned into the private sphere, separate from work. Today, those living in advanced economies typically depend on income from outside sources. Simply put: we have jobs or businesses that we exchange for our time to support ourselves economically. Rather than benefitting from large families to share farm labor, having kids is expensive--recent estimates put the cost at about \$300,000 total—rather than being economically beneficial.

The growth of the wage labor market, particularly in the twentieth century in the U.S. meant that more people could live outside of the gendered family arrangement where sex was tied to procreation. D’Emilio notes, “As wage labor spread and production became socialized, then, it was possible to release sexuality from the ‘imperative’ to procreate”.

Economic survival is a central mechanism of social control. When the ability to survive economically changes, social control changes as well. Enter the attempt in the mid-twentieth century, most notably, to create laws that restrict newly forming LGBT identities, communities, and political movements.

D’Emilio argues that World War II was an important catalyst that altered social control of gender and sexuality. He states that the war “severely disrupted traditional patterns of gender relations and sexuality...it plucked millions of young men and women, whose sexual identities were just forming... and dropped them into sex-segregated situations...” Perhaps it’s not an accident that naval port cities became home some of the earliest gay communities in the U.S.

The backlash happened almost immediately, as the postwar Red Scare especially targeted LGBTQ individuals. Known as the Lavender Scare, many people working in government positions lost their jobs as “security risks.” Presumed to be easily targets of communists due to their alleged fear of being outed, the logic here was circular: LGBT people were considered vulnerable to blackmail because they could lose their jobs if their sexual orientation was discovered. But rather than strengthen workplace protections, and thus the threat of blackmail, the opposite happened.

Other forms of mid-twentieth social control included police raids, FBI surveillance, and even the postal service tracing letters. These actions highlight the fear produced by economic social changes, often cynically used to support measures of oppression during the Cold War era.

D’Emilio’s analysis of twentieth century economic changes can help us understand attempts to control gender and sexuality today. Since the essay’s publication 40 years ago, we have seen significant changes in both the gender order and LGBTQ rights in the U.S. Human Rights Watch notes that 34 countries now have legal same-sex marriage since the Netherlands passed legislation in 2000.

Just after the publication of this essay, sociologist Kristin Luker published *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1986), for which she interviewed activists on both sides of the issue. She concludes that at the heart of controversies about abortion lie conflicted views about sex and the changing status of women. At a time when women’s social roles were expanding beyond mothering, the debate about abortion also comes to symbolize this shift. This issue has been at the heart of attempts to reinstate social control, culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision in 2022.

Just as D’Emilio argued that advanced capitalism and the rise of the wage labor market altered the economic imperative of marriage and child bearing, it perhaps destabilized the meaning of gender itself. If basic survival is not dependent on any particular type of gendered family arrangements, then not only do families look different, but so too might people’s construction of gender identity. This has created a backlash and opportunity for moral panic that we have been seeing. When those that had been excluded from mainstream acceptance see barriers breaking down, others step in hoping to put them back up again.



GROWTH MANIA

The nation's media, present in full force at the annual conference of the World Economic Forum (WEF), dutifully relayed back to India sound bytes uttered by the allies of the world's giant corporations. Among these was the laudatory statement by the WEF's President that India was a \$10 trillion economy in the making. This is only the most recent of a spate of predictions on the future size of India's economy. At least it can be said for them that it is India's own leaders who were the first to make these. Thus, in 2019, upon returning to office, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India aimed to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, which would have been the end of his current term.

That this has not materialised as yet has not deterred other political leaders from making predictions of, or expressing an aspiration for, a \$1 trillion economy for their States. This includes the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Though these leaders represent political parties with widely differing social agendas and ideologies, they seem united in their economic goals. From Davos to Lucknow and Chennai, never before has growth dominated the economic agenda in democracies. This bears mentioning, as a democracy is also meant to deliver other things.

Growth is a legitimate aspiration in India where the majority of the population is yet to attain a reasonable standard of living. Indeed, it should remain on the table so long as this is the case. The point, though, is that going all out for economic size may not do much by way of levelling the income of the presently excluded even as it may generate outcomes that are undesirable to all. Such outcomes are already in evidence in India, and an economic policy that privileges growth could exacerbate them.

Growth plus rising inequality

The first thing to note about the recent growth in India is that it has been accompanied by growing inequality. It is important to recognise that this trend is not new. Having commenced in the 1980s, it picked up in the next decade, after which it has been unstoppable. It has, by now, reached levels that make India one of the more unequal societies in the world. With government agencies appearing reluctant to supply data, it is difficult to provide precise estimates of

this inequality, but the world's leading inequality researchers are very likely right in describing India as “a poor country with an affluent elite” (‘World Inequality Report’, 2022). This augurs badly for the country. It is not just that the growth we are witnessing is unequalising, it is that it appears to be making little difference to the income levels of the poorest. The rising tide may not be lifting all boats after all.

Rural wage rates

A simple exercise would cast light on how unequal recent growth in India has been. I rely on what is one of the more reliable sources of data on wages — that on rural wage rates published by the Labour Bureau. These are based on actual market quotations rather than responses given to surveys. Also, unlike data gathered from income-tax records, which have value in determining the distribution of income, the wage data can convey information on the level of living at the bottom of the pyramid. A weakness of the Labour Bureau data, however, is that it presents data on wages of male workers alone. The absence of data on women workers is a serious omission as women have historically constituted approximately half the workforce in the cultivation of certain crops. We are left to assume that the agricultural wage rate for women has moved alongside that of men, so that we may rely on the latter alone.

Once the data have been adjusted for inflation, we find the following trends in the real wage rate. With respect to agricultural labour, there is a mild increase. To be precise, the real wage rate has grown by 4.6% over the nine years from 2014 to 2022-23. However, even this bare movement is truncated. The real wage rate peaks midway through the period and has remained stagnant since. Nevertheless, it is higher on average since 2014. Compared to the wages of the agricultural workers, the real wage rate of non-agricultural and construction workers, respectively, is actually lower at the end of the period studied. The Sixth Economic Census of India (2013-14) reports that 51.7% of the employed are in rural India, and, of these, the overwhelming majority (68.9%) are non-agricultural workers.

This implies that for about 35% of India's workforce, real wages have not grown since 2014. So, even though there is growth of the economy, per capita income at the bottom of the pyramid is not rising. Even for the section

of the rural workforce for which data show an increase in the real wage rate, the increase is dwarfed by the growth of per capita income in the economy as a whole. Over the period 2014-23, real per capita income in India has increased by 37% while the real wage of agricultural labour has increased by less than 5%.

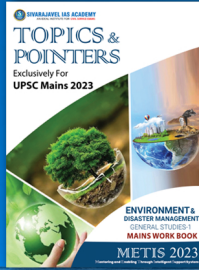
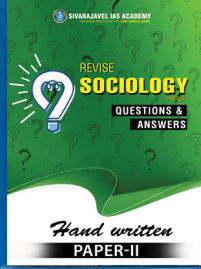
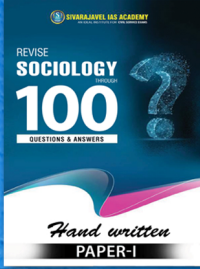
Why inequality does matter

Should it matter to us that the growth in India is unequal? We can think of at least two reasons why it does. First, as has been carefully documented, unequal societies are subject to the worst forms of social pathology. These range from violence to disease and mental health disorder. The rich are not immune from the pathologies, for they must now build moats around their urban castles to protect their riches — which is what the gated communities of India in effect are. Second, inequality stands in the way of achieving collective action at a time when it is most needed. It does so by lowering trust between groups for they stand differently in their valuation of some public goods. Think of India's challenge at achieving total sanitation, which is what the Swachh Bharat Mission ostensibly aims for. The rich, who have all their basic needs and more met, want clean public spaces, while the poor, whose basic needs are unmet, are not as motivated to contribute towards this. The persistence of open defecation, which reflects an unwillingness to shift to practices that contribute to the greater public good, is an example of this. Inequality can defeat attempts to build public goods in spheres as diverse as the conservation of natural capital and urban waste management to lowering the threat from climate change, for those excluded from economic growth have less of a stake in these goals.

However, whatever its pernicious effects, the reduction of inequality ought not to be seen merely in terms of its instrumentality in overcoming some of our most pressing challenges. India is a democracy, as the Prime Minister constantly reminds us, and it is not in the spirit of democracy to have such divergent economic outcomes. India has not, historically, given enough space in its economic policy to the gross inequality of opportunity across its population. If at a time of an already unequal distribution of income the preoccupation of political parties is how to maximise the size of the economy, it is unlikely that we will ever bridge the gap.



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