

NOTE

Living in a Hell

Sanjeev Mahajan writes :

A BAG BELONGING TO AN adivasi woman, Sodi Sambo, is sitting in a corner of my Delhi house. It contains a few old clothes, medicines of various kinds, cotton balls, and some bandages which she would use to dress her bullet wound inflicted on her by the CRPF when they shot her in the leg. When we were accompanying her to India's highest and most august judicial body, the police stopped us on the way, and abducted her. Since then, Sodi Sambo is under illegal police custody.

I also have in my possession a shoulder bag belonging to another Adivasi woman, Soni Sori. This bag was given to me by the police on orders of a Delhi court. The bag contains a few bangles belonging to Soni. She had worn those bangles in the hope of seeing her husband return, who has been in the prison for the past one year. The shoulder bag also has a few toffees which she had bought for three children, confident that once the real truth was revealed, and once she had been vindicated in the Supreme Court, she would soon be able to see her eagerly waiting children, and give them these toffees.

I also have with me a few letters of little Adivasi girls, who were raped by the 'defenders' of this country, and when they detailed their misery in a court, the Government locked them in police station and beat them mercilessly for five days.

I also have a few tear-drenched letters written by women whose sons were declared the "most serious threat to the country's internal security" and imprisoned for the simple crime of bringing rice for their homes, and there is not even the remotest possibility of them ever returning home.

I also have a few clothes meant for a little child. My wife had bought them for this child whose mother was killed with a knife to her head. This heinous crime was committed in the Gompad village of Dantewada by the CRPF's Cobra battalion, who then proceeded to chop off the hand of the child in her lap, and then rape her corpse.

I also have pictures of corpses of a few poor policemen, who, on orders of corrupt ministers and rich businessmen, had gone to kill their poor adivasi brethren, and instead were killed themselves, and whose widows, eternally waiting for compensation, work as maids cleaning dirty dishes in the houses of the rich, so as to feed their chronically hungry children.

Before the police raids my house and seizes all this, I would like someone else to take it away. And these splendid symbols of Indian democracy should be put in a museum that showcases what a great and spiritual country India is. In the past, it was a teacher of the world, and in the future, it is going to be a superpower. These symbols should be proof positive for our

children of what makes the saffron stripe of our tricolor, and whose greenery we have stolen to fill in the green stripe.

The people who are proud of our democratic and spiritual traditions should take all this away from me. These symbols of our non-violence and kindness keep me awake all night. Help me and take it all away from me. I don't have the courage to look at them any more. □□□