

CLASS NOTES

(9th February, 2026)

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VOCABULARY

- **Lacklustre**: Lacking enthusiasm or vitality
- **Conundrum** : A difficult or confusing problem
- **Sententious** : Moralising in a pompous or preachy way
- **Turgid** : Overly complex, dense, and hard to read
- **Recondite** : Difficult to understand; obscure
- **Vicissitude** : A change or variation in circumstances, often unpleasant
- **Obstreperous**: Noisy, unruly, and difficult to control
- **Sanguine**: Optimistic or hopeful in outlook
- **Tendentious**: Biased or presenting a one-sided view
- **Obfuscatory**: Intentionally unclear or confusing

ARTICLE FOR READING

Messaging power: on a healthy digital marketplace

The Supreme Court of India, last week, sharply questioned Meta Platforms LLC and its messaging platform WhatsApp, in an appeal rooted in updates it made in 2021 around user data sharing with other Meta services such as Instagram and Facebook. The Court underscored the power that WhatsApp holds in India's messaging ecosystem: it is practically impossible to reach everyone with a smartphone, coordinate groups, and undertake business communications without being on WhatsApp. The app's "network effect" has captured nearly every smartphone in the country. The precise background of the litigation that reached the Court is an appeal against a ₹213.14 crore penalty issued by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for abruptly amending its privacy policy, allowing the firm to share user data across its sister concerns, Facebook and Instagram. Users were prompted at that time to accept the terms or cease using the service. This ultimatum was problematic, and understandably drew pushback from civil society, the government, and the CCI. Nobody argues that WhatsApp must not earn money for a service that has been transformative for communications in India. Owing to its parent's massive scale of operations, WhatsApp has been able to offer messaging, multimedia sharing, telephony — services that were until 2016 prohibitively priced by telecom operators — for free, with only an Internet connection and a phone number as a pre-requisite. WhatsApp's enthusiastic adoption of end-to-end encryption also furthered a societal expectation for secure communications as a norm, in a country where telecommunications has always been subjected to excessive executive-led surveillance. What is equally true is that WhatsApp is so deeply embedded in Indian society that its transition to an advertising model, where it would start making money here, deserves the highest scrutiny. Competition regulators, including in India, have frowned upon ubiquitous platforms that present users with ultimatums that they can scarcely refuse. There are free alternatives to WhatsApp that work just as well — Signal, Telegram and even Arattai from Zoho are serviceable — but they lack what makes the Meta product so valuable: the guarantee that virtually everyone one knows is on it. Allowing users to "opt out" of data sharing is an inappropriate remedy for services at WhatsApp's scale, because the power of the default option at that scale leaves far too many with no real, informed choice in the matter. The Court's thoughts on this matter are correct, but they need to be supported by a digital competition law, a draft of which was released in 2024, but has seen little progress since. As India approaches a billion Internet users, that law is needed to protect and foster a healthy digital marketplace.

ARTICLE FOR SKIMMING

India-U.S. trade deal is a blow to India's strategic autonomy

The “framework for an Interim Agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade”, announced through the U.S.-India joint statement issued on February 6, raises serious concerns regarding India's economic and geopolitical future. An unequal and unfair bilateral trade deal is being brazenly imposed on India by the Trump administration. By agreeing to such terms, the government is surrendering India's national interest. The very premise of the Interim Agreement, defined as “a common commitment to reciprocal and balanced trade based on mutual interests and concrete outcomes”, works against India's economic interests. The current nominal GDP of the U.S. is seven times larger than India's GDP and its per capita income is over 30 times higher than that of India. Why has the Indian government made commitments towards “reciprocal and balanced trade” with a much larger and richer economy? As per the text of the agreement, India has agreed to zero or reduced tariffs for “all U.S. industrial goods and a wide range of U.S. food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products”. India has also agreed to eliminate non-tariff barriers (NTB) on U.S. exports of ICT goods, medical devices, food and agricultural products, etc. India's intention to purchase \$500 billion worth of U.S. energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next five years has also been built into the text of the framework agreement. Such massive trade concessions to the U.S. could completely transform the structure of India's foreign trade. The U.S. has been the largest market for Indian goods exports since long, with Indian exports to the U.S. crossing \$86 billion in 2024-25, accounting for over 19% of India's total exports of \$437 billion. While India's trade deficit expanded to \$283 billion in 2024-25, it had a trade surplus of over \$40 billion with the U.S. In 2025-26 (April-December), India's goods trade surplus vis-a-vis the U.S. stood at \$26 billion, with imports from the U.S. crossing \$ 39 billion. It is noteworthy that while India's intention to purchase \$500 billion worth of U.S. goods in the next five years is mentioned in the text of the interim agreement, there is no reciprocal commitment to increase U.S. imports from India to a similar level. This thoroughly exposes the government's exaggerated claims of enhanced potential for Indian exports following the reduction of the U.S. reciprocal tariff rate to 18%. Such an unfair bilateral trade agreement will eliminate India's present trade surplus vis-a-vis the U.S. and convert it into a deficit in the next five years, with a surge of American imports into India. The losses of domestic market shares by Indian industrial producers and farmers will far exceed the gains made by Indian exporters, if any.

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Write an essay of 300 words: Merits and Demerits of Cashless Economy.

A cashless economy refers to a system where financial transactions are carried out digitally through debit cards, credit cards, mobile wallets, and online banking rather than physical cash. With rapid technological advancement and the spread of smartphones, many countries, including India, are gradually moving toward a cashless mode of transactions. While this shift offers several advantages, it also presents certain challenges. One of the major merits of a cashless economy is transparency. Digital transactions create an electronic record, which helps reduce corruption, black money, and tax evasion. It also promotes financial inclusion by bringing more people into the formal banking system. Convenience is another significant benefit. Cashless payments are quick, easy, and eliminate the need to carry physical money or worry about exact change. Moreover, digital payments can boost economic efficiency by reducing the cost of printing, storing, and transporting currency. For governments, a cashless system improves monitoring of financial flows and strengthens tax collection.

However, a cashless economy also has notable demerits. The most serious concern is cybersecurity. Digital transactions are vulnerable to hacking, data theft, and online fraud, which can lead to financial losses. Another drawback is digital inequality. A large section of the population, especially in rural areas, lacks access to smartphones, stable internet, or digital literacy, making it difficult for them to participate fully in a cashless system. Technical failures such as server issues, power cuts, or network problems can also disrupt transactions and cause inconvenience. Additionally, excessive reliance on digital payments may compromise individual privacy due to constant tracking of financial activities. In conclusion, a cashless economy offers efficiency, transparency, and convenience, but it is not without risks. For a successful transition, governments must focus on strengthening digital infrastructure, ensuring cybersecurity, and improving digital literacy so that the benefits of a cashless economy are accessible to all sections of society.

READING COMPREHENSION

Polythene bags have become an inseparable part of modern consumer life, yet their convenience comes at a severe environmental cost. These bags are non-biodegradable and can persist in the environment for hundreds of years. Their widespread use has led to alarming levels of land, water, and air pollution, posing a serious threat to ecosystems and human health. One of the most visible impacts of polythene bags is on drainage systems and water bodies. Discarded bags clog drains, leading to urban flooding during monsoons. In rivers and oceans, they are mistaken for food by animals and marine life, often resulting in suffocation or death. India alone generates thousands of tonnes of plastic waste daily, much of which remains uncollected or improperly disposed of. Polythene bags also contribute to soil degradation. When buried, they reduce soil fertility by blocking air and water circulation. Moreover, when burnt — a common disposal method — they release toxic fumes such as dioxins and furans, which can cause respiratory diseases and even cancer. Thus, polythene pollution is not merely an environmental issue but a public health concern. Banning polythene bags is therefore essential. Several Indian states have already imposed partial bans, but weak enforcement and lack of awareness have limited their success. A complete ban, supported by strict penalties, promotion of affordable alternatives like cloth or jute bags, and public education campaigns, is necessary. Consumers, manufacturers, and governments must work together to shift towards sustainable habits. In conclusion, banning polythene bags is not an option but a necessity. It is a crucial step towards protecting the environment, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring a healthier future for coming generations.

Perfection Vocab

- **Transplantation** – Transfer of an organ or tissue from one body to another
- **Brainstem** – Part of the brain controlling vital functions
- **Irreversibly** – In a way that cannot be undone
- **Legal sanction** – Official legal approval
- **Immersed** – Fully absorbed
- **Nuance** – A subtle difference or detail
- **Acoustics** – Sound quality of a space
- **Aesthetics** – Visual appeal
- **Multidisciplinary** – Involving multiple fields of study
- **Institutional support** – Organisational backing
- **Ecosystem** – Interconnected supporting environment
- **Accountability** – Responsibility for actions
- **Vexatious** – Annoying or problematic
- **Punitive action** – Disciplinary punishment
- **Neurodivergence** – Natural variation in cognitive functioning
- **Cognitive** – Related to thinking and understanding
- **Nuanced** – Showing subtle understanding
- **Liquidity** – Availability of money

- **Open Market Operations (OMO)** – RBI buying/selling government securities
- **Policy transmission** – How policy effects reach the economy
- **Depreciation** – Fall in value of a currency
- **Liquidity** – नकदी उपलब्धता
- **Open Market Operations (OMO)** – RBI द्वारा बॉन्ड की खरीद-बिक्री
- **Inject** – धन प्रवाहित करना
- **Withdraw** – धन निकालना
- **Policy transmission** – नीति का असर
- **Depreciation** – मुद्रा का मूल्य गिरना

Extra Vocab from Editorial

Dullness / Lack of Originality

- **Dull** – lacking interest
- **Drab** – dull in appearance
- **Lacklustre** – lacking energy
- **Dreary** – depressingly dull
- **Boring** – not interesting
- **Mundane** – ordinary
- **Humdrum** – monotonous
- **Monotonous** – repetitive
- **Tedious** – tiresome
- **Prosaic** – unimaginative
- **Pedestrian** – ordinary
- **Unoriginal** – lacking novelty
- **Not innovative** – lacking creativity
- **Bland** – lacking strong features
- **Insipid** – dull in taste or character
- **Tepid** – showing little enthusiasm
- **Lukewarm** – mildly interested

- **Mild** – lacking intensity
 - **Clichéd** – overused expression
 - **Platitudinous** – full of trite remarks
 - **Trite** – overfamiliar
 - **Banal** – boringly common
 - **Hackneyed** – excessively repeated
-

Problems / Complexity

- **Riddle** – puzzling question
 - **Imbroglia** – complicated situation
 - **Enigma** – mystery
 - **Quagmire** – difficult entanglement
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Energy / Enthusiasm

- **Vibrant** – full of energy
 - **Enthusiastic** – showing eagerness
 - **Ardent** – passionately devoted
 - **Avid** – keenly interested
 - **Fervent** – intensely enthusiastic
 - **Lively** – energetic
 - **Energetic** – full of energy
 - **Animated** – lively in action
-

Complexity / Difficulty in Understanding

- **Complex** – having many parts
 - **Complicated** – difficult to understand
 - **Obfuscated** – deliberately unclear
 - **Enigmatic** – mysterious
 - **Byzantine** – overly complex
 - **Arcane** – understood by few
 - **Recondite** – obscure
 - **Convolutd** – extremely complex
 - **Esoteric** – meant for specialists
 - **Labyrinthine** – maze-like
 - **Cryptic** – hidden meaning
 - **Abstruse** – hard to comprehend
 - **Intricate** – detailed and complex
 - **Knotty** – complicated
-

Unclear / Ambiguous

- **Ambiguous** – having multiple meanings
- **Vague** – unclear
- **Unclear** – not easily understood
- **Equivocal** – deliberately ambiguous
- **Obscure** – not clear

- **Opaque** – difficult to understand
 - **Hazy** – unclear
 - **Cloudy** – confused
 - **Blurry** – indistinct
 - **Misty** – unclear
 - **Frosty** – cold or unclear
 - **Fuzzy** – indistinct
 - **Murky** – dark or unclear
 - **Muddy** – confused
 - **Nebulous** – vague
-

Clarity

- **Pellucid** – crystal clear
 - **Limpid** – perfectly clear
 - **Conspicuous** – easily noticeable
 - **Perspicuous** – clearly expressed
-

Confusion / Shock

- **Maze-like** – confusing
- **Puzzling** – confusing
- **Riddle-like** – mysterious
- **Gobsmacking** – astonishing

- **Befuddling** – confusing
 - **Muddling** – causing confusion
 - **Bewildering** – extremely confusing
 - **Bamboozling** – deceptive confusion
 - **Baffling** – puzzling
 - **Perplexing** – confusing
 - **Flummoxing** – bewildering
 - **Flabbergasting** – shocking
 - **Staggering** – astonishing
 - **Astonishing** – very surprising
 - **Astounding** – extremely surprising
 - **Surprising** – unexpected
-

Complexity of Movement / Structure

- **Tangled** – intertwined
 - **Entangled** – caught together
 - **Serpentine** – winding
 - **Circuitous** – indirect
 - **Tortuous** – twisted
 - **Winding** – curved
 - **Meandering** – wandering
-

Hidden / Secret

- **Concealed** – hidden
- **Covert** – secret
- **Hidden** – not visible
- **Cloaked** – covered
- **Latent** – hidden but present
- **Shrouded** – covered or hidden
- **Masked** – concealed
- **Veiled** – partly hidden
- **Clandestine** – secret
- **Surreptitious** – done secretly
- **Sneaky** – secretly dishonest
- **Insidious** – subtly harmful
- **Stealthy** – quietly hidden
- **Furtive** – secretive
- **Disguised** – made unrecognisable
- **Camouflaged** – hidden by blending

Change / Movement

- **Transition** – process of change
- **Mutation** – transformation

Noise / Chaos

- **Clamorous** – loudly noisy
 - **Boisterous** – rowdy
 - **Vociferous** – loudly expressive
 - **Uproarious** – extremely noisy
 - **Raucous** – harshly loud
 - **Riotous** – wildly noisy
 - **Brouhaha** – noisy confusion
 - **Hullabaloo** – loud disturbance
 - **Tumult** – violent commotion
 - **Ruckus** – disturbance
 - **Clamour** – loud demand
 - **Commotion** – noisy disturbance
 - **Bedlam** – chaos
 - **Mayhem** – violent disorder
-

Disaster / Disorder

- **Disaster** – great misfortune
- **Apocalypse** – total destruction
- **Catastrophic** – extremely damaging
- **Cataclysmic** – violently destructive
- **Turbulence** – instability

- **Turmoil** – chaos
 - **Upheaval** – major disturbance
 - **Uproar** – noisy disorder
 - **Chaos** – complete disorder
 - **Confusion** – lack of clarity
 - **Disorder** – lack of order
 - **Anarchy** – absence of authority
 - **Disarray** – state of disorder
 - **Pandemonium** – wild chaos
-

Bias / Objectivity

- **Skewed** – distorted
 - **Prejudiced** – biased
 - **Disinterested** – impartial
 - **Dispassionate** – unemotional
-

Fabrication / Distortion

- **Concoct** – invent falsely
 - **Fabricate** – create falsely
 - **Spin a story** – manipulate facts
 - **Obfuscate** – deliberately confuse
-

Miscellaneous Idioms

- **Full of beans** – energetic

- **Fire in the belly** – strong motivation
- **In high spirits** – very cheerful
- **Alive and kicking** – active and energetic
- **Gordian knot** – extremely difficult problem
- **At sea** – confused
- **In a pickle** – in trouble
- **In hot water** – facing trouble
- **In deep water** – serious difficulty
- **Open Pandora's box** – start serious trouble
- **Open a can of worms** – create complications
- **In the soup** – in trouble
- **Ebb and flow** – rise and fall
- **Ups and downs** – alternating success and failure
- **Tilt the scales** – influence outcome

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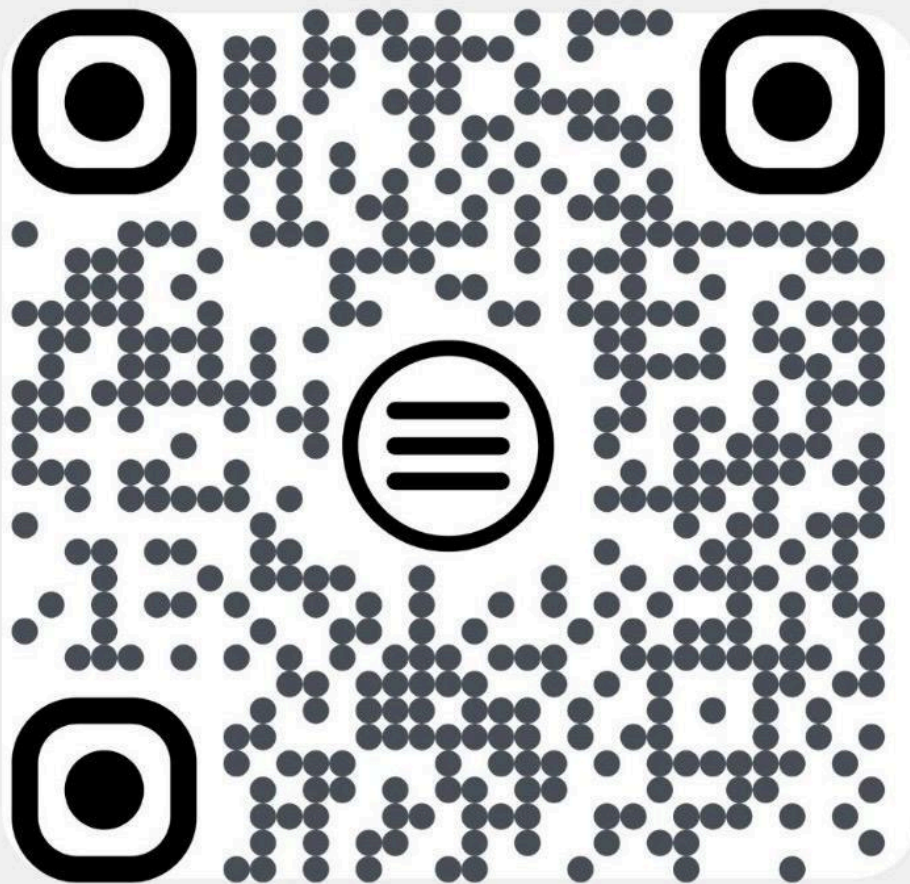
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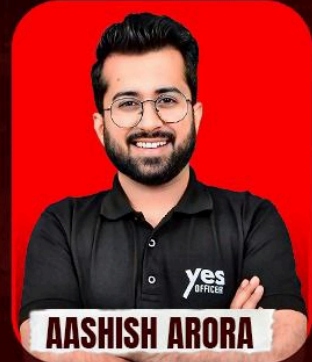
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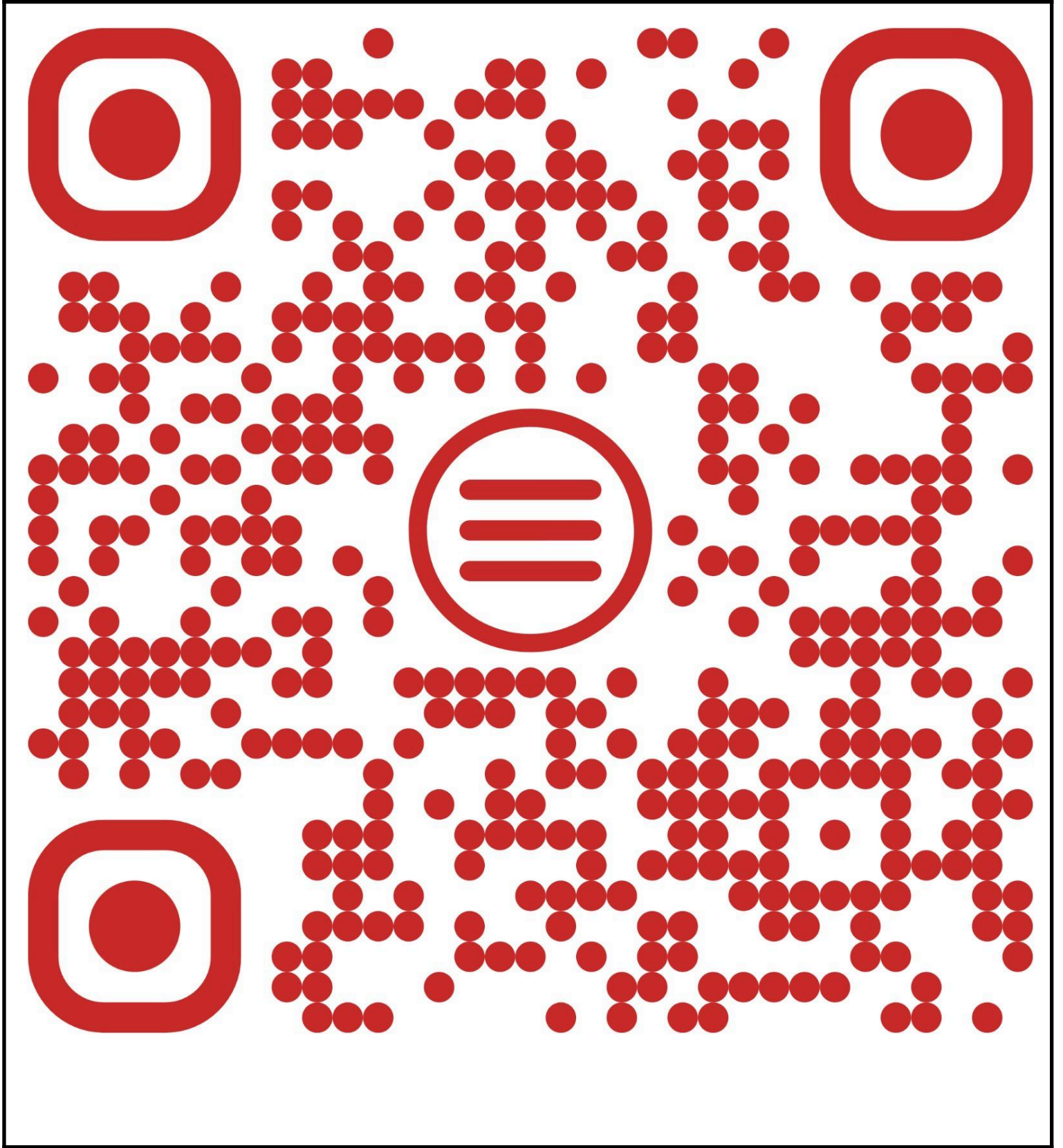
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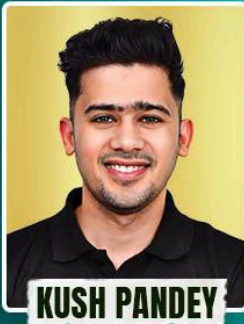
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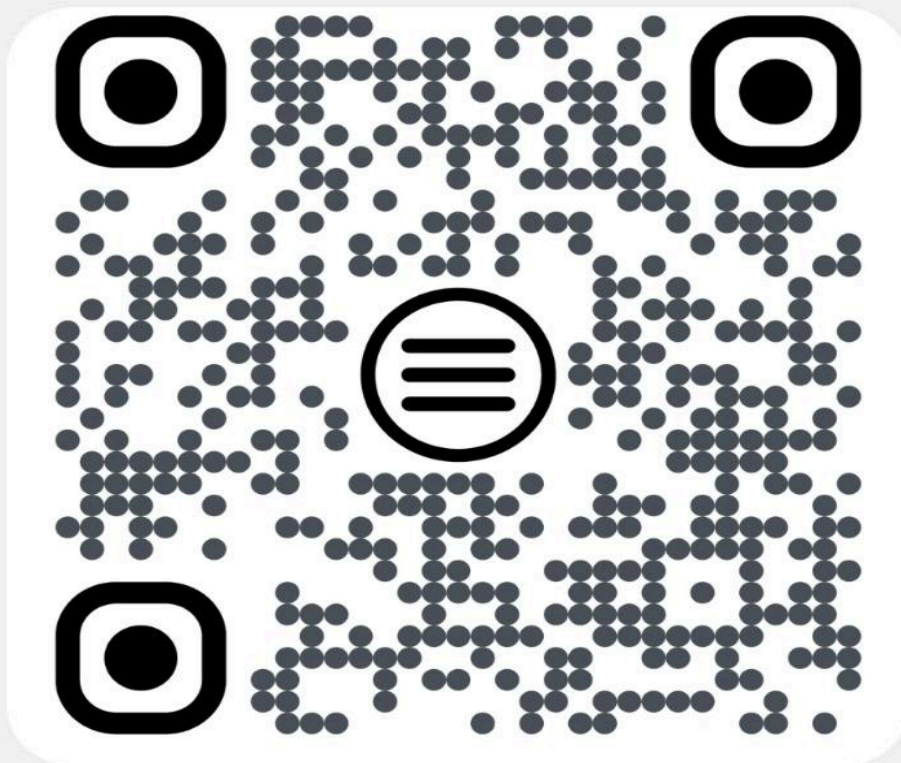
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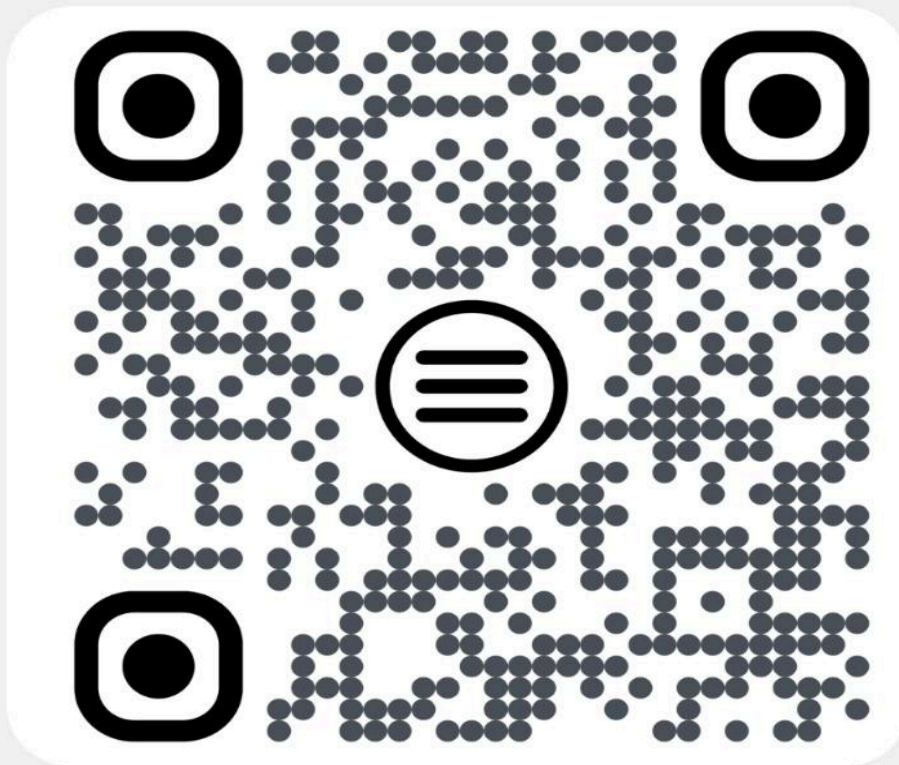


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