

## The Hindu Analysis 6 May 2022

### Pg 6. GS 1&2 (Social Issues and Polity)

In 1970, Jane Roe (a fictional name used in court documents to protect the plaintiff's identity) filed a lawsuit against Henry Wade, the district attorney of Dallas County, Texas, where she resided, challenging a Texas law making abortion illegal except by a doctor's orders to save a woman's life. In her lawsuit, Roe alleged that the state laws were unconstitutionally vague and abridged her right of personal privacy. US Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood v Casey* reaffirmed the woman's right to terminate her pregnancy.

## A leaked draft, termination rights and the politics

The U.S. Supreme Court's 'decision' might have fired up the political scene, but the health statistics must not be ignored



SRIVIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI

It was something that literally no one expected, and from the portals of the Supreme Court of the United States – a leaked draft of the court's decision on abortion law indicating that a majority of the Justices might have just about agreed to overturn the 1973 landmark *Roe vs Wade* that legalised abortion in America. When Politico got its hands on the 98-page draft, and other media organisations jumped on the bandwagon, all hell broke loose, and expectedly so. In an already divisive country, nothing rankles the partisans more than the sensitive subject of abortion.

Some have likened the leaked document as being the equivalent of the *Pentagon Papers* that surfaced during the Nixon era. In a country where leaks are not out of the ordinary, these have been mostly confined to the White House and the vast bureaucracies, but not from the sacred hallways of the Supreme Court. In fact, one argument has been that even in the heightened political environ-

ment of 2000, when the election of a President (George W. Bush/Al Gore) was being decided, there was not even a whisper about which way the Justices were leaning.

#### Reactions

But not so this time around. Within a short period of time, the accusations have begun, with the needle of suspicion pointing to the Liberal Justices in the apex court, their clerks and allies, with the intention of alerting the nation about what was in store. According to the story, the first draft had the consent of five Conservative Justices with the Chief Justice, John Roberts, yet to weigh in. "The left continues its assault on the Supreme Court with an unprecedented breach of confidentiality, clearly meant to intimidate. The Justices mustn't give in to this attempt to corrupt the process. Stay strong", tweeted Republican Senator from Missouri, Josh Hawley.

Top Democrats were quick on the draw as well. In a statement, Senate Majority leader Charles Schumer and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, said, "If the report is accurate, the Supreme Court is poised to inflict that greatest restriction of rights in the past 50 years – not just on women but on all Americans. The Republican-appointed



Justices' reported votes to overturn *Roe v Wade* would go down as an abomination, one of the worst and most damaging decisions in modern history."

Out of the nine Justices, six have been appointed by Republican Presidents. Politico has stated that the so-called first draft was supposedly prepared by Justice Samuel Alito with the sole intention of overturning the Court's ruling on *Roe vs Wade* and a 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood vs Casey*. In the "Opinion of the Court", Justice Alito is said to have written that "*Roe* was egregiously wrong from the start" and that it must be overruled. "It is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people's representatives", he is said to have added.

Chief Justice Roberts would want a full-scale investigation into

the leak which would most certainly involve the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and there is an element of uncertainty as to whether the top court will stay on schedule for a decision in June/July. The argument that the first draft need not necessarily be the final word on the subject has had few takers, with both supporters and opponents in a no-holds-barred slanging match, with at least one conservative commentator describing the leak as amounting to an "insurrection" against the top court.

#### The political angle

There is, undoubtedly, a political angle to this, especially in the run-up to the mid-term elections of November 8 which is about six months away. More immediately, the leak will be seen as having an impact on the primaries that are scheduled in the next few weeks. In a national poll by Marquette Law School in January 2022, 72% were opposed to overturning *Roe vs Wade* as opposed to only 28% who were in favour. And Democratic lawmakers have once again come together to call for codifying *Roe vs Wade* into law – a task that is easier said than done given that the Democrats do not have 60 votes in the Senate and dissension within their ranks on getting rid of filibuster as a procedural tool.

"...the repercussions will be significant," argued Aditi Vaidya of the Center for Health Systems and Policy in the School of Medicine of Tufts University this February. "The removal of the constitutional right to abortion will be felt most among low income people, people of color and rural communities across the country. As history so clearly tells us, banning abortion does not stop them from occurring, it pushes them underground, limiting access to safe abortions," she added, pointing to dangerous methods, unqualified persons in procedures and online pharmacies peddling abortion pills.

#### Some data

Even as the heated debate has just started and is one that will intensify in the weeks ahead, statistics speak of about 6,30,000 reported abortions in the United States in 2019, down 18% from 2010; 57% of the women were in their twenties; African-American women had the highest rate of abortions, of 27 per 1,000 women aged between 15 years and 44 years. These are telling statistics that the Republicans and the Democrats need to keep in mind as they wrestle for political points.

*Srividhar Krishnaswami was a senior journalist in Washington covering North America and the United Nations*

- The US Constitution provides that federal judges – including Supreme Court "Justices" – are to be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate (the upper chamber of the US Congress).
- According to the Republican Party "The left continues its assault on the Supreme Court with an unprecedented breach of confidentiality, clearly meant to intimidate. The Justices mustn't give in to this attempt to corrupt the process. Stay strong"
- Democrat Senate leader said, "If the report is accurate, the Supreme Court is poised to inflict that greatest restriction of rights in the past 50 years — not just on women but on all Americans. The Republican-appointed Justices' reported votes to overturn *Roe v Wade* would go down as an abomination, one of the worst and most damaging decisions in modern history."
- In a national poll by Marquette Law School in January 2022, 72% were opposed to overturning *Roe vs Wade* as opposed to only 28% who were in favour.
- In the "Opinion of the Court", Justice Alito is said to have written that "*Roe* was egregiously wrong from

the start” and that it must be overruled.

- Determination of legal rights based on transient political considerations
- Right to abortion will be felt most among low income people, people of color and rural communities
- Banning abortion does not stop them from occurring, it pushes them underground
- Right to bodily autonomy and liberty
- Embolden conservative anti-abortion voices across the world
- Raise fundamental questions on the limits of judicial activism aimed at protecting the rights of persons and classes
- Setback to the celebrated doctrine of transformative constitutionalism

## Pg 8. GS 3 (Economy)

On May 1, a Boeing 737-800 aircraft of low-cost private carrier SpiceJet, on a scheduled flight (SG-945) operating from Mumbai to Andal (Durgapur, West Bengal) with 195 passengers on board (189 passengers and six crew), experienced turbulence because of bad weather

# The SpiceJet ‘accident’

What are the factors that might have caused the flight to experience severe turbulence? What about adverse weather?

MURALI N. KRISHNASWAMY

**The story so far:** On the evening of May 1, a Boeing 737-800 aircraft of low-cost private carrier SpiceJet, on a scheduled flight (SG-945) operating from Mumbai to Andal (Durgapur, West Bengal) with 195 passengers on board (189 passengers and six crew), experienced severe turbulence, at around 16,000 feet, while on approach to the destination airport.

**What happened on the flight?**  
Due to severe turbulence, nearly 17 passengers suffered head, shoulder, spinal, forehead and facial injuries that were serious enough to warrant hospitalisation. The aircraft too experienced damage in the cabin. Visuals showed oxygen mask compartments open, sections of the cabin ceiling having come apart exposing ducts, damage to some seat handrests and the cabin being in a state of disarray, with items from the galley as well as passenger belongings strewn around. The flight crew took manual control of the aircraft (from autopilot mode) and the aircraft made a safe landing about 20 minutes later.

A preliminary report by India's civil aviation regulatory body, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), categorised it as an “accident”. It said: “... the vertical load factor [which is related to aviation] varied from 2.64G and minus 1.36G, and during this period, the autopilot got disengaged for two minutes...” In addition, there were speed variations. The crew have been off rostered. The airline's aircraft maintenance engineer who released the aircraft from Durgapur (the plane was flown from Andal to Kolkata later) has also been derostered. The aircraft has been grounded and the DGCA has ordered a full inspection of the SpiceJet aircraft fleet.

**Why has it been called an ‘accident’?**  
The occurrence would fall under one of the conditions that defines an ‘accident’ in aviation, i.e., “an occurrence associated with the operation of aircraft which ... i) in the case of a manned aircraft, takes place

between the time any person boards the aircraft until such time as all such persons have disembarked.... a) a person is fatally injured or seriously injured as a result of: i) being in the aircraft ii) direct contact with any part of the aircraft including parts of which have become detached from the aircraft....”

India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), has taken over investigation into the occurrence. The AAIB is responsible for “classification of safety occurrences” that involve aircraft operating in Indian airspace falling under the categories ‘accidents’, ‘serious incidents’ and ‘incidents’. The AAIB says it investigates any ‘accident’ and ‘serious incident’ involving aircraft having what is called an ‘all up weight (AUW)’ of more than 2,250 kg’.

**Was there awareness of turbulence? What could have happened?**

A pilot says air turbulence can be graded as light, moderate, severe and extreme. In the last classification, there may be even structural damage and possible loss of aircraft control. In terms of the categorisation of turbulence, there is (in general): convective turbulence (or turbulence linked to cloud convection); mechanical turbulence (low-level turbulence); orographic turbulence (linked to elevated terrain such as mountains); clear air turbulence; low-level jet streams, and also wake turbulence caused by other aircraft.

In a tweet, Madhavan Rajeevan, former Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, who has “research interests on monsoons” has said: “In my understanding Spice Jet has their own weather forecasting team for their planning. They don't take [the] services of [the] IMD [India Meteorological Department]. All airlines should take weather services very seriously for their operations....”

It must be reiterated, however, that airlines do invest considerable resources in the training of crew in aviation meteorology.

Captain A. (Mohan) Ranganathan, a former airline instructor pilot and aviation

safety adviser, who shared resource material with *The Hindu* from an ‘Adverse Weather Operations training kit’ prepared on behalf of the DGCA in 2001, said that from initial analysis, it appeared that the flight crew had not followed the speed for turbulence penetration. This, he said, was probably why severe conditions were encountered. The aviation expert highlighted the important factor of Total Air Temperature (TAT), which is the best guide for turbulence. TAT monitoring by crew is essential while in flight, more so during the crucial phases of aircraft climb and descent, he said. A key point highlighted in the training kit was for a pilot to be alert to a temperature inversion between 16,000 feet and 24,000 feet as being an indicator of adverse weather conditions. He said that aviation awareness about TAT is low these days.

More importantly, the aviation expert drew attention to a weather phenomenon (and an aviation hazard) called the Norwester over eastern and northeastern India which occurs in March, with its frequency increasing in May and early June (almost eight occurrences a month). This subject is in focus as the flight path of the SpiceJet aircraft was over Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, with its descent into West Bengal.

Norwesters are destructive squalls which take place in the afternoon/evening; what is more, cells of weakening down drafts regenerate themselves as new storm cells. An aircraft can experience a stall and loss of lift when flying near or through them. There is also an additional high risk of hail damage. The professional aviation advice is to avoid making an approach if in the vicinity of a Norwester. Captain Ranganathan also gave the example of the kind of turbulence that can be expected, when in the 1980s, a Boeing 737 on the Agartala-Calcutta sector got into one such cell and was buffeted so severely that it caused several rivets on the aircraft fuselage to go missing; this was discovered after landing.

In a typical Norwester, if flying in



proximity of what is called its downwind wake area (these can be generated given the way a Norwester is formed), an aircraft can get sucked into the centre of the storm cell and experience damage and severe turbulence.

A senior commander who flies Airbus aircraft said turbulence detection, in general, would also depend on whether it was clear air turbulence or, separately, what is called avoidable weather. If it was weather that was visibly noticeable, or read on the aircraft's weather radar, the question during the investigation would be whether the crew were monitoring this and had situational awareness. While the weather radar system fitted in the new generation of aircraft is technologically advanced – some models can perform 3D picturisation using multibeam for hundreds of kilometres ahead and autoscans from the ground up to 60,000 feet – management of adverse weather flying calls for good meteorological knowledge, a thorough understanding of the aircraft's radar functions, planning, anticipation, and, most importantly, the crew's overall assessment of the weather situation.

A SpiceJet Boeing 737-800 passenger plane. • REUTERS

“An occurrence associated with the operation of aircraft which ... i) in the case of a **manned aircraft**, takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft until such time as all such persons have disembarked.... a) a person is fatally injured or seriously injured as a result of: i) being in the aircraft ii) direct contact with any part of the aircraft including parts of which have become detached from the aircraft....”



Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)

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## What is turbulence?

A sudden, violent shift in airflow

### Causes:

- Wind
- Storms
- Jet stream
- Objects near the plane (particularly mountain ranges)


Aircraft can drop or change altitude suddenly

@aircraftmaintenancengineer

## Turbulence Intensity

Intensity	Rise/drop	Effects
Light	1 metre	Hardly noticeable to passengers
Moderate	3-6 metres	Drinks may spill
Severe	up to 30 metres	Occupants can be thrown if not strapped in

Intensity	Aircraft reaction	Inside aircraft
Light	Momentarily causes slight. Erractic changes in altitude and/or attitude.	Unsecured objects may be displaced slightly. Food service easily conducted. No difficulty in walking.
Moderate	Changes in altitude and/or attitude. Aircraft remains in positive control. Variations in indicated airspeed.	Unsecured objects dislodged. Food service and walking difficult.
Severe	Large abrupt changes in altitude and/or attitude. Large variations in indicated airspeed. Aircraft may be momentarily out of control.	Food service and walking impossible.
Extreme	Aircraft violently tossed about and is practically impossible to control. May cause structural damage.	Strong desire to land.



- The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommends that carriers should improve dispatch procedures by keeping communication channels open full-time; include turbulence in weather briefings; promote real-time information-sharing between pilot and dispatcher; reinforce the carrier's turbulence avoidance policy through dispatcher training; consider re-routing using automation, atmospheric modelling, and data displays; and use all applicable weather data as well as reporting and forecasting graphics.

## What to do in turbulence

➤ Stay calm and listen to the cabin crew instructions

➤ Fasten and tighten seat belt to avoid getting thrown around

➤ Stow away loose items, like bags, under the seat

➤ In case luggage falls off

the overhead rack, brace for impact by putting arm over head and face

➤ Bracing for impact can also help avoid facial injuries if thrown against the food tray in front

➤ Take deep breath to avoid nausea

Wimbledon has decided to deny entries to players from Russia and Belarus for the 2022 edition of the tournament. Sport takes place within society, it is a product of society, and society is constantly being impacted by politics. So, it's very hard to separate them.

# Is it possible to separate sports and politics?

**PARLEY**

They have always mixed — the crucial thing is to not allow sport and sportspersons to be used as pawns

A fortnight ago, Wimbledon decided to deny entries to players from Russia and Belarus for the 2022 edition of the tournament. Coming as it did against the backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Wimbledon said it was to thwart any attempt from the Russian regime to 'derive any benefits from the involvement of Russian or Belarusian players with The Championships'. Many other sports, such as football, track and field, and Formula One, have also imposed sanctions of varying degrees. This has resurrected the debate on the influence of politics on sport. In a discussion moderated by N. Sudarshan, Sharda Ugra and Zeeshan Ali discussed the various facets of the same. Edited excerpts:



**Sharda Ugra** is a sports journalist with more than three decades' experience across newspapers at The Hindu, Mid-Day, India Today and ESPNcricinfo

**Is it possible to separate sports and politics? Can sports exist in a vacuum?**

**Sharda Ugra:** Everyone always says, 'Let's try and separate sports from politics.' But sport takes place within society, it is a product of society, and society is constantly being impacted by politics. So, it's very hard to separate them. Given the history of political involvement in sport, because sport is seen as an agent of soft power, we will always end up in a situation like where we are today. In the highly professionalised world of elite sport, it gets even more complicated. We want to exist in an almost utopian sphere and go back to an amateur era. But you know, even that was not very utopian in the first place.



**Zeeshan Ali**, a former tennis player and Olympian, is currently India's Davis Cup coach and also the head of the National Tennis Centre in New Delhi

**Zeeshan Ali:** I totally agree with Sharda. Sports and politics have always mixed. In 1974, India was to play the Davis Cup final against South Africa but we had to give a walkover because of the apartheid issue. In 1988, we were drawn to play Israel (in the World Group relegation play-offs) and we had to give a walkover again. Unfortunately, sports and arts do get affected (by politics) and when a government is involved in taking certain decisions, it's very difficult for an individual to go against it.



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Is there room for the 'right kind'

**apartheid possible in the present-day world of competing interests?**

**SU:** Politics was made to play a part in sport and outside of sport to try and push the apartheid regime to change its stance. You will look at that and say, 'That was a good thing.' But people of my generation remember what it was like for countries like India and other non-white nations to stand up against this huge, almost monolith West which seemed to think it was okay to go and play in South Africa. Countries fought very hard against the Western world to say that South Africa's policies were extremely flawed and had to be fixed. Sport was used as one measure to push through that message. We also see how sport has been used politically to send out a message, like Nazi Germany did in 1936 (the Berlin Games were a show of Nazi propaganda). The South African example is perhaps the only one I can think of that ended in the right way.

**How should sports bodies respond when there are conflicting and ethical arguments on both sides?**

**ZA:** What is right for one country does not necessarily mean it is right for the other. In the case of South Africa, the whole world was getting together for a reason, a humanitarian one. What's happening right now is completely different. A superpower is taking over another country, and sports is becoming part of the politics. I was part of the team in 1988 when we had to give a walkover to Israel. After having reached the final of the Davis Cup the previous year, it was a huge shock to us. But that was the stance the Indian government took and we were just small players. Frankly speaking, sportspeople don't really have much of a say. It's sad for somebody like Daniil Medvedev to not be allowed to play certain tournaments. If a government decides that certain players or certain countries should not be playing, that is political and it is unfortunate that sportswomen are affected by it.



and other bodies are being projected as sport doing its bit to bring about peace. Can sport assume such a big role where some players will inevitably be collateral damage?

**SU:** It's interesting for people to say that 'sport is playing its part'. There is the NHL (National Hockey League) in the U.S. where Russians are still playing. So, I think it's a little self-righteous to say that. In the case of Wimbledon, I did get the feeling that the British foreign office made a big noise. No other individual tennis tournament has said that they will not allow Russians. When are we going to talk about Israel and Palestine? Is that not an issue that should be front and centre? A conflict has been going on for decades there. So, it's a bit overambitious on the part of sport to think that way. For an individual sport to be doing it is literally a slippery slope. Where do you stop and on whose behalf do you stop? You do understand the anguish of the Ukrainian athletes on what's happening in their country. But to imagine that this will work by having Russians not take part... it's not well thought through.

**ZA:** There is this debate going on right now that the entry into Wimbledon is not based on nationality but on ranking. So, why is Wimbledon not allowing Russian players to play? They are already playing under a neutral flag. Like Sharda mentioned the Israel-Palestine issue, tomorrow it could be another country that might have issues with its neighbour. So, will you stop every single sportsperson from that country? It's a dangerous precedent. I just hope going forward sports doesn't become a battlefield for any

**It's the duty of professional sport to stay more clear-headed and vigilant about how much politics it will allow. If sport wants to play a part, let it raise money for the refugees and all other causes. What's happening in tennis is largely a propaganda exercise.**

country to play because we don't kind of agree with their policies.' There is no end to it.

**Sports bodies and governments have tried to clamp down on all forms of protest. On the other hand, they do not shy away from using these very events and successes of sportspersons to enrich their standing. How do you see this dichotomy?**

**SU:** You see elite sports use platforms of all kinds of governments to stage events. Look at where some Formula One races are held. There was also a controversy about Qatar being given the rights to host the FIFA World Cup. So, it's almost like you have played into the hands of the people in power. I think, sport, perhaps, should find a way to ring-fence itself. The Olympics is another kettle of fish because there are a number of international federations. But at least sports like tennis, that are high profile, very elite with a lot of money, highly professionalised and largely well-run, should really fence themselves away. I just wanted to bring up the case of Peng Shuai, the Chinese tennis player who had spoken out against a [government] official. Tennis's response at that time was outstanding

Even though it's come to a point where we do not know what the truth really is, tennis's first line of defence was, 'Let us speak to her. She's our athlete. Let us look after her.' And what has Wimbledon done? It has said, 'It's somebody else's thing. Let's get these people out.' Sport should not allow this. What was the symbol of the athlete at the end of 2020 and 2021? It was to take a knee, to raise a fist and to stand up against discrimination. That's the way sport should be used, rather than this kind of exclusion, which is what Martina Navratilova also said. Exclusion is not the way to go.

**ZA:** Sport is supposed to unite and not divide us. It is dividing people right now and that's the last thing we want. I was at the Olympics in 1988 and then I was the (non-playing) captain of the Indian team in 2016 in Rio. The kind of atmosphere you have in the village, especially in the dining room area, where you have people from different countries sitting together... It's not a question of colour or language or anything. Everybody over there is a sportsperson. In Rio, there was a McDonald's outlet where people would queue up for one kilometre. In that one kilometre, you had people from 100 different nationalities standing and talking to each other. That's uniting people. Unfortunately, the situation now is doing anything but that and sport is a loser.

**When governments play such a huge role in sports, from funding to presiding over events, can we expect sports and politics to be detached?**

**SU:** I don't think so. Particularly in Olympic sports where, in around 75% of the countries, funding is from the government and through taxpayers. So, you do know that the government will be trying to stamp its authority. But professional sport doesn't require anything other than, say, permissions to stage events. So, it's the duty of professional sport to stay a bit more clear-headed and vigilant about how much politics it will allow. If sport wants to play a part, let it raise money for the refugees and all other causes. What's happening in tennis is largely a propaganda exercise and won't really fall into this. Because

said about the image of the future being the boot on the face. You have to push back as much as you can.

**ZA:** I don't think sports and politics are ever going to be detached. Sports bodies in most countries come under the jurisdiction of the government. Let's leave the BCCI out of it, but I'm talking about other sports in the country, like hockey, that are completely reliant on the sports ministry and the government. It also cannot be a sports body's decision to go against the government because there will be repercussions. But like Sharda said, there needs to be some amount of leeway given, for a certain stand to be taken concerning big political decisions. As much as we would like sports and politics not to mingle, it's not happened in so many years and, unfortunately, going forward also I don't see it happening. Even in individual sport, if you were to go against your nation's decision of not playing in a particular country or traveling to a particular country, there may be repercussions. A government can say, 'Okay, we will withhold your passport.' And then you cannot travel to any part of the world. So, we sportspeople and sports federations have to at some point abide by these decisions, whether it is good for the sport or not. Unfortunately, we're just pawns in something much bigger.

**SU:** It was quite interesting to hear what Zeeshan had to say. To my mind the IPL (Indian Premier League) is a classic example of how politics has been allowed to spread itself completely over the sport. So, we cannot have Pakistan players in the IPL. Is cricket a team sport? Yes, absolutely. But it's a team sport with teams from Mumbai and other cities. An Indian team will always win the IPL. But you can't have Pakistan players because of an unwritten rule and because there will be some 'hassle'. There will not be any hassle... hassle will be created. Cricket in India, and Pakistan, has allowed itself to be completely overwhelmed and manipulated by politics. Cricket has become the currency with which politics is enacted. And when Wimbledon has done something like this now, it shouldn't want to become currency again. That's what Zeeshan said. 'You can

In 1974, India was to play the Davis Cup final against South Africa but had to give a walkover because of the apartheid issue. Sports bodies in most countries come under the jurisdiction of the government. Particularly in Olympic sports where, in around 75% of the countries, funding is from the government and through taxpayers.

**Pg 6. GS 2 (Education)**



# The school dress is in the cross hairs

The uniform has been transformed into a new political tool and as a means to curtailing the autonomy of educationists



KRISHNA KUMAR

Nowhere in the long history of education can you find evidence to say that a school uniform is a factor in learning. Yet, a lot of people today cannot imagine a school without a uniform. When they think about a school, including their own, they think about the uniform that makes its children distinct from the children of other schools. Especially on festive occasions when grand events bring all the schools of a city together, people find something deeply edifying in the spectacle of children marching or displaying their smartness wearing a distinct uniform. The public fascination with such spectacles, and the history of the school uniform, point to the single most important role that a school uniform plays: it helps in the regimentation of the young. Uniformly dressed children constitute one of the two archetypal metaphors of schooling. One is that of a garden where different flowers bloom; the other is of an army of little soldiers marching together.

## A history, social impact

If you divide the world into countries that have a compulsory uniform in their schools and countries that do not, the history starts to reveal itself. Systems of education that evolved under colonial rulers of different types generally favour strict enforcement of the school uniform. That includes us. If you strain popular memories and scan old photographs, you will find that the idea of a school uniform has spread with urbanisation, prosperity and privatisation.

Rural and small town schools seldom insisted on a daily uniform in the early years of Independence. It was required on certain days of the week and on special days. Gradually, when different types of private schools started, they demanded every day wearing of the prescribed uniform. Supply of uniforms for children of different schools offered business opportunities for local cloth merchants, tailors and shoe stores. Instead of offering competitive pricing, the uniform business encouraged local monopolies. In many cases, the schools assented to participate and asked parents to patronise a particular source.

## Command-based system

This short, and obviously generalised social history has little apparent relevance to the situation in Karnataka. Nicely hemmed in between the order of the Directorate and the court, a complete uniform code has evolved within a few weeks. Its regime now encompasses the classroom as well as the examination hall. And although Kendriya Vidyalayas (central schools) are not governed by any provincial government, the ones located in Karnataka have fallen in line. Their stance is not difficult to appreciate under the circumstances.

Thus, one of India's most literate and prosperous States, globally famous for its advancements in the so-called knowledge economy, has emerged as the crucible of educational orthodoxy and control. The school uniform has mutated into a new political tool, and as a means of curtailing the already limited autonomy of principals and teachers. To what extent the politics of the school dress will influence electoral outcomes will become a subject fit for research in the social sciences. Systematic study of the school dress, its history and fascination, was long overdue.

It is interesting that the uniform



controversy erupted in the secondary education system of a State that bypassed major policy reforms of the 1960s. Pre-university or junior colleges are left in only a small number of States now. Elsewhere in the country, the 10+2 model recommended by the Kothari Commission nearly 60 years ago prevails. It led to a significant reorganisation of the administrative system in education. Its full potential would have been realised had school principals and teachers been given a greater say and freedom in establishing the norms that govern institutional life.

Another gain would have been a participatory role for the community in matters of day-to-day life at school. Had the vision of the Kothari report – sculpted by its Member-Secretary, J.P. Naik – been realised in its entirety, bureaucratic authority would have declined, creating greater room for school autonomy. A different kind of politics might have emerged, with the school as its intellectual resource. Karnataka might have been a highly fertile social ground for such alternative democratic polity because of its own history and propulsion towards decentralised governance.

History took a different direction. The picture of a teacher or principal of a junior college in Karnataka stopping a student from entering the examination hall on account of a dress item will serve as a symbol of unkindness for many

years to come. Hopefully, her predicament will also become a subject of discussion in teacher education colleges. The question it will raise is: 'Did she voluntarily agree to be so unkind to a student in order to be compliant to orders?' An administrative query might also be worth pursuing: 'Did the Directorate's order on the specified uniform extend to the examination hall?' Notionally it did, but then it stretched the normal role of a school uniform – to provide a collective institutional identity. If that identity covers the examination hall, why do students need a hall ticket, establishing their individual identity? Let us hope the legal argument on this issue will go into these uncharted layers of the lives of learners and examinees.

## Key distinction

Even at this juncture, it is worth recalling a key distinction. A uniform is different from a dress code. A uniform is more prescriptive than a dress code. The latter may expect children and their parents to avoid using clothes flaunting status or wealth. A uniform, on the other hand, may well go as far as prescribing not just the colour but also the material and the design or cut. In older times, it was considered sufficient to recommend a dress code; nowadays even a fully defined uniform does not seem to suffice. The social ethos promotes conspicuous consumption (a phrase used by the economist, Veblen), and banquet halls serve this aim as efficiently as schools. Uniforms do help to maintain a veneer of equality in a society where inequality is pervasive.

Education, however, is supposed to promote equal opportunities for all strata and sections of society in more substantial ways. One important contribution that education can make in this direc-

tion is to widen the scope of public debates, enabling the participation of all concerned, especially teachers. They are in far closer touch with students from different backgrounds and, therefore, will be more sensitive to what makes classroom life more comfortable for all.

No modern philosopher has explained the problems that underlie this state of collective existence better than Sri Aurobindo. In *The Ideal of Human Unity*, he draws upon diversity in nature to explain why uniformity tempts us, but does not contribute to a sense of relatedness or unity. He extends his analysis to all aspects of social, cultural and political life, including international relations. In our present context, the issue underlying the turmoil in Karnataka has to do with the role of education and the manner in which it functions as a system. As the term 'uniform' suggests, a common dress conveys that all differences have been overcome.

Had that been the case in Karnataka, the Directorate would not have to exert its pressure to seek compliance. The expectations this resilient institution forged under colonial rule harbours in its bureaucratic heart are best illustrated by a story J.P. Naik told me. The Kothari Commission had suggested ways to make classroom teaching less stereotyped, and more lively and child-centred. Soon after the Commission's report received official approval, the Directorate in Maharashtra fired off a D.O. (i.e. demi-official) order to all schools that, as per the desire of the competent authority, henceforth, all teaching must be child-centred!

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## Mains Practice Questions

1. Overturning the landmark abortion ruling in United States of America will have implications for constitutional jurisprudence globally. Examine. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. What happens when an aircraft encounters turbulence? How can airlines avoid turbulence? (10 Marks, 150 Words)