

My drive to pursue a degree in politics, philosophy, and economics

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A few weeks ago, I heard that the Supreme Court passing the ' Aadhaar' Bill - a ruling on the Indian state's biometric-based demographic database of every individual resident - like a punch in the gut. In India, where I live, this was the first form of central identification for many: a huge opportunity for the government to streamline public distribution, reach more people, and monitor progress. However, the only dissenting Judge's opinion that Aadhar is a blatant violation of the fundamental right to privacy deeply resonated with me. For the last 5 years, I've been tracking debates around Aadhaar. I've observed economic, political, and social logics in support and in conflict with each other through these debates, and I would like to study this interaction further through a degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics.

The gathering of enormous amounts of data, linked to other personal information, raises questions about the impact of surveillance on societies. Reading Foucault's description of panopticism in " Discipline and Punish", I discovered the way observation alters the behaviour of individuals and increases the efficiency of power. With the mandatory application of Aadhar to Indian society, I began to question to what extent the state should be able to exert its dominance over citizens, or modify their ability to oppose government through protest or advocacy? And would citizens of India lose the most essential feature of a democracy- the knowledge of its government's actions? I have explored these questions further by analysing case studies in a sociology project.

I grew interested in theories of the relationship between states and citizens, free will, and morality, exploring these subjects in Thomas Nagel's " What

Does it All Mean". The issue also has everything to do with the daily workings of our political system. By linking Aadhaar to Public Distribution Schemes, the government has secured the right to deny impoverished citizens of social benefits if they fail to register. However, reading Jean Dreze's "Sense and Solidarity" I reconciled with the corruption prevalent at the grass root level of the Indian Public Distribution System that means, without identification to protect against fraud, middlemen swallow large portions of public funds. While analyzing Max Weber's explanation of bureaucracy in a Sociology class, I began to question how it has affected the implementation of government welfare schemes in Indian society. On the other hand, the glaring flaws in the implementation of this scheme have resulted in massive data breaches.

While interning at a corporate law firm, I began researching how various countries have responded to the advancement of blockchain technology and whether the application of blockchain technology to the Aadhar database would make it more secure. I'm also interested in comparative government and international affairs- influenced by my participation in several national and international Model UNs where I simulated the thought process of the world's most influential policy-makers. After watching the documentary, 'Nero's Guest,' I wrote a research paper on the plight of the Indian farmer and how deeply indifferent the elite was to their struggle; inspired by this, I raised funds for the promotion of rainwater harvesting in drought-stricken areas. While macroeconomic indicators of growth and development might show that India's economy has been growing at an increasing rate, it has

been at the cost of political and civil rights. In “ Development as Freedom”, economist Amartya Sen states that an increase in freedom of individuals must be considered when analysing economic development as a means and an end. I was very interested in the interrelation between economics and political philosophy he highlights through critiques of utilitarianism, libertarianism and Rawlsian justice theories.

I am also currently pursuing an AP Economics course through which I’ve learned build models to diagnose, quantify, predict and solve complex economic problems. As a house and sports captain, I have always tried to adopt a democratic approach while resolving disputes and to promote leadership as a collective activity - small but concrete applications of the things I’ve learned.

I believe I would thrive in this interdisciplinary course, as it allows me to engage with all aspects of any multifaceted topic, truly break it down and make it comprehensible through the combined lens of related subjects. Through the coalescence of these three disciplines, I hope to fight for the protection of political and civil rights of Indians and ameliorate their living conditions.