

POLITICS

CULTURE

ORGANISATION



Introducing ourselves



“collective” is an initiative in politics, culture and organization in JNU. It is a shared space where we can express our ideas, expectations, aspirations and experiences, as we come into our own as students of the university.

Collective spaces are shrinking in most campuses in our country. Certainly JNU is somehow different in its traditions. Academic and political circuits and the social spaces that these circuits create are crucial in tying together a diverse student population; each often marked by his/her caste, class, gender, ethnicity and creed. Coming face to face with this diversity, there is a possibility to unlearn the norms that society produces in us; bring down the barriers of caste, gender and others that limit our intellectual growth, rather than reproducing the same barriers over and over again.

As a student, when we sit in the examination hall, writing with our spines bent, we are all alone. Not only alone, rather, we have to compete with each other to get the degree and sell it in the job market. Today neo-liberal authoritarianism is reinventing our cultural conditions through control/discipline/punishment within campuses so as to silence any differing voices. Hence, the easy target is ‘student politics’. Apparently the target is ‘muscle/money power flexing student politics’ but the market has enough money to silence/maintain them selectively. But where there is a power to repress and demolish, there is also a collective to resist and create anew.

The question confronting many of us is what type of collectivity do we imagine against all these attacks?

In spite of the long cherished political culture of JNU and the democratic ethos embodied in the JNUSU constitution, it is often said of JNU today that, apart from a few instances, the participation of common students in activism and movement is decreasing. Some may hold the organization that ‘controls’ JNUSU responsible for this. Others may say that this is the fallout of the Lyngdoh committee recommendations and other administrative and external attacks on campus democracy. Yet others may explain this apathy for political activities on the basis of the changing student profile and a growing number of ‘well-off’ students coming to campus. Some may attribute the cause to increasing ‘careerism’ and an overall shift towards neoliberal-consumerist culture in society in recent years. All these observations contain some elements of truths.

One section argues that ‘all politics/organizations are equally bad etc...’ and it is best to stay aloof from them. But if we want to really change the situation for ourselves and for others then it needs investment. **A primary proposition regarding the way forward is to look at ourselves, looking back at the ways and forms in which we have organized ourselves.** Do we need to invest more in ‘bottom-up’ democratic political practices? Do we have to imagine our collectivity more creatively, which furthers the development of independent political initiative among common students, so that they do not remain only good executors of some predefined ‘correct political positions’? How can suitable forums be formed which enable greater participation and role for common students in collective decision making processes. How can different independent forums really combine in creative initiatives and struggles which can enrich the ‘mainstream’ political discourse in JNU through ensuring more student participation in decision making, and allow the mass of students to reclaim the responsibility

of JNUSU as something their own.

This process of internal democratization is both necessary for and complementary to the struggle to democratize the decision making bodies on campus, where all the stakeholders of this campus, students, teachers, staffs, other workers have a say in the decision making process up to the 'highest decision making body'. This process is connected to the struggle against privatization-commercialization-exclusion in knowledge production in JNU and beyond. Today, when the academic system in our country has become a laboratory of neoliberal and 'Hin-



A primary proposition regarding the way forward is to look at ourselves, looking back at the ways and forms in which we have organized ourselves. Do we need to invest more in 'bottom-up' democratic political practices? Do we have to imagine our collectivity more creatively, which furthers the development of independent political initiative among common students, so that they do not remain only good executers of some predefined "correct political positions"?

dvta' restructuring, we face further impending attacks through fund-cuts and other measures. But the attack is not limited to the fact that the state is gradually shaking off its responsibility to run the 'Public University' but also the constant pressure to restructure the courses and syllabi so that the intellectual labour expended fits well into the needs of capital. In this context there is also the need to recognize that the university, as a space for knowledge production is organically connected to different forms of labour within and outside the academic community, in dhabas, hostel messes, gardens, construction sites, the labour which helps the campus to reproduce its activity.

We are witness to many movements which exhibit the independent (political) initiative of students and other sections of society. **To take an example among students, in the past few months itself, we have seen the #hokkolorob movement in Jadavpur University, the struggle of university students in Sikkim, FTII, Pondicherry, IIT-Roorkee, Ranchi, and so on. Students in these movements are organizing themselves in very many forms which are not necessarily limited to the single banner of**

an XYZ organization. These different resistances against neoliberal reforms, communalism-saffronization and initiatives for campus democracy, social justice and radical transformative politics in different campuses need to come together to shape the students' struggles in a larger arena. The task before all of us is to explore the processes of meaningful collaborations of different struggles and initiatives, the potential being already visible. **This emerging tendency in its organization should have the democratic space and flexibility to carry within it different shades of radical student politics debating together with different independent progressive struggles and**

creative initiatives of students. We identify ourselves as a part of this tendency in its becoming.

Such impulses are already (attempting to) making themselves visible in the many varied struggles in the last phase against the logic of the ruling system. **The movements against the 16th December rape incident in Delhi, the movement of 'Kiss of Love' are some examples where people have organized themselves without being mediated by established political parties or their wings. The recent struggles for jal-jangal-jameen and other environmental issues against the aggression of the State/Capital over the past few years, be it in Singur-Nandigram-Lalgarh, in Jagatsighpur (anti-POSCO), in Raigarh, Niyamgiri, Kudankulam or elsewhere, have witnessed ground level 'Peoples' Committees' as the primary form of organization of struggles and avoided any single party banner.** In the working class movement in new industrial regions, the party-controlled bureaucratic Central Trade Unions are finding themselves bypassed by most of the factory based workers movements which are asserting or seeking to assert their militancy or

organized initiative against the current wave of attack by capital. Close-home is the example of more than fifty factory occupations, strikes and lockouts by the workers in the nearby industrial belts in Gurgaon-Manesar-Noida in the last two-three years. Globally, be it the 'Occupy' movement in America or anti-austerity movements in Europe, democratic struggles in Latin America, the student movement of Chile and struggles in other places there have been sincere experiments in practicing greater democracy within the movement. Democracy too, has been defined at more personal, intimate levels, not limited to adhering to some functional rules.

While citing all these instances, we have no intention to argue that organizations are out-of-fashion or that we need not be organized. What these resistances seem to be hinting at is that the necessary organizational form in struggles against a heavily organized system needs to be thought and worked out with even greater seriousness from the ground of struggle: the yet-to-be-born child in the womb of the present cannot be pigeon-holed into the presupposed forms of organization inherited from a gone-by context which often seem limited or ossified in current contexts.

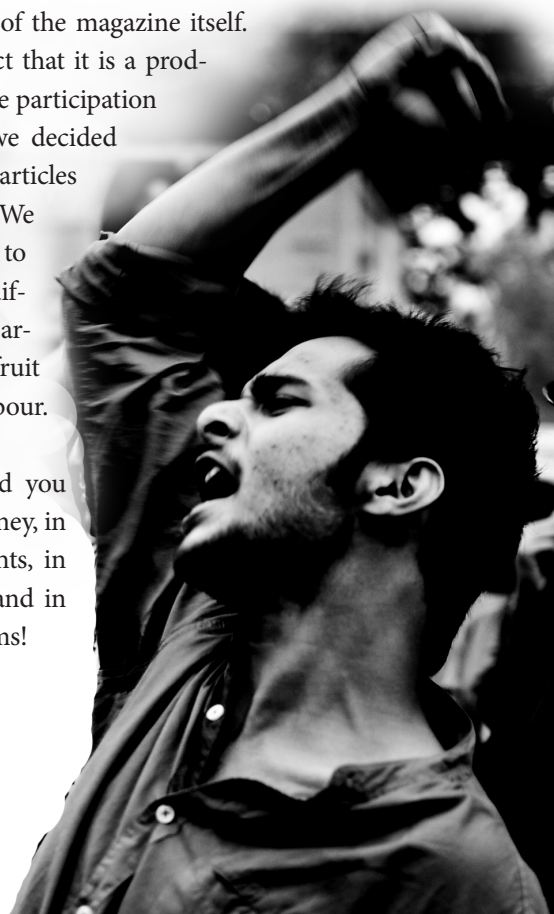
The magazine here is a humble attempt committed to the political task of independent initiative building as students in JNU. It arises once again, as many have earlier, from the felt necessity of marching 'along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand', while attempting to listen carefully to and sculpt out the alternative(s). **But a 'free university' within a society premised on exploitation and oppression is like a 'reading room in the prison'. The processes through which we reproduce ourselves, produce knowledge or even produce this magazine are not free from 'politics'.** Our society is always shaping the production and reproduction of our lives within JNU as much as outside. Thus our vision of a 'free University' is not detached from the vision of a free society, which we constantly build through our struggles, our debates and of course through our practices in 'personal life'. Collective will try to take forward this dialogue among students. Sometimes woven around a set of predictable and ritualized activities, the public sphere of JNU can only accommodate certain voices, and not others. It

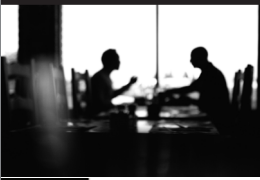
shall try to bring conversations relegated to the private sphere of campus politics to the public domain, to provide space to different languages of politics, over and above the hustle and bustle of 'fighting enemies' in campus politics.

When we started thinking about a magazine initiative as a form of expression, we found ourselves in a complicated political discussion. Being aware of the limited access to formal education in our country, the medium of a magazine is itself self-limiting for communication throughout society. But here, in academic institutions like JNU, what will be the language of communication keeping in mind the factors of linguistic hegemonies? Would the magazine be in English, the 'official language' of the global (capitalist) knowledge system? Would it be in Hindi, still falling prey to the hegemony of Hindi-nationalism propagated by the Indian state. There is also the regional hegemony of Bengali or other languages in many regions, while caste-class-ethnicity are all factors in distilling a 'normal/proper' language from within every language. We have adjourned this debate for the time, with some dissatisfaction and settled for the combination of non-academic English and occasional Hindi.

We also discussed and debated the process of the production of the magazine itself. To re-stress the fact that it is a product of our collective participation and exploration, we decided to avoid naming articles after individuals. We have all felt free to comment and edit different drafts of all articles to make it a fruit of our collective labour.

We hope to find you with us in our journey, in 'impossible' thoughts, in collective actions and in resolute criticisms!





English speaking urban elite consolidation and demographic shift is again appearing in JNU

For a university with ideals of social justice, JNU has not been doing too badly over the years. Years of struggle by the students have ensured a number of measures like progressive admission policy, deprivation points, correction of the faulty OBC reservation implementation to make this campus a more inclusive one ensuring the diversity of the student body all around. However, the thing with ideal is that it is often an objective that is unattainable within a time period, but can be approached without limit. Therefore, the struggle needs to be continuous, and that is where the question arises. In view of the recent spate of drop outs from the deprived sections or reserved category seats not getting filled up, there has been a growing feeling that in absence of continuous engagement with these issues, slowly the progressive steps are getting overturned and the campus is becoming more and more homogenized. This shift in student demographics is hurting the diverse fabric of the campus like never before and we felt that it is high time that we engage with these issues with full gravitas and chart out a path of collective action.

The first step, therefore, we think is to understand the situation, by reflecting on its history to gauge the present crisis better. As someone who has been a student in JNU for almost a decade, and now being faculty in the Centre for the Study of Discrimination and Exclusion, School of Social Sciences, Kaustav Banerjee seemed an apt person to begin the dialogue with. So, on a rain-drenched afternoon we met with Kaustav at his fourth floor office and the following is an abridged version of the conversation that ensued.

We would primarily want to know the history of this system of deprivation point, how it came about, the understanding behind an inclusive campus and how it got implemented.

Ok. First the basic idea behind this. There are two kinds of affirmative actions. One is a preferential boost system and the other is a quota system. Preferential boost system is giving plus five or plus ten marks to a certain group and anybody who is member of that group gets this boost, for instance plus five for women. The quota system on the other hand, is a fixed number of seats that have to be given. The situation in JNU towards the end of the nineties was that people from all across the country actually, given that it was an all India entrance exam, would come and it was a clear understanding within JNU in terms of faculty as well as the students belonging to the progressive sections in the university, that the diversity of the country should get a chance, in which it was figured that without using cer-

tain preferential boosts, it was very difficult to keep the doors open for everybody from all sections. We should keep in mind that the OBC reservation had not come in at that point in time. So, if this didn't happen there could have been a systemic shift towards an English speaking elitisation of the university. Now there was a debate within the left from the time of Mandal whether the reservation was good or not...

When did the quartile point system started?

In 1998-99, after what was called the progressive admission policy. There was a huge UGBM. The debate went on for days. There was violent backlash from the upper caste segment whose interest would be affected by this. So, essentially in this backdrop, the student's union had mooted this. It got passed and was implemented around that time. This is the recent history. There have been points given earlier as well. So, if you check, you can probably find out.

What was the quartile system?

The idea behind quartile was measuring social distance as represented through geographical distance from the centre, like categorizing of districts as different quartiles in terms of their backwardness and awarding points to students coming from such locations accordingly.

Well, what about the other argument that's put against creamy layer-that within caste groups itself there is horizontal hierarchy?

See there's both horizontal and vertical inequality. The horizontal part is the interesting part because that is what breaks solidarity among oppressed groups. But of course there would be issues when opportunities get hoarded by certain groups and this is bound to happen across caste groups with affirmative action

One opinion that goes around is that the five deprivation points for women are overweighting the points for quartile. So, a relatively homogenous kind of women is coming and others, including other women, are left out in the admission process. So, the quartile points are not doing much for diversity...

Now it is not just women who are coming in which would then lead to the elitisation of the situation. That is a bit unfair because there are elite men as well. So what is actually happening is that English speaking urban elite consolidation and demographic shift is again appearing in JNU. Why I am saying again is that I primarily would believe that this was the case in the 70s also.

Statistically, this could be true, for two rea-

sons. One is given the way the screening is done, or the way the entrance examination is, there could be an implicit preference for people coming from an English speaking background. This implicit situation of preference and bias may work when people read the answer scripts. So this is I am talking of the first situation where you are only giving a written exam.

There is another one when you are coming for MPhil or direct PhD where you are interviewed also. So, what is happening is that when

you use both preferential boost and all quotas (with OBC reservation coming in) together, there is a probability of more women from a certain section entering because they will get a plus five and not the men from the same section.

So, if we sense that a certain homogenization is happening among the student population, then how do we think of way outs, like restructuring the quota system or the preferential boost systems, so that the aim of students coming from diverse situations are not affected?

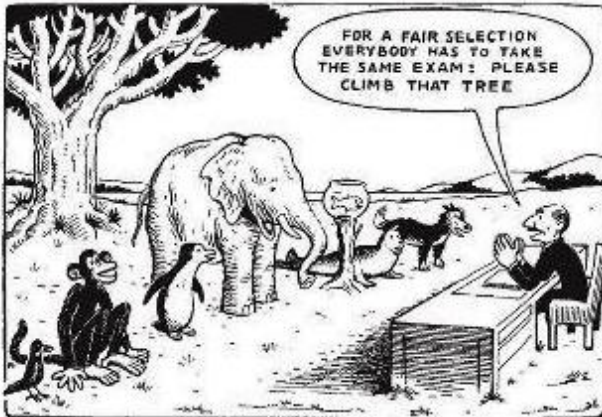
I think it is good that you all are thinking of this. I think there is a need for a very honest debate at this point. We can all see it around, but we're not talking about it. This is the tragedy of social science. Also being part of the diversity committee, I am aware that it is happening and what it is leading to. There is a need for an honest debate about this with concrete empirical facts. We have to find out what we mean when we say deprivation, discrimination, that who is it and what is the category through which it is operating and what is it that we want to break, because to have diversity we have to knock down social barriers and constructs. This essentially is what affirmative action does. It knocks down things to make it easier for people from marginalised social groups to come in. But also this Universalist, generalised approach is not helping, because then the question is buried under rhetorical things. You become anti-this, anti-that.

There are certain institutions, which works in IIM and AIIMS to sensitize the students as well as the faculty about discrimination through an intensive program running over a span of weeks. Do you think something similar can be started in JNU?

Of course the answer is yes. There should be some serious sensitization. We are rhetorically progressive and socially conservative, and that's not helping. Whatever it takes to break this is required. I would probably be one of the first to sign up and figure out how you do it. The sad thing is that there is already academic literature by people who are inside the university and



around. So, it seems we don't read each other as faculty colleagues, or else we would not be asking questions like what is one's family background in an interview. What is the relevance of that question? Actually there should be like in universities abroad where the faculty members are also asked to be part of gender sensitization to know what you can do and what you cannot do, what you can say and what you cannot say. The same needs to be done here. But of course there will be a huge backlash if this is suggested. I am completely fine even with the backlash



happening, because this is necessary.

So, this preferential boost system or the quota system ensures that a certain number of disadvantaged students get into the system, but once they're included in the system, the system itself exerts a huge demand on them. So do you think the mechanisms that presently exist in the campus are enough to assist students for handling that and if not, what needs to be done?

I would say we are trying but it is obviously not enough. You see, because this is a serious thing that instead of calling it a 'remedial class' that is again a very looking down kind of a thing, there's need to be serious pedagogic rethink of what should be done to ensure and welcome diversity.

I would actually argue that a lot of advantage/disadvantage flows from the educational institutions one has been in before coming to University, say it has to do with the fact that where have you done your graduation before you came to this university. That could be the basis for awarding people preferential boost points. You know it's done to Indians outside and they accept it so easily.

When you go to the US for example, suppose you're going to study economics, they will ask you to come earlier and sit through the Maths and quantitative part. Because the assumption that people from India who are coming, are not at par with Maths. Now, that's an absurd kind of an assumption. But, Indian students have to do it and they're not worse off by doing it if they want to pursue that subject. Similarly, how do you articulate an argument in history? Let's say the JNU history centre is one of the best in the world, so the entire situation is you

"... to have diversity we have to knock down things. This essentially is what affirmative action does. It knocks down things to make it easier for people from deprived background to come in"

don't suddenly come in from A, B, C and start speaking that lingo. The subject has a certain way of articulation that gives the person who's articulating it, currency within their own tribes so as to speak. So, if you have to have an academic engagement with a scientist, you have to speak that language.

These are the questions that need to be addressed instead of reducing the entire thing to making people learn English. It is so humiliating that if I come from a certain background, based on their assumption the idea is to making me a gentleman. So, I didn't come to a finishing school. I came to a university. I want to enter the battle of ideas. So, I want my weapon to be as sharp as somebody else's. That is what I want. I don't want to be taught how to have soup and where to keep the spoon and that's how 'remedial classes' have been imagined. That's wrong. So, that basically would also mean a lot of work on the part of the faculty and the senior PhD students in the centre. They would actually have to work together to make this a smooth process for people coming from a diverse backgrounds. And most importantly ensuring that all students have a fair chance in finishing the course.



The recent incidents cited below are nothing but a reflection of a definite trend – the trend of shrinking spaces of protest and dissent within the campus, the common spaces of the students- the spaces that nurture critical thinking and forms of resistance, being increasingly coming under the domain of surveillance and scrutiny by the university ‘managers’ and the increasing punitive measures to ‘discipline’ the students when they deviate from their ‘assigned role’.

On 2nd August, the administration, in collaboration with the right wing forces, tried to stall a screening of ‘Muzaffarnagar Baqi Hai’ in JNU. ABVP goons had forcibly stopped the screening of the same and manhandled the director in Kirori Mal College in Delhi University few days earlier. The screening was organised in JNU as a form of protest against such hooliganism. In a virtual repetition of events, the administration went all out in extent including using the battalion of security forces and debarring the projector and sound system technician to reach the site to prevent the screening from taking place citing one after another ludicrous reasons like public security and others. After failing in their attempts of threat and intimidation, the ABVP finally called the Delhi Police into the campus to scuttle the screening. However, as before and always, the common students gathered in huge numbers and their resistance ensured the smooth screening of the documentary well past the midnight in the Godavari Dhaba using a white bed sheet instead of a proper screen, small sound system and personal projector.

On 13th July, the students blocked the road near the T-point and the Administrative building asserting their right for a decent accommodation in a residential campus. The students resorted to this measure after the JNU administration continues to turn a deaf ear to the long standing popular demand of the students for adequate hostel facilities. The administration, predictably, imposed a fine of Rs 5000 each on six of the students present in the protest that day in the name of disciplin-

ary action.

On 11th February, a public meeting was held at Tapti hostel to deliberate on the question of the right to self-determination of Kashmir and Prof. SAR Geelani from Delhi University was the keynote speaker. He was acquitted earlier from the Parliament attack case. The organisers had acquired permission to conduct the meeting. But in the last hour the permission was cancelled by the administration, clearly under the pressure of ABVP and other right wing forces, citing misguidance of information regarding the speaker. Moreover, the warden also alleged that she was not informed about the ‘controversial’ past of the speaker at the time of taking permission for the event. While the meeting was going on, the administration deliberately switched off the power to the venue while rest of the campus was unaffected. More importantly, even when ABVP goons tried to break in and disrupt the meeting, or tried to prevent Prof. Geelani from entering or leaving the campus, and pelted stones at his car, the security forces, clearly under the diktat of the administration, did nothing to prevent such acts of hooliganism. It was the spirited resistance and determination of the students’ community, who gathered and formed human chain, which ultimately foiled the attempts of vested interests to curtail the spaces of deliberation and critical thinking on such serious issues. But though meeting was successfully held, the administration did not stop there. Four months later, the JNU administration struck back with vengeance on the student activists. While taking absolutely no action against the lumpenism by ABVP goons that night, the proctor’s office, after conducting a sham in the name of an ‘official proctoral enquiry’, issued a show cause notice on 5th June to one resident of Tapti Hostel, under whose name the hostel mess was booked and was fined Rs.5000 and transferred from the hostel.

SHRINKING SPACES OF DISSENT WITHIN THE CAMPUS


I was educated mostly in Benares. Our "mul niwas" is Kushinagar on Bihar-UP-Nepal border. My parents are both professors at BHU - of Hindi and Chemistry. Because of this I got more exposure than many other people, I had applied to DU and Columbia as well but couldn't go abroad because I didn't get a scholarship. I expect from JNU rigorous academics more than anything else. BHU like other universities in Eastern UP has been in decline for years, now it's almost beyond redemption. Some departments are still good - engineering, visual arts- but liberal arts departments' condition without doubt is one of the worst. Log padhna nahi chahte hai, market ke logic ke mutabik jo fastest way to earn money hai, bas chahte hai. In my 1st and 2nd years mostly research scholars taught us in class. Kuchh achchhe teachers the but overall atmosphere itna "philistine" hai ki bohot saare students tak reach out karna unke liye bhi mushkil hai. There's a students' council, ABVP and SP dominate in it - it's ABVP that has a large cadre base, SP mostly has goons. The cultural expression on campus is also heavily dominated by Hindutva, minorities don't get a say. There was a strike in demand for a union and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) came and beat us up. JNU se umeed hai ki politics karne se maar nahi padhega! Where I come from the common stereotypes about JNU are that it's "naxal", "zabardasti intellectuals bante hai", "aare daaru peena se hi kya buddhi hoti hai" etc. but people know that in reality JNU is far better than BHU academically.

Ishan Shahi
1st year MA,
CPS

I did my schooling in Patna and passed my +2 in private. My original plan was to study Law, but then when I didn't get a rank to my liking, I decided to come to JNU. Most people in my Centre are also from Bihar and Jharkhand. More than any specific course, it was the university that I wanted to study in. My father was a research scholar in Geology, here. That is how I knew about JNU from early on. Among my friends and relatives back home it's known primarily as a place where serious studies happen, the political aspect is not discussed that much. Hostel facility is also a crucial factor for so many of the students coming to study here - my parents didn't think twice before sending me. Without the kind of safety that hostels provide with how friendly people are in my department and even outside. And the campus is known for the security it provides, unlike other places in Delhi like DU. Now that I am here, I might stay on for an MA as well, and I hope to get placed somewhere after that.

Harshita Sinha
Russian Studies,
1st year BA

I was born and brought up in Delhi. I did my under graduation from Sri Venkateswara College and Post graduation from University of Delhi south campus both in electronics in 2010 and 2012 respectively. I worked in patent industry for two years and then taught in a DU college for 7 months as an Ad-Hoc. At present I am looking after a small initiative "school chale". My father is a bank clerk and some years ago my parents also worked as book binder to add on to the family income. I am a person who is looking forward to bring some social change. I worked in many different NGOs, working in different locations such as Red Light area, Slums and also on issues like child rights. I taught in a college and I saw a system where hardly anyone was working. After all these I realized if I really want to bring any change then I will have to occupy a higher office. At that point I decided to study more to make myself competent enough to any opportunity coming in the future. So I came to JNU. I came to know about JNU when I was working with Save Sharmila solidarity campaign. We came to JNU to raise the voice for Irom Sharmila in 2011. No one actually recommended me JNU, it was in fact my last option. All other places rejected me - being a student of applied science I was considered useless. Usually people identify JNU as an open and fun filled place. But the best part I find in JNU is the safety. I felt the same when I came to JNU in 2011 for the first time. I just expect that I will get to learn lots of new things in the university.



Shekhar Jain,
Science Policy,
MPhil 1st year

From Bettiah, Bihar. My father is a farmer, and I have an elder brother who is an engineer. I did my schooling from KV till +2. I wanted to study Law, would have preferred humanities in 11-12 but there was no option to study that in my town. Maximum people, unless there is an urgent problem, go outside for their plus 2 - most go to Kota for IIT coaching, or to Bokaro/Patna/Delhi. There are no coaching centers in Bettiah. I studied Science and prepared for CLAT, I've always wanted to study Law. But when I didn't get a high enough rank in CLAT, I decided to do my undergraduation from JNU and then do an LLb, JNU was in fact my last choice. Back home I had a school friend who told me about the Language courses, he said nearly everyone applies to French. But I didn't want to study that, so I thought Arabic would be easy enough because if it's close to Urdu then I would only need to learn the script - I know much of the vocabulary already. In my town people know JNU as a good place to study in: there's a notion that "yaahan aane se to pakka UPSC ka ticket mil jaati hai". The security that the campus offers you is a central factor for most students coming from my part of the country - hostel facilities, food. There's also a professor in Korean Studies - Ravikesh - who lives in a village next to ours, and people know him and respect him as a JNU Professor, back home. I had heard about its politics too - that people are really helpful, that you can raise any demands you feel strongly about, and most importantly, that all such political activities still do not hamper their studies. I wanted to experience Delhi as well, though inside the campus the "mahaul" is so different, it hardly feels like Delhi, I feel at home here. I am still undecided about this line studies though, if I feel I'm not being able to prepare well for my Law Entrance then I will most probably quit.



Aadarsh Garg, Arabic Studies, BA 1st year

COMMENTARY

The message that JNU sends out to all reserved category students seems to be: Don't be smart enough to compete in the unreserved quota otherwise, we will punish you by snatching your benefits.

This is the stark reality of JNU, the "model" university of the country! The new students from JNU are the ones however, who are left to face the strange consequences of this "model". Students from reserved categories who are listed under the unreserved quota are being denied the benefits of their respective categories since the administration considers them as unreserved students. However, during admission they were listed in the unreserved category with the JNU administration specifically mentioning their category before their names - that is, they do not occupy any unreserved seat but in fact a reserved category seat.

When these students approached the administration for the first time, they were told that "sometimes it's bad to get good marks". Later, the administration said they were setting up a committee to look into this matter. But from where does the need for such a committee arise? When the merit of the students is in plain sight, this seems to suggest that the administration is trying to make the process more complicated so that they won't not be accused of not considering these students. These students are being punished for their studious nature. The whole set of values of the brahmanical patriarchal Indian society are on stark display within the JNU campus - which lies only 10 km away from the Indian Parliament. It is this Parliament which says that India is a land which follows the Rule of Law. But the JNU administration seems to be declaring: No. We will not follow the Indian Constitution or the Indian Law.

Suraj, MA 1st year, Informal Economy and Labour Studies

The 'Other' JNU:

Keeping JNU clean: gender, caste, and sanitation work

Last semester, wanting to understand how JNU was cleaned, we interviewed both administrative staff and sanitation workers. We found the numbers of permanent and contract workers to be roughly equal, with the ratio tipping steadily towards impermanency. To our knowledge, two-thirds of the hostel sanitation workers employed in JNU are women and all the sanitation workers belong to the scheduled caste category. It was surprising that an occupation so structured by caste and gender hadn't come to the attention of the student body more prominently. When we talk of sexual harassment and the GSCASH how is it that efforts to raise awareness begin and end with the student body? When we discuss caste in the classroom why didn't we know that it is often demanded of sanitation workers to do jobs that are outside their purview - like removing animal carcasses from the roads - but are still seen as being 'their job', or that contract sanitation workers are paid the minimum wage with very few benefits and lack of attention to safety and cleaning equipment?

When we interviewed the women who clean the hostels, we were told of how difficult it was to juggle a full day-job and also manage domestic tasks and childcare which appeared to be managed exclusively by women,

with no provision for either at the workplace. One woman told us that when her children were young, she'd "be making rotis in the morning and running to work with flour still on her hands." Another worker described a nearly sleepless schedule: "I'd get up at four to cook. I would wash clothes at midnight." They talked of students who'd leave vomit in the basins and menstrual pads in the bathing areas and male students who would attempt to use the urinals while they were cleaning the same bathroom. When the hostel workers [in a women's hostel] attempted to tell the residents to dispose of their sanitary napkins in the garbage bin, the girls either denied not doing so or said something like, "didi, you're doing this work anyway [so what difference does it make to pick up a pad]" or, "this is your work, why are you complaining about it?" We expect our waste to be invisible and, additionally, that those who clean our waste make themselves invisible as well! While 'Swachchh Bharat' is being furiously promoted everywhere, our experience raised interesting questions about sanitation work and cleanliness - who does these jobs? What do caste and gender have to do with these jobs? And, at what cost to the workers do we keep JNU clean?

One may wonder whether one can actually compare public conscience and students' politics in JNU. Let me be very clear; I do not mean a give and take relationship between the two but a juxtaposition of these terms enables an intervention in certain ways into the commonly held notions of JNU being an idiosyncratic space in the country. In a sense, from the following instances, we will see that students' politics in JNU follows and is organised according to the dominant notions of politics (and public conscience) in the country.

JNU is understood to be the cradle of Left politics in the country, and this image, though feared by majority of the people, is cherished by progressive sections of the population. While the progressive nature of student politics in the campus can be marked in various registers such as debates, discussions, pamphlets and demonstrations, insidious ways in which the idea of public conscience gets a foothold in the campus can only be earmarked by a lack. A reading of the lack bursts open in extraordinary events. To illustrate this, a relook at the discourses that animated two recent instances of capital punishments given to Afzal Guru and Yakob Memon is very helpful. There is a large consensus in the campus against capital punishment served on them and its futility as a form of punishment. However, issues such as communal targeting of particular communities for death penalty, procedural lapses, denial of basic rights, and so on, did not gain much importance in terms of discussion. Apart from their culpability, about which there are serious questions unaddressed, what one should remember is the way a community is being stereotyped in these circumstances. For instance, Tripura governor exhorted that those who attended the burial of Yakob Memon are potential terrorists. Some of the major student political parties were reluctant to initiate debates around such issues fearing not only possible fallout in popularity and vote-base but also due to an assumption of increasing acceptance for such discourses among middle-class students. This reluctance is a remarkable specimen of our liberal conscience which

is heavily mediated by discourses of dominant ideas. They also seem to share, to a large extent, mainstream discourses of communalism, national security and terrorism. This reluctance could only be understood as a lack since it takes part in mainstream discourses by avoiding confrontation with it.

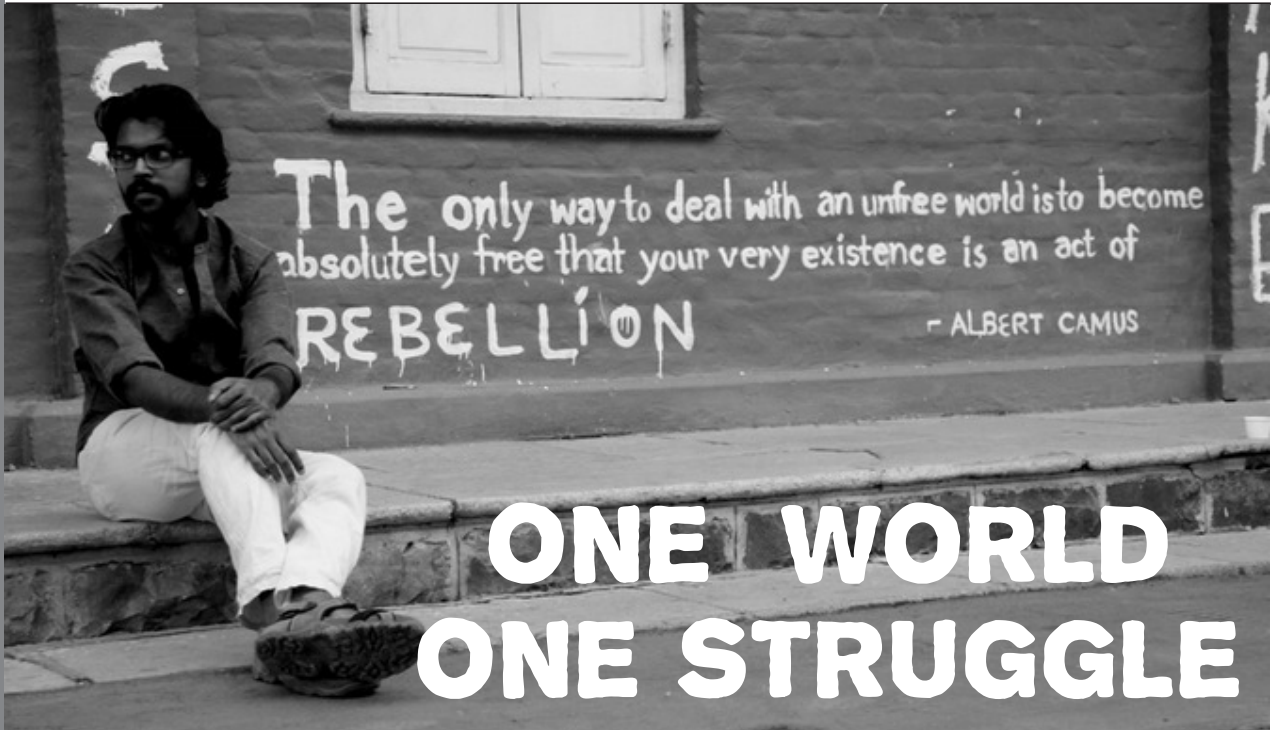
It is through such indivisible modes of thinking that student politics become enmeshed in the larger political discourses of our times. This gets reflected in the ways in which one of the Left student organisations strategically campaign among Muslim students. They convince Muslim students of the threat to lives and property if right-wing organisations stage a comeback in the campus. This is the same way dominant political parties in the country ensured electoral support among Muslims in elections after elections. It also strengthens the notion of a homogeneous Muslim community in India led by unanimous interests as constructed by dominant political interests within the community and outside. But in reality, Muslims are as diverse as any community in India; it is actually divided into various social groups based on many feudal, status-differential notions and discriminatory practices. It is as patriarchal as any other community in India and women are not allowed, in most of the cases, to take employment. It is the lack of reflections on such issues and similarities of thinking with dominant political interests that pose a threat to progressive student politics in the campus. A Left



Public Conscience and Students' Politics in JNU

organisation should ideally be breaking such stereotypic notions of communities and politics by inculcating critical thinking among students about the ways in which politics is organised predominantly in our times.

To confront and deconstruct modes of thinking that categorises certain communities and castes as repositories of certain imageries and ideas we should have meaningful and timely discussions. I find this is an ideal moment to reflect on such issues since politics is dominantly organised in such modes today. Students, as the relentless reservoir of critical engagements, should be the site where such ruminations flower today.



EDUCATION IS NOT FOR SALE

The two most significant student struggles of recent times, which have thrown the most direct and audacious challenge to the Modi government are the FTII movement and the APSC protests. Here we will mention some other important students' movement, which has not grabbed the limelight like the previous two, but is important in its own right in another way as an example of the direct reaction to the anti-student neo-liberal policies of the present government.

Pondicherry University struggle: A fight against fund-cut in higher education

Students of the Pondicherry University, which is a Central University, began protesting from the end of July against the university administration, especially against the VC and demanded her immediate resignation. The demands put forward by the protesting students were wide in the range of issues and include numerous lapses and delays on the part of the administration in education and infrastructure. The students complain of severe shortage of hostel facilities for the

students, diversion of funds meant for hostels, lack of proper transport facilities within the campus, non-functioning of WiFi, delay in declaring the examination results, meagre and irregular scholarships for the PG students, poor library facilities and a host of other issues, that the administration was turning a blind eye towards in spite of repeated pleas in the past. Further, they alleged that the VC, in person, had been involved in numerous fraudulent activities including charges of plagiarism.

The students began to start a demonstration in front of the University main gate, which swelled in numbers as days progressed and led to an indefinite hunger strike with complete suspension of academic activities within the universities. Despite continuous threat from the administration and part of the teachers, a significant section of teachers (under the banner of PUTA) and non-teaching staffs supported and actively supported the movement. After a few days into the strike, the administration called in the police, who resorted to merciless lathicharge to disperse the students from

the demonstration and the hunger strike site. The police action, which led to the hospitalisation of a number of students, led to widespread condemnation from all quarters including the major opposition parties and number of social and political organisations. However, in spite of the constant threats by the administration to ruin their future academic careers, police excesses hand-in-glove with the authority and persistent deaf ear by the MHRD, the students did not budge in and are carrying out the militant struggles against all odds and risking everything at stake. Finally, the MHRD succumbed to the students protests and asked the VC to go for an indefinite leave.

IIT-Roorkee: The story of discrimination continues

The story of IIT-Roorkee is another familiar tale of different forms of discrimination and exclusion, subtle or blatant, which play themselves out in the academic institutes of higher education every day. In July, the administration of the IIT-Roorkee took a decision to expel 73 first year students of the undergraduate course after they failed to attain the minimum CGPA of 5 points (in addition to the already well-established criteria of minimum credits of 22 points) in the first two semesters, which was set as the standard criteria for eligibility for promotion. The senate of the institute which made the new amendments last year, neither have any representation of the students nor consulted the students before taking this significant decision.

A bit of investigative journalism also uncovered the dark statistics behind this mass expulsion - "out of the 73 students, 31 were from ST category, 23 from SC category, 4 from PD, 8 from OBC & 7 from general category (90.4% students are from the reserved category)." It is in this same institute where a student named Manish Kumar committed suicide about four years ago due to the

casteist taunts, after which the authorities tried to cover up the incident and shield the accused. The large numbers of students come from a small town Vernacular/Hindi medium background, who, in spite of their high scores in the hugely competitive entrance examinations, failed to grasp the content of the course material or communicate with the professors in the class or express their ideas in the examination paper, the medium of all of which are in English, which made them trail significantly behind their classmates who are fluent in English communication. The provisions of 'Remedial Classes' are weak and ineffective due to different reasons like late start of the classes, inadequate time and attention due to the tight schedule of the senior students etc. Though the number of students expelled has been exceedingly large this year, it should be borne in mind that there is a significant dropout of students from almost every IITs/NITs each year.



Police crackdown on Pondicherry University students

Though the number of students expelled has been exceedingly large this year, it should be borne in mind that there is a significant dropout of students from almost every IITs/NITs each year.

The students and their guardians moved to the Nainital High Court against this unjust decision by the authorities putting the future of such a large number of students at stake, but, the court ruled otherwise in favour of the institute upholding its decision. Following this verdict, the other students, who are

the classmates of those expelled students, went on for an academic strike and refused to attend their classes in spite of the threats of disciplinary action by the authorities. Facing criticism from all quarters, the authorities, following a senate meeting on 3rd August, decided to revoke the expulsion of 65 students out of the 72 expelled students on the basis of certain stringent academic pre-conditions for the students, failing which they will be re-expelled. However, the authority still has not given any promise to carry out a review of the existing grading system of evaluation and the minimum criteria for promotion.

It is to be again noted that the six of the seven stu-

dents to be finally expelled also belong to the reserved categories. A team from National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and National Dalit Movement for Justice, after visiting the campus and interacting with the students, faculties and administrators, severely criticised the entire process leading up to the expulsion and said “Since these institutes cannot control government policy on intake, they come up with parallel policies that are aimed at keeping out SC/ST students”. One serious concern here is that the concept of ‘merit’ as an independent objective category having an universal standard has been internalised by the student community to such an extent that they themselves fail to identify the subtle forms of discrimination that continue to take place.

Central University of Ranchi: Movement on Hostel issues

Meanwhile, in Central University of Ranchi, located near Ranchi, about 500 students locked up the class-

rooms and administrative buildings and suspended the functioning of the university after a number of students fell ill and 19 of them had to be hospitalised after taking the dinner in the hostel mess. Students had long been complaining of the poor foods being served in the hostels despite having to pay an annual fee of Rs 26000. On facing the heat from the students, the CUJ authorities promised to keep some of the demands of the protesting students like termination of the contract of the private caterer and replacing the acting VC with a full time VC, but they remained silent on the roll back of the advanced mess charges, which is an exorbitant amount of Rs 13000. After the four day long protests by the students, the authorities completely suspended the classes and other academic activities of the university until further notice. A new full time VC was appointed who promised to resume the classes until the renovation work of the hostels was completed.



इसलिए राह संघर्ष की हम चुनें
जिंदगी आंसुओं से नहायी न हो
शाम सहमी न हो , रात हो न डरी
भोर की आंख फिर डबडबायी न हो ॥ इसलिए...

सूर्य पर बादलों का न पहरा रहे
रोशनी रोशनाई में डूबी न हो
यूं न ईमान फुटपाथ पर हो पड़ा
हर समय आत्मा सबकी ऊबी न हो
आसमां पे टंगी हो न खुशहालियां
कैद महलों में सबकी कमाई न हो ॥ इसलिए ...

अब तमन्नाएं फिर न करें खुदकुशी
ख्वाब पर खौफ की चौकसी न रहे
श्रम के पांवों में हों न पड़ी बेडियां
शक्ति की पीठ अब ज्यादाती ना सहे
दम न तोड़े कहीं भूख से बचपना
रोटियों के लिए अब लड़ाई न हो ॥ इसलिए ...

Protest graffiti at FTII

We were talking to the Dilip (Hostel President- Mahi Mandavi) and some of his friends regarding the recent movement of Mahi-Mandavi for shifting the garbage-dumping ground. Here is an excerpt from that conversation.

समस्या क्या थी और कब से कब तक रही?

लगभग 10-12 वर्षों से यह समस्या थी। यह इलाका पहले कचरा एकत्रित करने का स्थान था। सन 2002 में इस छात्रावास का निर्माण हुआ, परंतु फिर भी पूरे विश्वविद्यालय का कचरा यहीं पर फेंक दिया जाता था। टेंडर के मुताबिक हर दिन MCD का ट्रक कचरा ले जाने के लिए आना चाहिए, पर प्रशासन और कांटेक्टर की मिलीभगत के कारण ट्रक नहीं आया।

15 अप्रैल को हमने (प्रेसिडेंट और हॉस्टल कमिटी) VC को पत्र लिखा परन्तु कोई कार्यवाई नहीं हुई। फिर डीन को पत्र भेजा गया, और इस बार भी कुछ नहीं हुआ। हमने 27 जुलाई का अल्टीमेटम दिया, इसके बाद भी कोई कार्यवाई नहीं हुई। प्रशासन के इस व्यवहार को देखते हुए हम 31 जुलाई (शुक्रवार) सुबह को भूख हड़ताल पर बैठे। हमने निरंतर तीन दिनों तक हड़ताल जारी रखी और जिसके बीच वर्षा भी हुई, जिसके लिए हमें व्यवस्थाएं भी करनी पड़ीं। इंडियन एक्सप्रेस, दैनिक जागरण, आदि जैसे समाचार पत्रों में इस पूरे मामले की खबर छपी।

फिर कैसे बढ़ा आन्दोलन?

शनिवार की सुबह को जब सुपरवाइजर और फ्रील्ड ऑफिसर आये तो हम लोगों ने उनको भी अपने साथ बैठा लिया और बोला कि आप भी इस आन्दोलन में हमारे साथ मिलकर कोई समाधान निकालिए, और स्टाफ ने भी जा कर सारा कचरा साबरमती छात्रावास के सामने फेंक दिया। उसके बाद इस छात्रावास का वार्डन आ कर अफसरों पर गुस्सा होने लगे कि कचरा यहाँ क्यों फेंका है। हमारी सिर्फ दो ही मांगें थीं, 1) डंपिंग ग्राउंड को विस्थापित किया जाए, और 2) कचरा हटा दिया जाए। VC ने 2 अगस्त को वादा किया कि 15-20 दिनों में कोई दूसरी जगह खोज ली जाएगी। अभी कुछ कचरा वसंत कुंज के पास, तथा कुछ अकेडमिक स्टाफ कॉलेज की तरफ फेंका जा रहा है।

कैम्पस के विभिन्न राजनैतिक संगठनों की क्या प्रतिक्रिया रही?

इस मुद्दे को लेकर आन्दोलन स्वयं छात्रावास के छात्रों ने किया, परंतु इस मुद्दे का भी राजनीतिकरण किया गया। कई छात्र संगठनों का यहाँ दावा है कि उन्होंने इस आन्दोलन में योगदान किया, जबकि सच यह है कि यह आन्दोलन hostel कमेटी तथा कमेटी प्रमुख के नेतृत्व में हुआ। हमारे हॉस्टल प्रेसिडेंट ने सेनापति के समान रणनीति बनाई, जिसको छात्रावास के तमाम छात्रों का सहयोग मिला तथा वे इसमें शामिल हुए, वहीं VC से भी काफी सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया प्राप्त हुई, उन्होंने यह कहा कि उन्हें इस मुद्दे के बारे में बताया ही नहीं गया था। उन्होंने इस क्षेत्र में एक डेवलपमेंट पार्क बनाने की बात भी की।

कब से इस मुद्दे को लेकर आपके बीच बात चल रही थी?

जब से मैं प्रेसिडेंट चुना गया तब से इस मुद्दे को लेकर बात चीत होती रही है। इस समस्या की वजह से 2-3 छात्रों को डेंगू हो गया और उन्हें अस्पताल में भर्ती करना पड़ा। कई बार झाड़ी से सांप निकलते हैं, जो छात्रों के लिए जानलेवा अबित हो सकते हैं।

कैम्पस के लोग कैसे देख रहे हैं आपके इस सफलतापूर्ण अभियान को?

वह सब लोग यह देख रहे हैं कि अगर छात्रों में दृढ़ इच्छा शक्ति हो तो वो कुछ भी लार सकते हैं। हमारे देश के आम चुनाव के समय में भी सारे मुद्दों का राजनीतिकरण करना और फिर चुनाव खतम होते ही सब भूल जाने से काम निपटना आसान नहीं होता। 2012 साल में 9B के लिये fellowship extend करने को लेकर खुद साधारण छात्रों ने आन्दोलन चालू किया। जैसे ही आन्दोलन peak में पहुंचा, ये सारी पार्टी आ गई क्योंकि वे बंदनाम हो रहे थे। पिछले साल नर्मदा के छात्रों ने प्रदर्शन किया था प्रशासन के पास, क्योंकि उनके खाने में कुछ दूधड़त हो रही थी...



Education Parliament at Jantar Mantar

The JNUSU organized an Education Parliament at Jantar Mantar on 5th August where students from all over the country gathered to protest against recent reforms in higher education. While student representatives from Allahabad, Benrares, Lucknow, Pune etc. recounted their daily struggles with inadequate facilities and authoritarianism on campus, educationists and teachers spoke at length about the CBCS, WTO-GAT, Central Universities Act and other ploys to centralize and commercialize higher education.



Delhi University has already introduced the Choice Based Credit System from the current semester onward, following UGC's directive. Hailed by the UGC for expanding students' choices and letting them learn at their own pace, the CBCS has been denounced by academicians as a move to undermine the quality of education in public universities. All autonomy regarding syllabus-making has been snatched away, introducing uniformity across educational institutions that will profit foreign investors by providing them with a homogeneous market, but will rob universities of their respective strengths in research-areas that are often regionally specific. All students will be required to study one semester outside her own university: as DUTA President Nandita Narain pointed out at the Education Parliament, since most public institutions are already overcrowded, students will be forced to earn these credits in private universities, these "mobility-enhancing" provision being nothing but a camouflage for boosting private universities. Whether all students can afford to pay the exorbitant fees at a private institution has been left out of the equation altogether.

The drive toward increased commercialization was detailed by Anil Sadgopal from AIFRTE in his speech on the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which includes education as a trade-able "service" and which India is all set to sign in December. Once India becomes party to this agreement and foreign universities begin coming here under global trade agreement to make profits, the WTO would get a say in India's trade policies. And this would now include its policies on the education "market". This stripping of autonomy closely echoes the recently proposed Central Universities Bill which once again, ignoring all consideration of regional diversity, provides for a common syllabus, common entrance exam and faculty transfer among all central universities.

Student representatives from institutions as far apart as Allahabad University and Savitribai Phule University had the same story to share with the Parliament: faculty posts lying vacant, no new recruitment, not enough hostels, scholarships that haven't come through in the last ten years. It is no coincidence that these all-too-visible problems are lying unaddressed. As a June 2015 EPW article written by a group of teachers from DU and JNU asserts, "standardisation and homogenisation are being seen as the one-step solution for all the problems of uneven quality". The result: pushing for demands like greater mobility while students have barely enough quality institutions to choose from. The burning question of budget cuts in the education sector is conveniently sidelined.

The Twelfth Plan (2012-17) is the first instance of a government document suggesting "the re-examination of "not-for-profit" approach in the provision of higher education on "pragmatic" grounds". This pattern, which the latest reforms follow and further extend, is neither new nor hidden from the public eye. But where the value of gatherings like the Education Parliament lies, is in driving home how determinedly it is being pushed through and the strikingly similar struggles that ordinary students throughout the country are waging against it.

The contract workers of JNU have supported the All India Workers' Strike on 2nd September. We appeal to all the students of JNU to support the strike of 2nd September, to stand by their demands and co-operate them in executing the strike successfully.

“कियेँकि सारे वर्कर अभी तक नहीं समझ पा रहे थे कि हमार हक क्या है, तो वो अपने हक तो समझे। जो न्यूनतम बेतन मिलना चाहिये वो हमें मिले और प्रशासन को एक मेसेज देना हैं- कि हमें हमार हक नहीं देंगे तो हम स्ट्राइक भी करेंगे। परमनैट और कन्ट्रैक्ट वर्कर एक ही काम करते है। बल्कि हम ज्यादा काम करते है। ये जो छोटे-बड़े का फासला है, उसको हम खतम करना चाहते है। और जिस दिन यह फासला खतम होगा उस दिन जे.एन.यु के अंदर एक नया इतिहास रचा जायेगा...”

उर्मिला
प्रतिनिधि, अल इण्डिया जेनरल कामगार यूनियन (जे.एन.यु यूनित)

LAST WORD

So, what did you think of the magazine and the issues we wanted to highlight? If you have anything to share, suggest or shout at, feel free to contact us at collective.jnu@gmail.com.



Write to me

Are you all keeping well?

Write to me.

Which bastard has stuffed your ears
that I go gallivanting down the street?

If you have suspicions about me,
I won't leave the house again.

Should I go out to fetch water?

Or not? Write to me.

You want me to account for a hundred rupees.
Do you think I scarfed it down, all by myself?
I paid twenty for the light-bill, thirty for water,
bought food worth twenty-five.

Should I pay the milkman fifty?

Or not? Write to me.

The brat had fever and cough

I had taken him to a private clinic

Should I take him to JJ?

Or not? Write to me.

I've enrolled our baby in school, she's doing well.
Everyone here says girls should be educated too.

Should I also go to the night-school?

Or not? Write to me.

Ever since you have left town

lowlife thugs rule the roost,

instead of living in peace

cause riots in the name of religion.

Should I speak to the entire neighborhood?

Or not? Write to me.

Assemblies for women's liberation take place.

We attend these meetings too.

Your sister's husband beats her, all the time.

He threatens everyone, everywhere.

Shall I go and bring her to safety?

Or not? Write to me.

So, who is the bastard who has filled your ears
that I go gallivanting down the street?

I attend meetings; take part in rallies.

How can things change, otherwise?

Will you join us, shoulder to shoulder?

Or not? Write to me.

—by Narayan Gangaram Surve, translated from the Marathi by Mustansir Dalvi

Published by Sayan on behalf of 'COLLECTIVE', Contact: 9013472380, 9971460299