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'Nothing is Left'

SINCE THE OCT 7 HAMAS ATTACK ON ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S ensuing military onslaught on Gaza, discussion and debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been shut down like never before. With the war playing out on social media (also like never before), the discourse has polarised and flattened. Mutually exclusive narratives breed distrust and denials. And in incident after incident, those who speak out about the brutalities of the war, about starvation in Gaza, about the horrors of Hamas' Oct 7 attack, about Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories—face backlash, censure or worse from those who disagree with them.

The heavy-handed responses to campus protests in the U S are only the latest example. On April 17, students at Columbia University in the City of New York set up an encampment outside Butler Library to demonstrate against Israel's operation in Gaza. The following day Minouche Shafik, the university's president—fresh from testifying at a congressional hearing on antisemitism—sent in the police. Shafik said that the protest had created a “harassing and intimidating environment” for other students and accused the protesters of trespassing and refusing to leave.

The way the university administrators and police reacted is a manifestation of the vanishing space for discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mirrored online.

In Israel, academia has become fraught terrain. 95 students at more than 33 Israeli academic institutions have been subjected to disciplinary procedures over social media posts (including simply quoting verses from the Quran and prayers for peace). They are also representing some of the 150 Palestinian citizens facing criminal indictments, in cases brought by the state under Israel's 2016 Counterterrorism Law, over social media posts.

University lecturers, Jewish and Palestinian alike, in Israel have also been in the firing line.

If debate dies, what is left but the spreading of denials? What is left but unchallenged justifications for extreme violence?

Meanwhile, on May 15, Palestinians across the world observed the anniversary of the Nakba, “catastrophe” in Arabic, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people were expelled or fled during the creation of the state of Israel during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Seventy-six years later Palestinians are again being displaced enmasse as the Israeli offensive continues in Rafah with renewed fighting in the north against Hamas

militants in areas where the fundamentalist militias had been declared by IDF “dismantled” only a few weeks ago. It’s not that easy to defeat an insurgency when it gets support from masses. They have failed to destroy the Hamas network. The mighty America tasted the bitter fruit in Vietnam. Israelis despite their superior fire power are now facing the same dilemma. Some 800,000 Gazans have reportedly evacuated Rafah, the last refuge for the majority of the Strip’s popula-

tion, many having been previously displaced from other areas earlier in the war. Even the 1948 Nakba survivors have no language to describe the scale of devastation that is going on at the moment.

“Our homes have gone, our children have gone, our property has gone, our gold has gone, our incomes have gone—nothing is left. What is left for us to cry over?” That is how Palestinians are narrating their predicament today.

The Israeli-Palestine war has once

again exposed the hypocrisy of America as they exhibit it continually in the Russia-Ukraine war. Trucks carrying badly needed aid for the Gaza strip rolled across a newly built U S pier for the first time and the media projected it as a great humanitarian face of America but at the same time they sidetracked the contentious issue of how the Pentagon was delivering new weapons to energise the Israeli war machine. □□□

19-08-2024

COMMENT

Hinton and Mao’s China

WILLIAM H HINTON, WHO ILLUMINATED the gigantic strides of Socialist China secured under Chairman Mao, died 20 years ago on May 15th, 2004, at a nursing home in Concord, Mass. He was 85.

William Hinton was an encyclopaedia of knowledge on the revolutionary transformation of Chinese agriculture. With utmost resilience, in the face of systematic vilification of the Chinese revolution by the western media and by the present rulers of China themselves, Hinton relentlessly defied reactionaries to give credibility to all the practices of China under Mao.

It was reading Edgar Snow’s *Red Star* over China in 1942 that a transformation took place within him from a pacifist to a Marxist.

He returned to China in 1945 and again in 1947, the last time as a tractor technician with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. He managed to stay on in Communist-held north China teaching English, and seized the opportunity to join as an observer of a land reform work-team sent to Long Bow village in Shanxi province. The following six months in Long Bow was the turning point in his life. He took

a thousand pages of notes, and participated “directly in the revolutionary transformation of China, the greatest social upheaval of all time, at least in terms of numbers. It has been an experience to savour and renew, again and again.

Upon his return to the US in 1953, his notes and his passport were seized and he was hauled up before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security. This did not prevent him from travelling incessantly across the US to narrate people the truth about the Chinese Revolution. That year alone, at the height of McCarthyism, he delivered 300 such talks.

After recovering his notes in 1958 through a court suit, he wrote *Fanshen*, on how land reform was carried out at Long Bow.

Hinton was highly disturbed by the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, which he was a first hand witness to, driving through the suburbs of Beijing to monitor the advance of the army. His daughter by his first marriage, Carmelita Hinton, born and educated in China, later co-produced ‘The Gate of Heavenly Peace’ (1996)—a challenging film about the massacre.

In 1995 in an interview he most

analytically or logically dissected every element of Mao’s political career. Hinton underlined why the Cultural Revolution as a whole was a great creative departure in history and not a plot, not a purge, but a mass mobilisation whereby people were inspired to come to the party and supervise their cadres and form new popular committees to exercise control at the grassroots and higher levels.

During the final years of his life, he felt it was his duty to uphold the Chinese revolution combating the attacks and distortions waged against it. In writings and lectures given around the world, he upheld Mao’s revolutionary approach to land reform and collectivisation. He played a major role in countering the West’s ideological offensive against communism.

Head on he battled the slanders directed at the Great Leap Forward and Mao’s agricultural policies, and relentlessly refuted vilification of the Cultural Revolution.

In *Shenfan* (1983) Hinton denotes how the Cultural Revolution quickly degenerated into factionalism and unprincipled contests for power at national, provincial, and local levels. Hinton asserts in *Shenfan* that Mao was responsible for these leftist excesses because he refused to initiate mass campaigns to erase them and was making use of China’s Confucian and feudal culture to elevate a personality cult. □□□

[Contributed by Harsh Thakor]

NOTE

NewsClick Editor on Bail

A J writes:

THE SUPREME COURT SAYS the arrest of NewsClick website's founder and Editor Prabir Purkayastha last year under a stringent antiterrorism law was illegal and has ordered his release on bail.

Purkayastha was arrested in October, nearly two months after a New York Times report alleged his English-language news website had been financially supported by a network pushing Chinese propaganda.

The 75-year-old journalist was charged with receiving foreign money and criminal conspiracy, and arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), a stringent antiterrorism law which makes it virtually impossible to get bail.

The Supreme Court ruled that Purkayastha's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, India's financial crimes agency, was illegal since it failed to communicate the grounds for detention in writing to him.

Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta declared his arrest "invalid in the eyes of law" and said he should be released, subject to the furnishing of bail bonds. The top court said its ruling on Purkayastha's confinement was not a statement on the merits of the ongoing case against him.

"A good day for independent media!" said NewsClick in a post on X, welcoming Purkayastha's release.

NewsClick, with an independent

and critical focus on India's "progressive movements", was founded in 2009 by Purkayastha, who was previously arrested in 1975 during a state of emergency imposed by the then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Last year, The New York Times reported that NewsClick was financed by the United States-based millionaire Neville Roy Singham. The report said the website "sprinkled its coverage with Chinese government talking points"—claims Singham and NewsClick rejected.

At the time, NewsClick said it does not publish news or information at the behest of any Chinese entity or authority, and does not take directions from Singham on its content. In 2021, ED officials first raided the NewsClick office and Purkayastha's residence over allegations of money laundering and foreign funding. During the time of the raid, the news website had extensively reported on the massive antigovernment protests by Indian farmers.

But no arrests were made during that raid, with the authorities saying their investigation against the media outlet will continue.

In October last year, the ED again raided the NewsClick office and the residences of nearly 80 journalists and other individuals associated with the New Delhi-based organisation. Computers and mobile

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phones of its employees and independent writers who wrote for it were seized.

Last year, Indian tax authorities also raided the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai, shortly after the British broadcaster released a documentary that was critical of Modi. Dozens of Indian journalists critical of the Hindu nationalist government have complained of increased harassment, including on social media—where the governing BJP party has a powerful presence.

India fell to 159th rank in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, an annual ranking by non-profit Reporters Without Borders, a marginal improvement from 161 last year. □□□

POLITICAL MONOTHEISM

The Making of a Majoritarian State

Neshat Quaiser

DEEPLY DISTURBING SUSPENSION of 146 MPs is just a surface manifestation which is otherwise reflection of a

much deeper malady and requires a dispassionate discourse. Immediate cause may be to divert attention from the real or perceived near demo-

lition of the myth of a seemingly invincible supremacist present ruling dispensation after the intrusion of the two youths even inside the Indian Parliament, unlike the 2001 Parliament attack.

The conditions of the production of what is happening around relate to the Political Monotheism and the

emergence of a designed politico-religiously propelled majoritarian state, unsure though from within, supported by the related social forces beneath the surface.

The ideology of the political monotheism and the newly emerging state, which is never neutral guided by the Constitutional ethos despite its claim to be so, acquire ontological centrality to explain the present India society and polity.

The idea of the political monotheism was first conceptualised during the Tahrir Square (in a discussion in 2011 on a private TV Channel IBN7) movement to outline the shift taking place within the Islamist thinking that this writer characterised as being based on the ideology of political monotheism.

The concept of the political monotheism is equally applicable to the ideology of Hindutva the mirror image of Islamism. Political monotheism signifies epistemological absolutism of an exclusivist politico-religious-theological hegemony and domination to establish a religiously majoritarian unitary state. Monovocality constitutes its hegemonic foundational mechanism as opposed to dialogical processes. In order to shift the focus from the extremely undesirable everyday social existence of the majority of Shudra-Dalit disenfranchised population and the

vulnerable high caste middle classes in a state of unstable and egregious socio-economic material conditions, Hindutva political monotheism, with its myriad manifestation, is propelled through brazenly masculine populist authoritarianism to legitimise and normalise the Hindutva

ideological apparatuses, in order to instill in them a sense of belongingness to an otherwise anti-theological unitary Hindu state. And to appeal the popular imagination of the majority and of the religiously dispersed Hindu population and to produce homogeneousness through explicit or implicit coercion in them, the project of Hindutva political monotheism employs the ideology of scape-goatism and emerges as the sole triumphal avenger of the injustices and oppression perpetrated on 'Hindus' by the foreign 'invaders' in the past which is responsible for the present plights of the 'Hindus' and the destruction of the Hindu Golden Past.

A Hindutva propelled politically monotheistic majoritarian state, thus, by definition has the political project to 'govern' people and institutions for its own sustenance, continuation and survival. However, this all-powerful, seemingly invincible state is never sure of the logic of its own existence, as a result, it continuously must engage in such demonstrable acts—such as lynching of Muslims and enacting laws to suppress the voices of opposition—whereby it is seen as the 'sole avenger' not only to make the governed fall in line, but also assure itself of the legitimacy of the logic of its existence. Thus, the ideology of political monotheism and politically monotheistic state ultimately "petrify the true meanings of the subjugated free through the mechanism of choreographic occultation" in order to produce a petrified post-colonial Hindutva subject.

Thus 'governing', controlling and gagging the media in all forms is also linked directly with the notion of governance of a politically monotheistic state, which is never neutral guided by the Constitutional ethos despite its claim to be so. Thus, controlling of media is all about the question of establishing legitimacy of what is not legitimate, as the state is not viewed as the redeemer of its people. And much of the corporatised media today, in one or another way, is aligned with the ruling establishment and the ideologies that support it. However, there are media which would not like to fall in line. So, the state in fact thoroughly detests the dissenting, the questioning media.

Similarly, the politically monotheistic state intervention in the constitution of law and justice and "judicial choreographic occultation resulting in petrification of true meanings of life, existence and freedom" is palpable.

In such a situation, in order to reclaim the seriously backsliding constitutional and civil democratic ethos robbing people of their right to be true citizens, a broadest possible non-dogmatic democratic alliance based on counter-institutive praxis to counter the communal-feudal-capitalist technologies of domination alone is the only way out. This is necessary to assert that democracy cannot be reduced to electoral politics alone, so that creatively evolving constitutional and civil democracy could be reclaimed and politically monotheistic state's technologies of domination could be answered. □□□ [The narrator has taught in the Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, Central University, Delhi. As told to Amit Sengupta]

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KASHMIR DIARY

A Kashmiri Muslim Boy's Journey

Joydip Ghosal

THE DIARY OF GUL MOHAMMAD, A Kashmiri Muslim boy's journey from Kashmir to Kerala (Oxford University Press) by Humra Quraishi deftly chronicles the trials and tribulations of a Kashmiri boy who has been transported from his abode in downtown Srinagar to a Madrasa in New Delhi. His parents took the decision in the hope that he would be able to study unhindered in a hazard-free atmosphere. This book is written in a diary format and it brings to the fore the predicament a 14-year-old Muslim boy faces in a violence-ridden society which is sharply polarised along religious lines. In order to protect the identity of the characters their names, surnames have been changed.

Humra Quraishi is a Delhi-based columnist and journalist. She has co-authored many books with Khushwant Singh including *The Good, the Bad and the Ridiculous: Profiles and Absolute Khushwant Kashmir: the untold story and Kashmir: the unending tragedy* are my personal favourites. Throughout her writings her intense love and compassion for suffering humanities residing in Kashmir are clearly evident. All her books are testimony to her in-depth research and extensive leg works. For the last over three decades she had been visiting orphanages and madrasas in towns and cities she travelled to. She interacted with the madrasa children, maulvis. But hardly she came across their parents and grandparents. Many of these children were orphans. Some of them were semi-orphan that meant one of their parents was dead. Some of the children's parents were

alive but the connection got severed. Those parents were unable to visit their wards because of financial constraints. The author told unequivocally that a large number of children had been sent to madrasas so that they could get two square meals every day. Their cravings for a 'safe roof' over their head also met. These visits to the madrasas got her closer to the realities in which the children were surviving in. She observed that majority of madrasas did not have radio set or television. They did not have access to modern-day gadgets. Their forlorn look, innocence left an imprint upon author's mind. Most of the children she came across were subdued. Their body languages betrayed anxiety and restlessness. Most of the madrasas that she visited in and around Mewat, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh it was just the sheer basics to the daily survival that stood out. In the introduction part of the book the author Humra Quraishi pointed out that madrasa children are the most vulnerable in the communally surcharged climate of the country. Even in Delhi they were not spared. She cited some incidents to demonstrate the horrific issue. In 2018, an eight-year-old boy Md Azeem was lynched by religious fanatics. That incident happened in South Delhi's Begampur locality. In that same locality in 2017 a small group of Madrasa students were roughed up and forced to chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jay'. In 2019, the whole country was shaken when three madrasa boys were seriously wounded in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao. A group of men brutally thrashed the boys.

The author categorically points

out that madrasa children are most vulnerable in today's India where communalism was systematically unleashed on 'Muslim looking children' attired in Kurta-pyjama with their skull caps on. When the author visited Lucknow-situated Nadwa, she felt she had been transported to a Gandhian ashram. When she asked the maulanas whether they did get any aid from Muslim countries they rubbished the claims. Milli Gazette's editor, Zafarul Islam Khan told her that when LK Advani used to say that madrasas were place of terrorist activities, they not only strongly countered that but even sent a team of reporters to the Indo-Nepal border situated madrasas to ascertain the situation for themselves. But they found nothing. He himself studied in madrasa where 60 percent is the teaching of religious subjects. Late political and social commentator Asghar Ali Engineer told her categorically that these were nothing but propaganda. Even non-Muslims study in madrasas.

In a highly militarised zone like Kashmir people are living under extreme agony despite the boastful claims and tom-tomming by ruling dispensation. Caught between two warring sides the protagonist in this booklet is a miserable life. His brother had been severely wounded. His one eye had been damaged and as a result he had lost his vision. They faced all sorts of abuses and torture. Many were picked up for interrogation but they never returned. The author put the characters against the backdrop of trigger-happy personnel and gun toting insurgents. Though he had been shifted from valley his Kashmiri identity did not leave him in solace. It is the prevailing ground realities in Kashmir valley. Gul's love for his Kashmir is deep and intense and the traumatic events and unspeakable atrocities

rendered him numb and helpless. He was agitated and because of that he was mentally in shambles. While he was shifted to a Madrasa in New Delhi he had to strut through many twists and turns. He captured that painful moments in his diary. But in the madrasa in Delhi he felt himself like an outsider who was unable to assimilate into the atmosphere.

Later when he was transported to Muzaffarnagar he faced more bleak prospect. There the maulvi was brutally roughed up. One of his friends lamented that never before Muslims

faced such hate-filled atmosphere. In order to conceal his identity they decided to call him as Pahari. The maulvi was assassinated by frenzied mobs. Situation looked grim like the partition years. Even he did not get employment in a roadside eatery because of his identity. His life went through trials and tribulations. Later he found refuge in Calicut. But at the end of the book he received the shocking news that family which gave him shelter in Uttar Pradesh became the prey to blood-thirsty politics of hate-driven dispensation.

Throughout the book the author's

empathy for the Kashmiri people is clearly evident. She does not mince words in attacking the majoritarian mind-set that launches attacks on 'others'. Though there are several fictional characters-factors are interwebbed-webbed in this account this book stands out for its effort at unravelling the different tangle and knot in a Kashmiri Muslim boy's life. Its smooth flow of narration also helps the reader to navigate without any hindrance. This book will be etched as a realistic portrayal of a boy's life who was shoved to the brink by mainland inhabitants. □□

ANTHROPOLOGY AND CULTURE

The Sam Pitroda Controversy

Abhijit Guha

THE RECENT CONTROVERSY, which was sparked off by a video interview of Sam Pitroda, the overseas chairman of the Congress party by The Statesman should have attracted the attention of the anthropologists in India and other countries. The anthropological interest stemmed from the fact that the anthropologists have been studying human population differences, which they called 'variation' since more than last one hundred and fifty years. Anthropologists have been struggling over the physical and cultural differences of humans at the group level and they have tried to classify human groups on the basis of various physical and biological characteristics. In the early days of anthropology the practitioners classified the populations of the world into various 'Races' and cautioned from the very beginning that all human beings originated from a single stock and the physical differences among them arose mainly due to geographical and environmental factors. Taking their lead from the evolutionary theory of the English

biologist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Swedish taxonomist Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), anthropologists had recognised human biological differences and the need to classify human groups as non-watertight compartments being products of a long and gradual evolutionary process named natural selection.

It was the anthropologists who scientifically challenged the Biblical origin of human beings with fossil and other kinds of evidences. According to the anthropologists, biological variation within and between human groups is a natural law and has to be recognised as a basic fact, which deserved scientific enquiry. Along with this, the anthropologists pointed out that the word 'Race' is a biological concept and should not be confused with the term 'racism'. Now-a-days the anthropologists no more use the term 'Race'; they now use the term 'population'. Same species of animals also have distinct biological varieties, as one finds among elephants or tigers but people do not get emotionally charged when they refer to 'white tigers' or 'African elephants'!

Viewed from the above angle, Sam Pitroda's statement as revealed in the press just echoed a natural fact, which had been the grist to the mill of the anthropologists in India—the country being the 'ethnological paradise' according to a famous British anthropologist—Sir Arthur Keith. Let me reiterate Pitroda's statement: 'We could hold a country together as diverse as India, where people on the east look like Chinese, people on the West look like Arab, people on the North look like white and maybe people on the South look like Africans... doesn't matter. We are all brothers and sisters' (*The Statesman*, 9 May 2024, p.1). The last sentence is significant even from a biological standpoint. Brothers and sisters are born from the same parents, so are the all Indians, although looking different but originated from the same stock. Pure anthropology! This writer being an anthropologist could not find any 'racist' element in this statement.

There is another element of truth in Pitroda's statement. Although, he highlighted the physical variation among Indians in the east, west, north and south he did not state or even imply that people of one region of India is biologically 'superior' or 'inferior' to the people of another

region. Everybody knows that the claim of superiority for a particular 'Race' was one of the fundamental characteristic of 'Racism' which was not found in the above statement of Sam Pitroda.

Here one can recount a little bit of history. Adolf Hitler and his Nazi scientists not only classified inter alia the sharp nosed and white group of the 'Nordic' race but they also propagated that the Nordics were the most superior kind of human beings in Germany. So, racism is not only classification of human groups into races but also involved a kind of ethnocentrism that is a belief in the superiority of one group over the others, in case of Germany the other inferior group of race according to the Nazis was the Jews.

It is not without reason that in all the Indian universities the undergraduate syllabus in anthropology contains courses on the concept of race and racial classification. The University Grants Commission too in its last Curriculum Development Report published in 2001 in Anthropology specifically included a course on the 'Concept of Race, Genetic

basis of Race, UNESCO Statement on Race-Ethnic Group-Population and Racial classification of human populations' (UGC, CDC Report 2001, p.31).

Suffice it to say that looking different and belonging to the same country or nation is not the same thing. People of different countries may look similar in physical features while people of the same country or nation may look different. European countries are good examples. Do the Punjabis and a South Indian tribe named Cholanayakan look similar? Do the Jarwas of Andaman and the Nagas of North East have similar physical features? But undoubtedly, all of them are Indians. These are facts and not fiction. Ironically the BJP leaders have been trying to confuse these two things by trying to mess up biology with culture. For example, while rebutting the remarks made by Sam Pitroda, the Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that 'she is from South India and she looks Indian' (*The Statesman*, 9 May 2024). Do the South Indians and the Kashmiri Brahmins have similar physical features? India is a

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country of 'Unity in diversity'. The BJP leaders have forgotten this basic fact. Long ago, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore recognised this diversity of India in his immortalised national anthem.

It is high time that the anthropologists and other related scientists in India who search for the reasons behind the physical variation of human beings should open their mouth and reveal the scientific truth before the public. □□□

[Abhijit Guha, Former Professor in Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, Email: aguhavu@gmail.com]

A FORGOTTEN ANNIVERSARY

The 1974 Railway Strike

Harsh Thakor

ONE OF THE MOST INTENSIVE strikes in the history of labour movements anywhere in the world took place in India 50 years ago, on May 8th 1974 when workers of the Indian Railways struck work for 20 days, demanding better working conditions and higher wages. The strike was led by George Fernandes who acted as the President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, one of the two unions recognised by the Railway Board along with the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR).

The Indian Railways strike of 1974 continues to shimmer almost unprecedented deeds of the heroism of ordinary railway workers, their families and those who with death defying courage supported them against the merciless might of the Indian state. The most widespread and glorious revolt by the working class in independent India has received scant attention from labour historians. Scenario reminiscent of David conquering the Goliath, with 2 million workers backed by seventy lakh persons, resisting like a boulder

withstanding the fiercest of gales, exhibiting relentless spirit in heights rarely scaled.

This was arguably last of the classic general strikes in India, and certainly the last general strike in the railway industry. Throughout the year of 1973 the mood of the working people had become inclined to the left. Significantly, vital sectors of economy, the infrastructure and logistical industry in particular, underwent more unrest and work stoppages, with consequences spreading like wildfire. The rebellious mood of the workers struck turbulence to authority, law, and order. The strike emerged in the backdrop of prices soaring of food grains, edible oil, and Kerosene. It had a telling effect

on the very 'lifeline' of the Indian economy.

The strike demanded a need-based minimum wage, social security, such as food, the formalisation of jobs, an eight-hour daily work limit, protection to check escalating prices and the right of railway workers to dissent and negotiate.

The chief discontent of the workers was rooted in the British-era condition whereby their work was classified as "continuous". This forced loco workers to be on duty as long as a train was running. Often, the duration lasted several days at a stretch.

To start with, the strike was victorious with workers and their families squatting on the tracks to block the trains running. What shook the government even more was when electricity and transport workers as well as taxi drivers in Mumbai joined the protests.

Eventually the strike lasted only 20 days but its impact was felt for decades to come since it was at this very juncture that the first seeds of the Emergency were planted.

Workers waged a prolonged struggle for securing an eight-hour working day on par with other government staff for a while. Between 1967 and 1974 there had been four such strikes but the one in 1974, supported by over 70 percent of the railway staff, was the most unique. Now many rail workers having lost faith with their recognised unions' failure to protect their rights formed independent, category-based unions, such as the Loco Running Staff Association.

During the 1960's unrest escalated amongst railway workers on issues of low wages, harsh working conditions and long hours of work. The railway board remained completely apathetic, instilling frustration and alienation within workers. This brewed a collective and inde-

pendent resistance from workers to construct independent category unions, like the loco running staff union. In August 1973, after prolonged struggle, it procured demands of mass sick leaves, work to rule and work to designation. It reduced working hours from 14 to 10. This development was the breeding ground for the blooming of the strike in 1974.

The two railway Unions affiliated to the railway board, the All India Railwaymen's Federation and the National Federation of Railwaymen opposed negotiation of workers with the board, and did not morally wage struggles for rights of workers. The leaders of the two unions worked with complicity with the board to crush militancy of the workers.

The government was embarking on a scheme on introducing electrical engines to replace Steam engines, which proved disastrous to the railway transport system, with further production of steam engines stopped. Huge amounts of dumped coal and steel products lay dumped in coal fields and factories. Now the government transferred the burden of responsibility to the railwaymen, with their sheer negligence on the verge of being exposed. They purposely sowed the seeds for the turbulence of railwaymen, leading to a strike. On the filthy plea of an impending strike, it cancelled almost 400 passenger trains, diverting all engines.

And yet, even though the railway workers had taken on the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, even before the Janata party government came to power after the emergency ended, there were 24,000 casual labourers out of the 40,000.

On April 20, 1974, 1,000 women and children in then Madras organised a rally to the divisional headquarters of the Indian Railways raising slogans and gave a memo-

randum containing their grievances to the chief station officer. At Trichy, 1,800 women and children who comprised 20% of the residents of the Trichy railway colony took out a similar Morcha (procession). At Madurai, 1,000 women rallied to gherao (encircle) the divisional superintendent to force him to stop down to their memorandum of grievances. At Guntakal, 400 women, including women in purdah (veils), rallied to imbibe consciousness among the general public.

All this happened on the same day that the railway union leadership sat on the negotiating table with the authorities at Rail Bhavan in New Delhi.

The government was embarking on a scheme on introducing electrical engines to replace Steam engines, which proved disastrous to the railway transport system, with further production of steam engines stopped. Huge amounts of dumped coal and steel products lay dumped in coal fields and factories. Now the government transferred the burden of responsibility to the railwaymen, with their sheer negligence on the verge of being exposed. They purposely sowed the seeds for the turbulence of railwaymen, leading to a strike. On the filthy plea of an impending strike, it cancelled almost 400 passenger trains, diverting all engines for purpose of carrying products like dumped coal and other essential commodities.

The Indira Gandhi-led Congress govt organised most fascistic or barbaric repression, unparalleled in post-independence India, which no civil government could even envisage. Family members and even women folk were brutalised in a savage manner. Deploying forced labour to keep the kitchens burning, forced labour was used to propel the railway wheels. The BSF, CRPF and police recruited musclemen to mount

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shameless atrocities on striking railway employees and their family members.

The strike led to merciless government action with the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) deployed to crush the protests. Thousands of workers were arrested under the draconian Defence of India Rules and the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and others were summarily dismissed from service. Fernandes along with many of the leaders was arrested on the night of May 2, 1974 a clear indication that the government of Indira Gandhi was reluctant to negotiate. The repression with which the state moved to quell the movement was a precursor of events that would shape out a year engulfing the country when Emergency was declared.

In ending the strike, the railway men bowed to the position of Mrs

Gandhi, who decided to imprison thousands of rail workers—the figures range from 20,000 to 50,000. Mrs Gandhi had declared that the strike was “illegal” and that the Government would not bargain with the rail union until the walkout ended.

Railway workers faced harsh consequences in the aftermath of the strike. 30000 permanent staff were dismissed, 50000 casual workers working from 5-20 years dismissed, 20000 workers prosecuted on criminal charges, 10 lakh permanent workers treated as new recruits, etc.

Strangely, the political leadership of the non-Congress parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) relented and jumped on a quick negotiated settlement to diffuse the momentum of the strike. Their action confused the workers who lost faith in their own unions.

The reformist, vacillating and opportunist character of the leader-

ship, nullified the spirit of the strike. The Socialist Party, Communist Party of India and the CPI (M) with sinister designs conspired with the merciless and dictatorial acts of the rulers, who all failed to give impetus or escalate the gigantic upsurge to a higher plane. They gave no organised shape to the spontaneous upsurge of the railwaymen nor placed any concrete form of action.

The wavering and irresponsible nature of the leadership was apparent, when at the very start leaders of all the 3 parties went underground, to evade arrest but failed to establish any contact with the workers, while the other section fell entrenched within jail walls. Both these trends vitiated the revolt.

Today in age of globalisation and digitalisation patronised by Hindutva neo-fascism, it is more than urgent to resurrect the energy of the railway men in a new form. □□□

[Harsh Thakor is a freelance journalist]

DISSECTING BOLLYWOOD

‘All Is Not Lost’

Asis Ranjan Sengupta

FROM THE HOLLYWOOD movie making hub, Mumbai (erstwhile Bombay) Hindi film industry is fondly called Bollywood.

It, at least now a days, produce nothing but trash stuff in the name of so-called entertainment, at the cost of billions of Rupees, featuring super or mega stars, dazzling locations, sets, make belief illogical stories, absurd fights and dance sequences and of course frightening actions. The only positive aspect of such products seem to be endless experiment with music and songs, which more often than not captivate listeners.

Previously this industry had produced a number of good movies having human story lines, brilliant acting and melodious songs. But the

deterioration, like all other spheres of life, is discernible.

But in spite of all these negative features, there are honest efforts, some glitters of hope here also, amid myriads of valueless presentations, box office hits and flops, a few stand out as exceptions and somehow provides hope for the Industry.

Last year movies like "Article 15" or "Sardar Udham Singh" had created stir, but failed to attract box office, as screening chains did not show interest, and even electronic media too turned away face from such movies due to may be some extraneous pressures. This year three movies that have hit the screens as well as the OTT platforms deserve attention from sensible movie buffs.

In the times and a situation, when obnoxious propaganda movies like 'Kashmir Files' or 'Kerala Story' find state sponsorship and publicity backing, these films claim to stand on their own feet and find popularity. But one thing should be made clear at the outset, that these are not experimental or so-called 'art films', sans any story line, but simple story based movies highlighting human problems, emotions, situations, struggles, and endings sometimes in unpleasant or pleasant ways. Cinematic treatments, the characters, camera settings are also as simple as can be easily identifiable by all segments of audiences.

'Chamkila, Amarjit Singh', deals with the tragic story of a popular mass singer of Punjab. Unfortunately, he was born and flourished in a time when Punjab was rocked by violent and religious orthodox terrorism. He was an in-born talent, who

could write lyrics, compose tunes and sing out spontaneously, without any formal training or grooming. The problem was that his folk tunes were from the popular numbers, often performed on wedding occasions, full of obscene and erotic contents, the success story and popularity, was due to that very feature of universal acceptability among cheap entertainment loving adult men and women. He was a mass singer and only a singer, he could not perform or do anything in life for sustenance or bread and butter, other than singing. He had his female partner, later became his wife, with whom he travelled far and wide, only to perform on stages.

All popular stories in old and middle ages were full of erotic references. In old English, Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' or Italian author Boccaccio's 'Decameron' or 'Vaishnab Padavali' in Bengali literature can be cited as reference. So Chamkila committed no crime. But problem lied with his ever rising popularity. The bigots, who wanted to force their ideology on all like poison, got annoyed, warned him and finally killed the singing couple while they were performing. Chamkila means startling, but the two young startling geniuses created problem for the self imposed guardians of religion, society and faith, who finished their career brutally. So this musical movie ended in grim tragedy, and the display of utmost callousness on part of law enforcement agencies. This movie can be viewed on Netflix platform.

The second one is more important as it deals with the issue of tribal life of this land. The corporate greed for grabbing the natural wealth, minerals, water, timber, animal reserves, is posing hazards for the original inhabitants, who are living in these lands enjoying the benefits without harming the resources from

time immemorial. From the British period, these poor people have risen in revolt, Santal, Munda, Chuar, Bastar, Mopla, all are historic examples of resistance against conspiracy to deprive them from their habitats. The legacy still continues. The protagonist in the movie, titled "Joram", had annihilated one tribal betrayer who had joined the para military forces to evict the tribals, and he was forced to flee along with his wife to Mumbai and hid there, and was working as day labourer under inhuman working condition, dwelling in slums like animals. But misfortune did not spare them. His wife bore a child. The widow of that slain guy became a leader in native village joined the corporate forces to be a legislator. She sent secret forces who raided the Mumbai slum, and failing to trace the male killed the wife and hung her upside down as a sign of bloody vengeance, leaving the tiny baby for the care of single parent. The father had no other way but to flee back to his native village to rear his baby single handed. But his efforts to find shelter was foiled as he was hounded by forces and private armies (may be Ranveer Sena or Salwa Judum) , the film depicts and ends with the symbolic unending runs from here to there by these ill-fated people from jungle to jungle like rats or rabbits ,in their helpless efforts to survive for self and next generation who are born under threats of existence. But finally it asserts the failure of forces of death and destruction to chase down the lights of life and dawn. This stirring movie is available in Prime Video Channel.

The first two movies, particularly the first one has elements of commercial success, apart from known stars from movie world and popular songs, and the second one features star cast of Manoj Bajpayee, even though the story may not be commercially interesting.

But last but not the least one has all the elements of commercial success, in spite of having totally uncommon story and all new faces in casting. The debutant Director Krishna Rao has struck wonder with a low budget, simple rural settings, no star cast, all new faces, no dance, no fights, bare music and minimum song, and she produced a magic.

The movie "Lapata Ladies", is a story of missing girls, so common feature in India's common rural or urban lives. So many ladies end up traceless and finally land in dark world. But here two ladies went missing for quite uncommon reasons. One bridegroom came back to his own home after marriage with the bride whose face, as per custom, covered in Ghunghat to find that it was not his bride, and the actual bride got lost in an unknown Railway station in strange situation. But the twist in the story is that, one went missing as a mishap, or by chance, but another who had arrived in wrong groom's house went missing deliberately, or by choice, to escape her in-laws' hostile environment.

The first lady, though at first frightened and was at a loss, soon found herself in empathetic ambience not without helpful strangers. The good Station Master proved helpful, the tea stall assistant vagabond boy, the fake lame beggar, and finally the lady Tea Stall owner, passing passengers, all may appear villains in metropolitan mind-set, but here they proved to be not so bad, on the contrary faithful guys. The Tea Stall owner lady, who had abandoned her hostile in-laws and violent husband to be self help, not only provided shelter, but also offered job in her stall to the lost girl, and paid for her services. She taught the clueless little bride how to be self sufficient and stand on own feet and challenge the society bravely. Missing lady, at last traced back her

husband and home and, got united. But she was now a changed lady with a new outlook to change everything around her.

Another lady who had fled from her in-laws and heartless brutal husband, in a planned way fooling all, proved to be an educated lady, who was determined to study further and make own career. She was accepted in her new found home with honour and dignity. The bereaved groom and his family were surprised to find that she knew many things in farming not known to them; she taught the child, whose father was far away in work place, leaving his mother at home. The child's mother also came out to be an artist who can portray

anyone accurately. She was herself not aware of her talent, lost in household chore of sweeping, cleaning, cooking, breeding, feeding and farming, until it was highlighted and appreciated by the stranger lady. All characters here are round, not flat prototypes of conventional movies. The Police Officer, who apparently, looked like a bribe taking, betel chewing corrupt guy, as usual, proved to be so helpful cop in rescuing the second lady from the clutches of her in-laws, and inspired her to go back to home to undertake further study and build her own future. So this has all the elements of a commercial success movie but with some social message for ladies to find

their own places in life. This movie can be watched in commercial chains and in Netflix platform of OTT.

The purpose of this article is not to review a set of films, but to highlight the reality that things are not so bad, as people sometimes feel. In a vitiated time, when media is toxic, social media venomous, educational institutes on decay path, sports bodies headed by money launders, or rapists, even the game of Cricket has degenerated into global gambling board, where players are bought and sold in open market, as it happened in old age or medieval slave markets, art, literature, all decadent, politics fully corrupt, there are still some rays of hope. □□□

COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOURS OF HUMANITY

Territorialisation of Knowledge

Bhabani Shankar Nayak

THE DEVELOPMENT AND dissemination of ideas and knowledge are deeply rooted in collective efforts and shared experiences. Every form of knowledge, whether it be scientific discoveries, philosophical insights, ethnographic experiences, or cultural traditions, is shaped by the contributions of countless individuals and communities. Throughout history, human societies have engaged in the exchange of ideas through various means, including oral traditions, written texts, artistic expressions, and interpersonal communication. These interactions serve as the foundation upon which knowledge is built, refined, and transmitted across generations. At its core, knowledge emerges from the collective endeavour of sharing experiences from everyday life. Observations, reflections, and innovations stemming from individual experiences are shared within communities, sparking dialogue, debate, and collaboration. Through this collabora-

tive process, ideas are tested, challenged, and enriched, leading to the advancement of understanding in diverse fields of inquiry.

The collective nature and foundation of knowledge extends beyond individual communities to encompass global networks of communication and collaboration. In an interconnected world, ideas, and knowledge flow across geographical and cultural boundaries, fostering cross-cultural exchange and enriching intellectual discourse. Recognising the collective foundations of knowledge underscores the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration in the pursuit of understanding. By valuing and incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences, societies can foster innovation, creativity, and social progress. All forms of knowledge are a testament to the collective endeavours of humanity, reflecting shared quest for understanding and enlightenment. Embracing this collective ethos not only

enriches intellectual pursuits but also strengthens the bonds that unite people as members of a global community.

The territorialisation of knowledge traditions and ideas, whether they be Arabic, African, Asian, British, Chinese, Indian, American, or European, has not only undermined individual excellence rooted in collective foundations of knowledge production and dissemination, but it has also commodified knowledge as mere skills, reducing it to essentialist aspects while neglecting emancipatory potential of knowledge. Throughout history, diverse cultures and civilisations have developed rich and multifaceted knowledge systems, each reflecting the unique perspectives, experiences, and values of its creators. However, the process of territorialisation has often led to the imposition of artificial boundaries and hierarchies, which limit the exchange and integration of ideas across cultural and geographical divides.

In this context, knowledge becomes commodified, stripped of its context, and reduced to marketable skills or products. This narrow focus on utilitarian aspects of knowledge

overlooks its transformative power and its capacity to challenge and reshape social norms and structures. Additionally, by emphasising certain knowledge traditions over others, territorialisation perpetuates hierarchies of power and privilege, marginalising voices and perspectives that fall outside dominant paradigms. This not only stifles creativity and innovation but also reinforces inequalities and injustices within society.

European colonialism and its associated racialised capitalist systems played a significant role in dismantling collective foundations of knowledge traditions by propagating a narrative that European knowledge was synonymous with "science," while relegating Asian, African, Arabic, and American knowledge traditions to the status of mere "ethnographies." This myopic, false, and racialised distinction was actively promoted by European colonisers to assert their cultural and intellectual superiority while undermining indigenous knowledge systems and their emancipatory potentials. Under colonial rule, European powers im-

posed their own systems of education, governance, and language upon colonised peoples, often at the expense of local traditions and ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge, which had developed over generations through close observation of nature, community practices, and cultural rituals, was systematically devalued and marginalised.

By portraying European knowledge as the epitome of scientific rigour and progress, colonial authorities justified their domination and exploitation of colonised territories, natural resources, and labour. This narrative not only served to legitimise colonial rule but also reinforced racial hierarchies and stereotypes, portraying colonised peoples as primitive and backward compared to their European counterparts. So, the promotion of European knowledge as the sole arbiter of truth and progress perpetuated a legacy of epistemic violence, in which indigenous knowledge traditions were denigrated and erased, leaving lasting scars on communities and cultures around the world.

The processes of colonial rule and its strategies of territorialisation of knowledge undermine both the essentialist and emancipatory aspects of knowledge traditions, ultimately eroding the very foundations of knowledge itself. By imposing artificial boundaries and hierarchies, territorialisation restricts the free flow of ideas, inhibiting the exchange and integration of diverse perspectives and insights. On one hand, territorialisation tends to essentialise knowledge, reducing it to static, commodified forms that prioritise practical utility over broader understandings of truth and meaning. This reductionist approach limits the richness and complexity of knowledge traditions, stripping them of their dynamic and evolving nature. On the other hand, territorialisation also undermines the emancipatory po-

tential of knowledge by reinforcing existing power structures and marginalising voices and perspectives that challenge dominant narratives. By privileging certain knowledge traditions over others, territorialisation perpetuates inequalities and injustices within society, stifling creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Ultimately, the process of territorialisation threatens to fragment and homogenise knowledge, erasing the diverse cultural, historical, and social contexts from which it emerges.

Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge and challenge the colonial legacy of territorialisation of knowledge production and dissemination for decolonising our understanding of the world and fostering genuine dialogue and exchange among diverse knowledge traditions. This requires acknowledging the inherent value and question the authenticity and validity of all knowledge systems, regardless of their cultural or geographic origins, and working towards a more inclusive and equitable approach to knowledge creation and sharing. It is also essential to recognise the interconnectedness of knowledge across cultures and to create spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning. By embracing the diversity of human experience and valuing the contributions of all knowledge traditions, people can harness the full potential of knowledge as a force for empowerment, liberation, and social change. It is time to reclaim decolonial, diverse and emancipatory knowledge traditions and work towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable future based on science and secularism. □□□

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TOO MANY UNDERTRIALS

The NewsClick Verdict

Bharat Dogra

THE WELCOME EXTENDED by several organisations of journalists as well civil liberties organisations to the Supreme Court's decision on granting bail to Prabir Purkayastha as well as strong supportive comments by leading newspapers indicate wider public feelings that this senior editor and science activist has suffered serious injustice which requires remedial actions.

In fact there is a strong case for the government itself taking back its case against him. Mistakes can be made and there is honour, certainly no loss of face, if the government itself initiates actions to undo any mistakes that were made either due to misunderstandings or otherwise.

Prabir Purkayastha has been widely known for his science activism and research. He was a founder-member of Delhi Science Forum which took up several important issues of national interest. Prabir's own contributions were more in the context of electricity, telecom and software. Much of this work was in opposition to the increasing grip of multinational companies and in favour of policies relating to self-reliance. At a much later stage of his career Prabir became known as the founder-editor of NewsClick portal, a news and media organisation known for raising many questions regarding government policies. This is a perfectly legitimate democratic role, the kind of role very much needed for the health of a democracy and in fact one reason for the decline of western democracies particularly US democracy is that there has not been adequate criticism by their mainstream media of the ter-

rible foreign policy mistakes that these governments have been making. The very idea that NewsClick or any other media organisation can be prosecuted for publishing articles and reports supportive of farmers' movement, to give just one example, is outrageously anti-democratic. The BJP/Jana Sangh were also in the opposition for most of the time and people only have to look at the files of the Organiser and their other publications to see how much criticism they routinely and continuously made of governments at that time, sometimes using very strong language too. This was tolerated by governments because governments in democracies generally should give adequate room to critical voices and in particular avoid taking repressive steps against critical journalists.

Hence it is not surprising that in a country that has been used since independence to democratic practices, actions such as those against Prabir and NewsClick have upset many people and the journalist community in particular. The Hindu, a very prestigious newspaper, wrote in an editorial titled 'Malign Motive' (May 17), "The Supreme Court of India's order invalidating the arrest and remand of NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha is much more than a technical outcome based on the failure of the Delhi police to furnish the grounds for his arrest in writing. It is also an indictment of the clandestine manner in which the police sought to obtain his custody. As if invoking the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against the web portal was not malign enough—the case seems fictional in its entirety, and establishes no overt act that

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can even be described as unlawful, much less a terrorist act—the police seemed to have resorted to what the Court called a ‘blatant attempt to circumvent the due process of law.’”

The Indian Express has done well to include three comments on this issue on May 17. In its editorial titled ‘A Welcome Message’ this prominent newspaper has stated, “Supreme Court order in NewsClick case is heartening, reinforces importance of due process, regardless of the offence.” Further this editorial commented, “In a legal system where the process can often be a form of punishment, the integrity of so-called technical procedures must be impeachable.”

In fact this editorial goes on to comment on some wider issues of great importance for civil liberties. The Indian Express notes that two fundamental principles of jurisprudence—‘bail not jail’ and ‘innocent until proven guilty’—are diluted in cases brought under ‘special’ laws like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Official NCRB data showed, this

editorial notes, that PMLA cases grew by 450% in the first three years of the current government’s second term, compared to the same period in the first term.

An article titled ‘A Right to Fairness’ written by Faizan Mustafa (Vice Chancellor, Chanakya National University, Patna) and published in the *Indian Express* (May 17) has argued that this Supreme Court verdict in NewsClick case affirms that adherence to due process is more than a procedural requirement. Further this article has noted that although in 2023 the Supreme Court had termed preventive detention laws as a colonial legacy with great potential of abuse; India continues to have several stringent preventive detention laws, both at the Centre and state levels. As per the NCRB over 12,000 people were in prisons in 2021 under such laws and 76 per cent of prison inmates were under trial in 2022. Unfortunately, this article says, the part of the 44th amendment on preventive detention has not been notified even after 46 years.

In an article published by The

Tribune (May 17) titled ‘Stringent laws have made prolonged detention norm’ a senior advocate Sriram Panchu has stated, “The flaw in this case was a gaping one... Yet, and this is what should disturb us, it has taken the judicial system more than half a year to release him (Purkayasha)...The chief problem is the monstrous nature of the laws under which many detentions are made—UAPA and PMLA... Purkayasha’s long detention is particularly disturbing because courts worldwide are usually quick to examine cases of journalists being held in preventive custody.”

India’s leading newspaper The Times of India has published (May 17) an article titled ‘Courting the Cops, Always’ written by Naveed Mehmood Ahmad, Senior Resident Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. This article has argued that the Supreme Court order in the NewsClick case shows trial court judges are authorising detentions casually. With around 50 lakh arrests a year and thousands of remand applications a day, they must apply judicial scrutiny. □□□

LETTERS

Deaths due to Manual Scavenging

There is no proper data on the number of manual scavengers and the government hugely suppresses the number of manual scavenging deaths.

Recently, Uttar Pradesh saw eight deaths due to manual scavenging within a short span of ten days. On 2nd May, Shroban Yadav, 57, and his son Sushil Yadav, 30, were killed while testing a sewer line in Lucknow’s Wazirganj area. On 3rd May, two daily wage workers, Kokan Mandal, 40, and Nooni Mandal, 36, were killed while cleaning the septic tank of a private residence in Noida Sector 26.

Soon after on 9th May, four people died from inhaling toxic gases while cleaning the septic tank of a house in Mughalsarai, Chandauli. Three of the victims, Vinod Rawat, 35 Kundan, 42 and Loha, 23, were informal sanitation workers while the fourth victim was the son of the house owner who died while trying to save the workers. In October 2023 the Supreme Court ordered a compensation of 30 lakhs to the families of victims of manual scavenging which has not reached any of the victims so far. Allegedly, the District Administration promised to provide only Rs 4 lakh ex gratia to each deceased in the incident in

Chandauli. In India the lives of workers are considered cheap and inexpensive and they can only safeguard their rights through unionisation, said Roma, a senior activist from the All India Union of Forest Working People.

In all of the incidents, the workers worked as informal labourers or contractual sanitation workers and were made to clean sewer/septic tanks without any supervision. The sewer/septic tank workers are not provided with any safety equipment and often they have to face the toxic gases with just a handkerchief, said Radhika Bordia, a senior journalist who has been covering these cases for the last 25 years.

Many workers are made to forc-

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ibly enter sewer/septic tanks by contracting agencies or private residents. In one such incident on 12th May, a housekeeping staff member, Hare Krishan Prasad, was forced to enter the sewer in D Mall, Rohini, Delhi, where he was killed due to inhalation of toxic gases. Colin Gonsalves, Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court believes that the municipal authorities should be held responsible for the deaths of these workers and held accountable for these offenses which are as serious as murder charges.

Sanjeev Kumar
Secretary
Dalit Adivasi Shakti
Adhikar Manch (DASAM)

Climate Scientists Are Freaking Out

Ocean temperatures are off the charts—they've broken records EVERY DAY for the past year!

Now Atlantic currents that regulate the entire climate are going haywire, and coral reefs from Mexico to Australia are blistering to death. The ocean's nurseries are withering. This is mass extinction.

Millions of people are already running from wildfires, famine, and floods every year—and it'll only get worse. The climate crisis will affect everybody everywhere.

The younger you are, the more severe it could become.

The legal battle to stop a giant oil pipeline in East Africa is on a knife's edge; Indigenous communities in the Amazon are fighting for crucial protections; and a potential lawsuit against BP for their toxic oil fields is just taking off. The weeks and months ahead could be decisive.

Living organisms are fragile. Beyond a certain temperature, they simply overheat and die.

Some parts of the planet are

now approaching that red line, when just a few hours outside can be deadly. Yet world leaders and CEOs still aggressively fuel this crisis.

As the world bakes, this is the moment to harness public attention and force radical action.

Avazz

Climate Change

Bengal's temperature is higher than Rajasthan's—this writer is not surprised with it. Days ago, Dhaka was hotter than day-time in Dubai and Saudi Arabia; and those deserts were cooler at night than Dhaka at night. Dhaka, days ago, was hotter than Meghalaya, a few hundred kms of distance between the two. Now, there is red alert in Kerala due to heat wave.

People are experiencing the tail-end of El Nino; and then, La Nina is going to come, which will bring a lot of serious anomalies in weather, and its associates—the rains, etc.

There is, in addition to these, the great climate crisis.

Farooque Chowdhury
Dhaka

Border Security Force

India and Bangladesh have a long drawn international border; the major portion of this international border is with the Indian state of West Bengal. The reality is that the populace living along the sides of the international border has unique similarity in their socio-economic as well as religious identities, as mostly are Dalits of Hindu community and oppressed Backward classes of Muslim community.

In the presence of border guards; Border Security Force (BSF) nobody can hope for a decent and peaceful civil life. Peasants are being harassed to carry out their normal livelihood activities, women are not secured, small time traders are al-

ways apprehensive about their business activities, in a whole BSF presence wrecked the normal life.

The very presence of the armed forces within civilian inhabitation is drawing several disturbances. The women and girls facing gender sensitive humiliation as the force are most of the time gender insensitive by their practices and behaviour.

The BSF creates whimsical regulations to micromanage the villagers. For instance, the villagers have to submit their AADHAR Cards (UDI) and stand in a long queue every day before going to their land. The civil administration is systematically encroaching on personal liberty of citizens by promulgating the section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code throughout the border for decades without any respite, the civil administration never thought its legalities, only nodded in BSF's illegitimate demand.

Bangladesh is a friendly country of India like Nepal and Bhutan, in both the cases, the citizenry of corresponding countries has no such restriction in movements. For Nepal and Bhutan, Indian citizens do not require Visa or passport to visit those countries, similarly Nepalis and Bhutanese do not require visa or passport to visit India. Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB) is posted at the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan border, which is not such an ill-reputed force as BSF is. This act of the Indian State is against the basic tenet of Article 14 of Indian Constitution.

Kirity Roy. MASUM

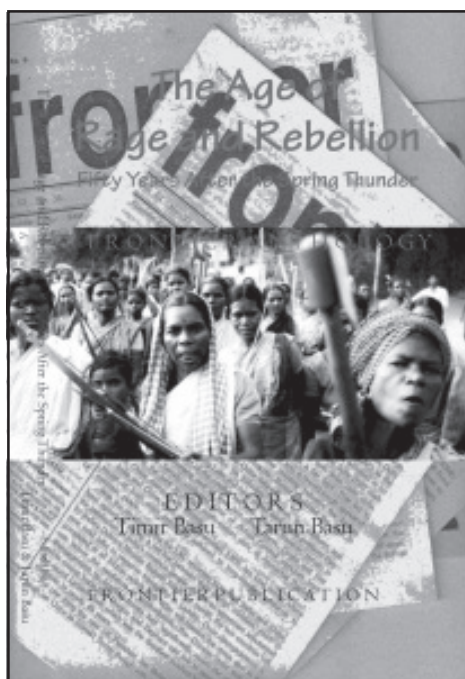
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