

# **Ethical Subjectivity of the Pirates in India**

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## **Abstract**

In the mainstream literature pirates are devoid of a moral consciousness. On one hand pirates are like ‘parasites’ that do not add any new value in the process of knowledge production. On the other hand pirates act out as ‘social bandits’ contesting existing system of accumulation of capital. (Dawdy and Bonny, 2012). This essay tries to have a more critical understanding of what it means for pirates to have ethics based on their position in a particular economic and social situation.

The essay uses Partha Chatterjee’s concept of ‘civic society’ and ‘political society’ to illustrate the moral and political implications of inhibiting a pirate economy in India today (Chatterjee, 2004). Partha Chatterjee’s division demonstrates the dominant binary through which the pirate economy in India is contextualized. Civil society comprising of ‘corporate class’ and urban middle class criminalizes piracy through the spectrum of Intellectual property (IP) laws. The absence of legitimization on the side of the pirates in India puts them in a political society where they use informal and illegal arrangements to negotiate with the state. ‘Normative’ aspirations and rights traditionally mark the ‘bourgeoisie’ sphere of civil society. Political society is about groups of population including pirates and their use of electoral democracy to get strategic gains for basic survival.

Survival concerns in a political society does not let it have ethics beyond biological life. This essay argues otherwise. Far from a political society of pirates operating in a moral vacuum in India, they have a complex subjectivity. Operating in a political society does not mean that the pirates do not have normative aspirations. The pirates in the video gaming markets in Delhi grapple with a Hindu moral world, and the IP world. Interestingly both these ideals are part of the civil society in India. I argue by borrowing civil society morals while operating in a political society in India, pirates in Delhi show that Hinduism and neoliberalism are part of a process of extending individual self-interests to their everyday business pursuits. It is more than a process of mere colonization of political society in India by civil society morals. The pirates in Delhi use civil society morals to build an ethical subjectivity even though in an aspirational plane to better and enrich their economic experiences in the markets in Delhi.

**Keywords:** Pirate Economy, Ethics, Civil Society, Political Society, Rational Market Actors

## **References**

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