UNMAAD
2013-14

The Annual TISS Students' Magazine
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Cover photos by: Vaseem Chaudhary and Phebe Kachchap

The editorial team would like to thank Mr. Gaurishankar Kamble, the editors of the Fieldnotes blog, and the executive body members of the Students' Union for their support.
Message from the Dean, Students' Affairs

It gives me immense pleasure that the student's magazine 'UNMAAD' is being published. The wide-spectrum of essays and articles on fieldwork experiences, media, mental health, movie reviews, life in small towns, gender and past annual events at TISS are interesting and absorbing. It also demonstrates that our students possess creative potential and original thinking in ample measures. I compliment the contributors for their thought provoking articles in the magazine.

This has been an eventful year for the students. The Students' Union (SU) organised several street plays on diverse themes and social issues existing in the society. A cultural event of a well-known band 'Hirawal' from Bihar recognized for its songs on social issues and 'Meghmudra', a welcome event for the freshers was organised. Quintessence, an annual cultural festival was celebrated with much fanfare and active participation of the students. Condemning the acts of racism, SU organized a protest demonstration at Azad Maidan. All the events received a good response and I congratulate all the participants and organisers for successfully conducting these programmes.

It also gives us a sense of pride that our students participated in various inter-collegiate sports events and won several matches and medals under the leadership of Mr.Roy Rona, Sports Secretary, Students' Union.

I appreciate the efforts of Mr.Vikrant Dadawala, Literary Secretary, Students' Union and his Editorial Team for publishing the annual students' magazine.

With best wishes,
Prof. Arvind Tiwari
Dean, Students' Affairs
Unmaad 2013-2014

Interview with the Director

Can you tell us about your association with TISS over the years?

Some time in March 1981, I submitted my PhD thesis. I already had a post-doctoral fellowship in Honolulu. However, it normally takes about a year for you to actually get the PhD after you submit it. But the fellowship stopped as soon as I submitted my thesis, and I needed money. So, somebody told me that TISS always has jobs as research assistants. So I came here, and the Director, Prof M S Gore was here. I gave my CV to him. He asked me to come on the next day, which I did. Prof Gore told me that although they did not have a vacancy for a research assistant, they had a vacancy for a lecturer's job. I got the job, which initially involved writing computer programming of statistical packages. Then, I also got a permanent job in the Indian Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS). Prof Gore was there for both the interviews, so I asked him what I should do. He said to me, “Do you want to be a demographer where there already are twenty demographers or do you want to be the only demographer in this place (TISS)? So, I stayed here. I went for my post-doctoral studies, and I came back. That's how I got here.

Over the years, what have been the major changes that you have seen here?

When I joined, Prof Gore, a very high quality intellectual, was the director. He was a pioneer in several fields like family studies and criminology. During his tenure of twenty years as the director, he brought in a very strong culture of research to the institute. While I joined in 1981, he retired in 1982. Then, we had Prof Armaity Desai, who is a social worker trained at the Chicago University. She believed that social work has the answer to most of the problems being faced by the society, but also that there is a need for strategy and long-term work. When I came here, it was a small place- I was the 21st faculty member or something like that. Ms Desai made TISS a bigger institution. When she left in 1995, there were about 80 or 90 faculty members. For the first time, we were taught that if it benefits society, one should not hesitate to say the truth to power and that we must be willing to take sides with the people. To take sides with the people, we need courage and knowledge. Knowledge gives you the capacity to talk to power. So, she (Prof Desai) was phenomenally different and she changed the nature of social work in the country. She said that social work must be a transformative, not merely a curative discipline. I worked on many interesting projects with her- like the National Commission on Urbanization and the Sardar Sarovar project. In the case of the Sardar Sarovar project, the World Bank and the government believed that if you were not taking their side, then you don't exist. But we continued to speak from the side of the people. That period- between 1982 and 1995- was one of introspection and growth, and was very interesting.
An important part of the history of TISS is stability in leadership. However, when Prof Gore left in 1995, I knew that there would be a period of instability, and so I also left. Then, I came back, but only for a few months. The director at that time felt that a rural campus at Tuljapur was a bad idea, and that it was better for it to be somewhere close by. But Ms Desai, and many of us had invested a lot of work in the Tuljapur campus. So, I came and spoke to the director about it. The, I became a member of a committee which wrote a perspective paper for the Tuljapur campus and made sure that it was not closed. After this, I left again.

In 2004, I was working with the United Nations in Bangkok, when I got a call asking if would be interested in coming back to India at TISS. I was tired of working outside the country for close to ten years. So, I decided to come back.

My first term was from 2004 to 2009, and I will now complete my second term now. I had inherited a place which was very small- where there about 100 faculty members and 300 students. As there were only 300 students, all of them would get jobs. We had to do a fundamental restructuring, and we spent two years debating whether we were doing the right thing (by taking in more students). The restructuring took place between August 2004 and February 2006. We abolished all the existing schools and research units and instead, we created new schools and independent centres. We started new teaching programmes like developmental studies and social entrepreneurship. The thought behind this was to see what the country needed.

Today, we have about 2000 students on the campus and a very strong doctoral programme with about 600 students. We have new campuses in Guwahati and Hyderabad. We are, in some ways, policy entrepreneurs. The need for this lies in the fact that the society is not sufficiently mobilized. This is where we need policy think-tanks like us, who can see the future, mobilize forces and provide research support. Now, we have four campuses and we are planning to further increase our faculty strength. While courses like developmental studies have stabilized, courses like, say, water policy and governance, may not have stabilized completely. We need to introduce a new M. Phil/PhD programme. So, we need to expand in terms of our research and influence. We need to raise quite a lot of money to create infrastructure.

Why does TISS emphasise inter-disciplinarity so much?

Basically, most human problems and the problems that the ecosystem faces are complex. They are not amenable to be explained by any particular discipline alone. You need a number of disciplines to come together to be able to holistically explain why this phenomena, why this problem, why this issue...

Say, you look at the urban context. Homelessness in the urban context. Now, how is planning done in this country? Planning is done in a technocratic way. “You want to build this? If you have the technology and you have the money, then build it!” But do you think in terms of its environmental cost? Do you think in terms of its social cost? We don't. We hardly think of all of this, they come in as afterthoughts. So we needed to create a discipline of planning that took not only the technical
feasability and financial feasability, but also brought in the social and environmental aspects into planning. So the habitat school is established to look at habitat from a multidisciplinary point of view... You needed not only architecture and engineering, but you also needed geography, you needed sociology, you needed political science.

... Like development studies if you look at it - its not purely an economics program. It borrows from sociology, anthropology, psychology. And public policy studies. Because development is not about economics, development is about people. And where are the people in development planning? ... And this is where TISS is uniquely placed in terms of bring in interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary areas. And we have always been trans-disciplinary! You always had linkages to the field.

What would you say to the people who think TISS is expanding too fast?

Have we expanded fast? We needed to do everything we did in order to make us relevant. You cannot have a situation whereby you have a 150 faculty members with 500 students. It is not acceptable. Unless they are working extraordinarily hard to do research. But research and teaching cannot be delinked. Good researchers can also be good teachers. What we have done is that we have by now created most of the courses we wanted to create. And we won't be having any more courses in the Mumbai campus. This is going to be a consolidation time for the next few years time. There will be new faculty members recruited as per the 12th plan who will join this group and strengthen our teaching programme and make sure we establish ourselves. Attracting faculty is the least of our problems. We are able to attract some of the finest faculty. For every open position we advertise, we are getting 200-300 applications. Students were never a problem because we have very few seats. We had around 35000 applications for around a 1000 seats. But don't be expanding beyond this. You stabilize here. Are jobs a problem? Let me tell you that in the last few years we have opened up almost all the government ministeries. Imagine if some 650 of our districts were to recruit 8-10 personnel each! We need those people to come out of our institutions. We need people at the block and taluka level. This is where we have opened up the development sector. Huge opportunities are going to be available. But we need people with understanding of the grassroots realities. IRMA produces so many graduates. Would they work at the grassroots? Our graduates can work at the grassroots level and also at the higher level.

What do you think the role for students in terms of activism, such as in a situation like Agarwadi (when students protesting the demolitions of hutments were arrested and detained by the police, along with community members)
You are students and you are here to gain a professional degree. We should be very clear about that. You are here to gain the degree and that you must do. Your ideology must be clear. The ideology to have a just and equitable society. That ideology is neither left nor right...

Now, where is the role for activism? When the state become incapable of protecting the rights and honouring the rights of the people, conscientious people may be forced to join hands with the people to protect their rights. Because you have eyes, you have ears, you see the suffering and you try to do something to deal with the immediate condition of suffering. But that is not a solution to the larger problem. Agarwadis happen all the time. You can't be everywhere. And that is not the way society's problems can be dealt with. There are two parts – you should generate knowledge and persuasive arguments and talk to the state in terms of what can be done, how it can be done, why it should be done. Even while you deal with the immediate condition of distress. You cannot stand in front of [the bulldozer] everytime there is distress. But in your backyard you can be conscientious. Do you have a price to pay for doing that? Yes, the state sees you as an intruder... Would you suffer on account of this? You won't, because the institute has the ability to deal with these kind of problems when our students face them. We will get the FIRs squashed because they are not valid. Is showing compassion a crime? No. What my students did is to show compassion. If that is a crime, then we have a problem. Our graduates must have this compassion. But can you do it as a full time job? No. [And] you need to have your institution's backing. Because alone you will be decimated! And that's why your institution must have a value framework.

How will an institution have a value framework? It can be possible only when the students are vigilant. [When] students have values and are able to influence their institutions within the democratic framework.
बीएमसी को नहीं चाहिए मुंबई बनाने वाले मजदूर

- अंकुर जायसवाल

राम चंद्र जी से परिचय बहुत पुराना रहा है... मेरे घर से कोई सतर किलोमीटर दूर एक मरिजद तोड़ दी जाती है क्यूंकि लोगों का कहना है कि वहाँ वह पैदा हुए थे, शेष सारा आस्था, अभ्यास, विश्वास की बात है। खेत अभी में बम्बई में रहता हूँ और जहाँ पढ़ाई करता हूँ, वहाँ से कोई दो किलोमीटर दूर आगराबाड़ी (मानसुख) नाम की जगह पे एक और राम चंद्र जी हैं जो अपने एक सौ तीस सदस्यीय आदिवासी परिवारों के साथ रहते थे।

वह बताते हैं कि वे लोग आंध्रप्रदेश और कर्नाटक की सीमाओं के पास के रहने वाले हैं और बूरिया जंगम और मसान जोगी नाम की आदिवासी समुदाय से ताल्लुक रखते हैं। 1984 में उनके चाचा-पापा कोई यहाँ मजदूरी करने आये थे और वर्ली के मोराजी मिल में काम करते थे फिर एक ठेंदार ने इसें चिल्लेंग ऐड सोसाइटी नाम की संस्था, जो की मानसुख में स्थित है की बाउड़ी बनाने के लिये बुलाया और फिर ठेंदार और सोसाइटी के झगड़े में इनको पूरा पैसा भी नहीं मिला तो वे लोग वहाँ पास के ही जगह को साफ-सूफ कर के रहने लगे। वे बताते है पहले वह पूरा जगह धीरान था और तामाम हटाए और अपराध हुआ करते थे।

पर धीरे-दीरे बम्बई शहर के बढ़ने से मानसुख के उन जंगलों मतलब जमीनों की जरूरत और कीमत बढ़ने लगी, तो भूमि माफियाओं की नजर यहाँ पड़ना लाजमी था तो अधिकांश से ये लोग गैरकानूनी हो गये और जहाँ घर बना के रहते थे वहाँ से 2005 में खदेड दिए गये और सामने के फूटपाथ पे आ के रहने लगे और फिर वहाँ से भी उनको स्वाभाविक रूप से हटा दिया गया क्यूंकि एक साहब वहाँ पीछे ही शादी का हाल बनवा रहे हैं।

अब ऐसे में उस शादी के हाल की शोभा में ये लोग किसकिसे बनने लगे तो बुधमुंबई महानगर पालिका (बीएमसी) ने महात्मा गांधी के नाम वाली किसी योजना के तहत उस फूटपाथ पे एक उद्यान बना के उसे बाड़ों से घेर दिया फिर ये लोग सड़क के इस पार आ गये और फिर 27 अगस्त 2013 को लोक निर्माण
विभाग ने भी उन्हें बिना किसी लिखित नोटिस के वहां से मार–पीट कर सामान फेंक कर भगा दिया तो ये मजदूर दुनिया भर का घर बनाने के बाद सड़क पे आ गये।

बीते 28 नवम्बर को बीएमसी ने करीब बारह बजे मुंबई पुलिस के साथ आ कर उनके सामानों को जबरदस्ती ट्रक में फेंकने लगे और धोड़ी सी मोहलत भी नहीं दी और उनके बने बनाये खाने तक को फेंक दिया, महिलाओं बच्चों के साथ बदसुलूकी की और जब टाटा सामाजिक संस्थान के बारे छात्र–छात्राओं ने मजदूर महिलाओं के साथ इसानियत का हवाला देते हुए इसका विरोध किया तो उनको भी मारा–पीटा गया और गिरफ्तार कर के करीब दस घंटे तक द्राम्बे पुलिस स्टेशन में रखा गया। संस्थान के डायरेक्टर के आने पर सारे लोगों को छोड़ा गया और अब ये सारे 130 लोग संस्थान में ही पिछले दो दिनों से रह रहे हैं (बाद में उन्हें रहने की एक अस्थायी जगह भेज दिया गया)। बाद में यह भी पता चला कि इनके बचे हुए सामानों को भी जला दिया गया जिसमे राशन कार्ड थे ताकि उनके यहां पे होने का नामो–निशान तक मिट जाये।

ऐसी घटनाएँ रोज़ की हैं और ये बताती हैं कि हमारा पूरा तत्कालीन पुलिस से ले के तमाम संस्थाएं किसके हित के लिए काम करती हैं और देश का कानून किसके हितों के लिए प्रयोग में लाया जाता है, टीवी मीडिया के लिए यह कैंप–कोला जैसी बड़ी खबर नहीं है क्यूंकि ये तो रोजमर्रा की बातें हैं।

अब सवाल ये उठता है कि आगे क्या? क्या यह सिर्फ इन 130 लोगों का मामला है या फिर उन ढेर सारे मजदूरों का? जिस तरह से पिछले सालों से जैसे जैसे लोग सड़कों पे धकेले गये हैं और वहां से पता नहीं कहीं? इनके लिए उतने ही एनजीओ भी पैदा हुए हैं और फूल–फले भी हैं पर इन मजदूरों को हक नहीं मिलता है और कुछ तो हो रहा है के नाम पे बुनियादी मुहा पूरे परिदृश्य से गायब हो जाता है, जिन रोटो–मार्गों को ये बनाते हैं वो कानूनी होते हैं और ये खुद वेधर और गैर–कानूनी करार दे दिए जाते हैं।

एक अनुमान के मुताबिक दुनिया भर में आठ में से एक आदमी तथाकथित रूप मलब झुग्गी– झोपड़ियों में रहता है, और हम अपने आस–पास फैली असीम अस्मानता के प्रति उदासीन हो जाते हैं और आज
जरूरत है की हम अपने आस-पास की गरीबी-बदहाली को बुनियादी तौर पर देखे कि ये हमारा सामाजिक-आर्थिक ढांचा कैसा है जो सेकड़ों मील दूर से लोगों को काम करने के लिए बड़े-बड़े शहरों में आने के लिए मजबूर करता है और फिर उनकी ऐसी हालत हो जाती है। एक तरफ दुनिया का सबसे अमीर आदमी इसी शहर में अद्वाईत मंजिल इमारत में अपने छोटे से परिवार के साथ रहता है और दूसरी तरफ अगर उसी इमारत की मंजिल से देखा जाये तो दूर तक फैली बूंढ़ी-झोपड़ियाँ दिखेंगी जिनका जीवन स्तर दुनिया भर में सबसे निम्न है और उसी के बीच ऐसे सेकड़ों लोग महिलाएं बच्चे जो सड़कों पे सोते हैं और ऐसे ही रोज उन्हें इधर से उधर भगाया जाता है।

हम ऐसे देश में रहते हैं जहाँ सामान्य अपना कंस खुद लड़ते हैं जिससे देश की राजनीति तय होती है और ना जाने कितने रामचंद्र रोज दर-दर की ठोकरें खाते हैं।

(अंकुर, टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान, मुंबई में सामाजिक उदयवाद के स्नातकोत्तर, द्वितीय वर्ष के छात्र है। उनका यह आलेख समाचार ब्लॉग ‘पत्रकार प्रैक्सिस’ पर 4 दिसंबर, 2013 को प्रकाशित हुआ था।)
संकरी गलियों का समाज
- वकार उस्मानी

उत्तर प्रदेश सर्वाधिक छोटे नगरों वाला प्रदेश है। इन्हें नगरों में से एक है मऊ नाथ भंजन जो अनेक कारणों से राज्य के राजनीतिक पटल पर एक खास महत्त्व रखता है। मऊ नाथ भंजन को अब केवल मऊ के नाम से जाना जाता है। अपने स्वरूप के अनुरूप ही इसकी वर्तमान व्यवस्था है। नगर का मुस्लिम बहुवर्षीय होना इसे एक स्वभाव देता है जिसने राजनीतिक आर्कांकों की पूर्ति के लिए इसे क्षेत्रीय प्रशासनकी बना डाला है। सतत प्रतितिथि बुकरों वाला ये नगर अपने भविष्य को इस वर्तमान में सुनिश्चित करने में अयोग्य पाता है। समस्याओं के अत्यधिक हो रहे इस नगर में वर्तमान में अब केवल विजली ही एक मात्र समस्या नहीं है पर ये जरूर है की यहीं एक समस्या अन्य समस्याओं को पनपने में योगदान दे रही है। विजली लूमो में जान भरती है जो स्वभाविक रूप से नगर की प्राथमिक प्रयूति को निकाह देती है। ये विजली ही लूमो की खट्टर पटरी के माध्यम से एक जटिि सामाजिक सम्बन्ध को जन्म एवं बढ़ावा देती है जो नगर के वाणिज्यिक विकास एवं सौहार्दता को बल प्रदान करती है। लूमों की गति विशेषतः बंटे हुए समाज को बौद्धका प्रतीक है व्यक्ति इस पूरे वाणिज्यिक तंत्र में जहाँ साड़ी उत्तराधि कुशल मुस्लिम कारीगर एवं दंगा राखे रखते हैं तो धारे एवं दंगा माल की बेहतर खेप की अपूर्ति एक कुशल हिन्दू बनया व्यवसायी ही सुझाव देता है। उसी प्रकार से साड़ी की हिडिजाइनिंग और ग्राफ एक मुस्लिम करता है तो पटा कटाई एक कुशल हिन्दू करारी देता है। वहीं सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है खराब हुए लूम मशीन को सही करने वाले कारीगर जो कि जकात तकनीशियन के नाम से प्रसिद्ध हैं, केवल हिन्दू ही हैं।

आजादी के बाद दंगों की विभीषिका झोले हुए और विशेष रूप से बंटे समाज में विकास की राजनीति मानो दम घोट रही है। दिशाहीन सरकारी नीतियों के दुस्साहसी नतीजें कभी भी क्षेत्रीय दैनिक में बहस का मुदा नहीं बनते बल्कि राजनीतिक द्वेष पूर्ण सामाजिक पुनः वर्गीकरण का साध हुआ प्रयास किया जाता है। (सुध्दारा?) अंग्रेजी मीडिया के पढ़ने वाले कम है, इसलिए वो कोई प्रयास नहीं करते।
केवल मौल ही नहीं बल्कि पूरे उत्तर भारत के छोटे कर्शों की मुस्लिम नागरिकों की दशा पर बहुत कम लिखा एवं समझा जाता है और इसके लिए क्षेत्रीय बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग सर्वप्रथम जिम्मेदार है। मुझे व्यक्तिगत रूप से मौल जाने का अवसर अपने स्नातकोत्तर शोध के सिलसिले में मिला।

मौल की महिलाएं जिनमे अधिकतर अंसारी मुस्लिम समाज की होती हैं, कई प्रमुख कारणों से विशेष हैं क्योंकि इनका रहन-सहन, शिक्षा एवं इनका घरेलू वस्त्र उत्पादन में मुख्य भूमिका उनने अपने पुरुष प्रधान भाषाएं में एक विशेष स्थान देता है। यहाँ शिक्षा सबके लिए समान है और वो है मदरसे जिसमे मुख्यतः सभी बुनकर लड़कियाँ शिक्षा पाती हैं। कुछ गिने चुने कॉलेज हैं पर मदरसे की कम लागत एवं धार्मिक शिक्षा देने की प्रबल भावना इन्हें इससे बेहतर विकल्प की ओर अग्रसर नहीं करती। अधिकांश लड़कियां बहुत ही छोटी उम्र से ही बुनकरी में कश्तला पा लेती हैं। इनको अपने समाज में एक बेहतर एवं कुशल कारीगर के रूप में उद्योग में सहायता एवं बढ़ावा देने की क्षमता के रूप में देखा जाता है। इनका विवाह भी मुख्यतः कम आयु में ही किया जाता है और इनके लिए वर भी नगर के ही किसी दूसरे मोहल्ले में दूंढ़ा जाता है। ये प्रथा जातिवादी एवं कुशल कारीगर को नगर के भीतर ही खानाने की कवयद जैसी ही है। जातिवादी मुस्लिम जैसे कि शेख, सम्यद एवं पटानो में इनका विवाह नहीं होता।

सरकारी तंत्र एवं पुरुष प्रधान समाज इनके बहुपूर्व जीवन को मुख्य धारा में न लाने हेतु सामान रूप से जिम्मेदार हैं। इनकी निष्क्रियता, जोकि आधारभूत सुविधाओं जैसे कि स्कूल, कॉलेज, पोलिटेक्निक एवं अस्पताल जैसी सुविधाएं देने में असफल है, समाज के पुरुष प्रधान ढांचे को ही बल देता है। नगर में ‘सेक्युलर स्पेसेज’ जैसे कि पार्क इत्यादि की कोई व्यस्था नहीं है जहाँ ये वर्ग क्रू गलियों ने सके पर नगर में ‘कम्युनल स्पेसेज’ की भरमार है जैसे कि मुहरम मैदान, सामग्री ग्राउंड इत्यादि जों पुरुष प्रधान समाज से संवालित होते हैं। बुनकर महिलाओं का जीवन मुख्यतः संकरी गतियों में बने घरों की जुगाड़ लूम मशीन के इर्द-गिर्द या घरेलू कार्यों में ही व्यतीत होता है। लूमों की खट्टर पटर की धुन मानो इन महिलाओं को एक जटिल परिवेश में शोषण हुआ समग्रतम मजिला देता हो।

(वकए, टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान, मुंबई में डेवलपमेंट स्टडीज के स्नातकोत्तर, द्वितीय वर्ष के छात्र है।)
समलैंगिकता बस यौन—रूढ़ि का मामला नहीं...

- अनुल आनंद

आपके समाज की अवधारणा में जो 'सामान्य' नहीं हैं, वे वर्जित हैं। उन्हें आप अपने समाज का हिस्सा बनने नहीं दे सकते। समलैंगिकता के खिलाफ सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का फैसला समाज के प्रभावशाली वर्ग के उस पूर्वग्रह को दिखाता है जो अपने से अलग यौन—रूढ़ि रखने वाले वर्ग को बर्दाश्त नहीं कर पाता। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के न्यायमूर्ति संघीय और मुख्यपाठ्य की बैंक ने अपने आदेश के पैरा 52 में समलैंगिकों और यौन संबंधों के अधिकारों के लिए 'तथाकथित' शब्द का इस्तेमाल किया है। भारतीय दल विधान (भादव) की धारा 377 स्त्री—पुरुष के बीच जननांगीय यौन संबंध के लिए अनुच्छेद 14 वाले हस्ताक्षर का हदस करती है। धारा 377 हमारे भारतीय संविधान में प्रदत्त मौलिक अधिकारों के विरुद्ध है। यह समाज का अधिकार (अनुसंधान 14), भेदभाव के विरुद्ध अधिकार (अनुसंधान 14), सम्मानपूर्वक जीने और गोपनीयता का अधिकार (अनुसंधान 21) आदि मौलिक अधिकारों का हनन करती है। अदालतों की यह असंवेदनशीलता समाज के कमजोर और बंचित तबकों के मुद्दों पर फैसले सुनाने वक्त भी देखने को मिलती है।

समलैंगिकों के प्रति की जाने वाली नफरत, नस्तीय और अपने से अलग वर्गों, रंग, जाति, राष्ट्रीयता इत्यादि रखने वाले समुदायों के प्रति की जाने वाली नफरत से अलग नहीं है। विषमलिंगी होना 'सामान्य' कहलाता है और समलैंगिकता 'बीमारी' बन जाती है। ये भेदभाव गोर—काले, सर्वर्ण—दलित, अमीर—गरीब जैसा भेदभाव ही हैं। समलैंगिकता पर चल रही बहस को सिफर यौन विषय और यौन सहवार को चुनने की आजादी के सवाल के रूप में नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए। इस बहस की बहुत सी परतें हैं जिन पर बात करने की जरूरत है।

समलैंगिकता के मुद्दे को लेकर पीछले दिनों देश और गैलिया में जिस तरह की बहसें होती रही हैं, उसमें से प्रमुख बहस समलैंगिकता और हिन्दू संस्कृति में इसकी स्वीकार्यता को लेकर है। बाबा रामदेव समलैंगिकता को बीमारी घोटित कर दिया। राजनीतिक दलों का समलैंगिकता को लेकर जो विचार हैं उन्हें जानना भी जरूरी होगा। भाजपा को छोड़कर दूसरे लगभग सभी प्रमुख राजनीतिक दल समलैंगिकों के
साथ हैं। समलैंगिकता के मुद्दे पर प्रगतिशील पत्रकारों और बुद्धिजीवियों के जो लेख आए हैं वे खजुराहो से लेकर हिन्दू धर्म ग्रंथों में समलैंगिक पात्रों का उद्धारण देते हुए समलैंगिकता को प्राचीन काल से ही ‘भारतीय’ संस्कृति में स्वीकार होने का दावा कर रहे हैं। वैसे भारतीयता, भारतीय संस्कृति आदि शब्दों की परिभाषा को लेकर विवाद है कि यह कठित भारतीयता सिफ हिन्दू संस्कृति का ही प्रतिनिधित्व करती है। 
अपूर्वान्द जनसतता में 15 दिसंबर को छपे अपने लेख ‘आपातसंगित : वैध अवैध’ में इस समस्या की ओर ईशारा करते हैं। अपूर्वान्द अपने इस लेख में कहते हैं,

"...समलैंगिक यौन आकर्षण को भारतीय बताने के लिए जो उद्धारण खोजे जा रहे हैं, वे सब उस संसार के हैं, जिन्हें हम ढीले-ढाले ढंग से हिन्दू ही कहते हैं। लेकिन भारतीय और हिन्दू तो समानार्थक नहीं।"

हालांकि अपूर्वान्द खुद उस ढीले-ढाले परिभाषा से भ्रमित लगते हैं और भारतीय और हिन्दू को अपने लेख में समानार्थी की तरह इस्तेमाल करते हैं। वह इस लेख में आगे कहते हैं,

“नाशीवाद भारतीय परंपरा से समर्थित नहीं और न दलित अधिकार का आंदोलन और न श्रमिकों का अधिकार, न सामान्य जन की स्वतंत्रता।"

अपूर्वान्द यहाँ जिस ‘भारतीय’ परंपरा की बात कर रहे हैं वह असल में हिन्दू परंपरा ही है। इस ‘भारतीय’ परंपरा में आदिवासी परंपरा और देश की दूसरी परंपराओं के लिए जगह नहीं है। जनसतता में ही 13 दिसंबर को छपे लेख ‘संस्कार की सामाजिक बुनावट’ में प्रकाश के रूप एक तरफ ‘मनुसृति’ और ‘नारद सृति’ के समलैंगिकता विरोधी होने की बात कहते हैं वहीं दूसरी तरफ कई दूसरे हिन्दू धर्म ग्रंथों में समलैंगिकों की उपस्थिति को समाज के उनके प्रति ‘सहिष्णु’ होने का प्रमाण मानते हैं। हिन्दू धर्म ग्रंथों के इस विरोधाभास पर वह यह तर्क देते हैं कि समलैंगिक विरोधी धर्म समप्रदाय में अधिक प्रचलित नहीं थे। हालांकि प्रकाश के रूप से समलैंगिक सम्मिलक हिन्दू धर्म ग्रंथों और उनके समलैंगिक पात्रों के उद्धारण देते हैं, उन ग्रंथों के अनुसार समलैंगिक/किन्नर पात्रों को बहुत सम्मान की नजर से नहीं देखा जाता था। ऋषि-मुनि किन्नर और समलैंगिक हो जाने के ‘आप’ देते थे।

इन बुद्धिजीवियों की समस्या यह है कि हिन्दू संस्कृति से उद्धारण देते वक्त वह इसके जटिल और विरोधाभासी समिक्षकों के उद्देश्य को समझने की कोशिश नहीं करते। उनके इस समस्या पर व्याख्या ने अपने ब्लॉग लेख ‘आप वामपंथी हैं, तो समलैंगिक तो होंगे ही...!’ में चुटकी ली है:
“...जरा प्रकाश समेत तमाम वामपंथी बताएं कि वह सुविधा की कोन सी आड़ है, जिसके तहत तनिक भी मौका मिलते ही आप पुराण-रामायण-महाभारत को कालबाह्य, गैर-ऐतिहासिक और अप्रासंगिक बताते हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर अपनी बात सिद्ध करने के लिए उनकी ही दुहाई देते हैं...”

हालांकि व्यालोक का यह लेख अपने शीर्षक में ही दुरारगी है। जैसे नारीवादी आंदोलन का समर्थन करने वाले का नारी होना एकमात्र योग्यता नहीं है वैसे ही समलैंगिक आंदोलन का समर्थन करने वाले वामपंथियों का समलैंगिक होना जरूरी नहीं है। इस लेख में व्यालोक ने अपने तथ्यों और तक्तों के सहारे हिन्दू दक्षिणपंथ और पितृसत्ता के गढ़ की हिकाजत करने की कोशिश की है। व्यालोक का यह सवाल हास्यास्पद है कि “क्या वामपंथी होने के लिए घोषित तौर पर समलैंगिकता का समर्थन करना जरूरी है?” व्यालोक शायद भूल गए है कि समानता वामपंथ के मूल सिद्धांतों में से एक है और भादवी की धारा 377 यौन अल्पसंख्यकों के समानता के अधिकार के खिलाफ है।

संघ परिवार, दक्षिणपंथी संगठन और दूसरे धार्मिक संगठन (बर्ख, मुस्लिम संगठन, आदि), वे सभी समलैंगिकता के मुद्दे पर एकमत हो इसका विरोध कर रहे हैं। दक्षिणपंथी संगठनों के लिए तो योगिकता पर चर्चा करना ही ‘भारतीय’ संस्कृति के खिलाफ है। यहाँ गौर करने वाली बात है कि जो लोग नारीवाद के खिलाफ हैं, वे ही लोग समलैंगिकता का भी विरोध कर रहे हैं। दरअसल पितृसत्ता को समलैंगिकता से खतरा है और सभी धर्म मुख्यतः पितृसत्तात्मक हैं। धर्म-संस्कृति के ‘रूपक’ यह कभी नहीं चाहेंगे कि यौन विषयों पर लोग अपने मनमुताबिक पूंछ लें। गीताप्रेस, गोरखपुर की किताबें यह उपदेश देती है कि कंसे यौन संबंध की उपयोगिता केवल बच्चे पैदा करने तक ही सीमित है, इसका उपयोग आनंद पाने के लिए नहीं किया जाना चाहिए।

विविधता है कि इजराईल, अमेरिका और दूसरे पश्चिमी देशों में समलैंगिकता को मुस्लिमों के खिलाफ हथियार के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है। इजराईल ने ‘ने प्रोपंगडा वार’ का इस्तेमाल समलैंगिकों को फलस्वीमी मुस्लिमों के खिलाफ भड़काने के लिए किया जहाँ समलैंगिकों को सरकार की तरफ से विभिन्न तरह की रियायतें दी गयी और इस्लाम के समलैंगिकता विरोधी होने का जमकर प्रचार किया गया। यह एक पीड़ित वर्ग को दूसरे पीड़ित वर्ग के खिलाफ भड़काने का अभियान है। इसी साल अमेरिका में समलैंगिकों के एक कार्यक्रम में कुरान को समलैंगिक विरोधी बता कर जलाया गया था। इस घटना पर एक अमेरिकी पत्रकार की टिपणी थी कि समलैंगिकता विरोधी तो बाईबिल भी है लेकिन अमेरिका में
बाइबिल को जलाने की हिम्मत कोई नहीं कर सकता। बहुत संभव है कि जो हिन्दू दक्षिणपंथी आज हमारे देश में समलैंगिकता का विरोध कर रहे हैं, वे भविष्य में समलैंगिकों के ‘शुभचिन्तक’ बन जाए और उन्हें मुस्लिमों के खिलाफ बड़काएं। आखिर इजराइल इनका आदर्श रहा है और ‘भारतीय’ या ‘फिर हिन्दू संस्कृति’ भी ऐसे विरोधाधिकारों से भरी है जो जरूरत के हिसाब से समलैंगिकों के पक्ष और विपक्ष में जा सकती है।

बुद्धिजीवी तारिक समदान समलैंगिकता के मुद्दे पर कहते हैं कि समलैंगिकता पर इस्लाम में भले ही पाबंदी है लेकिन एक मुस्लिम को समलैंगिक होने की वजह से नैतिकता के नियमों का हवाला देकर इस्लाम से निकाला नहीं जा सकता। लगभग सभी धर्मों का प्रगतिशील और बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग समलैंगिकता के पक्ष में अपनी आवाज उठा रहा है।

पिछले डेढ़ सौ सालों में सिर्फ 6 मौकों पर ही भादवि की धारा 377 के अंतर्गत मामला दर्ज हुआ है और सजा भी हुई तो बस एक मामले में। लेकिन इस कानून का विरोध इसलिए करना जरूरी है ताकि समलैंगिक आत्मसमान के साथ जी सके और इस कानून के दुरुपयोग को रोका जा सके। लेकिन इसके साथ ही हमें समाज के उन वर्गों की लड़ाई के बारे में भी बात करने की जरूरत है जिन्हें सताने के लिए धारा 377 जैसे किसी कानून की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती। पुलिस हिरासत में दलित, आदिवासी और दूसरे कमजोर तबकों से आने वाली महिलाओं के साथ किए जाने वाले बलात्कार के लिए किसी कानून का सहारा नहीं लेना पड़ता। किसी बम धमाके के बाद धर्म के आधार पर की जाने वाली गिरफ्तारियों का भी कोई कानून नहीं है। इन वर्गों के अपराधीकरण के लिए किसी कानून की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती। आज जरूरत यह है कि समाज के इन सभी वर्गों के प्रति हो रहे भेदभाव और अपराधीकरण के खिलाफ एकजुट होकर लड़ाई की जाए।

(अनुल, टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान, मुंबई में मीडिया एंड कल्चरल स्टडीज के स्नातकोत्तर, प्रथम वर्ष के छात्र है।)
बुलबुला
— काव्यभरी सरिता

tो बस अमी... हाँ बस अमी अमी... कुछ तो हुआ... कुछ जादूईरा...

हाथों में थे जूठे बर्तन और नारंगी स्क्रब और उस स्क्रब पर लगा झांग...

तभी उस झांग के चंगुल से खुद को छुड़ाकर एक नन्हा सा बुलबुला कुछ ऊपर उठा और उठता चला गया...

और वो उड़ता ही चला गया उस दरवाज़े की ओर जोकि गुसलखाने की तरफ खुलता था...

फिर वो नन्हा सा बुलबुला कुछ नीचे को आया, और हमारे दिल में एक धक्क सी हुई के अब ये न बचेगा...

और वो नीचे की ओर तैरता चला गया, ना जाने क्या था उसके अन्दर...

फिर ऊपर उठा थोड़ा यहाँ—वहाँ मटका और होले—होले वापस नीचे बड़े प्यार से नारंगी टाइल पर आकर उसकी दरार में घुल गया...

जाते जाते हमारे मन की बात को और पक्का कर गया कि यह जीवन चाहे एक पल तो हो पर उसका सफर कैसा रहा यही मायने रखता है...
हजारों ख्वाहिशें ऐसी
— कादंबरी सारिता

हजारों ख्वाहिशें ऐसी के हर ख्वाहिश पे दम निकले,
बहुत निकले मेरे अरमान, लेकिन, फिर भी कम निकले।
निकलना खुल्द से आदम का सुनते आये हैं लेकिन,
बहुत बेआबरू होकर तेरे कूचे से हम निकले।
— गालिब

गालिब सहब माफ़ी...

हजारों ख्वाहिशें ऐसी के....
किसी ख्वाहिश पे न दिल पिघला, न सांस उखड़ी, न दम निकला
बहुत निकले तेरे—मेरे अरमां और...
खत्म हुए, बस, गूँ ही... खत्म हुए
अब निकलेगी तो औरत,
औरत की कोख कि गहराई से।
बेआबरू नहीं बेरङ्ग होकर,
तेरी चोखट कि परछाई से।

(कादंबरी, टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान, मुंबई में सोशल वर्क की स्नातकोत्तर, द्वितीय वर्ष की छात्रा है।)
We love curd rice and you love dry fish...!

Beyond happy diversities

- Nidhin Shobhana

We have been witnessing varied assertions of differences 1 by marginalized sections, in our campuses. These differences are often based on caste, region, sexualities, and ideologies to list a few. We are told to celebrate these differences.

How do we celebrate them? One way to ‘celebrate differences’ would be through dialogues; Dialogues between different individuals and groups. However, in our analysis of differences we often fail to recognize negative histories which make groups ‘different’. Or in other words we fail to recognize the inherent conflict in dialogues on differences. For example, if an upper-caste urban man wants to engage in a dialogue with an urban Dalit woman, a simple exchange of ‘we love curd rice with extra helpings of ghee and you love dry fish!’ will not work. The power structures which decide our menu will also need reckoning. Such an exposure will connect them in a system of caste-class hierarchy. This could be viewed either as a dialogue which threatens or as a dialogue which liberates. Unfortunately, it’s often viewed as a dialogue which threatens. This ‘sense of threat’ is a chronic image in our campus.

How do people deal with this threat? There are several ways in which we deal with threats. We can flatten differences and claim that we are all humans. We freeze in silent guilt. We lament the loss of homogeneity. We patronize certain causes and make them our exotic sub-headings. I’ll illustrate these interesting responses through episodes I witnessed as a student at TISS. These responses are based on first hand experiences and real conversations with friends on campus.

Voting for humanity

During TISS Students union elections in 2013, the campus looked bright and beautiful with posters. Among all those posters, I vividly remember a few which invoked ‘humanity’. Ideally, I should have no problems with such a liberal invocation. However I wanted to explore the implicit connotations of such an appeal. The appeal asks the reader to grow beyond sectarian, primordial identities. In a way

1 Different social movements against the hegemonic structures in education have allowed the historical entry of many marginalized social groups into higher education.
claiming that the poster maker has already achieved this growth. It sells ‘humanity’, with the passion of a stock clearing sale, as a miraculous potion to deal with our identities. Such appeals are quite popular and clichéd. However, the fact that it is a cliché doesn’t reduce its political significance. Why would someone make such an appeal? It’s a response, by a certain section of the campus to the turmoil caused by ‘threatening diversities’. It’s a sign of how dialogues go bad. Brought up in myths of formal equality, this group uses an ultimate rhetoric that we are all humans. In this process the poster maker identifies differences as ‘divisive’. They flatten differences in search of sameness. I’ll try to illustrate this point with the help of few more examples.

In one of the talks organized in our campus, a close friend of mine, tried to engage with the speaker, on the issue of caste and environment. His question was simple – how do you think the environmental movement should respond to the question of caste? How can we build bridges between anti-caste struggles and environmental movements? The response of the speaker was quite alarming. She started off by saying that she did not understand the question. She called it an issue which was ‘invented’, absent during her college days (the 1980s). She added that her family had dealt with the issue of caste, since they denounced their surname and took up ‘Shiva’. What’s interesting here is the fact that she did not answer the question. She spoke briefly about how she dealt with caste and moved on. Thus she made a moral case for her ‘greater humanness’. This was done by highlighting her wonderful ability to erase her upper caste identity. And erasure of upper-caste identity is possible by a change in surname.

A different version of a similar instance unveiled in the convention centre. The French bearded techno-speaker was answering a question raised by another good friend. His question was whether the technoman faced any discrimination on the basis of his ‘lower caste’ identity. He answered that with ‘education’ he erased his caste identity, he became casteless. His answer was met with a warm round of applause. More than his answer, which was insensitive to the complex irrationalities of caste, what disturbed me was the applauding. The audience saturated with a sense of threat, found an answer to its endless quest for sameness in ‘Education’; education in its narrowest possible sense. Education equated to institutionalized credentials like B.A. or M.A. The claim that we are all students of TISS and that our foremost identity in the institute is that of a TISSian emerges from such insecurities. What this group

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2 I thank Sangharsh Apte for raising this issue with the speaker
3 I thank my friend Ravi Ujale for having raised this question with the speaker.
needs to remember is that students who enter TISS are dipped in their social locations, including them. We have different pasts and will surely have different futures. You can’t wipe out the conflicts of different social locations by forging a common identity which hides the dirt beneath the carpet.

Does this mean that common identities or rather common grounds of discussions are not possible? They are surely possible. However, this would happen only when we have the courage to table our conflicts. And for this we will have to create protocols to fight loudly.

**Frozen in guilt**

To freeze in guilt is another response to threatening differences. And this echoes across the campus. It comes from an acute awareness of one’s privileges. However, this guilt surfaces in everyday conversations as silence. What does such silence do? This silence stops us from effectively communicating our privileges. This in turn, transfers issues of caste to Dalits alone. The inability to letter ones privilege, promotes, what I call, ‘caste silences’. These caste silences can be practised democratically. One illustration could be as follows.

In one of the cultural studies classes4 at TISS, the upper caste teacher asked whether the class wanted to ‘deal’ with Caste and Culture or in other words whether it was ‘alright’ if they did not ‘deal’ with it. It’s very important to mention that, ‘Caste and Culture’ was accommodated as an additive to the tail end of the course. Instead of weaving caste as a fundamental category of analysis in every section, it was limited to this separate section. There is nothing new about this approach. However, let’s rewind and go back to the question she posed to her students. The most unfortunate details of her question can be listed as follows (a) She deliberately silences her caste-self (b) A discussion on caste and culture was posited as something which would have no consequences on her (c) In the name of being democratic ( in this case by allowing students to exercise the right to choice) she creatively grounds her indifference . What does this do? It denies many students their opportunity to ground their cultural histories which have gone unlettered and it also denies caste Hindu students moments of self-reflection. The ‘democratic’ language of the upper- caste teacher, for me and many others, is a language of deafening ‘caste’ silence. It’s important for our academic leaders to recognize and act on the need to be vulnerable in unfriendly terrains.

4 I thank my dear poet friend Firdaus Soni for this story.
The loss of the chocolate boy

The gate-keepers of social science education have been lamenting the loss of the chocolate boy for quite sometime now. Who am I talking about? Well, the chocolate boy of general category is the urban, heterosexual Brahmin Male. We find a dip in their numbers in absolute terms. Where did these men go? They have been the primary beneficiaries of the IT revolution. They are overseas, populating foreign universities and workplaces. This happened simultaneously with the entry of Dalit-Bahujan groups into higher education. The heterosexual urban Brahmin male student, who would have been the ‘natural’ successors of our ‘male authority figures’ in our universities are out of sight, but not out of mind. This is a matter of genuine lament for certain groups on campus. The epitome of quality and seamless articulation is nowhere in sight. They, the guardians of higher education, believe that they are left with a ‘miserable’ ‘meritless’ lot. How do these groups respond to such a ‘crisis in social sciences in India’? They do this by nurturing the gene-pool of the chocolate boy by forming academic castes; highly endogamous, terribly incestuous. Affirmative action policies are approached by this group with an inherent sense of loss.

Does this mean that there are no ‘happy moments’ for chocolate boy and his company? Surely, celebrations do take place. One important site of such happiness is campus placement. Like every year many students in Social Works opted for placement through a centrally created placement cell. Though, I do not know the details of how the cell functions, the results of the first round of placements needs critical attention since it exposes a persistent trend. Out of the fifty five students who got placed not a single student belongs to the SC category. The number of OBCs and STs are also dismal.

Where do we locate this moment of ‘caste joy’? It can be located at the many junctions where caste meets capitalism. In this neo-liberal economy, the idea of merit is cruelly defined by the conditions laid down by the funders. Does this mean that the conditions were any different earlier? Not really. The only difference being, earlier the students were more or less a homogenous category coming from similar social locations. Today the composition of students has changed. This change was not accompanied with a change in the ideology of merit, skills and aesthetics. Merit is often pitted against social justice. The images of merit, skill and aesthetics are trapped in the Brahmin guise. The market sanctifies this image. I would argue that more than tangible, rational factors which determine
placements, there are irrational factors which blind our sight and determine placements. The ideology of aesthetics and beauty can be pointed out as an example. I was told by my friend, that the caste-Hindu brigade in the placement cell have been constantly encouraging dalit-bahujan students to take up low end, low-paying field-oriented jobs. ‘You (Dalit-Bahujans) are good grass root workers!’ they say. On the other hand, ‘good-looking’ upper-caste candidates are placed very easily in high end jobs. Thus caste reproduces itself in every space. We need to reckon with the irrationalities of power structures to logically ground ‘caste joy’.

Higher education, symbolized by the caste-male authority figure, is hostile to the historical entry of many marginalized sections. Hostility is not often displayed as explicit hatred. It’s also done by appropriations. I’ll give certain examples of such appropriations in the next section

**Shuddhikriyas and appropriations**

In my last semester at TISS, I remember having attended a ‘Gender and Caste’ seminar. The organizers had invited Dalit Women writers from three states. They spoke about their life, work and journey. The seminar was chaired by a senior female authority figure. She spoke about how Dalit women writers have come off age and can now embrace the universal identity of writers and not Dalit writers. This point was well taken by many. But there were many others including me who disliked the statement and even exposed its caste connotations. The underlying assumptions of the statement can be listed as follows (a) Dalit writers by some mystique virtue can never be universal writers (b) However, they can be ‘certified’ as writers by a group of caste academicians, through rituals like seminars (c) Upper-caste writers, like the chair herself, are elementally universal, again due to some mystique virtue of theirs. These assumptions may seem funny, but they are dangerous; dangerous because they expose hostility which has turned into a sophisticated process of co-option and appropriation. The desperation to subsume conflicts as exotic sub-headings is yet another response to threatening diversities. This group mourns the loss of homogeneity often in terms of age. A sophisticated (but less nuanced) idiom of ageism is used to mourn this loss. The brahmanical female authority figure, who dominates certain disciplines, is often nostalgic about her youth when she dreamt of a different world, along with many

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I would like to thank Varsha Ayyar, Pranay, Meenakshi, Raju and Firdaus who helped discern the closing statement of the chair.
like her. They spoke the same language, quoted same examples, sang same songs and enjoyed each other’s company. Today, things are different. They say that the ‘youth’ (for them a homogenous entity) has no interest. However, this innocent posturing of ageism needs to be challenged in every occasion. This posturing hides the connotation of caste.

Not a Conclusion

Can we re-imagine differences? I think we can. It’s possible, when we are ready to defend the conflicts ingrained in threatening diversities. We need to formulate ground rules which help us fight with each other. We need to move beyond happy diversities and peaceful co-existence. What we need is a critical co-existence. Critical co-existence which threatens us and ultimately re-shapes us. This would need a thorough re-imagination of spaces of engagement and dialogue. We should accept and facilitate fights. Fights are not bad, they ventilate latent anger. This would eventually create common level playing fields.

(Nidhin was a student of M.A. Habitat Policy and Practice at TISS, Mumbai but dropped out in the third semester.)
The “Unspeakable Inequalities”: Gender-Neutrality and Educational Spaces

- Ketaki Chowkhani

Some educational institutions in India follow a policy of gender equality, but in practice there exist subtle forms of gender power relations and a disciplining of the female body. Despite the fact that boys and girls study together, play together, have access to the same resources, gender socialisation plays a role in ways in which certain disciplinary norms are at work.

When I had turned 21, and was in my final year of college, I was gifted my first mobile phone. It was a very basic model that allowed me only to make and receive calls and send and receive messages, in addition to a few other basic functions like the calculator, the alarm clock and so on.

Some of my friends too owned mobile phones, and as young people in the first decade of the 21st century, we gladly exchanged jokes via the medium of messages. Some of the jokes that were circulated during that time in my close friends’ circle, which consisted of boys as well as girls, were ‘adult jokes’ or jokes with a certain degree of sexual content.

At this point, I am reminded of a particular incident. One day I had sent one such joke, a witty one, to a female friend of mine. It so happened that one of her male friends who happened to be by her side during that time intercepted her phone and having reading the message, exclaimed with much shock along the following lines, “What a dirty joke. Oh my god, she sends these kinds of jokes!” And thus the news had spread like a forest fire in the campus.

Much before the news had reached me, every other person in the campus seemed to know about it. I was immediately informed by some friends that the jokes that I had sent to a male friend was read by all the other boys in the hostel. The boys told me since I sent dirty jokes they wouldn’t communicate with me through text messages. A point had reached when the boys even refused to have my mobile number.
The entire incident amused me. It did not really strike me as basically problematic. But now I can read the complexities of the whole ‘harmless little’ incident.

The reaction to the message came from the young men, the same men who watched porn slyly on the side. They were scandalised by a young woman exchanging a witty joke with a slight element of sex, with another woman. It was almost as if, for the men in question, the woman who was worth keeping in touch with or was worth considering to be a part of one’s social circle was someone who was devoid of any interest in sexuality or sexual material. It was a subtle process of ‘slut shaming’ and excluding women who have any interest in sexuality. It brought to light the Madonna-whore complex at work in the young men’s minds and how this binary of the good woman/bad woman orders everyday interactions.

What was more interesting was the fact that this took place in a college that took pride in preaching ‘equality’ between men and women and that believed that gender identity was not imposed on any of its students. If one were to ask the women, I am certain that one would hear of many more such incidents. But because of the gender-neutral policy, the space to talk meaningfully about prejudices was missing.

Merely having a policy about equal access to resources does not make any space gender-neutral or even gender-less, or equal. The socialisation of students among themselves often betrays some amount of misogyny. It does not change how a man perceives women and categorises them into the binaries of the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ or the Madonna-whore complex. For instance, in a heterogeneous group comprised of boys and girls, boys might prefer the fairer and thinner girls and might exclude or shame the ones who do not adhere to a normative sense of ‘the feminine’. When this happens, the space to protest, resist or seek some form of equality and justice seems to be suddenly missing. This is so because the educational space, which is supposed to be ‘gender-neutral’ or ‘gender-transcendental’ does not recognise these everyday acts of disciplining the female body. At the same time, having a gender-neutral policy makes one incapable of, literally speaking, what has recently been coined ‘slut shaming’. ‘Slut shaming’ in a gender-neutral college then renders the very act unspeakable. Those who protest or dissent then carry the burden of being gendered, or worrying too much about gender in a gender-less world, just like those who talk about caste discrimination suddenly carry the burden of caste, absolving
the higher castes of any caste identity.

One way to think about such acts of ‘slut shaming’ that one cannot name is by thinking through the ideas associated with postfeminism. Postfeminism is a term used to herald a time when equality is supposedly reached and when feminism is then no longer required. Postfeminism can be thought of as an epistemic break from the second wave, but most importantly, it is played out in the context of media culture and is often bemoaned as lacking a political agenda. Postfeminism is contextually located in a neoliberal and globalised first world space where there is a constant emphasis on choice and empowerment through a language of the media and globalisation (Gill 2007a). Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie warn us against taking this ‘choice’ discourse at face value and try to critically think about the problems and implications of the constant occupations with the self and the body. This move from sexual object to sexual subject is not totally unproblematic (Gill 2007a). Rosalind Gill (2007b) argues that one needs to look at the way power works in these contexts. One needs to be wary of being celebratory of this media discourse of ‘choice’ and unpack the ways in which it interpellates women into normalised roles.

Following from Bartky’s reading of Foucault’s modernisation of power, Rosalind Gill (2007a) looks at how the female body is overly sexualised and why one needs to be critical of this move. At the same time, Gill observes a return to the traditional pleasures of femininity: the heterosexual family, giving up work, taking the husband’s name among a few other things. Gill sees this as telling us two things: one, the ‘return of the repressed’ and second, prefeminist ideas being repackaged as postfeminism. These do not challenge normative heterosexual femininity. The danger that Gill reads into it is that all of this is packaged in the language of neoliberal individualism.

It is in this postfeminist context that Rosalind Gill (2011a) argues that it’s time to use the word sexism again and recover it from its previous meanings. She looks at the new forms that sexism takes in the present context, where equality is assumed and yet where men are privileged in various ways. These inequalities are those that exist outside the strategies that are used to challenge these inequalities: like anti-discrimination laws. Rosalind Gill calls them unspeakable inequalities: ‘largely unnoticed and unspoken about even by those most adversely affected by them’ (Gill, 2011: 5). Talking about it in the contemporary media workplace, Gill says that the new and mutated form of sexism that exists works
precisely through ‘the invalidation and annihilation of any language for talking about structural inequalities. The potency of sexism lies in its very unspeakability’.

My own experiences of the unspeakable inequalities that play out in spaces that have a gender-neutral policy, especially in educational spaces, reflect precisely such postfeminist notions. What happens when one has formal equality between boys and girls in educational institutions? What are the spaces for resistance then based on gender discrimination? How do women and men negotiate with these in such an environment?

*(Ketaki is a Ph.D Candidate at TISS, Mumbai)*

**References**


[1] ‘Slut shaming’ is a way in which women who do not confirm to gender expectations or who act on/acknowledge sexual feelings are made to feel inferior and/or are discriminated against. This is done in multiple ways and needn’t involve the use of the word ‘slut’ or any other related word.
Notes from Sonagachi

- Poornima Thapa

It could have been a usual nondescript government school playground, in a regular resettlement colony, in any city of India. But it was different.

It was not the kind of scene that one envisions when thinking about Asia’s largest red-light district, which houses more than ten thousand brothel-based sex workers. Adolescent boys, in purple and red and fresh new cleats, were bolting around the field. Some were tackling a football, others were trying to warm up, hopping, kicking the air, gleaming with perspiration. It was the football match Sonagachi had been looking forward to.

The ground was hardly appropriate — with puddles and bits of stones scattered around. The spectators, mostly young men from the community, lined the boundary, some squatting on the grass, others perched on bricks or fences. A lone mongrel scampered around near the Titagarh Goalpost, bewildered at the conglomeration. The extras in their keds were competing for the spotlight, trying to hit the ball between the goalposts, flaunting their head-butts. The potbellied referee blew the whistle, and the ground was cleared for the match. The young men were all charged up, and as the match began with ‘Waka Waka’ playing on the loudspeakers, they made it very clear that they meant business.

The match was being played out between Team Titagarh and Team Seoraphully as part of the Padatik Football League (PFL) funded by UNFPA. PFL was an initiative of the Amra Padatik Programme, the sports arm of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC).

DMSC began in 1995 as an HIV/STI (sexually transmitted infection) intervention programme under Dr. Samarjit Jana. Today, it encompasses several initiatives, which focus on multiple issues surrounding the lives of Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs). The Mamta Network works towards collectivization and mobilization of HIV positive women, while Usha is a micro-credit and cooperative banking initiative.
Unmaad 2013-2014

Exclusively for CSWs. DMSC realized that it would be difficult for these women to access the bank during office hours as they are usually up till late at night. Hence, the ‘daily collection initiative’ was born, wherein the children of these women were employed to go door-to-door to collect money, which would be deposited in the bank. DMSC is also actively involved with mainstreaming the children of these women. Shrishti is a vocational training programme, which trains the children in the production of handicraft goods (terracotta toys, figurines, bead work), while Beravhenge is an educational assistance program to tackle stigmatization and discrimination of these children in schools. DMSC also provides training in dance and music for these children through Komol Gandhar. Sangeeta* (name changed), who was trained to be a classical dancer by Komol Gandhar, now teaches other children from the community and dreams of establishing her own dance school one day. She is on cloud nine these days, as she will be traveling to Bangkok soon for a dance competition. For a nominal fee, the children can also get enrolled at Rahul Vidya Niketan, which is a residential school that provides football and vocational training.

Durbar realized that it was crucial to view the commercial sex workers in totality, complete with the social context that these women function in. The organization has hence done a splendid job of looking at the issues surrounding these women without oversimplifying them and relegating them to a medical problem of STI and HIV/AIDS. Their willingness to innovate and eagerness to involve the community has sustained them over the past fifteen years and has enabled them to gain recognition here in Sonagachi, in the community as well as amongst the local authorities. The organization is practically run by the commercial sex workers and their children, with 60% of the staff being from the community. The other 40% comprises of doctors, lawyers, counselors and other technical personnel.

The boys participating in the match were all trained by DMSC coaches in football training sessions held in the commercial sex areas of Titagarh and Seoraphully, where they reside with their mothers. There was much discussion about two boys from the Titagarh team who had recently participated in the World Slum Soccer championship in Poland, the only one of its kind for the underprivileged.

It was a forty-five minute match with a fifteen minute break. The first half saw no goals, but the second half was more aggressive and two goals and a red card later I realized that it was more thrilling than
any other sport I had ever watched on T.V. It was also different because I was rooting for both the sides.

(Poornima is a 2nd year student of MPH in Social Epidemiology at TISS, Mumbai)

The emotional fascism of Bala: Paradesi (2013)

- Bishal Halder

It’s been four days since I saw the Tamil film director Bala’s latest feature ‘Paradesi’ (Vagabond) and I’m still smarting. At the sheer impunity with which Bala does the cinematic medium an injustice. At the manner in which he throttles his own labour of love to our horror and, I suspect, his joy. At his presumptuousness in determining, for his viewers, the degree and meaning of bleakness and misery that they can endure, before their sanity and reason abandon them.

My situation as a viewer vis-a-vis Bala’s as a director can best be explained by drawing an analogy with a situation that Clarice Starling, the feisty heroine of the Hannibal series, finds herself in. On the way to visit Hannibal for the first time, she meets Dr. Chilton, in charge of the section of the asylum that contains Hannibal. Chilton hands Clarice a bunch of photographs of Hannibal’s victims, post-facto. Clarice, while looking at them, feels Chilton’s unblinking gaze upon her. She doesn’t know which is worse: the photographs or his gaze.

Except that in this case, the actual perpetrator and the one who gazes at us, waiting for us to flinch, squirm, curl up in disgust and ultimately plead for mercy is one and the same. And a perpetrator of what, precisely? This cinematic equivalent of watching meat burn black over a fire? This clothesline bearing the mangled, bloody remains of any and all artistry Bala might have shown in this film?

At this stage I ought to make a disclaimer: I’m hardly a stranger to brutality and misery on screen. John Hillcoat’s ‘The Proposition’ is a thing of lacerating, surpassing beauty, oozing poetry alongside blood, one of my eternal favourites. I’ve found myself transformed into someone who regards, with horrified fascination, the twisted, gruesome fates that befall characters in Pankaj Advani’s films, so textured and vigorous are his narratives. Despite my ample reservations about Mel Gibson’s cinematic sensibilities, I’m still in awe of his craft as a filmmaker and as an innovative manufacturer of dread. And it is totally

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to his credit that Shekhar Kapur succeeds in making the rugged landscapes of central India as impressionistically brutal and harsh as the characters in ‘Bandit Queen’.

The disclaimer has a twofold purpose: firstly, to establish for the sake of this discussion, a reasonable standard for onscreen brutality. Secondly, to undercut Bala’s claim (or reputation) of making stark, harsh narratives about “freaks” on the fringes of society, apropos this film. Its purpose is not, by any means, to make a judgment upon the mental hardiness of an individual based upon the degree and extent of onscreen brutality he or she can tolerate.

The story can be summed up in a couple of sentences: an entire drought-stricken-village-full of people is duped into indentured labour on a tea plantation owned by the British. Our protagonist, Rasa (Atharva), the village drummer, falls in love with the feisty Angamma (Vedhicka) from the same village, impregnates her, before being whisked away to work on the tea plantation, leaving her behind with child. Once these particulars are out of the way, the film becomes a chronicle of the brutalisation of simple village folk at the hands of nature (unsystematically) and at the hands of colonial masters and overseers (systematically). Rasa has the misfortune of being a (male) Bala protagonist, which entitles him to particular and exceptional cruelty. Indeed, it is through his protagonist that Bala establishes a hierarchy of exploitation: before half the village is sold into slavery, Rasa is ill-treated, marginalised and discriminated against by the village folk themselves. He has the added disadvantage of being cheerfully, unbelievably naive, almost a child trapped in a tall, strapping body, with the result that he’s almost always taken for granted by everyone he meets. When he bashfully passes off his fatherhood as being the result of Angamma’s decision, it is not a flaky, roguish refusal to shoulder responsibility, but a genuine statement, something we can understand, but Maragamma (Dhansika), a female co-worker to whom it is addressed, cannot quite.

Bala’s animalistic heroes are the rage among his fans and detractors alike; this kind of a gentle, meek protagonist is a complete surprise, more likely, a subversion (though his eating habits are woefully in line with those of his mates from the Bala pantheon). His intransigence in portraying the more unsavoury aspects of his protagonists counterbalanced against their relatively wholesome, likeable ones always lends an interesting dynamic to the arcs of these characters, playing up the question of their
ultimate redeemability almost to the point of suspense. Rasa is a character designed to milk our sympathy, a babe in the woods who is exploited even by those who love him. With teeth-gnashing perversity, then, Bala has subverted the very trope of the animalistic hero, by making Rasa here arrive at the film’s only piece of insight: no animal enslaves its own kind. Human beings do. Ergo...

What is the point of this film’s existence? The villagers seem to be working in shifts alternate to the colonialists and the Indian overseers to ensure Rasa does not experience a moment of happiness. The photography by Chezhiyan, employing a filter that casts a leaden, sepulchral pall, makes the locations and people look as though they’ve survived a volcanic eruption. There are wide, sweeping crane shots, tracking shots and long shots of the parched, barren landscape as a human stream wends its way across it, on the way to a putative Eden. Bala is at his most effective here, conveying the interminability of the journey through umpteen shots of the endless landscape and relentless cutting. GV Prakash Kumar’s dirge plays on the soundtrack doughtily, the singer’s voice a sustained wail of lament, soldiering on. There is no hell like the hell of boredom, as Alfed Bester wrote. The human beings are always framed in wide or mid-shots, accentuating their frailty, their insignificance in a universe conspiring to tear them apart. There are no close-ups, unless you count those of upturned eyes, shivering due to a bad bout of the ‘flu. The dialogues studiedly turn away from conveying anything about the inner states of the characters under such extreme conditions. There is surprisingly little bloodshed.

The scene of the unscrupulous overseer wheedling the men-folk of the village to take loans and repay them by working at the tea gardens is shot, cut and scored with all the subtlety of a public service announcement. Especially those that play in cinema halls before the main feature. This is a crying shame for it is the fulcrum on which the film and the fates of its principal characters rest.

A particular episode (actually the introduction scene of the chief goravillain) seems to have walked in from another film. As the villain makes his way through the shrubbery to survey the new batch of slaves, especially the female ones, he meets a veteran female slave who is a part of his harem. These ladies have the distinction of being rechristened with English, Christian names in return for their services. While pinching her and miming the act of breaking her nose off, tossing it up and eating it, the soundtrack actually plays a piece of music that would’ve been at home in a sitcom. Only to be replaced
by the usual dread-laden score a few seconds later when the *sahib* attempts to disport with a new female slave. Two minutes later, as we rotate through unexpected, short-lived humour, horror, oppression and tragedy, the primary overseer (also Tamil) stands upon a huge boulder in the centre of the static maelstrom the tea gardens resemble, and casts a dire warning. Bala can’t bring himself to be concerned with the specifics of the warning beyond the first couple of lines: he chooses instead to frame the overseer making facial contortions while brandishing a stick, as if scaring away eight year olds, while the background score reaches its most foreboding yet, drowning out his voice entirely.

For that is precisely how Bala views his characters and his viewers, as eight year olds he can pummel into a howling, blubbering mass of tears, with his supposedly devastating stories and heart-rending, thunderous scores, with actors that bawl and growl and flail their limbs like wounded animals, playing characters condemned to burn in a hell of despair forevermore. Within these parameters, the climax of this film, seen as a standalone sequence with no knowledge of what has transpired before, works remarkably well. It is to Bala’s credit that the actors, playing at such keening levels of melodrama, never fall prey to hamming. The final line of dialogue torn out from Rasa amidst his wails, the camera as it swoops up from his broken, prone body to circle over the verdant hell, his blasted sentiments put into song and the pathetic, wretched cries of him and his family on the soundtrack as the camera returns to them again, these are indelible images and sounds, seething with nihilistic despair.

Did I happen to mention the ‘flu earlier? A serious outbreak of the ‘flu in the labourers’ camp forces the masters to summon a visiting doctor, when the (literally) home-grown doctor is out of his depth. This visiting doctor is Tamil with an Englishwoman for a wife. Upon arriving at the camp they are appalled to see the living conditions there, not to mention the healthcare facilities. What they proceed to do makes us nearly as horrified as them. They turn out to be shameless proselytes, rounding up all the filthy, emaciated, sick, dying slaves into an enormous circle and dancing at its centre as if it were their child’s wedding. In praise of the Lord. The slaves chant, sway, leap and rejoice at their deliverance with a common deadened look on their faces, like a choir of kids tonelessly reciting a prayer they are untouched by. The look on the faces of the proselytes, meanwhile, is ecstatic. Once this macabre farce is over and the flu has served its purpose of felling an important character, it is cast aside to make way for the sucker punch, the climax mentioned above.
For Bala, bleakness and misery are both journey and destination. If the overwhelming emotional state of the film were to be expressed in dimensional terms, then temporally, the film is forced to be static until the climax. There is nothing to indicate that the slaves (or at least Rasa) possess an emotional graph that changes over time. Spatially, the film is a dream narrative masquerading as a realist one. The final tragedy and the enduring misery do not feel arrived at; there is no trajectory, no sense of the characters traversing different psychological terrains to meet their doom. There is no room for any other emotion than abject, helpless sorrow. After a point of time, we are expected to assume their emotional responses to oppression. The film courses along a kymographic plateau, as it were, the cinematic equivalent of muscle fatigue, where whatever the changes in the load, the tonal response of the muscle to it remains the same, a constantly straight line. We are past caring, observing from a disembodied point of view as our nerve endings and responses become palsied, and finally, leprous.

Which is exactly what Bala intends. Well, not exactly. I'm not sure that having our senses deadened to such terrible happenings on screen is an intended consequence of his quest. It is, probably, collateral damage for him. Too bad on our part if we end up being stone cold, emotionally. No, Bala wants to keep wounds amply raw, fresh and wet. So that when he fires the next salvo to cause his creations mortal anguish, they can only howl and writhe in pain. To our inarticulate horror and sympathy. It is this paralytic acceptance of suffering, a mute, subhuman, bestial mode of existence that he is enamoured by. And he will do anything to make us, his viewers, experience it, the emotional sadist and voyeur to boot that he is. The dignity of narratives, of well defined characters, of nuance, of gay laughter amidst darkness, of unitary resistance in the face of institutionalised oppression, those be damned. In his universe of ineffable pain, he is kadavul. Naan Kadavul, he seems to proclaim with every frame of this film. With that very proclamation he's unwittingly forced me to write. To articulate. After a very long time. Personally speaking, this is rather an achievement on his part. To him, then, I say: Enna kadavul? Appadi oru kadavumela enakku nambikkai illa.

(Bishal is a 2nd year student of MA in Media and Culture Studies at TISS, Mumbai)
When the clock stopped ticking…

- Reetika Subramanium

A red coloured Maruti van parked 100 metres away.

Four hefty men with bulging eyes.

Stark silence, dreaded darkness.

No familiar faces in sight.

The time was past midnight.

… a shiver ran down my spine.

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Amidst the chaos and clutter of charred bodies being wheeled in with families breaking down, little did I conceive an event that even today, gives me Goosebumps, every time I read a news story of a woman being sexually violated, and her body, mysteriously dumped in an isolated place.

As a trainee journalist then, covering an event as catastrophic as the serial bomb blast that shook the city of Mumbai in July 2011 was challenging at several levels.

Identifying that one aggrieved family member, who could narrate the whereabouts of their loved one before he/she reached the spot of the blast, sending real-time updates to the editor, maintaining my composure in such an emotionally-charged setup besides answering phone calls from my mother, who wanted to know if I was safe and had eaten my dinner, was a strenuous exercise, both, professionally and emotionally.
It was past midnight on the clock. Even as shutters of shops in the neighbourhood were pulled down and people on the streets had returned to the safe confines of their homes, the situation at the hospital only got more heart-breaking with every tick of the clock. More bodies were being wheeled in and the police personnel gheraoed certain areas to keep the journalists at bay.

Since it was the first time, I was working in such a high-pressure situation I was accompanied by a senior journalist from my own publication. I had to ensure that I was on my toes, keeping her in the know of everything that I found.

It was at this moment, when I was with a group of journalists, who were busy listing out the names of the identified victims, an unknown man, standing a few feet away, called out to me. Bogged down with the pressure of finding any relevant information that could make it to the next morning’s paper, I didn’t think twice before responding to him.

“Madam, hospital ke back gate ke bahar, ek family hai jinke bete ka death hua hai. Mein aapki baat-cheet unke saath karwa sakta hoon.” (Madam, I will introduce you to the family of a victim, who died in the blast. They are waiting near the back gate of the hospital.)

Now, finding a family, which could talk to the press at such a time was a real challenge. Thus, when the man offered to help, I actually felt relieved.

After informing my senior in hushed whispers – hoping that no other newspaper reporter could hear – that I would be back in a moment after speaking to the family, I followed the man.

Unthinkingly, I walked along with the man, asking him questions about the deceased and which member of the family might be in a more composed state to talk to me. He insisted that the victim’s father was around and even assured me an exclusive interview with him. I believed him.

A minute into this conversation, the unfamiliar corridors through which he was directing me through
struck me like a thunderbolt. It was just the two of us, away from the public and police glare, in the middle of the night. Moreover, the cemented walls in the large hospital ensured that there was either low or absolutely no mobile network for me to contact anyone. It was then that I started questioning my decision and this man’s intentions.

Suddenly, his genuine tone sounded pretentious. His eyes looked puffier than what I had first noticed, his story fragmented and fake with every word he uttered.

What would he get by promising me an ‘exclusive’ story?

Why would he take me through these unfamiliar corridors, when there is a direct road from outside the main gate to the morgue?

There were many more “Why” and “What” questions that sprung up in my mind. None had a convincing answer.

It was too late to turn back and move. We had crossed three long corridors and hastily turning back and running seemed like an implausible option. So, I decided to maintain my cool, go along with him, while hoping that some familiar face would suddenly appear to help me out of there. All this while, I continued to expect the worst and prayed to some divine unknown for deliverance.

Finally, after walking through several empty corridors that were towards the end, dimly lit, an exit door was visible. Three men, whom I immediately noticed were brawny and looked woozy, waited near a red coloured Maruti van that was parked a few metres from the gate.

My heart skipped a beat. A shiver ran down my spine. I felt numb.

“Gaadi ke peeche woh victim ka daddy khada hai. Chalo, aap mere saath aa jao.” (The victim’s father is waiting behind the car. Come along.) My feet refused to move. I didn’t find any escape route. There was no “daddy” visible through the faint light in the dark. Just the van and three men, staring at and into me.

I stood still for a few seconds.
What followed surpassed my imagination.

A senior journalist from a rival newspaper called out to me from behind, “Reetika, what the hell are you doing there? Just come here. Soon.” Who would have imagined that in following me to find out what story I was pursuing, she would in fact end up safeguarding me from a fate that could have been difficult to make peace with.

I ran. Ran towards her with tears rolling down my cheeks.

The man in the background suddenly disappeared into the darkness and was later seen, only in the nightmares that I had in the following few nights.

(Reetika is a first year student of the MA in Media and Cultural Studies programme. This article recounts her experiences as a journalist with the Hindustan Times.)
Torture in Kashmir

- Aditya Prakash

The Incident
On the night of 28th October 1991, the 2nd Dogra Regiment of the Indian Army was conducting interrogations in Palhallan. Palhallan is a large village in the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir. People suspected of having links with terrorists were interrogated. The women and men were asked to come out of their homes. The women were asked to gather at the local *dargah* (shrine) and the men were lined up in the village school.

A major from the 2nd Dogra handpicked Manzoor Ahmed Naiko to step forward. Others were also short listed for interrogation. Manzoor was taken inside the school and forced to strip. He was made to sit on a chair. His hands were fastened to his back.

‘Taaki main kuch na kar sakoon’

He was completely immobilized. The army personnel then asked him for his gun. Manzoor Ahmed said he had no gun. He tried to convince them that he was a shopkeeper and never owned a gun.

‘Main siyasati aadmi nahi hoon. Tab bhi nahi tha. Ab bhi nahi hoon. Bas Kashmir mein yeh zulm band hona chahiye’

The army personnel then tied a cloth drenched in oil around his penis and lit it on fire. The interrogation party watched behind their balaclavas as Manzoor shuffled in his seat in inexplicable pain.

‘Unhonen mere penis pe kapda bandh diya aur tel dalkar aag laga di. Unke chehra nahi dikh rahe the’

His shrieks did not find an audience. His voice was muffled by the cloth that ran tight through his mouth, gagging him. After this they asked him again,

“Where is your gun? Give us your gun and we’ll let you go”
Manzoor was searing with pain. He said, “My answer is still the same. I have no gun please let me go.” The patrol made him get up and escorted him to a house. They tied his hands and legs and Manzoor noticed that he was in his own house. He knew the place. But the moments of comfort were few. The army personnel tied his hands and legs again. Then they dunked him face first into the water. A rod was shoved in and out of his anus.

‘Woh andar bahar andar bahar karte rahe aur meri bleeding shuru ho gayi’

Manzoor Ahmed lay bleeding. The army’s interrogation was still incomplete. He was then laid down flat on the floor. Electrodes were placed all over his body.

The officer asked him, “Where is your gun?”

Manzoor channeled the little energy he had and as his voice was finding words, the officer slammed his boot on Manzoor’s wind pipe. He was then electrocuted several times. Every time he was asked and tried to reply, he was choked by the officer with his boot. The electrocutions were also interspersed with beatings. The army personnel battered his chest with their helmet of issue.

‘Meri sehat bahut acchi thi. Koi aur hota to mar jaata. Mere saath ek school teacher bhi tha jiske saath us din ye zulm hua. Usne vahin dum tod diya.’

(I was very strong. That is why my body could bear the torture and see me through alive. There was a school teacher who also faced a similar torturous interrogation. He didn’t make it through)

The interrogated men were then collected and their hands were tied together. This file was then asked to walk out naked out of the school.

‘Mere pet mein swelling a gayi thi. Andar mera rectum phat chuka tha. Yeh swelling internal bleeding ki vajah se thi’

Manzoor was made to stand up and walk. His stomach has swelled because of the internal hemorrhaging. He collapsed after a few steps.

Someone said, ‘The army doesn’t need another death. He’ll die if he faces more. Leave him.’

The next day Manzoor Ahmed discovered that the 4000 rupees in his house had been robbed. His watch was gone. So were his 20 chicken and tempo.

The Injustice

This ordeal lasted an entire night with Manzoor Ahmed. The morning of the 29th of October, Manzoor arranged himself to go to the SMHS (Sri Maharaja Hari Singh) hospital in Srinagar. This is the
government hospital and the one Manzoor could afford. He was taken into their emergency ward. Manzoor’s rectum was devastated. A colostomy was performed. A colostomy is a surgical procedure in which a stoma is formed by drawing the healthy end of the large intestine or colon through an incision in the anterior abdominal wall and suturing it into place. This opening, in conjunction with the attached stoma appliance, provides an alternative channel for feces to leave the body.[1] He spent 10 days in hospital. But a few months later, the stitches opened. The puss that leaked collected to form a painful abscess. Manzoor sought correction at the same hospital. He was refused by the surgeon.

‘Government hospital mein jo doctor tha, usne mera operation karne se inkaar kar diya. Usne kaha ki sirf 15% chance hai recovery ka. Uska sochna tha ki agar operation nakaam hua to zindagi bhar iski baddua lagegi mujhe’

(The surgeon did not want to put his medical career at risk by performing a dubious surgery. The surgery had a thin 15% chance of success. Further, he was superstitious that Manzoor would curse him if the surgery went wrong)

Manzoor Ahmed then went to Delhi on his meager income to get treated at AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences). AIIMS is India’s leading government hospital. He traveled 900 km from his village for treatment. The way was mountainous as ever. He travelled in excruciating pain. All the while his feces were leaking from his side outlet.

When he reached they asked him his details on a form and once they learned he was a Kashmiri interrogation victim, AIIMS shunned him. Manzoor had traveled for nothing.

The World Red Cross approached Manzoor Ahmed later and offered to treat him. The Medical Board in Srinagar refuses to give them the go ahead.

Twenty years hence in 2012, Manzoor Ahmed Naiko still suffers from leaking feces. This has restricted his life. He can no longer go to social gatherings for long for fear of soiling himself.

He knows medical terminology precisely, having learnt it the tough way.

The Person

Manzoor is a medium built man of 52. He looks young; like he is in his thirties. He claims his hair has just started graying.

A little boy of 5 is holding Manzoor Ahmed’s hand. All through this interview his sparkling green eyes
have worn a blank expression. He has been patient. He tugs Manzoor’s kurta a few times letting him know this was not his scene.

‘He doesn’t speak Hindi does he?’, I ask

‘No’, says Manzoor.

I am relieved.

Manzoor is an affectionate uncle. The child loves him likewise. He likes loitering about town with his uncle.

‘Yeh mujhe Daddy kehta hai aur apne baap ko Papa’, says Manzoor, ‘Aap ise mera beta, bhanja, pota, jo chahe keh lo’

The boy lives with him and Manzoor and his wife dress him up for school. They have three children of their own:

A daughter, Masrat Manzoor, 28, unmarried

A son, Naseer Ahmed, 26, MA in Urdu, unemployed

Another son, Javed Ahmed, 24, unemployed

Employment opportunities are so low that his sons have tried to get a job with the army and the police as well. That paradox belongs in hell. It is unnerving to see this vicious cycle of poverty.

They were refused because Manzoor was their father.

After everything, Manzoor has kept his quiet simplicity.

**A morning in the life of Manzoor Ahmed Naikoo:**

4:15 am Wake

4:55 am Pray (the morning Namaz)

6:00 Feed his cows

7:00 Tea

The rest of his day is as drab and normal as this morning.

Manzoor is still a believer. He shakes his head gently and disapproves when I suggest that God has been unkind to him. He says God tests his followers. This was his test.

‘Khuda ki aazmaish hoti hai bande par’

He laments that even as recently as 2010, 10 people were killed in his village as terrorist suspects. He says they were innocent.
He concludes by saying he is not a political person and likes to lead a quiet life. He says India judges Kashmiris and its other citizens by different standards.

‘Hindustan mein do aaine hain. Ek saare Hindustan ke liye aur ek Kashmir ke liye’

The Questions

After Manzoor shared his hardship with me, I am awe-struck. His courage is palpable in the silence. It was inherent and not advertised. All I find apt to do is to give him an opportunity to cross question me. He had been frank and I want to be frank as well.

He asks me what I do for a living. He also asks me if I am Muslim. I say my parents are Hindu. He says he had nothing more to ask. He ends our interview with a smile and points me in the direction of my lodge at Dal-Gate.

(Aditya is a second year student of Development Studies. This interview was conducted by him as part of his fieldwork for his MA dissertation in Kashmir.)
Yeh wala medicine hai?  
(Do you have this medicine?)

I slide my prescription across the counter to the chemist and ask. He takes one quick look at it and shoots me a furtive glance.

Rukiye puchhah hu . (Wait , let me ask).

He goes to consult his workmate who looks at me surreptitiously as well as they deliberate in hushed tones .All this while I wait silently trying to look as “normal”(it’s a very loaded word indeed) to them as possible so that he doesn’t come back to me and say “Nahi Hai” (We dont have it).

But that’s exactly what happens more often than not.

“Are you sure?”

Haan yeh medicine aani bandh hogai hai.( Yes , this medicine has stopped coming)

Kab se? Aur kyun? Ek mahine phele tak mein yahi se le jaata th/ jaati thi. (Since when and why? I used to buy it from here till a month ago)

Strike chal raha hai. (There is a strike going on)

Toh aur jagah kaise milti hai? (Then how do I get it in other pharmacies?)

Toh aap jao na wahi se le lo. (Then why don’t you go and buy it from them? )

The medicines I need are psychotic ones requiring a prescription which I always carry with myself in my wallet. But this particular chemist has been refusing to give me the medicines I need since the day I visited his pharmacy in a distraught state with my hair dishevelled, eyes puffy from weeping, nervousness and anxiety oozing out from my mannerisms and incoherent sentences. I was trying to get the medicine my psychiatrist had prescribed when I go through such breakdowns but I was refused at
this and several other pharmacies.
The regular medicines I am on are anti-depressants which I have been taking for five years now and buying on my own since two. The kind of treatment I am meted out in the pharmacies around here would make you think they exist only to provide solutions for the common cold or an occasional fever. The responses range from refusing to acknowledge that they have the medicine in stock, to scrutinizing your prescription closely to find loopholes which they can use to send you away. Sample this: “Your prescription is a month old, Get a new one” or “It doesn’t specify how long you are supposed to take these”. These typical responses are preceded by the usual covert glances to ascertain your normalancy, to marking you out for future visits, to conversations among the pharma owners and their staff in whispers.

I come away feeling even more distraught and a bit stigmatized. I feel like joking with them and making them more uncomfortable by saying “Hey Don’t worry, I am not planning to overdose”. But this thought only comes to me later because for all I know it might come out all wrong and make it sound like I am actually planning to. Or else I try to come to terms with it by convincing myself that they are just doing their job and it is all in my head. This coping mechanism is what comes naturally to me and people around me who try to convince me otherwise because being a person labelled as having a mental disorder - being clinically depressed (unipolar disorder, major depressive disorder or whatever name suits your psychiatrist’s fancy) it is not hard to justify events (though a nagging element of doubt is always there) that you are just imagining the hostile body language and responses. It’s all in your head.

Let me add a little aside here to mull over the repercussions of taking anti-depressants for so long. Sure it sets you right when you were not being able to keep yourself afloat. If I was a cartoonist of any talent I would have made a cartoon of a clinically depressed person as a little speck in the universe but an empty universe, a void without any of those things which makes the universe beautiful – nature or people. The only thing which exists in this universe is a dark cloud hovering over your head engulfing you with an overwhelming feeling of sadness, of hopelessness and of guilt. From frame to frame in this cartoon wherever this tiny speck of a human being goes the cloud follows. The universe as I mentioned is empty despite its very tangible existence because you are unable to appreciate it.

Sure anti-depressants restore you to that state where your universe is not empty anymore but still it doesn’t give any meaning or sense of direction to your life. A greater damage it does is that after
prolonged use you lose track of where your prescription ends and your true self begins? You question all your emotions – is this a sense of joy or elation I am feeling? If yes is it going to last? Or is it just the anti-depressants doing their job and keeping my mood up? Is this overwhelming sadness I am feeling an outcome of what is going on around me or is it just that I need to get my dosage of anti-depressants altered? Is this irritable and snappy self really me? Or things are going haywire in my brain again?

These doubts are again reinforced when you have an altercation with someone close to you or you seem incredibly lost or glum and they ask you even though with nothing other than utmost concern: “Are you taking your medicines?”. All your feelings are reduced to your medicines and their use and dosage. You lose sense of who you are and what is “normal” behaviour for you because you have been reduced to the sum total of your medicines.

In my one and half years here in this institute I have witnessed many puerile attempts being made to spread awareness about mental illness and health which range from childish and silly brain games in the dining hall conducted by counsellors who try to intrusively peep into your mental make-up through these games as though you are a lab rat who will respond to an external stimuli in ways in which their psychology text books prescribe.

I would like to comment on the entire business of psychiatry, counsellors and self help books too but I will refrain from it at this moment because it would just degenerate into a bitter, personal and vitriolic diatribe. So till then I would continue to humiliate myself by landing up at that particular pharmacy till he is shamed into to stop making excuses and denying me what I am entitled to.
Random thoughts after I saw ‘Fandry’

- Shiva Thorat

‘Fandry’ is a story of power dynamics through the failure of love and imagination. Fandry shows an innocent love of ‘Jabya’ (Somnath Avaghad) but at the same time it also simultaneously explores the multi-layered hierarchy of the evil Indian Society. In the movie, ‘Jabya’ is a lower caste boy and ‘Shalu’ (Rajeshwari Kharat) is an upper caste girl. Being set in rural area of Maharashtra, the ‘societal norms’ which are traditionally passed down from the ‘Manusmriti’ are of a peculiarly rigid nature. ‘Fandry’ is the face of teenage love, dreaming and facing the harsh truth in such a rigid caste system.

The movie was already very conferring in various platforms of the society. Apart from Kishor Kadam, everyone is new in movie and the treatment that they have offered is of a different substance. We can see these things from his proposed style. Although Fandry is a representative story, but it can easily relate to anyone who is ignored and belongs to a marginalized or oppressed group.

Jabya’s father Kacharu Mane (Kishor Kadam) is a good and obliging man of the society. He knows that whatever ‘Jabya’ is up to is not good for their family. Kacharu also has two daughters; the elder daughters’ life was shown to be ruined whereas the younger one was yet to be married. He works a lot for collecting the dowry. ‘Pirya’ (Suraj Pawar), who is Jabya’s best-friend, makes us happy. Even if in our society, a pig is a sign of sin and catcher of the pig is considered even more disrespectful.

‘Pirya’ is always with him, be it even for catching a black sparrow. The catching of a black sparrow is the theme of the movie. It is referring to a superstition in rural Maharashtra that if you catch a black sparrow (which is to be found very rarely) and burn it, the ashes of it if thrown on a beloved then she or he only think about you. The ashes are supposed to caste a spell. Satyajit Ray also shows similar situations in one of his movies, called ‘Pratidwand’. In that movie, a youngster, seeking a job, was in a
hallucination and searching for a bird which can give him happiness. But here, the society believes if you can catch a black sparrow then your wishes will come true, especially about love.

Jabya is a teen-aged student from Kaikadi community. He loves an upper caste girl in his class. His love is one sided. He and his family live in a small village, Akolner, in Ahmednager district, where misbehaviour in the name of caste is rampant. Despite the bad experiences that he goes through in this society, he decides to express his love to Shalu, the upper-caste girl from his school. To impress her, ‘Jabya’ and his friend ‘Pirya’ always wander and roam around the hills and far spaces of village, chasing her. A black sparrow is their destination but to catching the bird is their habit also. In school, he is part of a band which gives rhythm for ‘lezim’, in the village fair, he tries to impress her with his talent of ‘Halagi’ (a musical instrument). Meanwhile, his family takes every odd job for fulfilling their bread and butter. Just like his family ‘Jabya’ also takes up odd jobs for supporting his family, which is the underlying fact about their life, throughout.

‘Fandry’ is story of societal norms and the burning problem of caste system, in form of a love story. The Kaikadi community is known for catching pigs. Kacharu Mane (Kishor Kadam) is called for only when pigs give problems to the villagers. In the village fair market, ‘Jabya’ and his family sell things like wooden baskets and brooms, which come from caste occupations. ‘Jabya’ is not shy when he does these odd jobs, but when Shalu comes in the front of him, he hesitates and denies working so much so that the ‘Sarpanch’ (Patil) complains to Jabya’s father about Jabya when he refuses to listen to him. In the village fair, when Shalu comes, Jabya goes under the basket and tries to disappear. But an instance where he has to do the pig catching job, the situation of pig catching and the simultaneous screaming of his family make me uncomfortable. It is actual rather than romanticized. In the Kaikadi language, ‘Fandry’ means Pig. This word has become the identity of ‘Jabya’s’ family. Not many in the audience know what ‘Fandry’ is. It, of course, obviously follows that no one knows the condition of these people, the exploitation and humiliation that these people undergo at the hands of all the other communities. From the beginning to the end, the audience can see the hierarchies of the Hindu caste society and the related exploitation, ignorance, misbehaviour, rebellion and resistance. Owing to Jabya’s family status, if someone from the upper castes, hits him or ill treats him or abuses him, Jabya does not say a single word and that is shown fairly well to the audience, from the gaze of ‘Jabya’ alone.
Chankya (Nagraj Manjule) and Jabya share a rather unique relationship. Chankya is known as a fraud and a mad man of the village and is abused at. But when we see Jabya and Chankya converse, various perspectives on caste, tradition and love to break down the boundaries which made by the ‘Manusmriti’, emerge. To impress Shalu, Jabya takes Chankya’s Halagi (a musical instrument) in the village fair. But when Chankya also tries to dance just like everyone else, people from the upper castes do not allow him to dance and hit him. Even then, Chankya comes and dances like a mad man and then everyone distances themselves from Jabya and Chankya.

In the last scene when ‘Jabya’s’ family kills pig and is going on their way home, the director tries to show the images of Ambedkar, Shahu Maharaj, Sant Gadgebaba and Savitrimai, all of whom are symbols of the fight against the caste and class system. The images talk with the audience that, ‘fighting for equality is not enough, we have to fight the new bramhinism which comes in the face of technology, materialistic life and education’. In the state of Phule, Shahu, Ambedkar, caste is not ruined yet. Books and discussions are ample when describing this caste system but the reality is much more dangerous than in the books and discussions. The patient Jabya and the rebellious Jabya is a beautiful combination in the movie so much so that it can be another characteristic of the movie. The images are also very symbolical in nature in the movie. The situation of the village fair is very beautiful in the sense that it shows Chankya helping Jabya to get visibility. I don’t know how other people read this situation, but I have often observed that when in rural festivals like fairs, the lower caste youngsters always get beaten up publicly in the name of dance. Chankya’s occupation is to repair cycles in village, but he is till known as a superstitious man and is always drunk, as he thinks nothing suits him better. Jabya also does so many odd jobs for fulfilling his responsibility for his family. But Jabya is too mad for the black sparrow that he loses his mind and breaks his cycle. Chankya gives him support and tells him, ‘don’t worry it happens’. I must say that this happens because Chankya is too aware about the caste system and he knows the kind of situation Jabya is in as Chankya’s life too, has had this chapter. In Chankya’s shop, there is a photo of Annabhau Sathe, one of the finest writers ever, to be born in Maharashtra. AnnaBhau Sathe was a communist, for which he was ignored by his own community and also an untouchable, for which he was deliberately ignored by his upper caste Communist comrades. Situations like these are brought to explain the situation of the village (society) with photos of
Unmaad 2013-2014

Annapat Sathe, Dr. Ambedkar, Savitrimai, Shahu Mahraj, Sant Gadgebaba in the background. Also, I must say, these images are only limited in the photos, not in the reality.

Nagraj Manjule’s ‘Fandry’ is a school love-story, set in the caste-system abiding society. Manjule is very successful in showing both these things parallely. Being a commercial cinema after all, whatever masala is needed for a movie, ‘Fandry’ has it. We can safely say that it’s not a documentary. There are some movies which never live up to the criteria for a movie but instead, they define what can be movie, ‘Fandry’ is one such movie. Somnath Avaghade, Suraj Pawar, Rajeshwari Kharat, Chhaya Kadam, Pravin Tarade, Kishor Kadam and others are ornaments for the movie with their excellent work. Somnath and Suraj behave like it’s not a movie, it’s their reality and that is one of the many high points of the movie.

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