

BREAKING NEWS

-Vaidehee Thakur

“Congratulations! The pacemaker implantation is successful.” The satisfied cardiologist beamed at me, then switched over to a serious expression. “As a 40-year old patient of cardiac arrest, you need to take due care of yourself and take all measures to stay stress-free. I strictly prohibit you from watching Prime Time on TV.” He grinned at me. He knew I myself was a Prime Time debate host for a national news channel, and this categorical ban would mean I could no longer continue with what he called ‘an incendiary, highly stressful practice.’

Today is my first day out of the hospital, and the first time in ages when I’m not wracking my brains out over the next simmering debate issue. For once, I’m on the other side of the TV. I haven’t been restricted from watching the news, so I switch on the TV and head straight for a random news channel.

All the world’s a stage, especially for TRP-hungry media persons. If there’s anything more miscalibrating than a one-sided news debate show, it’s the hackneyed ‘100 headlines in 100 seconds’ morning programme. Ev-

ol’ critical, factual reporting. The next news programme is practically a looping clip of reporters bickering for selfies with a popular rightist leader after a press conference. Annoyed, I change to my channel. My show has started,

Admittedly, the discussion has gone too far left, and is vilification of a trivial matter. But still, it’s better than being right-wing biased, right?

Perhaps not. 6 years back, when the other party was in power, and when I was the presenter of the evening news analysis, I extensively covered the hottest scandal by that government. I received a call from the proprietor the very next day.

“Just don’t mention this one news? I acknowledge the quality of content and the viewership garnered, but refrain from explicitly naming individuals involved.”

I saw where it came from. The owner of our company had ties with the nephew of the party’s vice-president; but even so, I hadn’t anticipated this response from what I had always considered to be a neutral, relatively unbiased company. Presenting a supposedly research-inten-



BY HIMANSHU SINGHAL

ery headline is a hype du jour of an obscure crime, and every following headline is a gorier version of the same ‘news’. I’m glad my channel had discontinued this format some time back, and replaced it with good

except that Ravi has taken over ever since I was hospitalised.

I linger around for a bit, just to see how Ravi is handling the reins.

‘Let me speak now...’

sive show after such brazen self-censorship wasn't my cup of tea, so I switched to hosting Prime Time. With my pluralistic approach, the show wasn't nearly as loud and schismatic as its counterparts on most other channels.

I switch off the TV, and the air is at once relieved of the tension that had built up in my room. I shut my eyes and drifted back to the times when I was an ardent literature aficionado pursuing English Honours. If things had worked out well, I would have pursued an MA in Oxford or Cambridge. The turning point came when I, along with other students, happened to witness a junior getting beaten to death by a gang of student protestors. I froze in horror as I registered the face of one of them—the grandson of a prominent staff member. The

news quietly spread within the confines of our college, but we were too afraid to bear witness. Although I managed to reach out to a trustworthy independent media source after a day of silence on the issue, local dailies already bore headlines on how 'A student committed suicide in valiant desperate protest'. That was when I resolved to pursue journalism, and be the one who, despite all odds, can fearlessly report the ground truth.

My train of thought halts as the maid enters the hall.

"Hope you're not watching Prime Time?"

She chuckles, and scampers into the kitchen and returns with my lunch.

I slowly ingest the bland diabetic food, then turn on the TV to 'Saas, Bahu aur

Melodrama'. Here's all the masala I'll never get from my food from now on. I sigh, and change to another news channel.

'Khloe totally sizzled in a snake print dress—'

Thank you, next.

Really, what is the point of broadcasting these factoids? The next news channel has a pretty woman rambling about horoscopes—"...the planets' alignment is in your favour. Your child has high odds of clearing his engineering entrance exam..."

A shadow of a smile plays on my lips, as I wonder if I would've dodged my current predicament had I run the PCM/JEE rat race after my sophomore year in high school. Perhaps, as an engineer, I would have a sober life, and I wouldn't suffer a heart attack? Anyway, this is probably a blessing in

disguise. Two months of rest should do me wonders, as I detach myself from journalism for a while.

I glance at my manicured hands, then at the cameras around me as I walk into the studio.

'No Prime Time', the doctor had said. I have switched to anchoring the daytime news bulletin—the channel was kind enough to offer me the position of a news writer, as a quieter alternative, but I decided to throw myself into the newsroom as well. The temptation of spinning stories in front of the camera is too strong to resist now.

Dramatic soundtrack and sensational visuals

"Namaskar darshakon, aap dekh rahe hain Shudh Samachar..."

THREE OLD FRIENDS

-Advik Jain

It's been quite some time since the government revoked the Articles 370 and 35A, which granted special powers and certain exemptions to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Life still hasn't returned to normalcy in the newly formed union territories, however, people are making due. A Kashmiri, Ladakhi and

a Jammunite accidentally bump into each other somewhere and the following society mandated niceties, having a conversation on the revocation of the aforementioned articles. (The conversation takes place on half the stage, which is lighted. However, the other half is dark and silhouettes can be

identified standing)

Kashmiri: After all this hue and cry, it's these damned Ladakhis that got Azadi. Always whining about how they were being treated as the middle child. As if they can ever become developed, with us or without us. (snickers)

(Ladakhi breaks into a jingle in the background, thinking about acche din finally coming home, ignoring the snide remark)

Jammunite: Meh. I really don't care. We still have to stick around with you guys just because the central government was uncomfortable about the idea

of a Muslim majority state or union territory or whatever for god's sake we are now. **Kashmiri:** Haa. Easy for you to say. Things haven't been this worse since... ever. No communication, no internet, no nothing. Frankly what good is this crisis if I can't put Insta stories every hour. #Kashmirispirit #Wewillnotbowdown #AzadiStillNotFound. Also, my girlfriend now seems to think I am avoiding her. Anyway, good riddance. (pout, acts as if taking a selfie, cries)

Jammunite: All you people ever do is complain and complain. (shakes head)

Ladakhi (who by now and has joined in the conversation): The government has technically not exceeded any legal boundaries....

Ladakhi (sobbing, continues):The Kashmir Accession Pact was the same as other princely states signed at the time of partition. Secondly, special concessions given in said a..ar.. articles were only a tradeoff, (sobbing continues) for disposing of Sheik Abdullah who It's been quite some time since the government revoked the Articles 370 and 35A, which granted special powers and certain exemptions to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Life still hasn't returned to normalcy in the new-

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creasingly anti-India, by 1954. These articles were always meant for tighter control of the Indian Union over the region, instead of becoming political tools that they had now become.

(Jammunite and Kashmiri stare in amazement, having seen an educated Ladakhi for the first time)

Jammunite (chimes in enthusiastically): The government did follow the necessary and correct legislative procedure for repealing the articles. A vote was held in both the houses of the parliament, was passed by more than a supermajority and enjoyed political acceptance from even several opposition parties....

(Meanwhile the other side of the stage lights up, and the actors pause and lights on their side dims. The silhouette comes into focus and introduces itself a typical national party politician tasked with legislation in the national parliament and responsible for the whole country)



National Politician: Ahh... The technicalities of law...What can I say? I just saved myself tremendous effort by not explaining to these people what is and what will go on. By imposing a curfew, I also saved myself from being asked embarrassing questions, like why didn't you keep opposition parties and local leaders in the loop, why this, why that, yada yada. I'll now govern as I see fit because, local aspirations and distinctions mean little to me. I think I'll bring my wife to J&k next month because since curfews have destroyed the tourism industry and all the crowds have vanished, prices would be just like the economy. Down!!(laughs)

(Politician side's lights dimmed again and the other side lights up

again and the # gentlemen continue their conversation as if nothing happened)

Kashmiri: So putting our elected leaders under house arrest, denying them even the chance to represent our views was correct? Was denying us the choice to put forth our views correct? Was imposing a curfew for months correct? This stifled the livelihoods of thousands of people, disrupted education and cut us off the world!! Aren't we Indians just like you two? Just because some fringe elements cause nuisance, does it mean that we should be branded and denied basic rights which you take for granted?

(Other side lights up again, but this time the silhouette introduces itself as a Local J&K politician responsible for the well

being of the local people)

J&K Politician: Frankly, house arrest ain't so bad. I get a vacation from all that incessant shouting. And, now that I can't use 370 propaganda and politically weaponise the need to preserve our "special status", I will never be able to stir up the those "patriotic" feelings. The central government has played a good one. I'll probably need to find new ways to fool these people. Oh! Excuse me, it's almost snack time. (exits)

(The lights dim on the Politician side and the story continues. The atmosphere, however has suddenly turned heavy and the Jammunite and Ladakhi have start feeling uncomfortable)

Ladakhi (stammers): S...security reasons.

There were security reasons....

Kashmiri: No. Even if the Articles were not fundamental to our being a part of the Indian Union, are we not entitled to have a say on something that directly concerns us? When Telangana was created, was a curfew put in place? People were running amok as wild as animals. Its as if the government made our lives worse so that when we go back to our "normal" lives, we forget that something happened and are just grateful for being left alone.

(The Jammunite has no response, instead, challenges the Kashmiri to a duel for superiority, as always. The Ladakhi feels no obligation towards these two anymore and runs away)

HELLO, FROM THE OTHER SIDE

-Muskan Sharma

*'O sweet sunshine
Piercing the winter haze
Do not irk me
As I have befriended
The obscurity
Of the darkest pits'*

My voice is hoarse from screaming all night. I wonder whether the passenger sitting next to me can sense the reverberations of the turbulent riots transpiring

in my universe. Would he notice the tremors in my inconsistent tone? Would he offer to cement those gaps in my speech with his false commiserations? Oh look, he is getting off at the next station, leaving me alone to fight my own battles. But the truth of the matter is, I am exhausted. Tired of waiting for my final destination to

arrive. Tired of faking a smile and telling everybody "All is well" when things cannot be worse. Simple tasks have become ordeals. At times, breathing tightens my chest and ingesting food feels like swallowing stones. Mornings are the worst. The sheer amount of energy it takes to kick my feet off the ground and catch the train I am current-

ly riding, is inexplicably humongous. The sky seems to have turned into a faded shade of turquoise. From where I am observing, the grass is greener on the other side. Colourful butterflies agitate me. Their aimless wanderings are reminiscent of my own mundane existence.

I am afraid of looking at these strangers di-

rectly in their eyes lest they notice that my pupils are extremely dilated. So instead, I try to focus on the book idly resting on my lap. "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."

I could have related to that quote, except that now I am mostly repulsed by anything that life has to throw at me. A beautiful dress? Too boisterous. A sad song? One can't dance to it. My choices have become an aggregation of negations.

I wish to hope that therapy sessions are helping me sleep sans nightmares. It's been exactly four days since I have had the same old dream of me being chased by a tall, hideous, masked figure. He knows my next move, before I know it myself. I can never outrun him. So, when I start to run out of breath, I pause and face this monster fearlessly. I want to find out who is hiding

behind that mask. My hand reaches out for his face, and as I step forward to pull off the mask, I trip over a rock and keep falling into nothingness. That is when I wake up. During my last visit to Dr Knutz (ironic name, eh?), he asked me to describe the monster in absolute detail. I did. Then he asked me to answer the question, "Who am I?". I began to answer and then stopped abruptly.

Apparently, the serotonin in my blood has dipped low to a dangerous level. I take out the pills and with great effort, gulp them down all at once. Even though medication doesn't make me feel any better, I take them anyway because I don't want to worry my parents, especially after what they have gone through after my brother passed away. There, I said it. Dr Knutz would be so proud of me. The one emotion which I can distinctly discern from the others cobbled up in the cauldron of my

mind, is that of my love for my parents. I am a cent percent sure that as and when I take my last breath, the only flashback I will have will be that of my mother calling out my name in a soft, hushed voice, almost as if singing me a lullaby to sleep.

The train is finally entering the tunnel. It's funny how one second everything seems bright and illuminated and the next second my entire frame of existence plunges into darkness. My anxiety has returned and is now feeding on the last shreds of faith I have in my abilities to get out of this perpetual loop of emotional paralysis. The 'tick-tock' of the watch adorning my wrist, is pulling me down and my legs have become transfixed. I am screaming out really loud. But it seems like the cacophony of my voice have all gobbled up and formed an enormous lump in my throat. Nobody in my vicinity has even thrown a glance at me. I

look at my reflection in the glass window. The face staring back at me is mostly harmless, except the eyes. They say that eyes are a direct portal to the heart. At last, I have concurred with this conjecture.

I spot a dandelion swiftly twirling in the winter breeze. It's care-free, solemn waltz is beginning to tantalise me for some indefinable reason. It's feathery existence is defying all bounds of gravity. The weight pinning down my legs gradually begins to fade out and I feel light again. My station has arrived. I practically jump, to check whether or not I managed to break down the chains I had been tethered down with. Surprisingly, I did.

*"O sweet sunshine,
Harbinger of spring
Will thou pull me out
Of this abominable
abyss,
To witness the flowers
Turn from red to pink"*

FEMINIST ECONOMICS

-Aashna Jha

In his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith asks a very vital question - how do you get your dinner? Answering that question, he went through a set of intricate procedures and deduced that everyone involved in the

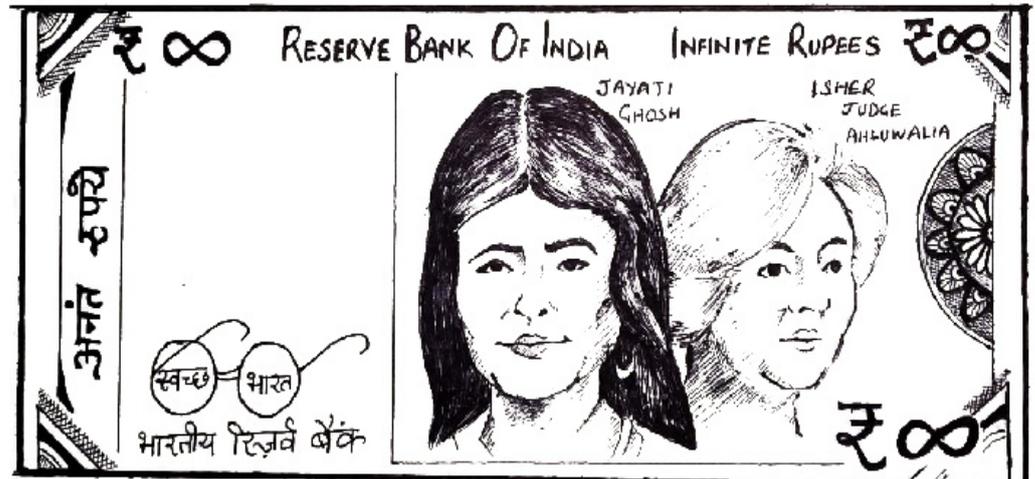
process - the butcher or the brewer or the baker - acted out of self-interest. They had no sense of benevolence while selling their product but acted as they did in order to gain profit for themselves. While asking and answering this

very important question, Adam Smith forgot a key component of it - Who cooks the dinner on the table? In his case, it was his mother - Margaret Douglas - who looked after the household his entire life. While self-inter-

est might have a role to place in her actions, it would be safe to say that it was also because she loved and cared for her son. As Adam Smith forgot his mother, Economics forgot about women.

In economics, there is a fictional character called the economic man. The economic man is based upon the idea of self-interest and is the guiding force of economics. He is independent, rational and isn't affected by emotions or family. If our economic man is always rational then the market is always rational and doesn't need to be regulated but we know that it is far from the truth. Markets crash and economies collapse far too often. The fact is that humans are emotional, dependent, vulnerable and heavily influenced by families and communities. What is striking here is that the economic man possesses qualities that are typically assumed to be masculine whereas everything that is excluded from the economic theory is widely regarded as feminine. This is how the economic theory ignores a woman's presence while romanticizing with the idea of a man's life. Models based on this theory can't understand gender inequalities, let alone make public policies to solve them.

Economics is a vast



BY SHASHANK SINGH

field covering a multitude of aspects and affecting governments, private organisations and common people alike. Despite the reach and power it holds, discourse in economics, like most other fields, is limited to the man's perspective. Modern economics is truly regressive, devaluing and ignoring a woman's contribution. This is reflected in the manner GDP is calculated wherein wages labour is accounted in but unpaid work at home is not. As stated in Marilyn Waring's book 'If Women Counted', this system has been designed to put women "in their place". Productive labour results in goods or services holding some monetary value hence compen-

sated through wages. Reproductive labour, on the other hand, is limited to the private sphere and is concerned with what people do for themselves, such as cooking, cleaning and more, it does not result in any monetary compensation. Reproductive labour is still largely dominated by women across the globe and this separation of the public and private sphere in economics leads to women doing unpaid labour. The fact that most women across the globe are working in unorganised sectors, their contribution to the economy is further made invisible.

While things are certainly changing for the better with international agencies such

as the United Nation factoring in measures such as health and well being other than cash income, there is still a long way to go. Feminist economics is needed to ensure that the economic policies made don't disproportionately affect women and a female narrative is always on the table. An ideal future would be one where the label 'feminist economics' ceases to exist and is instead what constitutes good economics. Gender relations and structures must be taken into account to understand the economics of any society, thus making feminist economics not just the economics for women but economics for all.

Mentors

Arushee Sharma
Soumya Bisht

Kshitij Mathur
Tanmay Singh

Perez Yeptho
Vandana Miglani

Simratpal Singh Satia Sharanya Swain

Editors

Anuja Sharma
Shashank Vishwanath

Harshita Pasricha
Trishla Verma

Kamalpreet Bhatia

Kritika Anuragi

Mimansa Bagri

Journalists

Anmol Garg

Devansh Batra

Manad Gupta

Mayank Saxena

Nishant Chahar

Pranay Bora

Priya Chugh

Srishti Bahot

Muskan Sharma

Shashank Singh

Aashna Jha

Advik Jain

Himanshu Singhal

Vidushi Yadav

Vishesh Bhaskar

Sheersha Majumder

Urja Banati

Vaidehee Thakur