



El Pueblo Unido

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COOL ELECTIVE



# COLLECTIVE

POLITICS ● CULTURE ● ORGANIZATION

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Editorial

●  
1

Campus Politics & Day Scholars

●  
3

Conversation with

Ayesha Kidwai

●  
4

A Socially embedded Science

●  
8

We don't need no

thoughtcontrol

●  
9

VIDROHI: Living an imagination

●  
10

Photo Collage: Student Movement

●  
12,13

Towards a democratic education?

●  
14

Classroom as a shared space

●  
18

Suspended Lives

●  
20

Problems of science students

●  
22

Poetry

●  
5,19

कैंपस में जाति का सवाल

●  
24

If you have anything to share, suggest or shout at, feel free to contact us at [collective.jnu@gmail.com](mailto:collective.jnu@gmail.com)/call us at 9971460299, 9910976213

## EDITORIAL

We begin by reiterating what we declared in our introductory issue – “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. As students are trying to learn and experiment in ‘bottom-up’ political practices and discover ways in which student movements can be democratized so as to accommodate a wider and more diverse population, the past few months have thrown up experiences that are in equal measure exciting and challenging.

Between the time of publication of the first issue and the current one, we have all been witness to some of the biggest student movements of recent times - from the #OccupyUGC protest against UGC’s sudden decision to discontinue the Non-NET fellowship to #justiceforRohit - an ongoing movement which was sparked off when a Dalit student, Rohit Vemula, a Ph.D. research scholar at Hyderabad Central University was forced to commit suicide under the concerted pressure by the HCU administration, acting hand-in-glove with right wing forces.

Though the contexts and objectives of these movements were different, there are some significant similarities between them - similarities which can, indeed, be read as emblematic of our times. Even though both the protests were mainly led by the students pursuing research and higher education in central universities and research institutes, it spilled over to other sections of the students as well as state universities. Second, despite their progressive character and demands for social transformation, they were not organised or led by any single ‘progressive students organisation’. Many progressive and democratic forces including different shades of left and Ambedkarite students’ organisations took part and played an active role in these protests. In fact, in both cases, as the movements gained momentum, they were led and guided by democratic committees - be it under the name of coordination committee or action com-



mittee - formed by the various participating organisations and individuals, and these committees tried to evolve a democratic process of taking decisions. Most importantly both movements were characterised by its wide participation of students, even from unexpected quarters – from campuses which have never witnessed any form of regular student political activity whether in the form of student union or elections. Such tendencies show an evolving form of consciousness among students across campuses regarding the oppressive and constraining nature of our educational institutions - a condition being increasingly recognized as the reflection of the nature of our society itself, not as problems occurring in the isolation of individual campuses.

Indeed, such massive participation from a diverse population of students across campuses in the country can be seen as testifying to the grave threat being repeatedly posed to democratic access to education, especially for marginalized sections of the society. Many of the students who depend most heavily on the Non-NET fellowship that was under attack by the UGC constitute the first generation entrants of their family, locality or even community to institutes of higher education. The discontinuation of the fellowship would affect these students most severely and perpetuate the already highly skewed and exclusivist nature of academia, research and higher education in the country. Similarly, Rohit's institutional murder exposed the deep fault lines along caste which exist within our academia and universities and how institutions, instead of playing an active part in undoing meritocratic practices among teachers and students, instead further the interests of upper caste and class elites. The implications of such exclusion for the kind of knowledge produced, research pursued etc. within higher education - which would no doubt be limited by similarly elitist ideologies - was another question that such movements brought sharply into focus.

In this respect, another recent movement against the exclusion of a different nature - #pinjraTod, led by

a group of independent students - has been started to protest the highly gender-discriminatory rules that most colleges and universities in Delhi follow. Women students are forced to return to their hostels in strict adherence to ridiculously early 'curfews' thus restricting their access to facilities such as libraries, but also to the public spaces of the city as a whole - all in the name of keeping them 'safe' within locked doors. #pinjraTod has highlighted the inherent patriarchal biases within institutes of higher education that curb women's freedom and their rights to fully explore and evolve within the city; this after many women struggle hard against such biases within their families to reach these institutes in the first place.

On the question of exclusion, recent developments in our campus have highlighted the need to address pressing concerns closer home as well. In JNU itself we are witnessing cases of non-fulfilment of reserved category seats in Direct Ph.D. citing the reason that candidates are 'not suitable'. There are departments where cases of blatant caste-based discrimination are coming to light - the Internal Organization (IO) division of CIPOD, SIS for instance, has not awarded a single Ph.D. to any Dalit student ever. At a time when there is a general upsurge in students' interest and involvement in political movements, it is imperative that we, the student body of JNU as whole take active political responsibility and struggle to address these concerns, considering them in the light of such trends across the country. The potential for drawing large sections of students to themselves - by the very nature of the concerns driving them - is perhaps the most significant feature of these recent movements. Striving to further democratize decision-making processes within such struggles so as to actively involve this growing number of students, remains a challenge. So does translating the lessons we learn in them, into everyday lived practices within our various campuses as we try to fight exclusions of class, caste and gender in our cultures of academia, politics and friendships.



# Campus Politics

In the middle of the third semester of my MA, more popularly identified as the most stressful of the four, the SFC elections were a thought provoking break from the endless deadlines. Not because it was an event that invigorated us to action, but mainly because it was a relatively uneventful one that managed to capture the attention of a few and largely registered as a regular administrative function. The inability to recognize the immense potential of the SFC as a space where the hierarchies between institution, teachers and students could be negotiated with, and the opportunity it provided for the student body to acquire some agency within the university can probably be located within the larger trend of indifference amongst the students towards campus politics. But it is interesting in the context of JNU, associated by many as one of the few surviving locations of visible student politics, to probe into what constitutes this indifference. As a day scholar, with my limited experience I can only make a case for the same category. Within the first few days of my arrival at JNU, in a timetable which required me to only be on campus for two hours a day on an average, the initial encounters with members of the different political parties were overwhelming. The distance I felt to issues relating to campus politics that they spoke about fuelled a sense of disinterest as well disappointment in me, because it was against the hopes of diverse and meaningful social engagements I had from JNU, harder to find in other institutional spaces in Delhi. I was disappointed that socialization on campus did not fit as a natural part of my daily schedule, that classes in the morning were the only reason I had to come to campus a few times a week and that I was compelled to stay at home to study for these classes.

Luckily for my case, there were many other factors, that enabled me to stay back on campus a few times, of which a welcoming hosteller friend was the most crucial one, and made me realize what I was losing out on by not attending events



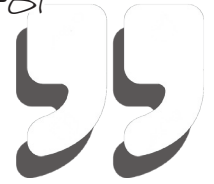
is the Day Scholar a participant?

that were meant very much for my benefit. But to come to the realization of the significance of becoming politicized in the university campus was definitely something that required a considerable amount of effort. From the most obvious struggle of juggling time between academics and socialization within campus, to the practical issues of unbreakable curfews at home and long transits, what was the incentive to stay behind on campus and engage? The often unrealized function of university as a space for questioning norms that our society conditions us with, a space where we have the scope to challenge our barriers of caste class, gender, is one that has a profound impact on the way we engage with academics. For a day scholar not only is it a practical question of not having constant/easy access to resources of the university such as the library, but also leads one to question what is the nature of knowledge that is produced, bereft of any engagement with the wider sociopolitical context?

One could obviously identify the role of the institution in constantly creating such conditions of disengagement and hence political apathy for the entire student body. In issues ranging from the refusal to build more hostels, effectively excluding students from underprivileged backgrounds to take admission altogether; or the changing socio-economic makeup of the student profile (especially the day scholar student profile); or even the growing desire among students to land admissions in western universities thus remaining indifferent to prevailing campus issues -- the negative role of the institution can be discerned. But even within the remaining spaces of active student politics in JNU, at the late night public meeting, effigy burnings, protest marches, or even academic conferences, the nature of student participation is one which could be checked or at least thought about, and the need to have campus politics more representative and inclusive of day scholars should be thought of, despite all these constraints. ■



*Autonomy is possible only by actually institutionalizing a system of recognition of sexual harassment, gender injustice and discrimination that was outside any individual's control*



We are all aware how the GSCASH has gone a long way in ensuring a gender-just environment within JNU. But as with any institution we run the risk of forgetting the long-drawn struggle that led to its creation in the first place. Looking back at the movemental vigour that propelled such an institution into being may enable us to move beyond the somewhat ossified lenses through which we perceive GSCASH at present. It may also urge us to think anew on issues of gender on our campus. **Collective talked to Ayesha Kidwai, senior faculty member at the Centre for Linguistics (SL)** and one of the people actively involved in the formation of the GSCASH, about some of those defining early moments.

**Let's start by talking about the larger women's movement in the 70s to 90s. How was the scene back then, in JNU campus and the country?**

Many of the big advancements that the women's movements made in the 70s and 80s were interrogating the State, the family, social institutions like marriage and the sexual violence committed by instruments of the State. When I was a student-I joined MA here in 1988- things like sexual harassment or sexism didn't really have a name. In general, it was the JNUSU that gave voice to a popular disgust with the phenomenon – I remember the first day I came to JNU somebody had passed a comment on somebody at Ganga Dhaba and there was a JNU Student Union pamphlet about it- but the Union was not there in every sphere of life and the anti-Mandal agitation really signified an important break because the Union was

not leading it. We knew that sexual harassment was not prosecutable except by police cases, so it was as though it was barely cognized. When I was a student you used to hear consistently about faculty or other students making unwelcome advances and we just found ways to be safe. In JNU which was very progressive, even until 1998 there wasn't an elected woman president. I'm not sure exactly what it was but something did change, towards the mid-1990s. I think the change really came from below because the JNUSU students' movement started changing its character. There was a lot of sexual harassment of women students in the anti-Mandal agitation - that also made the student community aware that something must be done about it.

**So against this backdrop, how was GSCASH formed and what were the reasons behind its formation?**

After the Bhanwari Devi rape case, we were told that there was an important judgement coming, but some teachers and students had already started talking about the need for a sexual harassment policy for the university. Another factor was that Mandal had unleashed two other things - one was that now punishment- or demonstration - would become much more of a public shaming character. I remember in the run up to 1996-7 when we actually started working on this policy, somebody had jumped into a girls' hostel and he was paraded around by left-groups and his face was blackened. And the other thing was this notion of male protectionism - that these were our women. There used to be many cases of outsider harassment at that point. The outsiders would come in, and a car was burnt by JNU men in defence of JNU women. We realized that now it was a question of ownership.



So when we started thinking about this policy, we knew that women's freedom also meant women's autonomy. And the only way one could get that autonomy was by actually institutionalizing a system of recognition of sexual harassment, gender injustice and discrimination that was outside any individual's control. If I could approach this as an individual with a grievance, I would not only end up giving sexual harassment a name but I would also follow a different kind of - Feminist, if you like - approach to justice and system of governance that would be made possible within institutions. Because structurally it was impossible to approach the police and it remains so today. But the immediate catalyst for the birth of the GSCASH was that it all came home to roost when some JNU students found that a mentally disabled, extremely disturbed young woman- we didn't know her age - had been abducted, held captive by

a JNU employee, and raped for two days. Some students saw her being fed in TEFLAS and they followed them. A big demonstration spontaneously arose of the faculty and the students. At first, the JNU authorities wanted to hand her over to the police or the Naari Niketan but the JNU faculty and students just refused to let that happen so she actually stayed in faculty houses. We went to the court and we said, give her to us until we can find a place. We did not want to send her to Naari Niketan. The university put her in a hospital after a few weeks. She had to be taken to a psychiatrist and the university provided a car and JNU students and faculty would go with her. It was at that moment that we understood that we wanted a policy. Somehow at that time, also, since we had already started working around the policy, there was a working group set up by some sensible people who were at the forefront of making the

policy.

### What was this committee called?

It was called the Karuna Chanana Working Group and was it set up in 1997. At that point there was Madhu Sahni, Ritoo Jerath, Ania Loomba, Rama Baru, myself - there were progressive men as well- but it was perceived to be a women's issue. There was suddenly a very positive atmosphere on campus for this kind of change, as JNU has never been resistant to moving ahead of existing laws. This working group actually held public meetings. The question was that if we were going to form a committee how was it going to be constituted. So you not only had to have a separate institution but you had to have a completely alternative conception of what the enquiry procedure was going to be. This working group took 3-4 months to frame its report. It held- again, something that had not happened earlier in JNU

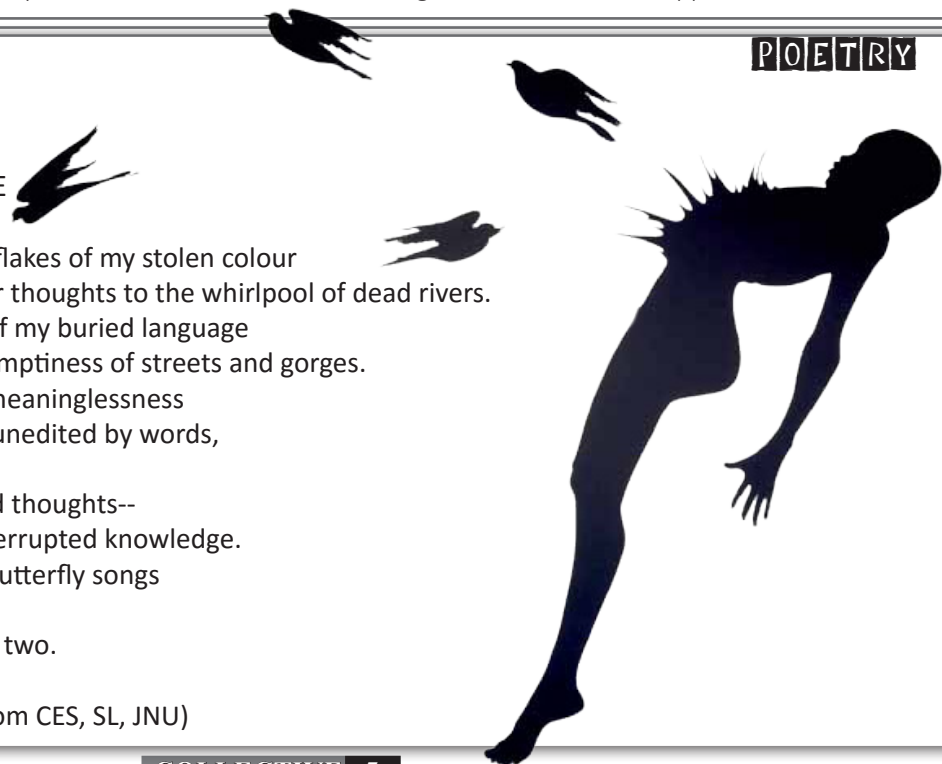
## POETRY

### Freedom

GERTRUDE LAMARE

I shall build silence from the flakes of my stolen colour  
 And banish the sound of your thoughts to the whirlpool of dead rivers.  
 I will reclaim the fragments of my buried language  
 And let it echo through the emptiness of streets and gorges.  
 I shall return to impeccable meaninglessness  
 Unsmoothened by intellect, unedited by words,  
 I want to free my breasts  
 From stings of utterances and thoughts--  
 So let me have a vision uninterrupted knowledge.  
 Let me capture my aborted butterfly songs  
 And whisper them to life,  
 For now, for another night or two.

(Gertrude is doing her PhD from CES, SL, JNU)



- widespread consultations about what kind of a body should be set up. We decided that there had to be elections. We knew that it wouldn't work for everywhere else but we knew this was the only way because it would mean that gender and gender equality is debated every year. The committee must be autonomous and must not have anybody in the administration, because then,

people who had ever thought about this matter. No one knew what sexual harassment was. Nobody knew how to do these enquiries either. None of us were people who knew the law or anything- we just wanted to do what was right, in a sensitive manner. The first committee- I think we formed it on 8th March 1999 - had Rekha Rajan as the chairperson of the first committee, Neeladri

enough just go up and tell her harasser "don't sing neeli chhatriwaali" - because you can do that, you don't need to file an official complaint- but we knew it was a learning process and it would take a long time.

The first thing that the committee did was to build a constitution for itself. And that constitution remains the seed, really. We knew that we



I think the change really came from below because the JNUSU students' movement started changing its character. There was a lot of sexual harassment of women students in the anti-Mandal agitation - that also brought the student community forward- because otherwise JNU was just considered incredibly progressive. I remember the first day I came to JNU somebody had passed a comment on somebody near Ganga Dhaba and there was a JNU Student Union pamphlet about it! So the Union was taking over the role of managing gender relations.

the hierarchies of the workplace get replicated inside the committee. So it had to be something that was constituted of the community but had an official recognition.

At that point the Visakha judgement came along, and we drew strength from the fact that this kind of a complaints committee was legitimized: except that the judgement was so sparse about who can be on this committee. The committee initially had only direct representation, it did not put any unions or associations. In the initial phase at least the Gender Studies Forum (GSF)- which had Ania, I, Ritoo, Madhu, and others- was also a member of the committee because we were the only

Bhattacharya, Ritoo Jerath as the GSF representative, as well as other gender-sensitive faculty, and that committee had the responsibility to try and figure out what GSCASH was supposed to do.

**How was the response in the campus, did the JNU community take it down well? How did GSCASH go about then?**

Complaints just poured in: there were 60 complaints in 6 months! Somebody was passing behind Periyar and somebody sang a song "Neeli Chhatri Waali" and the woman immediately made a complaint to GSCASH! - Which we were very happy about. I mean, of course we wanted the woman to be confident

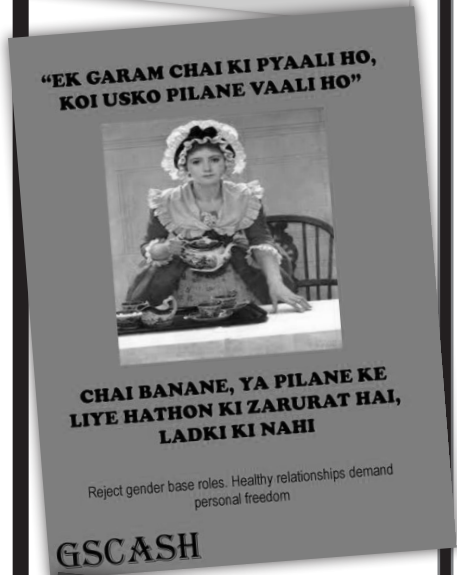
had to set up some principle and, again, there was nothing that could guide us. Already in the elections we had learnt a whole lot - in the student elections there were men campaigning for 'we want a man to represent the interests of men' and we thought God, now this was going to become the battleground. By 2001 it had been only three years but it had been a very difficult three years because we were not getting anywhere - our recommendations were not binding, GSCASH was helping individuals but there was nothing that the university had to do. But in the student community there was huge support for GSCASH. There was also a huge amount of criticism on particular cases but I remember



we used to bring out a newsletter, and the Gender Studies Forum was trying to guide it. It was during this time when rules- which have largely survived unchanged, were detailed: how are you going to call somebody, how are you going to send the summons, what will you supply, what will the person be allowed to ask, what can be investigated, what is the time frame - everything. Vrinda Grover had a large role to play in this process and this was done once again, by public consultation. We wanted to be able to think of a different system of justice - one that would be more caring towards the needs of the complainants, and sensitive to the nature of sexual harassment. Hence the mechanism of the restraint order, which was really spelt out and formalized in those rules: it is quite a standard now in GSCASH enquiries, that if there is a violation of the restraint order, it adds to the penalty. This one thing has ensured that when women complain of sexual harassment now, there is no repeat incident after that.

**We'd like to know more about Gender Studies Forum and how instrumental it was in the formation of GSCASH.**

The forum basically built GSCASH. And then it was thrown out. We'd conceived of the forum as an activist forum- we wanted to build a feminist collective across students and teachers. The draft of the rules and procedures took six months to be fully discussed, in open forums where students and teachers participated. After the first draft was passed the teachers union said we don't want

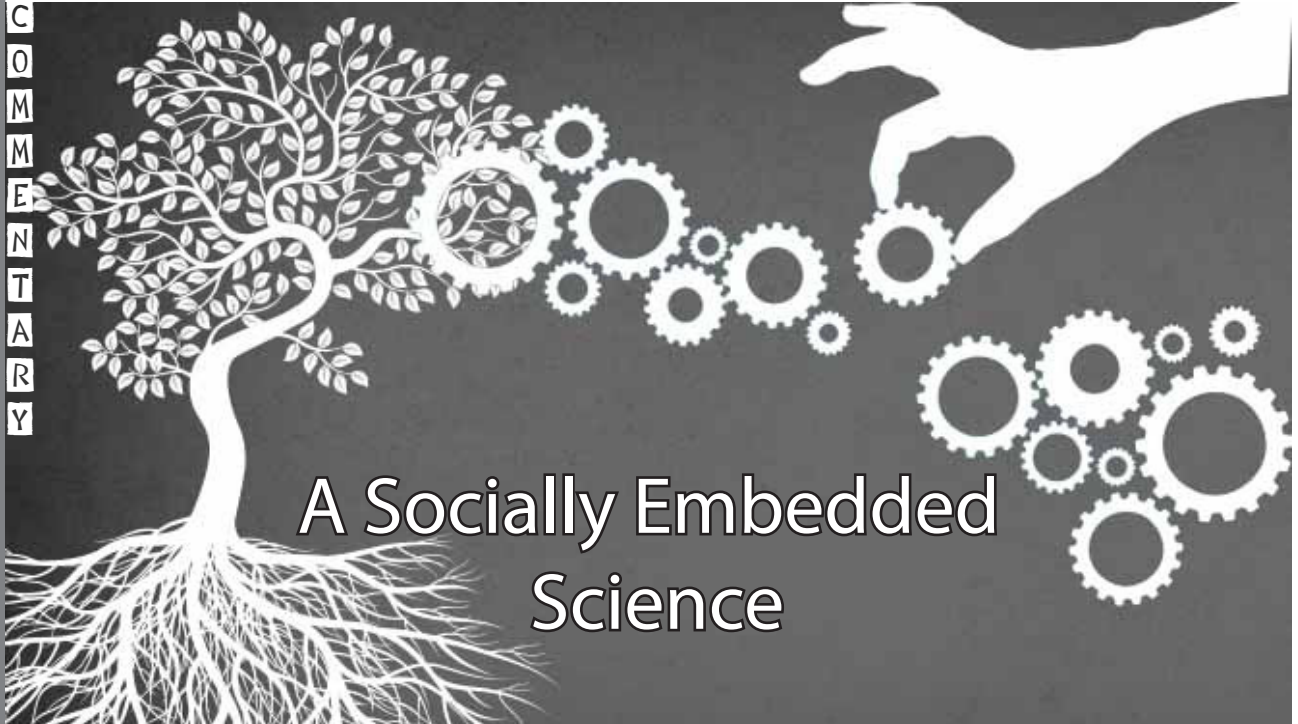


the Gender Studies Forum in it - when we are the ones who had made the rules. So we gave up...we said we didn't want it anymore. One reason why we were thrown out of GSCASH, is because we had successfully managed to prosecute a faculty member. Anyway, so GSF basically dissolved, but it's back in full force now as the Faculty Feminist Collective. But one thing we came to realize, by 2008 that our time in the institution per se had to be paused because what was needed was a larger collective outside to support the complainants. In those years the students carried GSCASH for a long time, the faculty members were not so good- I know about 2 or 3 cases against faculty members which went unattended because GSCASH did not know what to do. There were a couple of cases in which a lot of mistakes were made, from what I heard. However, we started helping complainants from the outside.

**Did you also interact with students from DU?**

They had Forum Against Sexual Harassment (FASH) and we had GSF. After Vishakha we could all set up our own committees and our fates were inextricably tied together. But where DU and JNU diverged was that we made this elaborate system of rules and they didn't. In DU cases have gone to the court, their judgments have been struck down etc. I don't think that's made a big difference, but they basically have a huge problem because they don't have a campus. So it's really in the college precincts. ■

(To be concluded in next issue)



## A Socially Embedded Science

Science often is touted as being the final authority to gain legitimacy to various beliefs and practices. A binary mode of viewing science in opposition to tradition, superstition, myth, and sometimes even religion has become a common way to view science. One asks if whether modern science came to the fore to challenge orthodoxy and religious superstition; as a heretic, blasphemous entity that believed in the truth of science above all. Is this why science is seen as the voice of reason? This imaginary of science as a voice of reason lends credibility to various beliefs, practices, scientific controversies, and methodological drifts. This repeated appeal to science as a voice of reason is because of its commitment to disinterestedness that transcends personal values and gains, and grounds reason in scientific principles. It establishes a triangular relationship between science, reason and human good.

This power of reasoning ideally comes from learning, through education, both formal and informal. This helps one think independently, logically, analytically and not to mention creatively. Any body of knowledge requires particular contexts and environments to sustain and flourish, and any technology that is an outcome of such knowledge also requires similar environment. Hence to make claims that the

technology of airplanes was known to us centuries ago; or that plastic surgery was first performed on the Indian god Ganesha, does not have any scientific grounding or reason. Such technological inventions require specialized and technical knowledge and an associated source of knowledge and specific knowledge-related practices that did not exist thousands of years ago.

Science is obligated for speaking in the interest of the public, the common good, and the socio-political. In the light of recent events such as rising pseudo-scientific claims, anti-science speakers, government sanctioned fund cuts on research, misuse of technology to name a few, science owes to itself and the citizenry to develop a social conscience- a social conscience that is accountable to the public rather than the state. Science is not something that happens out there or in a laboratory; it is socially embedded in different societies that practice it. It is important that we keep science closely connected with social and human concerns rather than obscuring it and making it cryptic. Also establishing a tolerant environment where criticisms of science are not perceived and termed as anti-science will help create pervasive cultures of critical dialogue and debate. ■



# WE DON'T NEED NO THOUGHT CONTROL

The University Grants Commission (UGC) issued the 'UGC Guidelines on Safety of Students On and Off Higher Educational Institutes' in April 2015 – a mere four page document addressing concerns of safety within campus spaces, ranging from sexual harassment to disaster management. Among other things, it recommended biometric identification for marking attendance of students in classes and hostels, setting up of police stations inside campuses, and creating a 'Student Counselling System' whereby parents, teachers, and hostel wardens can coordinate to exchange information about the "personal details of students, academic record, and behavior patterns for prompt pre-emptive or corrective action". The response was expectedly sharp: students and teachers across universities pointed out the agendas of surveillance and control lurking behind such guidelines and how it undermines a democratic vision of education. It was pointed out that a previous document sanctioned by the UGC, titled the Saksham guidelines, in response to cases of sexual harassment within campus spaces, provided a far more comprehensive and compassionate view of how to deal with the same. There were protests in campus spaces across Hyderabad, Pune, and Delhi, opposing the legitimization of these guidelines, finally

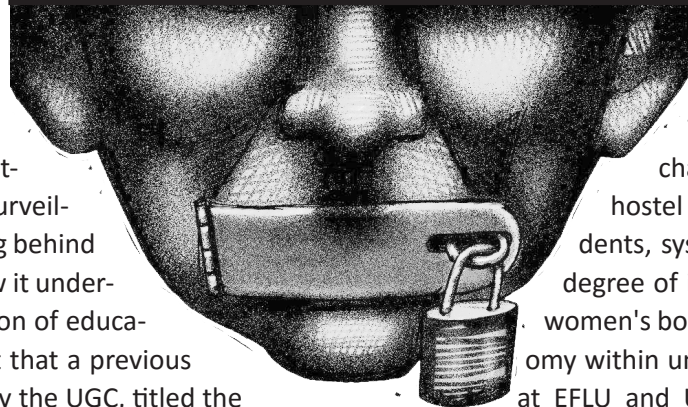
prompting the UGC to clarify that these were merely meant as recommendations and are not to be necessarily enforced. However, the agendas of surveillance – the need to regulate and repress the movement and expression of students – have hardly been put to rest; instead, they frequently tend to become more brutal. The justifications for surveillance are mostly predictable: to ensure the safety of women students; to prevent crime and violence on campus; to ensure students do not go astray. CCTV cameras

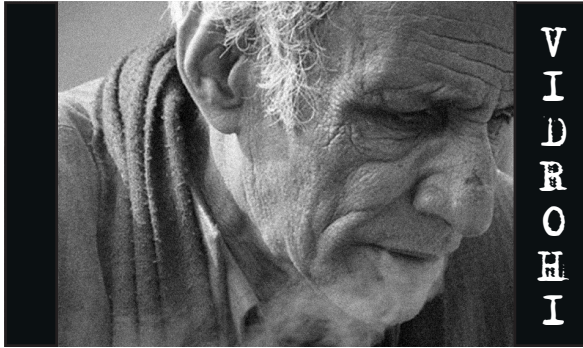
are installed; security forces are deployed; fines and suspensions are handed out. The subtext, however, has never been clearer: Prevent Dissent.

The previous year has been marked by narratives of repression and resistance: the Pinjra Tod campaign, aimed at changing discriminatory hostel rules for women students, systematically exposed the degree of institutional control over women's bodies and claims to autonomy within university spaces; protests at EFLU and University of Hyderabad have exposed the punishing attitude of university administrators towards dissenting students – with the death of Rohith Vemula, and the outpouring of hundreds of stories of the systematic regulation of the minds and bodies of students, from public and private universities alike, it must be asked

(Continued in page 11)

The justifications for surveillance are mostly predictable: to ensure the safety of women students; to prevent crime and violence on campus; to ensure students do not go astray. CCTV cameras are installed; security forces are deployed; fines and suspensions are handed out. The subtext, however, has never been clearer: Prevent Dissent.





## Living on imagination

*"Mere gunaho ko janoge to affsos hoga  
Mere iraado ko janoge to hausta hoga  
Main aapse kehne aya hun janaab  
Ki woh dlin karib hai jab faista hoga...."*

Ram Shankar Yadav popularly known as Vidrohi among students and activists represents a curious case of a person both deeply revered and ridiculed. He joined JNU in 1980 as a student and charted out a social and political life over decades. His participation in one of the ensuing protest movements of the time resulted in his expulsion from the university in 1983. Since then, his life as the 'resident poet' of campus has been a constant source of discussion and curiosity, and is defined by his acquaintances, critics and admirers as both 'revolutionary' and 'erratic'.

Vidrohi spent the major part of his life in the university - for more than three decades - not just in the official capacity of a 'student', but as a perpetual 'activist poet'. He remained a visible part of numerous movements. As an ardent artist Vidrohi was passionate about his poetic exercise: he practiced his oral works to himself daily in dhabas, as if he was refining his oral prowess. Occasionally he would break into rumblings of uncoded language and abuses.

Vidrohi displayed the peculiarity of an intense socio-political engagement along with a simultaneous distance from the campus community. While social distance helped him maintain his own way of life, his social engagement -- embodied in his poetry and politics -- expressed the angst of survival. His poetry manifested the angst and emotion of everyday life, be it through his participation in protests, his regular poetry, or his relationship with students and activists. He was a participant observer and chronicler of non-linear human history. The usual charac-

ters in his poetry were stripped of basic humanity by the ruling classes of various kinds: the capitalist state, the imperialist US, communal fascism, patriarchal society. The possibility of redemption in his work lay in raising questions and perhaps, a revolutionary struggle. He led the life of a revolutionary vagabond. While his struggle for bare existence, be it for food, clothing and even shelter remained very precarious throughout his stay in the university, his consistency in the articulation of politics as a vision for a new society never diminished. For Vidrohi, this went beyond the self-righteous justification of his own idealized living. He engaged with the essence of society in his works and his poetry was not individualistic; infact his works were outrightly social and political. His poetry was loaded with societal anxieties of pain, exploitation, but also the ensuing hope and struggle.

Sometimes the bare existence of a person with an austere 'different' way of living, within the settled idioms of the university student or activist, can give rise to a cacophony of meanings. Vidrohi was one such person, bestowed with immense significance by the 'progressive' JNU community for the kind of politics he endorsed. Yet his life and works were curiously speculative; he was branded with labels ranging from a revolutionary hero of the masses to an insignificant anti-hero symbolizing absurdity. Labels and perceptions of him ranged from a rebel poet, a perennial 'appendage' protestor, a 'consistent' revolutionary poet, an anarchist, a parasite, a madman, an insane person, and a comrade -- describing him in both the most ridiculed and revered terms of identification. His curious existence within the

'progressive' campus community circles in both his life and death demonstrates both the collective guilt and collective burden which the campus community shares. The campus community cannot wholly own him as an ideal standard nor give up on him by dint of his precarious political existence. Valorization of

his revolutionary legacy could take place only in bits and parts. Maybe idolization and idealization scripts its own history? Maybe Vidrohi's poetry and works will be part of that living contradiction which remains unresolved. Maybe vidroh (protest) in its very form remains dynamic and so does Vidrohi's legacy. ■



*"Ye vidrohi rajdhani ke viswavidyalaya ka parha hua hai...  
aur antarastriya sanchar vyavastha ke sarwaach se sampark saadhne wala hai.  
Lekin Vidrohi ke pichhe Bush hai! Aur Bush ke piche mouse hai. Lekin mouse ke piche billi hai.  
Aur yeh naa Washington hai naa Italy hai...  
Yeh Dillli hai. Jaha Ka Vidrohi Vaasi Hai... Aadivasi hai! Aur yeh Mahanuvav keh rahe hai ye  
Aadivasi hai..."*

### We don't need no thought control

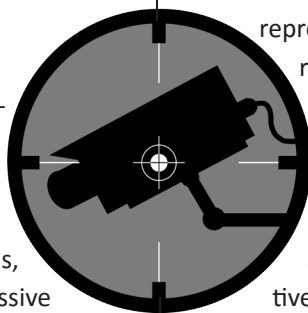
(After page 9)

sharply: why do universities want to increasingly restrict the free movement and expression of students? Women are locked into hostels; 'unhealthy' sexuality is discouraged; student activism is disproportionately punished; students are coercively disciplined into ideologies university authorities deem fit. Why? The answer perhaps lies in a major factor transforming higher education today: the claims of democratization.

Higher education intake has seen a significant rise in the past few years: there are more women, Dalits, social minorities, people from a variety of social contexts staking a claim on university spaces today – this is, in large part, the consequence of progressive movements over the past few decades. Democratization poses an immediate threat to existing hierarchies operating within universities: men over women and other genders, upper castes over lower castes, the wealthy over the poor. As those who have been historically excluded begin to stake their claims on knowledge, the traditional elite take desperate recourse to conservative impulses: the threat of losing power is perhaps too much. The

question of safety can be turned on its head then: students are not unsafe; the traditional centres of power are unsafe.

The political aspiration for open and inclusive spaces of education is not merely limited to students: teachers and workers within such spaces are also subject to the same repressive mechanisms and are, in resistance, raising their voices. However, it cannot be denied that everyday surveillance, in the garb of 'safety' or 'security', is increasingly normalised – the UGC guidelines hardly come as a surprise to many. The struggle against surveillance cannot merely be the prerogative of a few 'progressive' people then: it must involve constant engagement with those who might not imagine or desire what it means to live outside a culture of surveillance. The struggle against surveillance within educational spaces is not merely a response to a few isolated cases; it is a political response to a narrow, repressive vision of education: and in turn, it is an affirmation of the right to freely think, question, reflect, and dissent, from different locations, through different voices. ■





पिंजरा तोड़ो वक्त आ गया  
खामोसी तोड़ो वक्त आ गया  
खामोसी तोड़ो वक्त आ गया  
खामोसी तोड़ो वक्त आ गया

#pinjratod was a movement started by students in New Delhi against gender discriminatory rules in colleges and hostels – earlier ‘in-times’ for girls, differential access to facilities like libraries etc. – all in the name of ‘protection’ and ‘security’. Women adopted provocative tactics like guerilla postering and graffiti to claim campus walls and streets and to demand unconditional freedom to move in these spaces. #pinjratod mobilized large numbers of students around these issues and organized a jansunwai where women shared their experiences of living and studying in hostels and PGs.



No Warden as 'Protector'  
No Brother who is tough  
My FEMINIST COMRADES are enough  
#PINJTRATOD

CURFEW RAZ  
नहीं चलेगा!  
#PINJTRATOD  
NO MORE CAGING WOMEN



In August 2015 a wave of students' protests swept across South Africa. Students were reacting to universities' proposal to raise their fees by up to 11.5% the next year, citing the need to keep up standards. The largest demonstration – of more than 10,000 people, braving teargas, rubber bullets and stun grenades - took place at the Union Buildings, South Africa's seat of government in Pretoria. Participants represented a broad cross-section of the country's racial groups and political parties. The president, Jacob Zuma was forced to relent - he declared there would be a zero increase of university fees in 2016.



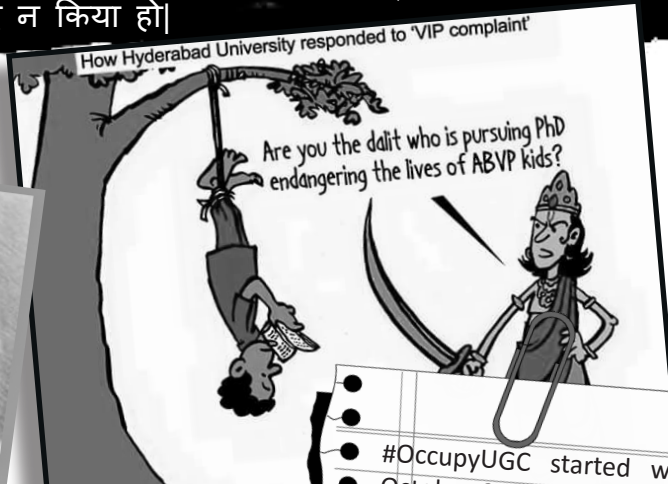


# WE ARE MORE THAN FIVE SHALL ALWAYS BE VICTORIOUS

## ब्राह्मणवाद मनुवाद हो बरबाद हो बरबाद

सितम्बर 2015 में हैदराबाद सेंट्रल यूनिवर्सिटी के पांच दलित छात्रों को सस्पेंड कर दिया गया। फिर उनको अपने होस्टल, मेस और यूनिवर्सिटी के सार्वजनिक स्थानों में घुसने से रोक दिया गया। इन छात्रों का जुर्म था कि इन्होंने, ABVP के द्वारा दिल्ली में 'मुज्जफर नगर बाकी है' फिल्म स्क्रीनिंग के समय बर्बता दर्शाने पर, प्रतिवाद में अपनी आवाज उठाई। 17 जनुअरी को, इन्ही पांच छात्रों में से एक, रोहित वार्मूला, ने इस सामाजिक बहिष्कार से जूझते हुए आत्महत्या की।

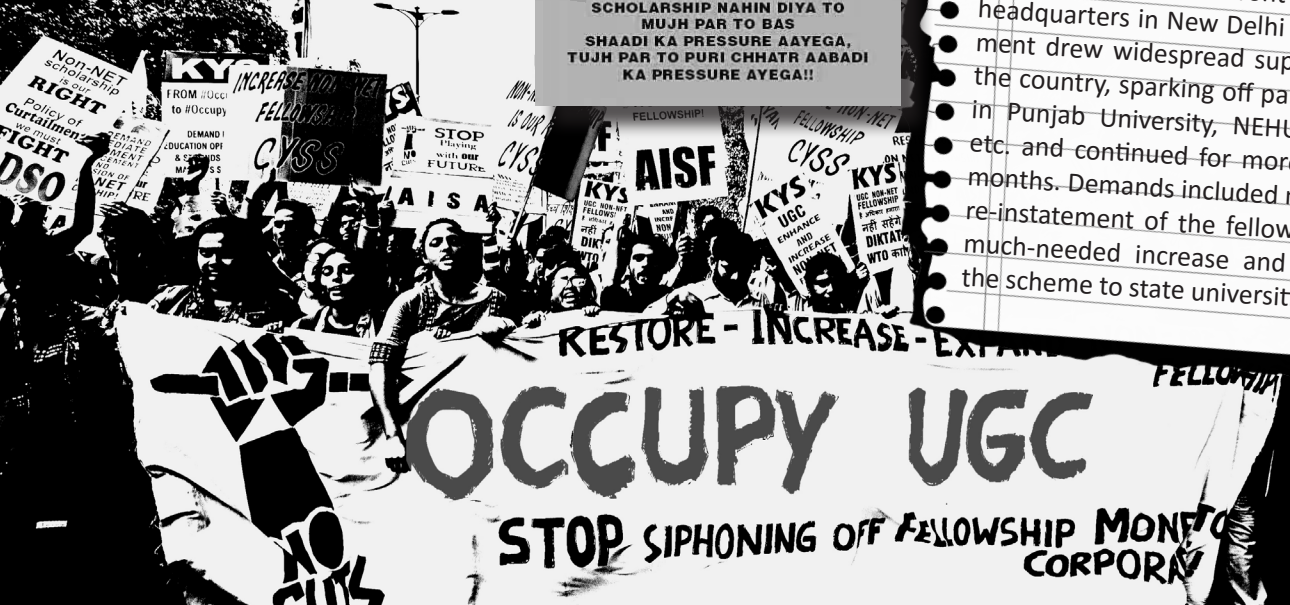
सारे देश में आज इस घटना को केंद्र में रखते हुए जाति के आधार पर होने वाले भेदभाव के खिलाफ एक लम्बे आंदोलन की मुहीम छेद दी गई है। देश का ऐसा कोई यूनिवर्सिटी नहीं, कैंपस नहीं, जहां ये छात्रों ने इस विषय पर प्रतिवाद न किया हो।



**DEKH BHAII UGC**

SCHOLARSHIP NAHIN DIYA TO MUJH PAR TO BAS SHAADI KA PRESSURE AAYEGA, TUJH PAR TO PURI CHHATR AABADI KA PRESSURE AAYEGA!!

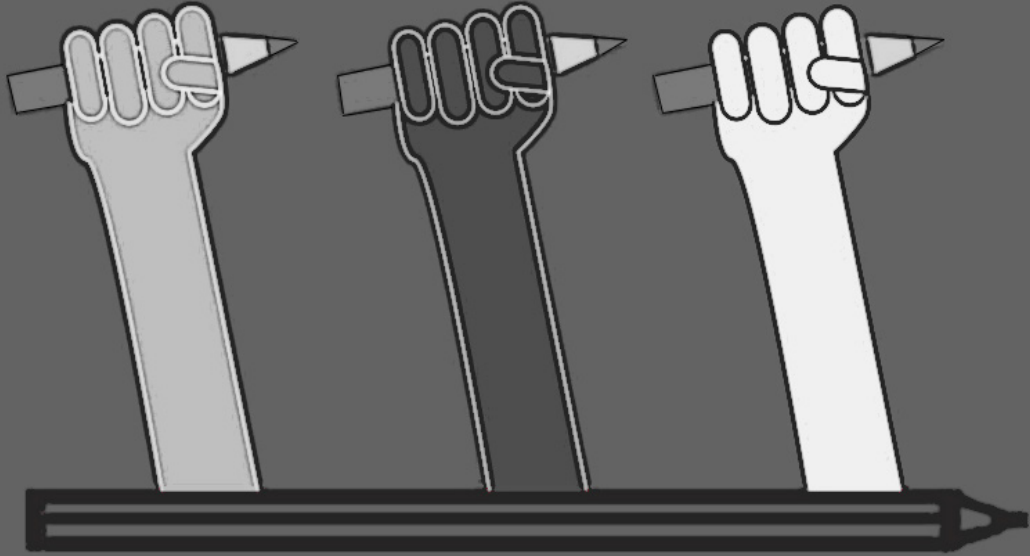
- #OccupyUGC started when on 21st
- October 2015 students in Delhi rose in protest against the UGC's decision - declared a day ago - to scrap the fellowship paid to research scholars who did not receive money under JRF or similar schemes. So called because of the novel form adopted by the protestors - staging an occupation in front of the UGC headquarters in New Delhi - the movement drew widespread support across the country, sparking off parallel action in Punjab University, NEHU (Shillong) etc. and continued for more than two months. Demands included not just the re-instatement of the fellowship but a much-needed increase and extending the scheme to state universities as well.



ब्राह्मणवाद हो बरबाद

WE ARE MORE THAN FIVE

बरबाद हम अपना अधिकार मांगते , नहीं किसीसे भीख मांगते



## Towards a Democratic Education?

Recent student movements – the FTII strike, Occupy UGC, #JusticeforRohithVemula, among others – have sparked off new debates on the politics of higher education and research in particular. Largely ignored by the mainstream media, their success in pushing back saffronization and privatization of higher education in the short-run have been rather limited. Nevertheless they have thrown up something unique in India’s political landscape.

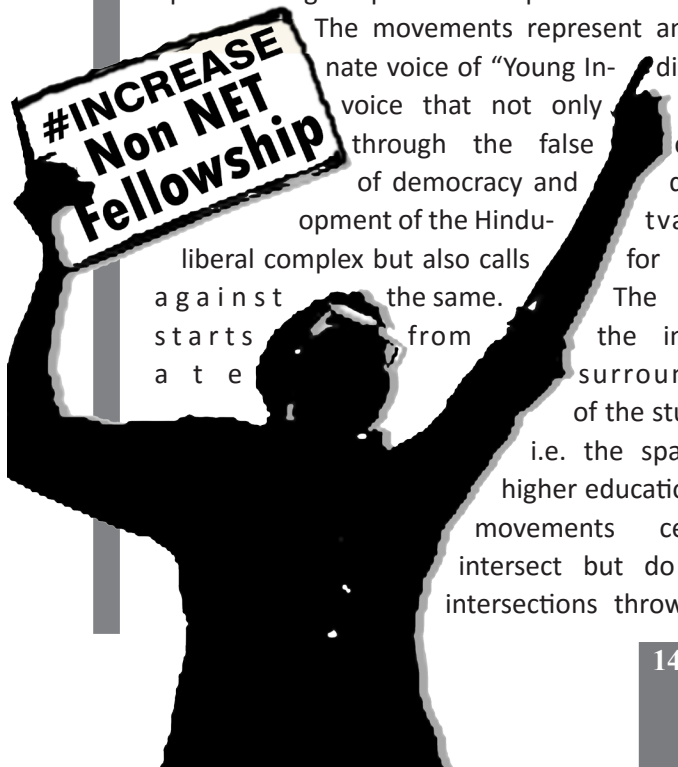
The movements represent an alternate voice of “Young India” – a voice that not only sees through the false claims of democracy and development of the Hindu-liberal complex but also calls for action against the same. The action starts from the immediate surroundings of the students, i.e. the spaces of higher education. The movements certainly intersect but do those intersections throw up a

coherent political agenda on the question on higher education and research? Not yet. Sometime in the near future? Hopefully. Possibly. In the spirit of these movements, let me take the liberty of imagining a possible politics of democratic higher education that we could be moving towards.

### The Movements and their Intersection

The students of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) started protesting when the central government appointed a BJP Member of Parliament Gajendra Chauhan as the Chairman of FTII. Chauhan’s dubious artistic credentials coupled with his Hindutva leanings added ammunition to the already existing discontent regarding the saffronization of education. Occupy UGC began when the University Grants Commission (UGC) decided to end the non-NET fellowship that is crucial to the financial sustenance of research students. Occupy UGC quickly linked the withdrawal of the fellowship to fund cuts in higher education that were being carried out with an eye on its privatization.

Occupy UGC displayed solidarity with the FTII movement and they together identified saffroniza-





tion, privatization, and repression of student politics as combined threats to our public universities. Both were however roundly criticized for their supposed lack of acknowledgement of the existing forms of discrimination within the public universities. FTII students were censured for seemingly pitting a “meritocratic” avant-garde culture, rather than a more inclusive definition of culture, against Hindutva. Occupy UGC’s call to save state-sponsored higher education from the onslaught of privatization was slated for its apparently inadequate attention to the history of exclusionary practices of the existing public university. Dalit students asked: Does there exist a universally accessible quality education that needs to be saved?

If FTII and Occupy UGC needed a reminder about the urgency of the question posed, it came rather

poorer sections of other backward castes and tribes, women of lower caste/class, and students identifying with alternate sexualities – from accessing quality higher education. Secondly, Hindutva forces are widening these fault-lines. Thirdly, privatization, through further reduction of access and perpetuation of the discourse of merit, is likely to further exclude marginalized groups from higher education. The movements intersect and in turn link together the three issues, creating the possibility of a consolidated agenda for higher education.

### **Democratic Education as a Historical Possibility**

What does it mean to imagine a democratic education when modern secular education, right from its genesis, was meant to (re)produce a society segregated in terms of

FTII students were censured for seemingly pitting a “meritocratic” avant-garde culture, rather than a more inclusive definition of culture, against Hindutva. Occupy UGC’s call to save state-sponsored higher education from the onslaught of privatization was slated for its apparently inadequate attention to the history of exclusionary practices of the existing public university. Dalit students asked: Does there exist a universally accessible quality education that needs to be saved?



soon in the form of the spine-chilling murder of Rohith Vemula. Rohith’s murder brought together several key issues: the everyday discrimination faced by Dalit students within the public university, the victimization of student politics that militates against such discrimination, and the role of the BJP and RSS in intensifying caste-ism and authoritarianism within universities, as elsewhere. Political energies activated during the FTII strike and Occupy UGC have pervaded the rallies and marches protesting Rohith’s murder.

The movements in tandem have identified three sets of problems in higher education and university-based research. Firstly, existing forms of discrimination and exclusion already prevent many – dalits,

class, gender, race and caste? Based on a hierarchy between physical and mental labour, it was the product of modern industrial society and was meant to perpetuate it. Institutions meant to perpetuate dominance can however be subverted to challenge that very dominance. The anti-colonial movements – nationalist, feminist, dalit – did just that. These movements fought for equal access to institutions that were meant to produce and perpetuate inequality. In success or failure, these struggles have become springboards for further efforts in this direction. .

The genesis of public education in India, including publically funded research, lay in powerful struggles

against colonialism and the knowledge imperialism that justified it. The anti-colonial movements had envisaged an education and research that would create a knowledge base for a democratic society. Economics research, for instance, would point the way towards socio-economic equality while research in science and technology would create national self-sufficiency in technical know-how. Knowledge was therefore a public good and intricately linked to the creation of egalitarian futures.

The promise of democracy was however not to be fulfilled easily. It turned out to be more notional than substantive. In time the non-fulfilment of the promise became the rallying point for marginalized groups. Sustained struggles by dalits and other backward castes, women and tribals through the 1970s and 80s led to different forms of affirmative action in higher education and to its limited democratization. Over the last two decades diversity in the universities have begun to be reflected in the domains of knowledge as well, with feminist and dalit perspectives making significant headways within academic disciplines. The caste/class elites threatened by the process were however looking for an opportunity to try to reassert their dominance. Neo-liberalism provided just that.

By the late 1990s higher education required greater state resources for deepening the democratization that was taking place. Easier affordability for marginal groups and better infrastructure to ensure that these groups could take full advantage of their entry were the needs of the hour. Besides, there was a unique opportunity to utilize the diversity of experiences within universities to create knowledge that could aid the process of democratic development. The state, however, took the neo-liberal route in

higher education, at a time when neo-liberalism was creating greater inequality than ever before.

It meant a re-orientation of the objective of higher education and research. Rather than pursuing egalitarian objectives, higher education and research was now to be tweaked to suits the needs of a neo-liberal labour market. Academic disciplines were now to be transformed to create knowledge on how to solve society's problems within the political-economic framework of neo-liberalism. Initially, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (I) chose to invest public resources in aiding a private-led development.

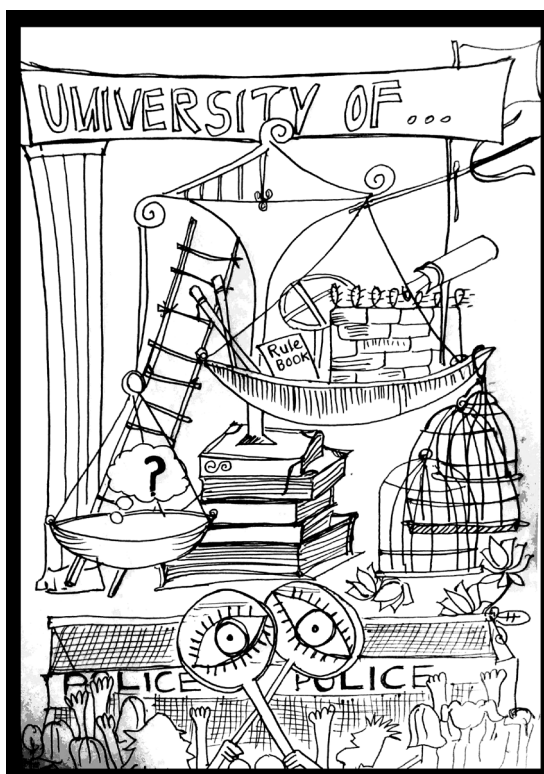
A few "centres of excellence" run by state resources were to be enclaves of "quality" higher education while the rest would produce cheap semi-skilled labour.

The BJP government feels no need to even have a few "centres of excellence" in India and is happy to import knowledge from Euro-America while gearing the entire system of education towards producing cheap labour. Hence the intensified fund-cuts. But be it in the form of a few publically funded "centres of excellence", or privatized spaces of knowledge well-guarded by high fees

and the lack of affirmative action, neo-liberalism has basically given a chance to caste/class elites to reassert their dominance. The capturing of institutions by the RSS/BJP is, in a way, its most naked form.

### Is Knowledge Democracy Possible?

To imagine a democratic education at this juncture means to try to seek a way out of the Hindutva/neo-liberal status quo in and through education and re-establish democracy as the objective of education and research. In concrete terms it requires us to first



Artist: Avipsha, CSSS, JNU

bring together the alternative, voices, emerging from the struggles around education with such voices in other political terrains such as the struggles of industrial workers. Could we think of an education and research that can aid the cause of development for all as it is emerging in these alternate voices across different terrains?

To even take some steps in that direction we would have to expand the range of issues we are covering in our student politics right now. End of saffronization, equal access for all, and campus democracy – the issues in focus – would have to be connected with different aspects of knowledge creation and dissemination. Take the example of everyday discriminations on campus for instance, for instance. It happens not merely in social relations but in and through the pedagogic process – curriculum, teaching methods, teacher-student relations and examination systems. Let me dwell briefly on the one of these issues: university curriculum and the content of academic disciplines.

Rohith Vemula's last political manifesto (his enemies call it his suicide note) talks of his dreams of becoming a scientist; like Carl Sagan. Sagan was known for his political commitment in and through sciences; commitment to nuclear disarmament and world peace. He was also a renowned writer of popular science. In citing Sagan, Vemula was making a statement in favour of democratizing knowledge itself, the next step after access to the university has been partially secured. Vemula's celebration of Sagan is in contrast to the way academic disciplines tend to produce knowledge that often feeds into the neo-liberal development machinery; knowledge that is exclusive and perpetuates a meritocratic logic. Unsurprisingly, Rohith murder has been condemned as undeserving of a "meritorious" student.

Sagan's (read Vemula's) inclination towards popular-

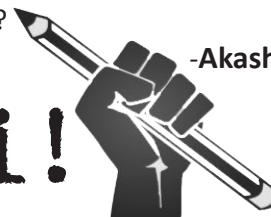
izing science brings us directly to our next topic: the dissemination of knowledge. It revives memories of another murder; that of Aaron Schwartz, the guerrilla warrior who fought for open access to knowledge. Open access strikes at the heart of perpetuation of social segregation in and through education. Restricted access, practised through a network of expensive books and journals, creates knowledge enclaves often monopolized by social elites.

The monopoly prevents marginal groups from accessing knowledge and, in turn, from the intellectual resources that can help them participate in its creation. Fierce competition to gain access to these enclaves dictates the priorities of knowledge and sets the agenda for research. Why not gear research towards destroying these enclaves? Can we give up the idea of the university space, or academics for that matter, as privileged domains of knowledge creation and of critical thinking? The glorification of academic knowledge hides the fact that it too is a form of work like anything else, and often serves to perpetuate the privileges enjoyed by the few who have access to it. What role of the university space do we then envisage? Rather than absorbing social wars, as it does at present, it has to sharpen social wars through an admission policy, curriculum and pedagogy that not only admits social diversity but also allows diverse experiences to exert pressure on existing structures of knowledge. We require a radical pedagogy that does not treat the classroom as the primary site of learning but goads students to also participate in the political struggles of our times in the process of creating knowledge. Knowledge created therein has to be put out for all, in a language that is accessible, and through open access publishing. New technologies such as e-learning have to be harnessed for this purpose.

Enough of knowledge economy. Can we have knowledge democracy?

-Akash, CHS, JNU

#gyankranti!





# LOOKING INWARDS: CLASSROOM AS A SHARED SPACE

“Epidemiology is the study of disease patterns in man.” “Disease is what a doctor diagnoses after seeing signs and symptoms of a patient, illness is what he (a patient) feels and experiences, and sickness is what the society ascribes him.” “A doctor should be sensitive to the socio-economic conditions of his patients.” “Health services in India face massive shortage of manpower.”

These are some of the common sentences I regularly hear and read in my classroom where I am trying to learn about public health. Every time I read or hear such a sentence, I cringe. Do you see why? If you don't, read them again.

“Epidemiology is the study of disease patterns in MAN.”  
“Disease is what a doctor diagnoses after seeing signs and symptoms of a patient, illness is what HE (a patient) feels and experiences, and sickness is what the society ascribes HIM.”

“A doctor should be sensitive to the socio-economic conditions of HIS patients.”

“Health services in India face massive shortage of MANpower.”

At such moments, ‘public’ in public health seems like a misnomer to me. Exclusive male pronouns or examples are often attempted to pass off as ‘universal’. I sometimes argue and even protest, but mostly, I sulk.

focus on the content. Okay, for a moment, I consider the argument, knowing very well that it's a ‘he’ telling me not to bother too much about exclusive use of ‘he’. I try to take refuge in the academic works that a novice in public health like myself is supposed to revere. But there too, I end up being frustrated.

Take for example, the Bhore Committee Report of 1946 that foregrounded the field of public health in India. It was much ahead of its time when it talked about social determinants of health, occupational health, mental health and various other measures. However, one of its recommendations was that more women should be recruited for nursing jobs as they were more ‘fit’ to do that. Another milestone, the Sohkey Committee report of 1947 went a step even further in suggesting that more women were needed in medical profession so that men could be free to do the ‘more’ important works related to nation building! Interestingly, the Bhore Committee was influenced by the Beveridge Report of 1942 which founded the Welfare State in England. I wonder what stopped the Committee to be influenced by the women's movement of that very country which was also raising important questions during those very times.

Another example is that of what is commonly called the ‘Ratcliffe study’. Indeed, this study is one of the finest in health research, breaking myths of ‘objectivity’ and



...our collective, co-created and shared spaces which we call our classrooms, deemed as sites of empowerment and learning, can be hierarchical, marginalising, devaluing and discriminatory. Our classrooms and the processes that lie within them can be as much a reflection of patriarchal social processes as any other space.

stressing on value criticality and systems approach in research processes. But what is hardly ever no-

A friend of mine tells me that I am overreacting and that it is not the linguistics – a ‘he’ here and there (or everywhere?) that should bother me. Rather, I should

ticed is that the study was co-authored by John W. Ratcliffe AND Amalia Gonzalez-del-Valle. How come, then, the study is exclusively called the ‘Ratcliffe study’ and

GERTRUDE LAMARE

The tragedy is you and me.  
 For they are minds, intellectually carved  
 By institutions-  
 Much like packaged goods wrapped in glittering paper.  
 How dare we slash them with our words!  
 For these are respectable women and men  
 Who make the sacrifice of showering gifts  
 On occasional trips to orphanages.  
 We, my friend, are blind.

For it is them who write pain into memory,  
 Who cry for justice in prayers,  
 Who throw their generosity,  
 In the interstices of a busy schedule  
 Even if, At Their Convenience.  
 Judge not,  
 But dignify them as saviours  
 Of our world.  
 Protectors of our culture,  
 As builders of a glamorous tomorrow,  
 For you and for me.

not the 'Ratcliffe and Gonzalez-del-Valle study'? If the first author logic is to be applied here, why do we still call many co-authored seminal works such as the Banerji and Anderson's study of Tuberculosis or the recent Dreze and Sen's book and so on and so forth? Just wondering.

To be honest, I do not intend this write up to be feminist critique of the mainstream public health literature since I have no qualification to write one. Rather, this is an unapologetic rant about how our collective, co-created and shared spaces which we call our classrooms, deemed as sites of empowerment and learning, can be hierarchical, marginalising, devaluing and discriminatory. Our classrooms and the processes that lie within them can be as much a reflection of patriarchal social processes as any other space. While we may spend semesters after semesters analysing what rots the 'outside' spaces or the systems, in our case the health system, we do not do enough of looking inwards or 'within'. By not doing so, we breed, sustain and even strengthen the privileges and capital of all kinds that are unequally bestowed upon some at the cost of many others.

The language we use, the jokes we crack, the assumptions we make, the groups we form, the questions we ask, the friends we make, or the readings we like – these are not random processes but are very much shaped by our caste, class, gender, religion, 'ability', geographical and other locations.

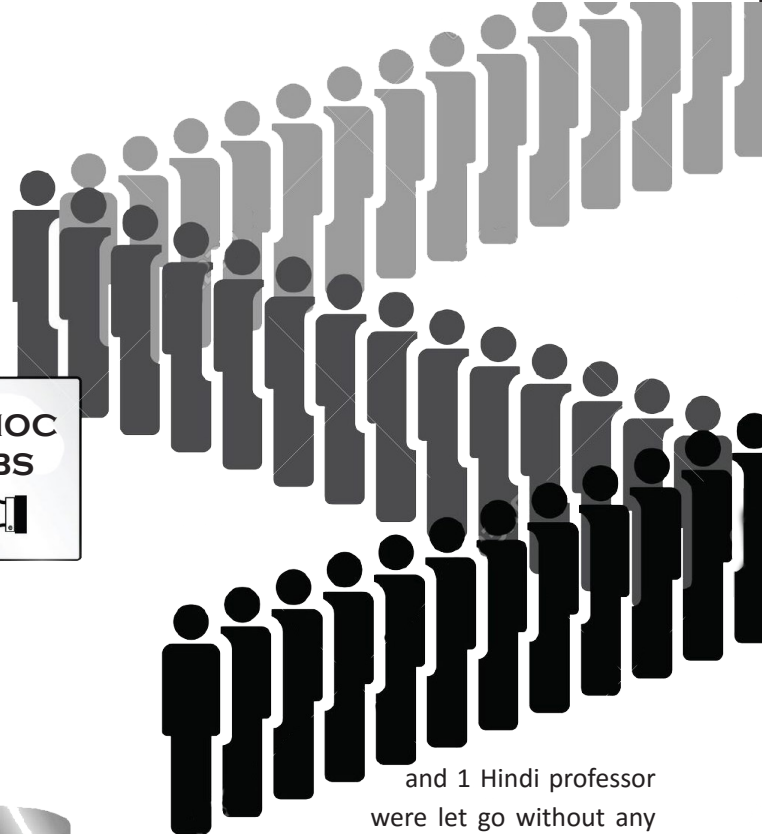
For instance, as a highly privileged 'upper' caste, 'up-

per' class, 'able' bodied, urban educated and cis-gendered woman, I find myself more vocal than I should be in my class. The reason I can comprehend, articulate, write or even score better than many hard working friends of mine is because the rules of the game called institutionalized 'higher' education were decided by the elites of my kind with similar privileges, and that is why I am able to 'perform'. Even if all the rules of the game in themselves are not discriminatory, unequal endowments mean that some people find it much easier than others to do well.

We need to begin asking the hard questions around these themes. We need to interrogate our spaces, our words, our privileges and also ourselves. Every time we exclusively use a 'he', we discriminate against persons with other gender identities. Every time we insist on speaking a 'common' language, be it the 'official' language or the so called 'national' one, we intimidate and oppress persons from vernacular backgrounds. Every time we express unhappiness about reservations or argue that it should be based only on 'merit' or suggest that caste-based discrimination is a 'thing of the past', we commit an atrocity. And then there are many subtle forms of discriminations too, or the forms that I am unaware of but contribute in their perpetuation, nevertheless.

Finally, I do not claim to have solutions. Because we all need to think about them and find them together. And for that, we need to have open, frank, and deep conversations. Lots and lots of them! ■

# SUSPENDED LIVES



Delhi University which has over the past few years rapidly evolved into a job hunting ground for students fresh out of MPhil or into PhD programs, currently employs nearly 5000 young teachers on an ad hoc basis. Appointed on a "tentative" basis (as stated in their contract) in over 70 colleges that come under it – for only 4 months at a time, with the added caveat that their services can be terminated any time during their tenure - these men and women comprise a wide pool of floating contractual labour. Most of these colleges have violated UGC regulations, which state that teachers should be appointed on contract basis only when it is absolutely necessary and when the student-teacher ratio does not satisfy the laid down norms and that their number should not exceed 10% of the total number of faculty positions in a college or university. While conditions vary from one college to another the stories of high-handedness from college authorities, of exploitation, the unspoken or overt standards of submissiveness that ad-hocs must follow, are all widespread enough to deserve some keen scrutiny.

Himani (name changed), a teacher of English, was terminated at Q College one July, citing a decrease in workload though there was no way to ascertain the validity of that claim or demand transparency in deciding the number of faculty members needed in such circumstances. The termination betrayed a clear bias against the humanities and social sciences - 4 English, 1 History

and 1 Hindi professor were let go without any prior intimation. In their place 3 Chemistry (relatives of the Principal) and 2 Computer Science professors were hired. The six of them then sat on a dharna demanding their reinstatement. After weeks of protesting they reached an agreement with the administration wherein they were re-hired as guest lecturers (the pay would be much less than an ad hoc gets, with a corresponding decrease in workload) though there was no paperwork to formalize the appointment. But it has been several months and they still haven't been paid their four months' salaries - despite having assiduously finished their courses and submitted all Internal Assessment marks at the end of the semester.

DU colleges have mastered many other tricks to get away with paying ad hoc professors as little as possible. For instance if a college hires someone as ad hoc for two semesters in a row, then, as long as she joins on the first working day of the second semester, she is entitled to a 'summer salary' or 'winter salary' - depending on the time of the year. So, the colleges either don't retain them beyond a semester, or in the rare cases that they do, make them join the day after the first working day so as to avoid paying them these salaries. And while legally colleges are bound to appoint as permanent faculty any teacher who has taught as an ad hoc



for 6 months, there are teachers in DU who have been teaching for more than 10 or 12 years now, without any promotion. Rampant nepotism is an open secret, especially when it comes to the hiring of permanent faculty.

Ad hocs are expected to stay quiet, submissive - even more so if you are a woman. Himani remembers being one of the first ad hocs to really stand up and speak out loudly in a teachers union meeting. There is no shortage of stares to impress on the female ad hoc which dresses are acceptable to the senior profs and which aren't.

"Your precarious work condition ensures that you're also the most fearful of being targeted," she explains. "And the hefty pay (in DU it's around 45-50,000 minus taxes - much higher than Haryana or Himachal Pradesh where the salary gap with permanent faculty is wider) plays not a small role in persuading teachers to stay quiet and take on the often unacknowledged workload within departments." From completing evaluations to preparing time-tables, the bulk of the clerical work falls on the ad-hoc's shoulders, work that they are obliged to do in order to stay within the fa-

vour of the administration with its arbitrary powers of dismissal. "The dominant mood is that of fear. And it prevents even friendships - let alone a sense of solidarity - from springing up among ad hoc professors themselves."

And there are always the Big Brothers with their new age gadgets to set you on the right path if you stray too far. The hiring and firing of employees insists Himani, is often far from arbitrary. Colleges across DU have been installing CCTV cameras to keep a check on potential dissenting activity. Furthermore, DU's ex-VC Dinesh Singh passed a bill forbidding faculty members from being "political" inside the classroom: if a student caught you on video saying things that could qualify as "political" that could get you fired.

What of unionizing then? Sporadic attempts at collectivizing ad hoc professors - in English departments

for example - across colleges in DU have not been very successful. There is a general sense of disillusionment among teachers, says Himani, regarding Left parties. The Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) whose candidate Nandita Narain is the current president of the DUTA has raised the ad hocs' question from time to time. They intervened on behalf of the protesting teachers at Q as well. But even DTF seems quite helpless at times. The DU Ad-Hoc Rights Forum (DUARF) formed in September 2014 as an "apolitical" forum with a single-point agenda: to demand filling up of all sanctioned posts before commencement of the new academic session, doesn't seem to have made much headway either.

The termination betrayed a clear bias against the humanities and social sciences - 4 English, 1 History and 1 Hindi professor were let go without any prior intimation. In their place 3 Chemistry (relatives of the Principal) and 2 Computer Science professors were hired.

As another semester begins at DU and the university goes about its daily work with studied indifference, we would do well to bear in mind how such exploitative employment practices within our higher education work in tandem with other existing attacks on that system. The ebbing out of any tolerance for dissent cannot be happy news for a place to which production of knowledge is integral. And we don't need to look very hard

to discern the connection this bears to the pressure on public institutes from above to cater to corporate interests or to make syllabuses conform to a right wing ideology. Despotic college authorities can command a servile dependence from their employees which is frightening, considering the nature of the profession. Under such circumstances, the university, of all (work) places falls an easy victim to ideological biases - of religion, caste, political creed etc. - that are bound to play a part wherever there are no regulations binding the employer. The mundane problems of the work week faced by the ad hoc - unmanageable workload, rude superiors - recounted to peers over tea in JNU perhaps, belie the magnitude of the issue or simply how ubiquitous those experiences are in the city. Locating a single, expendable ad hoc life in today's foreboding political landscape might be the first step towards launching an extensive, collective struggle to win back what we are rapidly losing. ■



# THE PROBLEMS OF DOING SCIENCE AS A STUDENT IN JNU

## PERSPECTIVE

They say that science transcends all boundaries and that scientific knowledge has the potential to illuminate the darkest recesses of the human mind. But it is an absolute tragedy that the very students pursuing science in this university have to battle odds that are created in circumstances that sometimes defy rational and egalitarian thinking.

There are several problems that a student pursuing higher studies in a university may have to face. The question we must ask here is- what are the problems specific to the science and technology scholars in this university? The most important factor that underlies all the difficulties faced by the students in the science schools is the prevalent laboratory culture in these schools. The nature of scientific work and the extended working hours tend to isolate the students from the world outside the laboratories. There is rarely any exchange of ideas from separate disciplines, especially the social sciences and the humanities. Furthermore, if ever there were to be any desire expressed by a student to learn something other than science, it is easily discouraged by a raised eyebrow from the supervisor and/or a busy schedule. The irony is most absurd when even on days when work is not as hectic, students are expected or even required to be present in the laboratory for the usual duration of time.

Under such circumstances, it is only natural that there arise certain problems quite unique to the science and technology scholars. One such problem is the problem of gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the science schools. This is a very sensitive issue and it must be emphasized that although every case of sexual harassment begins in more or less the same way, there are certain differences relating to these schools. The confines of the laboratory in the late working hours make it possible for any form of harassment to take place, if intended. This is not to say that such a situation most definitely arises in all the laboratories. But what must be understood is that such incidents are more likely to go unheeded in the science schools.

The reason for such a serious issue to go unheard of and

unattended is the reluctance of the female scholars to speak out and register complaints against sexual harassment. The usual social taboo and defamation associated with such an incident is well understood by most of us. But what must be understood further is that there is an intense politics that goes on inside a laboratory and the accused is, in most cases, either be a faculty member or a research scholar who is superior in the hierarchical structure of seniority operating inside a laboratory. It is more likely that such complaints may have a directly adverse impact on the victim's future career prospects. It may even make it impossible for her to continue research in the same laboratory. This forces the female scholars to find an alternative solution to the problem, like quitting the laboratory altogether.

There are ways in which a victim can be pressurized under the aforementioned circumstances. If the complaint is against one's own supervisor, the impact on her work may be more serious. Unlike the social sciences, the scientific knowledge produced in the laboratory is entirely based on prior work, most often the knowledge already generated by the supervisor himself. This ensures very limited creative autonomy and a high level of dependence on the supervisor's expertise. When a complaint is registered, everything that a student has been working on is subjected to complete jeopardy. On the other hand, if the accused is a colleague in the same laboratory chances are that he is senior to the victim and hence, enjoys a better relationship with the supervisor. This makes it difficult for the victim to win the sympathy of her supervisor in case of a complaint and the uncertainty until the final verdict makes it difficult for her to carry on as usual her work in the laboratory. Thus, many girls prefer not to raise their voices and the problem is once again swept under the dirty rug of hushed incidents.

Speaking out against abuse of any kind requires extreme courage. And where the work environment is as closed as it is in the laboratories, it becomes increasingly difficult for voices to be heard. It is a sad truth that hollering against sexual harassment is all the more challenging in institutions that are meant to uphold rational thinking. ■



## RESPONSE FROM BIOTECH STUDENTS

“The single most pressing problem in our department is the delayed arrival of funds. A delay of 7-8 months is common, the exact amount differs with the funding agency - CSIR is particularly notorious. Under the new government, funding agencies have stopped entertaining or even responding to us - the harshness with which our requests are dealt with is new. There have been cases of students’ names that initially appeared on fellowship lists being struck off, citing the lack of funds.”

“Fund cuts by the current government will harm basic research - it is easy for established faculty to raise funds to carry on their own research in labs because once their field is well-established money is easy to attract. But a place like JNU used to be important (earlier) because young researchers entering the university at 22 or 23 could get funds with which to start off their research, and government’s fund cuts are going to hit them specifically, very hard. Without a financial guarantee, the ability of fields such as our own, biotechnology, to attract young researchers, is sure to suffer.”

“Unlike research students in the humanities and social sciences our work requires us to be present in the lab 24X7, five days a week and sometimes more which means that we must work in very close rapport with our guides. The situation varies from one lab to another but many kinds of professional harassment are pretty well known - a student may be stuck with just one project year after year but not allowed to publish any paper despite contributing heavily to the content of research papers coming out of that project. The availability of funds is often a game-changer though. The individual freedom with which any student can work on a project would depend on how much money is available, when funds are limited we are more bound to carry out our guide’s instructions.”

“Sometimes a female student wants to get married or wants to take maternity leave and her guide makes contrary remarks about her decision. The issue of maternity leave is also tied to the problem of funding. Government agencies are more likely to grant paid maternity leave than private places, so it also depends on what kind of a project you are involved in at that point of time. There have been a few cases of women students dropping out after marriage, unable to bear the load of daily lab work as well as domestic responsibilities”.

“Shortage of time is the single most important factor behind science students’ lack of participation in political activities on campus. After spending the whole day in labs it’s impossible for us to invest in any kind of activity outside it. Our social interaction with students from other departments is also very limited - perhaps a few friends here and there from hostels. Otherwise, it’s mostly through some relation to our work that friendships are struck up.”

## SCIENCE UNDER THE PRESENT REGIME

The present government under Narendra Modi, in spite of its high rhetoric on ‘Make in India’ campaign has decided to go for a massive fund cut in the higher education and research in science and technology sector. The decision for this slash in budgetary allocation for scientific research was taken in a two day ‘Chintan Shivir’, which was held in Dehradun in June, 2015. Interestingly, representatives from Vigyan Bharati, a science organisation affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was a part of this conference with the aim of promoting ‘indigenous’ science. According to the ‘Dehradun Declaration,’ all laboratories were signatories to “develop a revenue model in a business-like manner with a clear cost-benefit analysis”. So, the research laboratories will slowly transform into ‘for-profit’ ventures. As a result of tie-up with private corporations and industries and dependence upon them for research funding, the research in the CSIR laboratories will eventually serve the profit motive of the private players instead of research for public interest and benefit. The cut in research grant and funding and the pressure of ‘deliverable target’ will also significantly hamper the research and academic autonomy of the scientists in the choice of the areas of research. The basic or fundamental research, which does not have an immediate tangible outcome or potential for commerce, will be jeopardised altogether. In addition, the junior scientists will also be hit hard since they are most dependent on the government funding at the beginning of their career.

\* The Ministry of Science and Technology has issued a directive which mandated all the publicly funded scientific laboratories in the country, whether in colleges, universities and research institutes ordering them to start ‘self-financing’ projects and seek funding from private agencies for their research projects. Instead of relying on government funding, the laboratories has been asked to become ‘self-sufficient’ and generate part of their funds through external funded projects and grants from foreign or national companies, industries and other government agencies.

\*The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which forms the backbone of the scientific research in the country, has been asked by the government to generate half of its funds by itself.

\*The number of Senior and Junior Research Fellowships (SRFS/JRFs) have been reduced this year. This will significantly exclude the students from socially and economically deprived sections of the society to take part in higher education and scientific research.



# कैंपस में जाति का सवाल

यह केवल हैदराबाद सेंट्रल यूनिवर्सिटी की बात नहीं है। जब हैदराबाद में पांच दलित छात्रों को हॉस्टल से, मेस से, यूनिवर्सिटी के पब्लिक बिल्डिंगों में घुसने से, बर्खास्त कर दिया जाता है, जब उन्हीं में से एक छात्र को आत्महत्या करने के लिए बाध्य किया जाता है, और सारे देश में आक्रोश और आंदोलन का माहोल बनता है, तब हमें न केवल HCU पर, मगर एक नज़र अपने कैंपस पर भी डालने का मौका मिलता है।

हमारे कैंपस में पिछले काफी समय से जाति और वर्ग के आधार पर पक्षपात और भेदभाव होने की घटनाएँ सामने आ रही हैं। मगर बात किसी एक या दो घटनाओं की नहीं है, सवाल यह है कि क्या कैंपस में सिस्टमिक रूप से जाति भेद के आधार पर पक्षपात हो रहा है? ऐसा कैसे संभव है कि किसी सेंटर के एक पूरे डिवीज़न में आज तक किसी दलित छात्र को कभी भी PhD पूरस्कृत नहीं किया गया? एक RTI से इस बात का खुलासा हुआ कि CIPOD के International Organization डिवीज़न में आज तक जितने भी SC कैटेगरी के छात्रों का दाखिला हुआ है, उनमें से किसीको कभी भी PhD डिग्री प्राप्त नहीं हुयी और केवल एक ही ST कैटेगरी के छात्र को PhD हासिल हुई है। हैरानी की बात यह है कि इस तरह का जातिभेद हमारे यूनिवर्सिटी में रहा है, मगर अब तक नज़र नहीं आया। अगर तर्क यह है कि SC/ST छात्रों में drop out rate ज्यादा होने के कारण इनकी PhDs जमा नहीं हो रही है, तो हमें सवाल उठाना चाहिए कि SC/ST छात्रों में drop out rate इतना ज्यादा क्यों है? क्या एक खास तपके से आने वाले छात्रों को हमारे विश्वविद्यालय में अपनी पढ़ाई या रिसर्च पूरी करने के लिए अनुकूल परिस्थितिया नहीं मिल रही हैं?

एक लम्बे समय से हमारी यूनिवर्सिटी में Direct PhD दाखिलों में SC और ST कैटेगरी की सीटें भरी नहीं जा रही हैं। जाहाँ Supreme Court का जजमेंट रहा कि SC, ST और OBC कैटेगरी की reserved सीटें निश्चित तौर पे भरी जानी चाहिए, वहाँ हमारी यूनिवर्सिटी के अधिकतर Centre इस बात को अपना 'discretionary power' मानते हैं ताकि SC और ST छात्रों को 'unsuitable' कहकर दाखिला ना दिया जाये। कैंपस में यह विषय उठाया भी गया और Academic Council ने भी निर्देश दिया कि reserved सीट्स पूर्ण

तौर पर भरी जानी चाहिये फिरभी इस सेमेस्टर में फिर से, Direct PhD में एक भी SC या ST कैटेगरी को दाखिला नहीं मिला। viva voce में नियमित रूप से SC, ST या OBC category के छात्रों को कम नंबर दिए जाते हैं।

दूसरी ओर हमारे होस्टलों के mess में जहाँ contract workers काम करते हैं वहाँ, अधिकतर SC या ST workers को खाना बनाने के काम पर नहीं लिया जाता। मगर सभी को पता होगा कि हमारे कैंपस में ज्यादातर सफाई कर्मचारी वाल्मीकि और अन्य नीची मानी जाने वाली जातियों में से हैं।

यह कहानी सिर्फ एक या दो विश्वविद्यालयों की नहीं है। IIT-Delhi में 2008 में 12 दलित छात्रों को निकाल दिया गया। पिछले कई वर्षों में IITs और अन्य टेक्निकल institutes में दलित छात्रों द्वारा आत्महत्या करने के अनेक मामले हमारे सामने आये हैं। 2010 में जब AIIMS में MBBS की पढ़ाई करने वाले एक दलित छात्र Balmukund Bharti, ने गंभीर अपमान और पक्षपात के चलते आत्महत्या की, तब देश के उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में जाति के आधार पर होने वाले भेदा-भेद पर जांच और सिफारिश करने के लिए Thorat commission का गठन किया गया। आज तक Thorat commission की सिफारिशों को लागू नहीं किया गया। यह सभी सवाल आज हमारे सामने मजूद हैं। आज आंदोलन का माहोल हमें मौका देता है कि हम इन सभी सवालों से जूझें।





## Cruelty

Namdeo Dhasal  
(translated from marathi by Dilip Chitre)

I am a venereal sore in the private part of language.  
The living spirit looking out  
of hundreds of thousands of sad, pitiful eyes  
Has shaken me.  
I am broken by the revolt exploding inside me.  
There's no moonlight anywhere;  
There's no water anywhere.  
A rabid fox is tearing off my flesh with its teeth;  
And a terrible venom-like cruelty  
Spreads out from my monkey-bone.

Release me from my infernal identity.  
Let me fall in love with these stars.  
A flowering violet has begun to crawl towards horizons.  
An oasis is welling up on a cracked face:  
A cyclone is swirling in irreducible vulvas.  
A cat has commenced combing the hairs of agony.  
The night has created space for my rage.  
A stray dog has started dancing in the window's eye.  
The beak of an ostrich has begun to break open junk.  
An Egyptian carrot is starting to savour physical reality.  
A poem is arousing a corpse from its grave.  
The doors of the self are being swiftly slammed shut.  
There's a current of blood flowing through all pronouns now.  
My day is rising beyond the wall of grammar.  
God's shit falls on the bed of creation.  
Pain and roti are being roasted in the same tandoor's fire.  
The flame of the clothless dwells in mythologies and folklore.  
The rock of whoring is meeting live roots;  
A sigh is standing up on lame legs;  
Satan has started drumming the long hollowness.  
A young green leaf is beginning to swing at the door of desire.  
Frustration's corpse is being sewn up.  
A psychopathic muse is giving a shove to the statue of eternity.  
Dust begins to peel armour.  
The turban of darkness is coming off.  
You, open your eyes: all these are old words.  
The creek is getting filled with a rising tide;  
Breakers are touching the shoreline.

Yet, a venom-like cruelty spreads out from my monkey-bone.

It's clear and limpid: like the waters of the Narmada river.