Editorial

Thursday, April 11, 2019

Revisiting CAB issue

It is now crystal clear that the BJP is all set to make CAB as the law of the country. 1st phase election of the Lok Sabha ended yesterday and the BJP's stand on CAB become more clearer. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during election campaign at Silchar yesterday said that if BJP return he will introduce the CAB Bill. Even though Manipur's CM N. Biren Singh tried to divert the issue making deliberate statement such as the bill will not affect the people Himanta Bishwas, the politician who took major role in popularizing the BJP is clear on the issue of CAB. He had stated that CAB is needed for India is a Hindu land.

The anti-BJP wave sweeping across the North Eastern states of India seems to give no worry to the BJP. May the BJP leadership under estimated the region even as they have tried when Narendra Modi wave hurled the country in 2014 parliamentary election. Their victory in 2014 had make them so confident that as long as the majority Hindu in the heartland of India can be hypnotized, the BJP is in no way going to lose the election. Of the 29 states, the BJP now seem to concentrate the issues of bigger states which have more number of MPs either in way of hypnotizing the less literate voters or by building unbreakable alliance with political parties so that the number of reinstating a similar BJP led NDA type government could be formed at the center. To be précised, targeting big states which have more numbers of MPs is becoming the agenda of BJP in their effort to bring back Narendra Damudor Modi as the country's Prime Minister again.

Promises to scrape inhuman and outdated legislation or Act are a mere joke. If one remember what the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi had spoken at Madison Square Graden in New York at which he stated that draconian and outdated laws will be scrape, he or she will certainly think that , "Mr. Modi did know how to make joke". The speech was delivered around 4 years back and till today the draconian Armed Forces Special Power Act is still enforce, the sedition laws make no changes and provisions to protect citizen from detention in the name of potential threat still continue in the name National Security Act (NSA) where a Manipuri Television Journalist Kishorechandra Wangkhem has been detained after court set him free.

The ambitious Act East policy which was renamed after the coming of the Modi government turn out to be another appeasement policy of the North Eastern states. NRC in Assam was supported and after knowing that over 40 lakhs illegal immigrants has been found out, the Government led by Narendra Modi is amending the citizenship act to grant citizen to these people perhaps.

The day when the Contentious Citizen Amendment Act, 2016 was passed in the lok Sabha, there was wild uproar in the entire states of North East. In Tripura protestors were fired.

The Chief Minister of Manipur, perhaps under pressure at least joint hands with some political party urged the Union Home Minister and the prime Minister to insert a clause that would protect the state from CAB, which is neither feasible nor listen by the BJP leadership.

Ram Madav, the General Secretary in Charge of NE states for the BJP and present MP had stated that they are going to present the CAB 2016 and will pass in the Rajya Sabha too. The very statement of the BJP leader without saying anything to the demand of a BJP Chief Minister showed that they care nothing to NE states. After all all the states put together including Sikkim have only 25 MPs. The issue of CAB and the uproar from the people of the state is not an issue as the BJP now shrewdly penetrated to West Bengal which have 42 MPs. Half of this number which the BJP is expecting to get due to the anti-incumbency factor of the Mamta Benerji Government as well as the number of Illegal Migrants which had already entered the city of joy who felt that they will be granted citizenship. Its is not an issue for muslim migrant to convert it to any religion as most entered the country for survival. After all the CAB says persons without any document can also be granted citizenship of the country. There are no marks to any human being to show that he or she belong to any religion.

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'It's all this loosey-goosey "culture" thing.'

Courtesy The Wire
By : Clive Thompson

In the summer of 2017, a Google employee named James Damore suggested in an internal email that several qualities more commonly found in women — including higher rates of anxiety — explained why they weren't thriving in a competitive world of coding; he cited the cognitive neuroscientist Simon Baron-Cohen, who theorizes that the male brain is more likely to be "systemizing," compared with women's "empathizing" brains. Google fired Damore, saying it could not employ someone who would argue that his female colleagues were inherently unsuited to the job. But on Google's internal boards, other male employees backed up Damore, agreeing with his analysis. The assumption that the makeup of the coding work force reflects a pure meritocracy runs deep among many Silicon Valley men; for them, sociobiology offers a way to explain things, particularly for the type who prefers to believe that sexism in the workplace is not a big deal, or even doubts it really exists.

But if biology were the reason so few women are in coding, it would be impossible to explain why women were so prominent in the early years of American programming, when the work could be, if anything, far harder than today's programming. It was an uncharted new field, in which you had to do math in binary and hexadecimal formats, and there were no helpful internet forums, no Google to query, for assistance with your bug. It was just your brain in a jar, solving hellish problems.

If biology limited women's ability to code, then the ratio of women to men in programming ought to be similar in other countries. It isn't. In India, roughly 40 percent of the students studying computer science and related fields are women. This is despite even greater barriers to becoming a female coder there; India has such rigid gender roles that female college students often have an 8 p.m. curfew, meaning they can't work late in the computer lab, as the social scientist Roli Varma learned when she studied them in 2015. The Indian women had one big cultural advantage over their American peers, though: They were far more likely to be encouraged by their parents to go into the field, Varma says. What's more, the women regarded coding as a safer job because it kept them indoors, lessening their exposure to street-level sexual harassment. It was, in other words, considered normal in India that women would code. The picture has been similar in Malaysia, where in 2001 — precisely when the share of American women in computer science had slid into a trough — women represented 52 percent of the undergraduate computer-science majors and 39 percent of the Ph.D. candidates at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

Today, when midcareer women decide that Silicon Valley's culture is unlikely to change, many simply leave the industry. When Sue Gardner surveyed those 1,400 women in 2014, they told her the same story: In the early years, as junior coders, they looked past the ambient sexism they encountered. They loved programming and were ambitious and excited by their jobs. But over time, Gardner says, "they get ground down." As they rose in the ranks, they found few, if any, mentors. Nearly two-thirds either experienced or witnessed harassment, she read in "The Athena Factor" (a 2008 study of women in tech); in Gardner's survey, one-third reported that their managers were more friendly toward and gave more support to their male co-workers. It's often assumed that having children is the moment when women are sidelined in tech careers, as in many others, but Gardner discovered that wasn't often the breaking point for these women. They grew discouraged seeing men with no better or even lesser qualifications get superior opportunities and treatment.

"What surprised me was that they felt, 'I did all that work!' They were *angry*," Gardner says. "It wasn't like they needed a helping hand or needed a little extra coaching. They were mad. They were not leaving because they couldn't hack it. They were leaving because they were skilled professionals who had skills that were broadly in demand in the marketplace, and they had other options. So they're like, '[expletive] it — I'll go somewhere where I'm seen as valuable.' "

The result is an industry that is drastically more male than it was decades ago, and far more so than the workplace at large. In 2018, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 26 percent of the workers in "computer and mathematical occupations" were women. The percentages for people of color are similarly low: Black employees were 8.4 percent, Latinos 7.5 percent. (The Census Bureau's American Community Survey put black coders at only 4.7 percent in 2016.) In the more rarefied world of the top Silicon Valley tech firms, the numbers are even more austere: A 2017 analysis by Recode, a news site that covers the technology industry, revealed that 20 percent of Google's technical employees were women, while only 1 percent were black and 3 percent were Hispanic. Facebook was nearly identical; the numbers at Twitter were 15 percent, 2 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

The reversal has been profound. In the early days of coding, women flocked to programming because it offered more opportunity and reward for merit, more than fields like law. Now software has the closed door.

In the late 1990s, Allan Fisher decided that Carnegie Mellon would try to address the male-female imbalance in its computer-science program. Prompted by Jane Margolis's findings, Fisher and his colleagues instituted several changes. One was the creation of classes that grouped students by experience: The kids who had been coding since youth would start on one track; the newcomers to coding would have a slightly different curriculum, allowing them more time to catch up. Carnegie Mellon also offered extra tutoring to all students, which was particularly useful for the novice coders. If Fisher could get them to stay through the first and second years, he knew, they would catch up to their peers.

They also modified the courses in order to show how code has impacts in the real world, so a new student's view of programming wouldn't just be an endless vista of algorithms disconnected from any practical use. Fisher wanted students to glimpse, earlier on, what it was like to make software that works its way into people's lives. Back in the '90s, before social media and even before the internet had gone mainstream, the influence that code could have on daily life wasn't so easy to see.

Faculty members, too, adopted a different perspective. For years some had tacitly endorsed the idea that the students who came in already knowing code were born to it. Carnegie Mellon "rewarded the obsessive hacker," Fisher told me. But the faculty now knew that their assumptions weren't true; they had been confusing previous experience with raw aptitude. They still wanted to encourage those obsessive teenage coders, but they had come to understand that the neophytes were just as likely to bloom rapidly into remarkable talents and deserved as much support. "We had to broaden how faculty sees what a successful student looks like," he says. The admissions process was adjusted, too; it no longer gave as much preference to students who had been teenage coders.

No single policy changed things. "There's really a virtuous cycle," Fisher says. "If you make the program accommodate people with less experience, then people with less experience come in." Faculty members became more used to seeing how green coders evolve into accomplished ones, and they learned how to teach that type.

Carnegie Mellon's efforts were remarkably successful. Only a few years after these changes, the percentage of women entering its computer-science program boomed, rising to 42 percent from 7 percent; graduation rates for women rose to nearly match those of the men. The school vaulted over the national average. Other schools concerned about the low number of female students began using approaches similar to Fisher's. In 2006, Harvey Mudd College tinkered with its Introduction to Computer Science course, creating a track specifically for novices, and rebranded it as Creative Problem Solving in Science and Engineering Using Computational Approaches — which, the institution's president, Maria Klawe, told me, "is actually a better description of what you're actually doing when you're coding." By 2018, 54 percent of Harvey Mudd's graduates who majored in computer science were women.

A broader cultural shift has accompanied the schools' efforts. In the last few years, women's interest in coding has begun rapidly rising throughout the United States. In 2012, the percentage of female undergraduates who plan to major in computer science began to rise at rates not seen for 35 years, since the decline in the mid-'80s, according to research by Linda Sax, an education professor at U.C.L.A. There has also been a boomlet of groups and organizations training and encouraging underrepresented cohorts to enter the field, like Black Girls Code and Code Newbie. Coding has come to be seen, in purely economic terms, as a bastion of well-paying and engaging work.In an age when Instagram and Snapchat and iPhones are part of the warp and weft of life's daily fabric, potential coders worry less that the job will be isolated, antisocial and distant from reality. "Women who see themselves as creative or artistic are more likely to pursue computer science today than in the past," says Sax, who has pored over decades of demographic data about the students in STEM fields. They're still less likely to go into coding than other fields, but programming is increasingly on their horizon. This shift is abetted by the fact that it's much easier to learn programming without getting a full degree, through free online coding schools, relatively cheaper "boot camps" or even meetup groups for newcomers — opportunities that have emerged only in the last decade.

Changing the culture at schools is one thing. Most female veterans of code I've spoken to say that what is harder is shifting the culture of the industry at large, particularly the reflexive sexism and racism still deeply ingrained in Silicon Valley. Some, like Sue Gardner, sometimes wonder if it's even ethical for her to encourage young women to go into tech. She fears they'll pour out of computer-science programs in increasing numbers, arrive at their first coding job excited and thrive early on, but then gradually get beaten down by industry. "The truth is, we can attract more and different people into the field, but they're just going to hit that wall in midcareer, unless we change how things happen higher up," she says.

On a spring weekend in 2017, more than 700 coders and designers were given 24 hours to dream up and create a new product at a hackathon in New York hosted by TechCrunch, a news site devoted to technology and Silicon Valley. At lunchtime on Sunday, the teams presented their creations to a panel of industry judges, in a blizzard of frantic elevator pitches. There was Instagrammie, a robot system that would automatically recognize the mood of an elderly relative or a person with limited mobility; there was Waste Not, an app to reduce food waste. Most of the contestants were coders who worked at local high-tech firms or computer-science students at nearby universities.

Despite women's historical role in the vanguard of computer programing, some female veterans of code wonder if it's even ethical to encourage young women to go into tech because of the reflexive sexism in the current culture of Silicon Valley.CreditApic/Getty Images Image

Despite women's historical role in the vanguard of computer programing, some female veterans of code wonder if it's even ethical to encourage young women to go into tech because of the reflexive sexism in the current culture of Silicon Valley.CreditApic/Getty Images The winning team, though, was a trio of high school girls from New Jersey: Sowmya Patapati, Akshaya Dinesh and Amulya Balakrishnan. In only 24 hours, they created reVIVE, a virtual-reality app that tests children for signs of A.D.H.D. After the students were handed their winnings onstage — a trophy-size check for $5,000 — they flopped into chairs in a nearby room to recuperate. They had been coding almost nonstop since noon the day before and were bleary with exhaustion.

"Lots of caffeine," Balakrishnan, 17, said, laughing. She wore a blue T-shirt that read "WHO HACK THE WORLD? GIRLS." The girls told me that they had impressed even themselves by how much they accomplished in 24 hours. "Our app really does streamline the process of detecting A.D.H.D.," said Dinesh, who was also 17. "It usually takes six to nine months to diagnose, and thousands of dollars! We could do it digitally in a much faster way!"

They all became interested in coding in high school, each of them with strong encouragement from immigrant parents. Balakrishnan's parents worked in software and medicine; Dinesh's parents came to the United States from India in 2000 and worked in information technology. Patapati immigrated from India as an infant with her young mother, who never went to college, and her father, an information-tech worker who was the first in his rural family to go to college.

Drawn to coding in high school, the young hackers got used to being the lone girl nerds at school, as Dinesh told me.

"I tried so hard to get other girls interested in computer science, and it was like, the interest levels were just so low," she says. "When I walked into my first hackathon, it was the most intimidating thing ever. I looked at a room of 80 kids: Five were girls, and I was probably the youngest person there." But she kept on competing in 25 more hackathons, and her confidence grew. To break the isolation and meet more girls in coding, she attended events by organizations like #BuiltByGirls, which is where, a few days previously, she had met Patapati and Balakrishnan and where they decided to team up. To attend TechCrunch, Patapati, who was 16, and Balakrishnan skipped a junior prom and a friend's birthday party. "Who needs a party when you can go to a hackathon?" Patapati said.

Winning TechCrunch as a group of young women of color brought extra attention, not all of it positive. "I've gotten a lot of comments like: 'Oh, you won the hackathon because you're a girl! You're a diversity pick," Balakrishnan said. After the prize was announced online, she recalled later, "there were quite a few engineers who commented, 'Oh, it was a girl pick; obviously that's why they won.' "

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