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FOUNDER - DIRECTOR OF SMART LEADERS IAS

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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.

Dear Readers,

As UPSC CSE Mains 2024 is round the corner, we from "The Social Fact team", like to send good wishes for all the aspirants.

To make your preparation simpler, in this special edition we compiled all previous editions of the 'Connecting the dots'. We hope, this will save your precious time and bring much needed dynamic for the sociology mains paper.

All The Best!!!

CONNECTING THE DOTS

SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

- A 37-year-old man from the Dhangar community in the Sangli district of Maharashtra committed suicide while demanding reservation for the community. The police said that the man allegedly hanged himself from a tree: **Durkheim's work on suicide provides a sociological framework to understand different types of suicides, including altruistic, egoistic, anomic, and fatalistic. In this case, the suicide might be viewed as a form of altruistic suicide, where an individual sacrifices themselves for the perceived greater good of their community. The act could reflect a deep sense of commitment to the cause of securing reservation for the Dhangar community.**
- Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced that Ahmednagar city would be renamed 'Ahilya Nagar' after the 18th century Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar. His decision, "respecting the public demand", came on the 298th birth anniversary of the ruler who established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) as the seat of the Holkar dynasty: **Though symbolic interactionism focusses on the micro level, this example shows the relevance of the significant symbols in the larger socio-political infrastructure as well.**
- The younger lot is seeing its idols dragged through the mud, says Ajay Malik, who has trained top grapplers, including Sakshi Malik; another coach says fewer female wrestlers are joining his camp. While women wrestlers continue to train here without missing a day, they look visibly demotivated : **Merton talks about the reference group theory and anticipatory socialisation, here how the person is received or retreated in the reference group influence the desirability of the person to enter the non-participant reference group or not.**

- 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.**
- China showered the Tesla CEO with admiration during his whistlestop tour of the country. Chinese social media was abuzz with news of Mr. Musk’s sojourn, with related hashtags on the Twitter-like Weibo platform racking up billions of views. Many has expressed that they “worship” Mr. Musk for his “great personal charm and constant excellence in his field”: **This 21st century “can-do” generation look up to the people in the technology over politics and the successful people becomes a charismatic authority, the rise of Elon Musk’s popularity is a testimonial.**
- An MP was recently alleged to accept bribes to target the Prime Minister with questions. The first hour of parliamentary sittings is the “Question Hour”, where MPs question ministers to hold the government accountable. Questions are governed by specific rules and need advance notice: **Rational choice theory emphasizes decision-making based on self-interest. In this case, the MP’s alleged acceptance of bribes to target the Prime Minister with questions could be seen as a calculated decision driven by personal gain, weighing the benefits against the potential risks or consequences (undermining of democratic processes meant for government accountability.)**

- *NFHS-5 data highlighted that there is a discernible disparity in the rates of C-section deliveries and hysterectomies across Indian states. More than half of the states show high C-section deliveries. The highest C-section deliveries was found in Telangana (60.7%): **Foucault's work on the medicalization of society and the power dynamics within healthcare systems is relevant. He discussed how medical institutions exert control over individuals and how societal norms influence medical practices, which could apply to the rising rates of C-sections and hysterectomies as a reflection of medical control over childbirth.***
- *Ban on 'improper clothes' of devotees at Jagannath Temple in Puri comes into force. A dress code meant to discourage devotees from wearing "improper" clothes came into force at the famous Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri district of Odisha : **From a structural functionalist perspective, sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons would analyze the dress code as a mechanism for maintaining social order and cohesion within the religious community. The imposition of a dress code serves to reinforce shared values and norms, ensuring that devotees adhere to established rituals and traditions. Durkheim's concept of "collective conscience" and Parsons' theory of social integration can provide insights into the role of religious institutions in regulating individual behavior and promoting solidarity***
- *A new mobilisation law came into force in Ukraine, which lowered the military conscription age from 27 to 25 in an effort to replenish its depleted ranks after more than two years of war following Russia's fullscale invasion. : **The implementation of Ukraine's new mobilization law, reducing the conscription age, reflects the interconnectedness of state action, family structure, and individual social roles. This decision underscores societal expectations for individuals, especially younger adults, to fulfill their duty to the nation in times of conflict. It also highlights the impact on family dynamics as younger members may be called upon for military service, emphasizing the collective responsibility of citizens in national defense efforts. As Durkheim said, sum (Society) is greater than the parts (Individuals)***

- 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.***
- According to the Bahai International Community (BIC), Bahai minority faces persecution even after death in Iran. Unlike other minorities, Bahais do not have their faith recognised by Iran's constitution and have no reserved seats in Parliament. They are unable to access the country's higher education and they suffer harassment ranging from raids against their businesses to confiscation of assets and arrest: **The discrimination against Bahá'í people in Iran may seem to serve the latent function of reinforcing social cohesion and stability within the dominant religious and political framework. By marginalizing a minority group, the majority population may feel a sense of unity and shared identity. At the same time, it may strengthen their (Bahai) own group solidarity and identity, which can lead to collective action.***
- In Australia, Six persons were killed and several others injured — including a nine-month-old baby — when a knife-wielding attacker rampaged through a busy Sydney shopping centre. The reason for this incident is unknown. The Australian police said multiple people were stabbed by the unidentified assailant, who was tracked down and shot dead by a policewoman who is being hailed as a national hero: **This incident explains how societal labels and stereotypes influence behavior. The incident may raise questions about how individuals are labelled as criminals or heroes based on their actions, as well as the broader social responses to violence and law enforcement interventions. Here the attacker disrupted the social order and labelled as criminal (deviant) and the policewoman who restored the order was hailed as Hero (Conformity) as a reward.***

- *Difference of opinions have surfaced over the film – “ The Kerala Story”. Some argues that it is marketed as a true story, the film is premised on the Hindutva conspiracy theory of “love jihad”, and falsely claims that thousands of Hindu women from Kerala have been converted to Islam and recruited in ISIS, while others claims this film as a true reality. Similar arguments were made around “The Kashmir Files” film : **The sociology won’t give the judgement of right and wrong but the above incidents show the increasing importance of ideological state apparatus (a term coined by Louis Althusser) in the modern society.***
- *The police in Iran announced a new crackdown on women who ignore the country’s strict Islamic dress code that makes it compulsory for them to wear headscarves in public. “From today the police in Tehran will implement their measures against this sort of violation of the law regarding hijab,” the capital’s police chief said : **The dress code serves as a tool for social control, shaping public behavior and conformity to religious and cultural norms. Ideological state apparatuses like religious institutions and educational systems play a crucial role in disseminating these norms and ensuring compliance through socialization and persuasion. The new crackdown by the police signifies the role of the repressive state apparatus in maintaining social order through coercion and punitive measures.***

GENDER - STRATIFICATION

- *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.***

- Report by SC's Centre for Research and Planning says 19.7 percent of the district courts in India do not have separate toilets for females. 19.7 percent of the district courts in India do not have separate toilets for females. Only 6.7 percent of toilets in district courts are women-friendly: **The absence of separate and women-friendly toilets in a significant portion of district courts in India is not merely a logistical issue but a reflection of deeper social inequalities and biases. Feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir and bell hooks would argue that the absence of adequate facilities for women reflects the marginalization and invisibility of women's needs within institutional structures. It reinforces the notion that the legal domain is primarily designed by and for men, neglecting the realities and requirements of women.**
- Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said in the parliament "As a menstruating woman, menstruation and the menstruation cycle are not a handicap; so there is no need for paid leave policy, it's a natural part of women's life journey, creating a paid leave policy specifically for menstruation could potentially deny equal opportunities to women" : **Feminist argues that dismissing the need for specific policies or accommodations for menstrual health issues overlooks the potential impact on gender equity in the workplace. It's not about considering menstruation a handicap but acknowledging that some women may experience health challenges requiring support during that time.**
- Observing that the attendants appointed to guard the bodies in mortuaries of many government and private hospitals indulge in "sexual intercourse" on the bodies, the High Court of Karnataka has recommended that the government amend the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to bring necrophilia under the definition of offence of unnatural sex or introduce new provision in IPC to make necrophilia an offence : **Sylvia Walby has given the six structures of patriarchy where violence is one of them and "necrophilia" shows the emerging forms of violence against women.**

- *Lancet study shows that the Suicide deaths in Indian men increased 2 times more than women in 2021. Unemployment, family problems, and health issues cause a 33.5 percentage point change in SDR among men : **The Silent Male Suicide Epidemic**” by Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas. This work delves into the societal expectations of masculinity and the resulting pressure that men face, which can contribute to higher suicide rates. She explores how traditional gender norms discourage men from seeking help or expressing vulnerability, leading to increased isolation and mental health struggles, ultimately culminating in higher suicide rates among men.*

CASTE - STRATIFICATION

- *From March 22 to April 26, 2023, as many as eight people have died while cleaning sewers in various parts of Gujarat, raising concerns about the continuing deaths of manual scavengers despite the fact that the practice has been declared illegal across the country : **Manual scavenging is not a career chosen voluntarily by workers, but is instead a deeply unhealthy, unsavoury and undignified job forced upon these people because of the stigma attached to their caste. The nature of the work itself then reinforces that stigma.***
- *In Gorakhpur, a primary school teacher has been booked here for allegedly thrashing a Class 6 student and passing casteist remarks after he refused to touch his feet, police said. The boy’s father alleged that his son suffered serious injury in his eyes and back and based on the complaint, a case has been registered against the teacher under the SC/ST Act : **The deschooling concept, introduced by Ivan Illich, challenges the traditional role and structure of formal education institutions. He argue that traditional schools often perpetuate authoritarianism, coercion, and violence, as seen in cases where teachers abuse their authority and discriminate against students based on caste or other factors. This incident highlights the need to rethink the role of schools in society and to promote alternative forms of education that prioritize equity, respect, and nonviolence.***

- *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***
- *The deep penetration of caste discrimination in Christianity is a point of concern. Despite constituting a majority in the Catholic order, Dalits are rarely appointed as Bishops. The Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front had contended that the practice of caste can be found in the formation of parishes, the denial to Dalit Christians to participate in the administration of the parish, and the construction of separate chapels in the same village for Dalits and other caste Christians : **M.N. Srinivas have emphasized the pervasive nature of the caste system in India, arguing that it transcends religious boundaries and influences social interactions and institutions. The deep penetration of caste discrimination within Christianity reflects how caste operates as a social structure, shaping patterns of social exclusion and privilege even within non hindu religious communities.***
- *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.***

- *They OBC groups are threatening to protest against the government's decision to grant Kunbi certificates to Marathas. They are not against increasing the EWS quota and giving reservations to Marathas under it but they are opposed to giving Kunbi certificates to all Marathas: **This issue underscores the intricacies of caste identities and the competition for limited reservation quotas and the presence of vote bank politics (M.N.Srinivas)***
- *From March 22 to April 26, 2023, as many as eight people have died while cleaning sewers in various parts of Gujarat, raising concerns about the continuing deaths of manual scavengers despite the fact that the practice has been declared illegal across the country: **BR Ambedkar reiterates that the Manual scavenging is not a career chosen voluntarily by workers, but instead a deeply unhealthy, unsavoury and undignified job forced upon these people because of the stigma attached to their caste. The nature of the work itself then reinforces that stigma.***
- *SC refuses to vacate order on temple priests in Tamil Nadu. Court had passed interim order on September 25 on the basis of a series of petitions; it was alleged that the State was attempting to appoint 'non-believers' as Archakas in Agamic temple: **This issue touches upon the sociological aspect of religious hierarchy and traditions within the Indian caste system. The appointment of temple priests is historically linked to specific castes or communities, and any attempt to alter these norms can challenge established social structures in the form of counter hegemony.***



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TRIBAL STRATIFICATION

- Over 6,000 villagers who lived devoid of essential government welfare schemes and developmental benefits for decades deep inside forests in Odisha's Ganjam district are set to embrace a new life with the recognition of their villages as revenue villages under the Forest Right Act : **Earlier, Ghurye formulated the tribal question. There are three views on the tribal situation: no change and revivalism; isolation and preservation; and finally assimilation. Later the government has adopted a policy of tribal integration into the mainstream, with the goal of developing a creative adjustment between tribes and non-tribes that leads to a responsible partnership.**
- Sexual abuse in Odisha's boarding schools for tribals demotivate first generation learners. The State Minister for ST and SC Development said that over the past five years, there were 22 cases of girls who faced sexual assaults in the 188 residential high schools exclusively for tribal girls, with 34 people being named as accused. Twelve girl students had delivered babies: **The sexual abuse of tribal girls underscores how intersecting forms of oppression, including caste, class, and gender, contribute to their heightened susceptibility to exploitation and abuse within institutional settings. Feminist sociologists like Vandana Shiva and Leela Dube have examined the intersections of gender, caste, and class, highlighting how patriarchal structures perpetuate violence and discrimination against women and girls.**
- Four infants between birth and four months died across a month in Madhya Pradesh's eastern districts of Shahdol, Umaria, and Anuppur after they were branded with hot bangles and iron sickles when they fell sick. This belief system is considered a remedy, to everything from breast-feeding difficulties to pneumonia. People believed the 'shock treatment' helps boost the baby's immunity when they are sick. : **GS Ghurye vs V. Elwin debate need to be revisited here, while it's essential to respect cultural practices and beliefs, there comes a point where harmful practices must be critically examined through a human rights lens. In this case, the traditional remedy of branding infants with hot objects resulted in tragic deaths, raising questions about the balance between cultural relativism and the protection of human rights, particularly those of vulnerable populations such as infants.**

STRATIFICATION - OTHER TOPICS

- *Puducherry transport Minister S. Chandira Priyanga from the All India N.R Congress (AINRC)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition government citing caste and gender discrimination against her. The only woman legislator in the 30-member assembly, Priyanga hails from the Dalit community: **This is an example of Intersectionality, where the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage***
- *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.***

WORK AND ECONOMICS

- *More than 730 employees of OpenAI have signed a letter saying they may quit and join Sam Altman at Microsoft unless the startup's board resigns and reappoints the ousted CEO.: **Marx discussed how workers might feel disconnected or alienated from the product of their labor and the decision-making processes within their workplace. The employees at OpenAI might feel alienated from the board's decisions, especially regarding the ousting of the CEO, leading to a collective response seeking change.***

- *The UK government announced a five-year pilot program to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing. The program's goal is to discourage illegal immigration. However the UK Supreme Court ruled the scheme unlawful, stating that Rwanda is not a safe third country for the government to send asylum seekers: **World systems theory looks at global inequalities and the interconnectedness of nations. In the context of migration, it could examine how economic disparities and geopolitical power dynamics influence migration patterns and policies. The UK's attempt to outsource asylum processing to Rwanda might reflect a global economic and political hierarchy.***
- *In a recent LinkedIn study, almost 70% of Gen Z and millennial Americans stated they planned to leave their jobs in 2023. And with unemployment at a low 3.4% with many jobs left over, all signs seem to point to the fact that American workers are fed up: **Simmel's concept of the "blase attitude" or the indifference that can arise in modern urban life could be applied to harsh working conditions. He highlighted how repetitive or unfavorable work environments might lead to a sense of detachment and emotional distance among workers, which leads to "mass resignation"***
- *Worried over the increase in train accidents across the rail network, the Railway Board has called for urgent steps to fill vacancies and reduce the long working hours of locomotive pilots. The prolonged working hours of loco pilots due to an acute shortage of manpower was suspected to be the main reason for the increasing number of accidents, particularly SPAD cases : **Neo Marxists anticipated that a democratic state would never take a stand against capitalism as they themselves perpetuate the cheap labour.***

- *Yet another minor working as a domestic help has been brutalised in Gurugram. The family of three allegedly held her captive, threatened to push her into prostitution, sexually abused her, hit her with hammers, and instigated their dog to bite her: **It shows the broader societal issues where women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence and exploitation within familial settings. Also, the victim's situation raises questions about social support systems and the marginalization of vulnerable individuals and it points to the need for stronger support networks and interventions to protect those who might be isolated and unable to seek help.** (Vina Mazumdar and Veena Das has written extensively about gender violence in India)*
- *Instagram has in recent years increasingly shifted toward video. It has introduced Reels, short videos meant to compete with the video-sharing app TikTok, and it has launched features to encourage people to make videos together. Many artists cite that this change has been nothing short of harmful to artists, especially those who make still images: **Shorter attention spans align with the attention economy, where attention becomes a scarce resource. In an era of information overload, individuals are bombarded with content, leading to a preference for concise and easily consumable information.***

STATE - NATION - POLITY

- *An ethnic clash erupted in India's north-eastern state of Manipur between the Meitei people, a majority that lives in the Imphal Valley, and the tribal community from the surrounding hills, including the Kuki and Zo peoples. The underlying anger, simmering for a long time, has other reasons. These are linked not just to the government's clampdown on reserved and protected forests in the State's hill areas but also to the Kukis' feeling of being persecuted : **Countries in which people of various ethnic background share no nationalist spirit experience efforts by separate factions to impose their own views of nationhood on the land; the resulting clash is often violent.***

- The allocation of tickets by the three principal parties in Odisha — BJD, BJP, and Congress — demonstrates the influence of dynastic ties across the political spectrum. Father-son and father-daughter duos feature in the Congress list of candidates for 49 Assembly and eight Lok Sabha seats. The chairman of the Congress campaign committee, is slated to contest the upcoming Assembly election from Narla in Kalahandi district while his son has been fielded from Bhawanipatna in the same district : **This explains the connection between dynastic parties and elite rule. Elite rule refers to the concentration of political power and influence within a small, often privileged group of individuals or families. As family members of established political figures are given preferential treatment in candidate selection and leadership roles, there is a perpetuation of political elitism.**
- Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao will kick-start celebrations of the State's 10th year of formation at the State Secretariat. Over 21 days, the government will celebrate the State's achievements in different sectors since its formation. Mr. Rao ordered the release of ₹105 crore to District Collectors for organising the celebrations. A series of programmes dedicated to one department a day will be organised across the State: **Rudolf and Rudolf has emphasised that the federalism and regionalism has helped the country as a whole to develop as a strong democratic country.**
- Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati said her party would take concrete steps to make western Uttar Pradesh a separate State if voted to power at the Centre. "You want western Uttar Pradesh to become a separate State. For this, visible and concrete steps will be taken if our government comes to power at the Centre," she said. :**The demand for a separate state reflects the mobilization of identity-based groups for political representation and recognition of their distinct socio-cultural identity within the larger national framework, while identity-based politics can empower marginalized groups and promote representation, it can also exacerbate identity-based conflicts and polarization. This demand might intensify inter-group rivalries, ethnic tensions, and political competition, potentially leading to social unrest.**

- *A Pro-Kannada organisation in Bengaluru engaged in vandalism of various hoardings and billboards in a bid to protest the use of the English language in advertisements and signboards. The name boards in English, installed by the shops in Chikkajala, were torn apart by the protesters. Boards of private hotels and other private establishments were also vandalised: **Urban sociologists like Sujata Patel and Amita Baviskar have studied urban spaces as sites of contestation and negotiation. The vandalism of hoardings and billboards in Bengaluru reflects the tensions and conflicts inherent in urban life, where diverse linguistic and cultural groups coexist. It highlights the complexities of urban governance and the challenges of managing cultural diversity in rapidly growing cities like Bengaluru***
- *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 water crisis in Bengaluru has triggered a row between Karnataka and Kerala. Following Kerala Industries Minister’s overtures to Information Technology (IT) firms in the city to relocate to his State against the backdrop of the water crisis, Karnataka Commerce and Industries minister, hit out at the Kerala government saying, “attempts to take undue advantage of the water scarcity situation is detrimental to the federal structure of the country.” : **The stance taken by Karnataka’s Minister reflects a nationalist perspective, emphasizing the importance of preserving national unity and the federal structure of the country. On the other hand, Kerala’s approach can be seen as a form of supra-nationalism, where states prioritize their own interests and seek to attract resources or investments from other regions, even if it creates tensions between states within the nation.***

- Reports says that Non-residents will have a say in voting pattern in Kerala, despite the hike in airfares, a large expatriate population from West Asian countries are likely to be in the State for voting. Candidates and their poll managers too visit these countries to garner Non Residents support. : **The involvement of non-resident Keralites (NRKs) in Kerala's electoral process reflects the concept of transnationalism, where individuals maintain connections, identities, and engagements across national borders. NRKs contribute to Kerala's economy through remittances and also participate in shaping political outcomes, blurring the boundaries between national and transnational political participation.**
- Chinese President Xi Jinping said China would “surely be reunified” with Taiwan during his televised New Year's address, renewing Beijing's threats to take over the self-ruled island, which it considers its own. Taiwan split from China amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary: **Sociologists like Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner have explored the construction of nationalism and national identity. In the case of China's claim to Taiwan, the emphasis on reunification reflects nationalist sentiments and the idea of a unified Chinese identity. Anderson's concept of imagined communities can help understand how narratives of national unity are constructed and perpetuated, shaping collective perceptions of belonging and loyalty.**
- Farmer leaders from across Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh gathered for a mahapanchayat and took a decision to meet President Droupadi Murmu seeking justice for India's top wrestlers. The wrestlers have been demanding the arrest of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for alleged sexual exploitation, charges which Mr. Singh has denied: **This is a classic example of the influence of pressure groups in the politics. This also throws light on the way that these pressure groups are taking up the issues which are beyond their immediate interest.**

- *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.***

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

- *Meat shops in the city will have to maintain a distance of 150 metres from religious places, according to a proposal passed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD): **The decision to mandate a distance between meat shops and religious places reflects the symbolic importance of religious spaces within the urban landscape. This decision is rooted in the idea of preserving the sanctity or perceived purity of these spaces and the justify Louis Dumont's theory of "purity and pollution" in the city also.***
- *According to the findings of the Delhi-based Institute of Policy Studies and Advocacy (IPSA) and the Indian Muslim Intellectuals Forum (IMIF), Muslims are lagging behind their contemporaries on most socioeconomic parameters in Delhi. The community suffers from one of the highest unemployment and maternal mortality rates and limited political representation: **Zoya Hasan believes that educational backwardness can explain Muslims underrepresentation at the higher levels of employment and the above finding is the extension of the theory.***

- *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.*
- *The Gujarat government will move the High Court to challenge the acquittal of self-styled godman Asaram’s wife, their daughter and four disciples in a 2013 rape case, an official said. They were accused by the prosecution of aiding and abetting the crime, but were acquitted for want of evidence: This can be quoted for the dysfunctional aspect of the sects and cults where the so called religious leaders exploiting their followers both physically and emotionally as they are already a vulnerable section (Weber called as them as theodicy of disprivileged)*

FAMILY AND KINSHIP SYSTEM

- *The Supreme Court held that its extraordinary discretion under Article 142 of the Constitution can be used to do “complete justice” for couples trapped in bitter marriages by granting them divorce by mutual consent, sparing them the “misery” of waiting for six to 18 months for a local court to declare the annulment final. : The statement said by the judge (“If a marriage is wrecked beyond hope of salvage, public interest lies in recognising this real fact,”) shows the desacralisation of marriages in India.*
- *Many countries in East and Southeast Asia are in the middle of a population crisis, with fewer births every year and record-low fertility rates. Hospitals in China stopped offering newborn delivery services due to declining demand, Reuters reported. The city of Seongnam, the fourth largest in the South Korea, resorted to hosting mass blind dates hoping that the falling*

birth rates would reverse: This crisis arises as couples choosing to not have children, citizens opting to remain single, and spiralling costs to raise children may all have contributed to the dip, this population crisis can challenge cultural norms and values associated with family, parenthood, and filial piety. Societies will experience shifts in attitudes towards marriage, childbearing, and the importance of family ties, ultimately the sustainability of social institutions like family may come into question.

- *A bill to outlaw polygamy will be introduced, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced: Polygamy is often rooted in cultural, religious, or traditional practices. This bill challenges such norms, indicating a shift in societal attitudes toward relationships, marriage, and family structures. It might empower women by challenging practices, that can lead to their marginalization within relationships. It can promote women's agency in making decisions about their lives and relationships.*
- *The Supreme Court of India refused to legally recognize same-sex marriages. The court ruled that it was beyond its scope and should be decided by parliament. The court's decision drew criticism from LGBTQ rights activists, who called the verdict "regressive": Foucault's work on the history of sexuality emphasizes how power shapes societal norms and controls individuals' behaviors and identities. In the context of the refusal to legalize same-sex marriage, Foucault's perspectives highlight how power structures, including legal institutions, regulate and control sexual norms, limiting the recognition of diverse forms of relationships.*

SOCIAL CHANGE

- *The Madras High Court orders removal of ‘transphobic’ panchayat president and directed the TN government to initiate steps to grant reservation for transgender persons in local body polls with a view to helping them slowly become part of mainstream society : **This decision signifies a societal shift towards recognizing and including marginalized groups in governance but as Andre Beteille said, Law only decides the direction which society should take, the actual direction of the society is decided by its culture.***
- *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***

MISCELLANEOUS

- *Economic woes, instead of ‘happiness’, set the stage as Bhutan goes to the polls. The picturesque Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan holds general elections with serious economic challenges calling into question its longstanding policy of prioritising “Gross National Happiness” over growth : **Cultural values and symbols shape societal attitudes towards development and well-being. Bhutan’s adoption of GNH as a measure of progress reflects its commitment to prioritizing holistic well-being over narrow economic indicators. However, the shift towards addressing economic challenges in the electoral discourse suggests a re-evaluation of societal priorities and values. This tension between economic growth and well-being reflects broader debates about the meaning and measurement of progress in contemporary societies.***

- *Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese issued a national apology to survivors of the thalidomide drug scandal and their families. The apology recognizes the government's role in the tragedy and its enduring impact. Albanese called the scandal one of the "darkest chapters" in the country's medical history : **The recognition of the thalidomide scandal as one of the "darkest chapters" in Australia's medical history shapes collective memory and national identity. Sociologically, it influences how societies remember and acknowledge past events, shaping their collective narrative and understanding of their history.***



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