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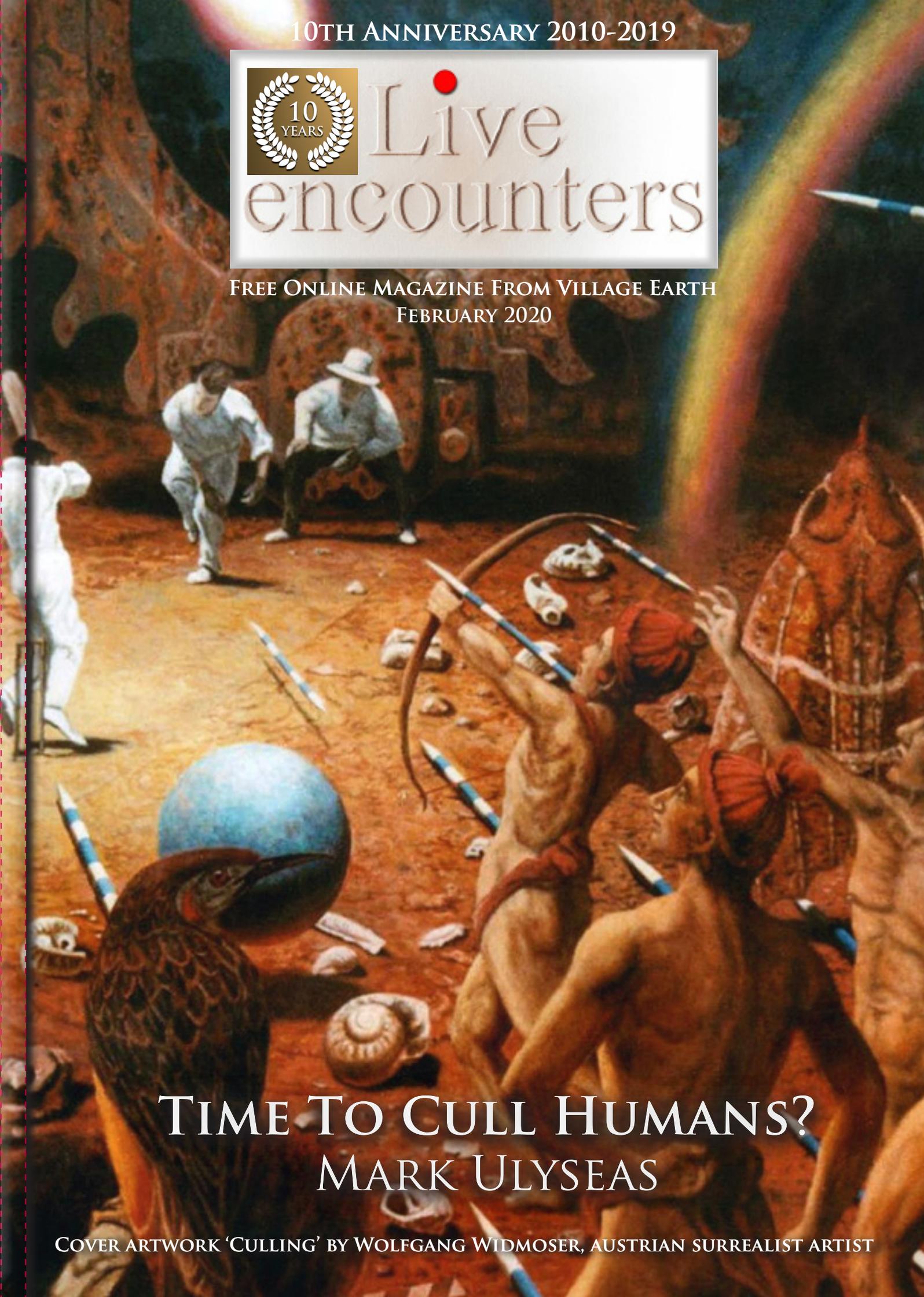


Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
FEBRUARY 2020

TIME TO CULL HUMANS? MARK ULYSEAS

COVER ARTWORK 'CULLING' BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER, AUSTRIAN SURREALIST ARTIST





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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount for this just cause.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
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Time to cull humans?

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Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*).



Water Stones of Wisdom

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Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. Bobby's enthusiasm, energy and passion for food are infectious as he cooks and entertains. He is now a permanent judge on *Top Chef Middle East* which is one of the highest rated shows for MBC and the most popular culinary show across the Middle East and North Africa. Thanks in part to his role as host of Discovery TLC's *World Café* series and judge on *Top Chef Middle East*, Bobby catapulted into a culinary celebrity across Asia and the Middle East



Hindutva and Dalits: The Irreconcilable Contradiction

Dr Anand Teltumbde

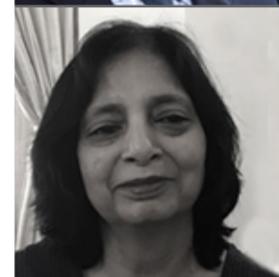
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Response from the East to the Western Discourses on Islamophobia

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Jammu and Kashmir, 1990 and Beyond

Rekha Chowdhary

Rekha Chowdhary is the fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. She has served at the University of Jammu as Professor of Political Science till 2013.



Migration, Trafficking and Gender Construction: Women in Transition

Associate Professor Roli Misra

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Bread of Angels

Stephanie Saldaña

Stephanie Saldaña has a B. A. from Middlebury College and a master's degree from Harvard Divinity School. She was a Watson and Fulbright scholar and has won several awards for her poetry. She is the author of *The Bread of Angels*, about her time living in Syria, and the recently published *A Country Between*. She is also the founder of Mosaic Stories, a project to tell the stories of endangered cultural heritage in the Middle East.

www.mosaicstories.org



Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 176 publications (upto February 2020). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY - My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya - Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. www.amazon.com/markulyseas <https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/>

MARK ULYSEAS

TIME TO CULL HUMANS?

Life is made up of images, sounds, tastes, and thoughts etc. that are contaminated the moment we are born. Indoctrination begins at a frenetic pace. The urgency with which this commences is frightening. *Word*, opinion and set rules are embedded in the psyche with a missionary zeal. The seed of exclusiveness becomes the exoskeleton of the human being. And as biological growth continues so does this exclusiveness clothed in an insidious indoctrination. The first step towards protecting one's territory is drawn out... Territory that demarcates the *us* and *them*. Added to this is the elixir of belief that feeds off the imagined fears of impending perceived divine retribution if one doesn't obey the rules of the *Word*. One cannot question for the answer will always be the same - *it is written in the Book...* The *Word* of one book being different to Books of other cultures across the world...Thus making the *Word* garbled to those who live within the confines of their own indoctrination.

And we populate and loot the earth with a shocking self-indulgence bordering on Divine Right. *We need, we want, we must have* are the mantras of daily life that are eating away, like termites, the planet's resources. Yet we pontificate about the sanctity of life whilst using one belief or another to either judge or persecute or in many instances commit murder; not just of our fellow folk but other members of Nature. Sometimes killing for pleasure.

Accumulation of wealth is the fundamental *life force*. The building block of human life. *The currency now is greed.*

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

The human population in 1800 was 1 billion and in 1900 it was 1.6 billion.

As of January 2020 the population is 7.8 billion inspite of the bloody conflicts of the 20th century.

Why do we cull other animals when we should be culling ourselves?

Are we so self-absorbed and egotistical that we cannot see that we are merely hybrid animals dressed in suits propagating a higher living through our *Word*, preaching ethics and morals, whilst living a self-obsessed existence in concrete jungles? Perhaps like rats running endlessly on exercise wheels in a laboratory...running, running, running but really going nowhere.

And as we go about decimating Nature we enunciate the terrors of environmental degradation. The hypocrisy has become a contagion.

A closer look from space will reveal the infestation of humans, that like a plague, is spreading uncontrolled with devastating effect. Like locusts voraciously feeding off the planet.

The overall life expectancy was 52 years in 1960. In 2017 it was 72 years approx. Thanks to the medical profession more cures are being found for diseases.

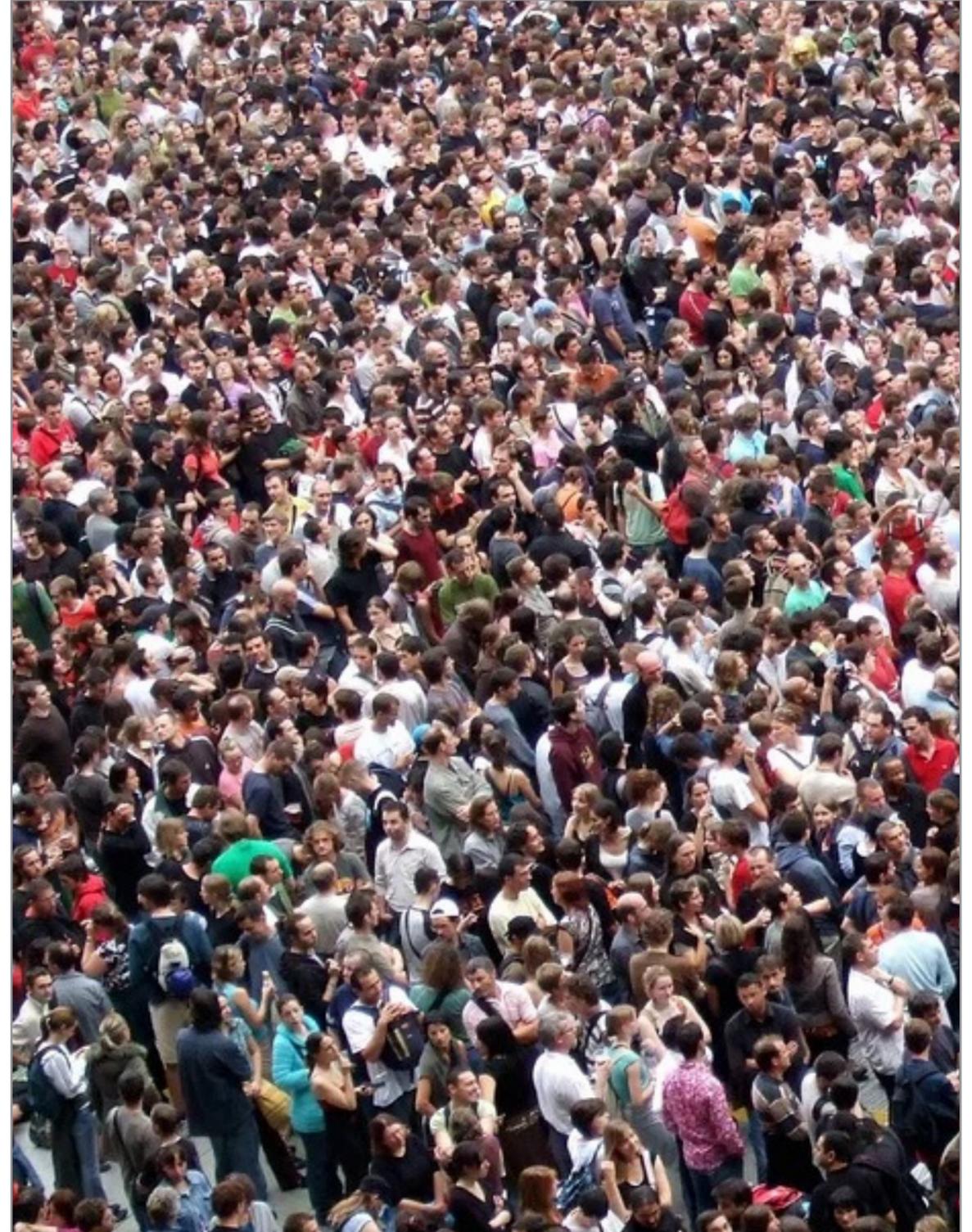
Science has done a great disservice to humanity by inventing cures for diseases and thereby increasing the level of life expectancy. Perhaps this is why Nature keeps inventing new diseases so as to cull humanity.

The human population in 1800 was 1 billion and in 1900 it was 1.6 billion. As on January 2020 the population is 7.8 billion, inspite of the bloody conflicts and genocide of the 20th century.

So why do we cull other animals when we should be culling ourselves?

We don't do this because we perceive ourselves as anointed custodians of this planet. We speak of our Gods as if we are an extension of divinity. And with this arrogance we 'farm' life; factories of blood and guts of poultry, goats, sheep, pigs, horses, cows et al. We have made a religion of murder - to appease our Gods we slaughter millions of animals every year. We farm the land to exhaustion and destroy pristine forests that are home to millions of flora and fauna. And when natural calamities occur we speak of the hand of God.

Billions believe that God created earth. So why do we need to willfully destroy His beautiful creation and offer the plundered wealth to Him in servitude? Shouldn't love, non-violence, truthfulness and charity be the preferred offerings?



Photograph by [Vania dos Santos vvaniasantoss](#) from Pixabay.com

It is reported that about 400 million animals, birds etc. died in the Australian bushfire. What a waste. If 400 million humans had died it would have been good for the environment. It would have had a positive impact on the flora and fauna. *Stop climate change, cull humans.*

There are some among us who protest about climate change accusing others of contributing to this change whilst our attire, electronic appendages and travel methods contradict this. So how are our clothes and cell phones manufactured, and what about land and air travel among other things? Selective amnesia is essential for hypocrisy to flourish in the garb of 21st century warped liberalism. Forget protesting about the environment, let us begin culling humans and all will be just fine.

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The population density figures of some countries:

Singapore – 8000 people per sq km.

Hong Kong – 6,700

Gibraltar - 3369

Bangladesh - 1,252

South Korea – 528

Rwanda – 495

India – 450

Japan - 336

Great Britain - 273

China - 148

Indonesia – 146

Ireland – 72

Mexico - 66

USA -36

Brazil – 25

Argentina -16

Russia – 9

Canada – 4

Australia -3

Greenland – 0.2

55% of the world's population of 7.8 billion lives in urban areas.



Singapore urban tower. Photograph by [xegxef](#) from Pixabay.com

<https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth>

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/04/060418-chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190701-why-plants-survived-chernobyls-deadly-radiation>

The Vitanuls by John Brunner

Doctor Rat by William Kotzwinkle

If one is to believe the writings on the wall by various experts, the world population will eventually decline and soon the earth will breathe a sigh of relief and begin repairing itself. The UN argues that the population explosion will continue whilst others refute this claim and present data that shows it is actually decreasing. Growing more trees, being vegetarian or vegan, using alternative sources of energy are too little too late. The fact is there are too many mouths to feed, and they are growing in number and so is human waste and the problems with its disposal. The industrial farming of animals and the ransacking of the marine world has gone well past the level of sustainability. The earth cannot continue to support the avaricious human race at the present rate. *Humans need to be culled, just like other animals.*

Could it be that the world has run out of souls, that there are no more souls to be reborn and hence those being born are without a soul? Has this already happened? And do these soulless bodies outnumber the souls on earth? Is this the reason for the rise in the destruction of the environment because these soulless bodies don't care what happens to the planet? That they are concerned only with their encapsulated lives, which are nothing more than a daily ritual like eating, sleeping and discharging waste matter; and where morals and ethics are dispensed with and money has taken their place?

Mother Nature has to ring the bell of doom. A string of pandemics spread across the planet affecting the reproductive organs of humans (that neuters them). This, in time, should at least infect two thirds of the human population (especially the soulless bodies) making them exist and grow old without reproducing. Thus, reducing the number of mouths to feed. The rest must be corralled in one region so as to allow other species to begin reproducing and regenerating in uninhabited areas. Chernobyl is a fine example of how Nature has reclaimed its property *without the helping hands* of humanity.

Perhaps the mass culling of humans by Mother Nature could bring about the next stage of evolution of humans – new souls embedded with a fabulous embracing love and intrinsic respect for all living beings on earth devoid of the carcinogenic effects of socio-economic-religious and regional demarcations of the past.

Humans cannot be trusted to cull themselves because it would only lead to selective genocide based on religion, race, colour and level of poverty. We have witnessed such culling throughout the murderous history of humankind. It failed.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om



Wolf pups in Chernobyl exclusion zone. Youtube screenshot.

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted *still-lives* in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the –elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea – Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang's motto – aesthetic = ethic – points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.



WOLFGANG WIDMOSER

WATER STONES OF WISDOM

Artworks

It was Herman Hesse's book, *The Glass Bead Game*, that came to mind when I put brush to canvas. Here is an extract that places this artwork feature into focus and leaves one contemplating the interconnectivity of thought and the Universe.

The Glass Bead Game is thus a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts a painter might have played with the colors on his palette. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative eras, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted into intellectual property—on all this immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game player plays like the organist on an organ. And this organ has attained an almost unimaginable perfection; its manuals and pedals range over the entire intellectual cosmos; its stops are almost beyond number. Theoretically this instrument is capable of reproducing in the Game the entire intellectual content of the universe.

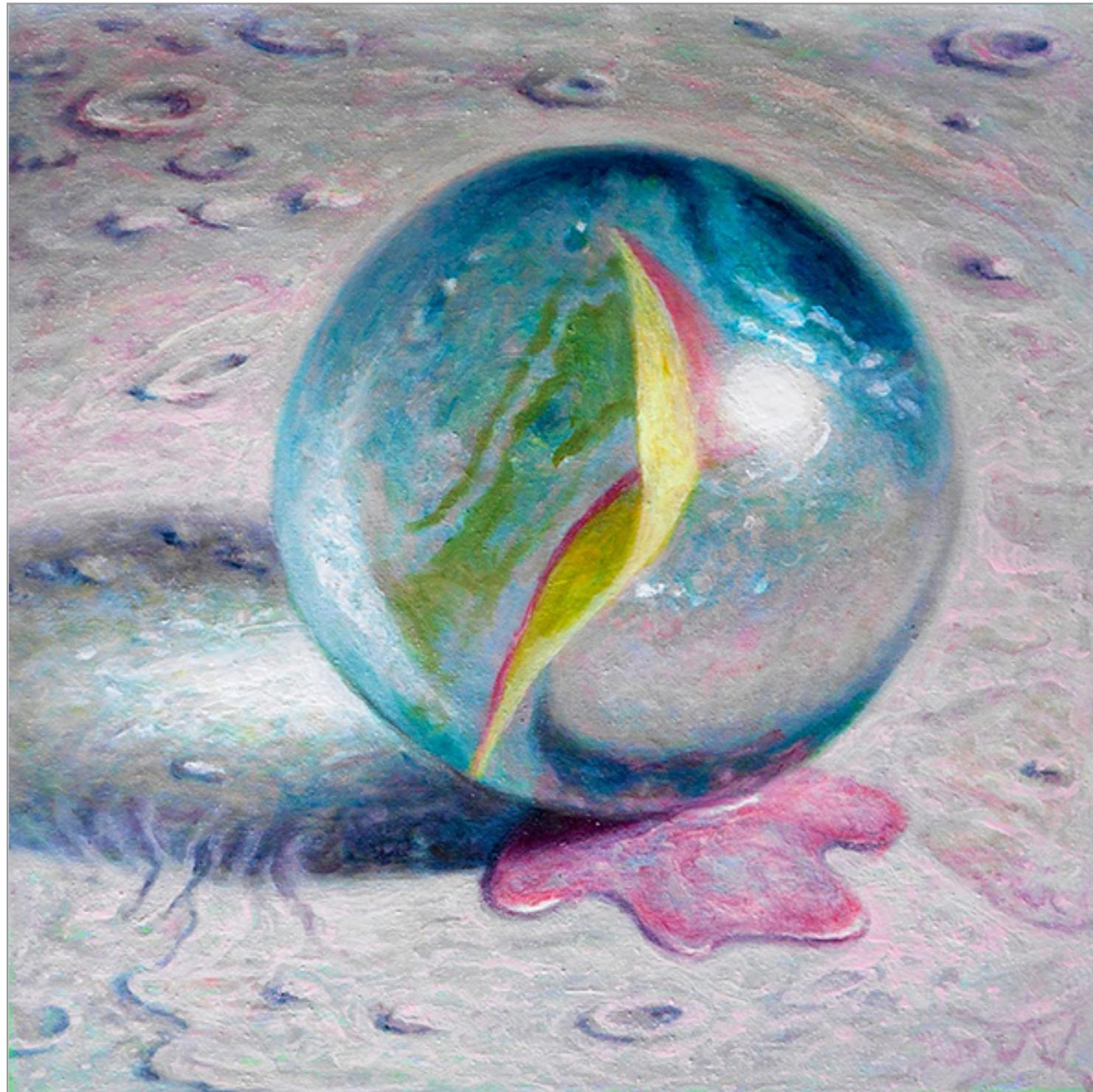
Wolfgang Widmoser



Marble - oil on canvas 33 x 33 cm



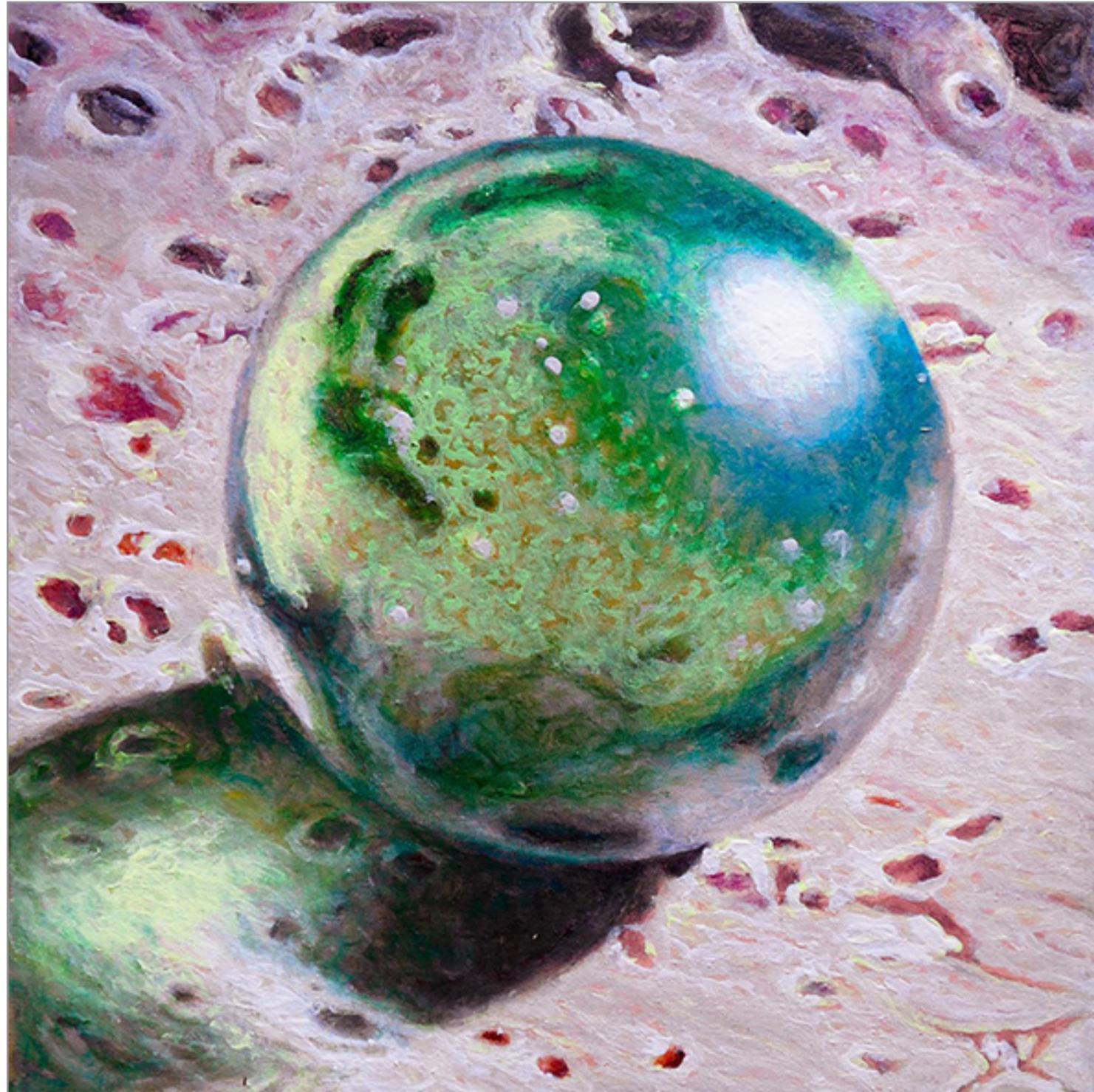
Marble - oil on canvas 33 x 33 cm



Marble - oil on canvas 33 x 33 cm



Marble - oil on canvas 33 x 33 cm



Marble - oil on canvas 33 x 33 cm



Marble - oil on canvas 100 x 80 cm



Marble - oil on canvas 155 x 125 cm

Dreaming dreams and capturing moments of the moving life - small and big, bitter and sweet - through the lens is what I am living for. I, Sourav Jourdar, 32, have been working as a photographer for the North Bengal Bureau of *The Statesman* from 2008 to 2013. Now I am working with *Uttarbanga Sambad*. Born and brought up in Siliguri, a cosmopolitan town in Darjeeling district of Bengal known as the Gateway to the Northeast, I completed my education in 2004. My first love being photography, I somehow carried on to support to my mother. Siliguri played its role in having instilled this passion in me with its exquisite natural charm. I am unshakably convinced that this is the only profession in the world that would never make one bored. My passion is to present the commonplace in a way that makes it look something out of the common for that reason 4 years ago I started my own small photography studio business with a small team named *Flashback - The Memory Makers*. [FACE BOOK PAGE](#)



SOURAV JOURDAR

THE BROKEN MOON LAND

Photographs of Ladakh, India.

Sourav is an intrepid photographer who manages to deftly capture the essence of emotion, colour and light of his subjects.

In this fascinating feature, he offers us a glimpse of a fabled land that rises well over 3000 metres above sea level. The landscapes are like paintings by a pensive god. Truly awe inspiring

Sourav Jourdar



© SOURAV JOURDAR

01 Ladakh



© SOURAV JOURDAR

02 Ladakh



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03 Ladakh



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09 Ladakh

David Lowenthal, British born international wildlife photographer and environmentalist. He was a keen underwater photographer in the pre-digital days and had several exhibitions in London. In 1990 he formed the 'Fragile World' company dedicated to coral reef conservation and education. He also worked on several projects with the Marine Conservation Society, WWF, FNNP and other nature NGO's. David has spent over fifteen years photographing, researching and monitoring the fauna and flora in Bali. He now has over 12.000 images on his site baliwildlife.com. This important body of work is the backbone for his upcoming book and comprehensive encyclopedia of Bali's wildlife. David's wildlife images are used by the majority of Bali's media.



DAVID LOWENTHAL

INSEXTS - DO THEY ALSO DO IT?

Photographs

On one occasion, whilst I was showing some photos of insects mating at a party, a guest asked 'Do they also do it !?' And this became the theme for my exhibition INSEXTS 'Do they also do it' [The exhibition was full of inspiration harmony and humour !].

Insects are undoubted the most numerable and arguably the most important class of animals on earth yet sadly they are far too often lumped under headings such as 'Pests' or 'Must be eradicated' and the word 'Bug' too often for too many equals 'Kill'.

Insects are of the greatest benefit to mankind as plant pollinators as scavengers~decomposers as creators of top soil and producers of essential products such as honey and silk. It is no exaggeration to say that without insects the natural world would rapidly grind to a complete halt.

I am passionate about the biodiversity of the natural world and have always had an interest in de-sign. The natural world offers an almost infinite numbers of shapes, colour combinations and pat-terns. Many of the oldest tribes in the world have used for their art the patterns and colour combina-tions from their natural surroundings, especially from the insect and reptilian kingdoms.

Every species matters.

David Lowenthal



Female Assassin Bug Assassinating Weevil and Mating.



Jewelled Frog Beetle - Sagra Buqueti.



Metalmark Moths - Mating.



Spotted Tortoise Beetle.



Common Fivering - *Ypthima Baldus*.



Mating Moths.



Plain Tiger - Danaus Chrysippus.



Broad Nosed Weevils - Mating.



Mating Weevils.jpg



Long-horned Beetles.

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. Bobby's enthusiasm, energy and passion for food are infectious as he cooks and entertains. He is now a permanent judge on *Top Chef Middle East* which is one of the highest rated shows for MBC and the most popular culinary show across the Middle East and North Africa. Thanks in part to his role as host of Discovery TLC's *World Café* series and judge on *Top Chef Middle East*, Bobby catapulted into a culinary celebrity across Asia and the Middle East. <http://bobbychinn.com/>

This article appeared in *Live Encounters Magazine*, March 2010. We are republishing this article as this is the Year of the Rat!

BOBBY CHINN

Thermo regulator and rat tails

Once again the Master Chef regales us with his wit and expertise in all things Asian.

Nha Tho Street is now known as Church Street for the miniature replica Notre Dame Cathedral that stands at the end of the road. The street has become a tourist destination filled with some of Hanoi's finest boutiques and restaurants while dictating some of the highest rents in the city. This wide tree lined street used to be a quiet residential neighbourhood back in 1996 even though it was in the heart of the city just off Hoan Kiem Lake. Moca Café, situated on Church Street, was one of a kind that brought much attention to this area, transforming it into what it is today.

Moca Café was a converted colonial convent. It was unusually large, as they had converted two spaces making it wide with sweeping views of the street. The space was unique with glass windows that could slide freely from one side to the other leaving a large breezy space, giving it an almost 'open air' feel to those seated by the front windows. The walls were wonderful old bricks that lined both flanks of the room, with a marble fireplace that would be quite cosy during the cold wintry months. Art deco in style, it was furnished with white marble tables and Frank Lloyd Wright chairs, giving the establishment one of, if not, the finest looking casual dining space Vietnam had yet to see.



© Bobby Chinn

He had opened probably the best independent restaurant in Hanoi at the time and it was an incredible achievement. Moca Café was an instant success, serving three distinctly different cuisines: Vietnamese, Indian, and Western, not to mention on-the-floor roasted coffee. It was one of the first packed western managed restaurants attracting Vietnamese, expat and tourist alike.

The high ceilings allowed for additional seating area with a converted loft like landing that flanked the perimeters of the room. In the front, an antique brass coffee roaster stood by the door, churning out freshly roasted coffee.

Jeff, an American from New Orleans, was the mastermind behind the design and layout of the place. A managing partner he was one of the most colourful characters within the growing expat community. Rich in experiences and stories that were so wide and varied he was nicked named Zelig after the Woody Allen movie. He had opened probably the best independent restaurant in Hanoi at the time and it was an incredible achievement. Moca Café was an instant success, serving three distinctly different cuisines: Vietnamese, Indian, and Western, not to mention on-the-floor roasted coffee. It was one of the first packed western managed restaurants attracting Vietnamese, expat and tourist alike.

It had been a year since its successful opening and although the place was always jam packed, it was now becoming more run down by the lack of cleaning and maintenance. Jeff had called me up to ask if I knew of anyone who could install a thermo-regulator for his Wolf range oven. I immediately suggested that I bring over Willie, Chief Engineer at the Hanoi Tower's and Vu Son from the purchasing department. Together they could assist with additional parts, as well as, expertise or staff that could assist. Willie was from Singapore, and always made it a point to show off his knowledge of everything concerning anything that touched upon engineering. He was very proud of his engineering triumphs and his operation. Vu Son, being the purchaser, was very close to Willie, as he needed to keep Willie updated on all the new fixtures, spare parts, prices and engineering items that were making it's way into the local market. They would take the company van on Saturday to source for supplies for the Hanoi Towers.

I decided to join them and take them on a slight detour towards Moca Café for a coffee so that Jeff could coincidentally show up giving him the opportunity to tell us about his equipment failure. Knowing Willie, he would give free advice and probably assist, if asked. We arrived at Jeff's establishment on what was typically a busy Saturday afternoon. We luckily arrived when a table by the window was leaving and ordered our coffees when Jeff magically appeared. Looking a little frazzled like he had already had more than his fair share of coffee I made the introductions.

'Jeff, let me introduce you to Willie and Son. Willie runs the engineering department and Son runs the purchasing department. Jeff is the proud owner of Moca.'

'He is having a YIV day' (Your In Vietnam) it was a code, a reminder for expats that culture shock was kicking in but the person that was experiencing it did not recognize it. It was a phrase that we all learned to use.

After a couple of minutes of formalities Jeff slowly made his request.

'Hey, you wouldn't know how to install a thermo-regulator would you?'

To my surprise Willie did not know what a thermo-regulator was, and Jeff looked a little perplexed and became rather undiplomatic.

'What? You don't know what a thermo-regulator is?'

Jeff quickly turned to me and glared, wondering how they could help.

Willie calmly replied, 'I know what a thermostat is, and I know what a gas regulator is, but I have never installed a thermo-regulator'.

Jeff immediately turned to me waving off Willie and Son. 'I'd be fucked if you think that I am going to let him touch my oven if he doesn't even know what a thermo regulator is!'

Willie threw me a glance of surprise and I was not sure if it was because my friend was rude or simply because I had roped him into a little free consulting without his consent. I simply brushed it off and focused on getting Jeff to calm down.

'Now slow down Tiger, we are here to help you.' With that I gave him a slow glacial nod, staring deep into his eyes with the hope that he would remember that they were coming out of their way to assist him. Hoping that he would mellow out I then turned to Willie

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Willie tilted his head and approved reluctantly. Turning to Jeff, I asked, 'Jeff why don't you show us the oven, then we can all see what you are talking about'

Jeff proceeds to tell us what a thermo-regulator is as we get up and make our way towards the kitchen.

'A thermo regulator is an instrument that regulates the temperature of the oven based on the setting, which in turn regulates the gas to ensure that a temperature is retained continuously. So if you open the door, a lot of the heat is lost, so the regulator increases the gas flow to bring the heat back up to the temperature that it is set to.'

We walk pass all the diners and entered his western kitchen which is connected to the bar. The kitchen was one of the first 'open' kitchens in Vietnam, with most other operators knowing full well that hygiene would be a deterrent to anyone ambitious enough to even consider a display kitchen in those early days. To the side lay what appeared to be a brand new 6 top Wolf range oven in the midst of a lot of the used locally fabricated equipment that surrounded it. It supposedly worked the first day or a couple of minutes according to Jeff. Someone had installed it without checking the manual first, or not knowing what a thermo regulator is, and within a couple of minutes the oven door blew open with fire and never worked again. Everything looked fine until I opened the oven door to the stench of what reminded me of the lion cages at the San Francisco Zoo. The smell was so over powering that Willie and Son took another couple of steps behind me as the smell hit them with equal offence. They also gave the space a quick inspection running their eyes over the kitchen and then finishing with me, looking appalled by the filth.

The base of the oven was a large steel plate that covered the major heat source.

'The thermo-regulator is below this steel plate?', I asked.

'Yeah,' replied Jeff, 'I think so, that is what I need help with. I don't know as we lost the manual'

'Ok, do you have a screwdriver with a Philip head?' asked Willie

Willie and Son looked like they were both ready to bolt.

'We can come back later if you don't have a Phillip head'

'No, let's do this now or it will never happen,' I said with finality.



Bobby Chinn photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

'My God, it's two rats!'



I reached into my pockets and pulled out my Swiss army knife, kneeling down onto the grease riddled floor I took a deep breath of fresh air and on my hand and knees, using the finger file, I began to unscrew the oven's base. My head now deep in the lions cage I was struggling not to gag from the nauseating smell when coming up for air I plaintively would look at Jeff hoping to see some recognition of the true friendship I was showing him by doing this disgusting job. But all I could see in his eyes was impatience and a caffeine haze.

Once the base was removed, the heating system of the oven was exposed; two parallel cast iron plates designed to radiate the heat throughout the oven as well as help to hold its temperature. Beneath those plates ran the gas lines for the heating system. From the corner of my eye, I could have sworn I saw something move in the darkness of the oven from one pipe to the other. I looked at Jeff and said, 'Did you see that?'

I then kicked the oven and then clearly saw a rat run from one pipe back to the other, hiding beneath the shelter of the cast iron plate. This time it was clear that there was a rat in the oven, as its tail was exposed. I quickly jumped up on the plastic stool.

'Dude you got a rat in the oven!' I screamed

He quickly hushed me

'Come on man I got customers!'

He then proceeded to lean over to the prep table in front of the oven and quickly removed the 12-inch chef knife that sat on the table and then fell on his knees. He slammed the blade down on the exposed tail of the rat as it quickly ran to the shelter of the other gas pipe. He slams the knife again this time over the left gas pipe, where a pair of rats ran from left to right. I quickly turn to the bewildered Willie and Son who by now looked further and further from getting any closer to the oven, let alone taking on the responsibility of installing a thermo-regulator.

'My God, it's two rats!'

Frantically hacking away, back and forth in between the pipes, on top of the cast iron plates, he desperately tried to kill the rats. He looked like he had just lost his mind as more and more rats were sent running back and forth, through the guillotine of his Hienkel knife. The rats were now bumping into each other, as more and more rats appeared colliding with each other.

It seemed apparent to me as well as to the rats that they were doomed in the congested space of the oven and that their only chance of survival was to quickly storm the executioner. And in one sudden moment, the rats charged. Leaping out of the oven, the horde of rats ran over Jeff as he fell on his back by the shock of it all, knife in hand slashing out like a musketeer. One after the other, they ran, some limping, some with bloodied bodies, some with tails, some without. Like a mad man he rotated the knife, waving it aimlessly in vain as the rats literally jumped over him in their great escape. There I stood on the low plastic stool but this time my words were filled with resonance and colour.

"Oh my God! You have tons of rats!'

His index finger quickly rushes over his mouth as he lay there on the floor now bloodied by the rats...

'Shhhhhhhush! I have customers!'

I turn to the dining room packed with diners enjoying their food, oblivious of the present state of the kitchen. Turning back to the kitchen Jeff was now back on his feet with his knife in hand, he turns to Willie and Son

'Where did they all go?'

Willie wide eyed pointed to the inside kitchen.

'They went that way'

Son pointed into the opposite direction, changed his mind and went with Willie's suggestion. The kitchen floor was laced with a trail of blood that seemed to run off in many directions. Jeff did not know what to do as the pack of rats escaped into the larger dining area that was packed. He then placed his chef knife back to the prep table.

It was now dented and stained with blood from all the tails he had successfully amputated. A prep cook arrived with a bucket of peeled potatoes in water and placed a chopping board on the wet towel, picked up the knife and proceeded to chop up a potato. I felt the need to bear more bad news to Jeff, without words. Clearing my throat loudly until I got Jeff's attention. My eyes darted towards the prep cook cutting away at the potatoes with a bloody knife. Jeff's eyes rolled up into his head and then fell into a deeper state of despair.

He slowly placed his hands on the hands of the cook, then removed the knife and placed it in the sink and then says:

'Don't ask, please don't ask!'

The confused cook stood there staring at Jeff, then to me standing on a plastic stool petrified from the thought of a rat attack, while in the middle of the kitchen two horrified members of management from the Hanoi Towers stood there in shock.

At that point Willie suggested, 'Do you want to do this another time?'

Jeff propped a smile, which lacked any form of ingenuity and agreed, 'Yeah let me fix things up here and I will give you a call when I am ready. Can you do me a favour? Please don't mention this to anyone?'

Willie agreed, but it was a tall order. They never fixed that oven. I had not eaten there since that incident. I also kept the story close to my chest until the day he was kicked out by his partner. I later hired Jeff to help me open my restaurant. He ran the bar, trained the bar staff on our prolific cocktail list.

Jeff is probably one of the most entertaining bartenders I have ever met. I have yet to meet anyone who could talk with close to encyclopaedic knowledge on any subject.

We still get a giggle out of the encounter with the rats.



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DR ANAND TELTUMBDE HINDUTVA AND DALITS: THE IRRECONCILABLE CONTRADICTION

Ambedkar in his *Annihilation of Caste* wrote, "There is no Hindu consciousness of kind. In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation." When the Hindutva forces, today at the pinnacle of power, take India's nationhood for granted and bulldoze the very idea of India at its altar, they only expose the basic contradiction between them and Dalits. Its idea of a nation, a la Hindu Rashtra, which Ambedkar had prophetically called "the greatest calamity for this country" and added, "No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. It is incompatible with democracy." It seeks to revive the imaginary past glory of India when Brahmanism ruled the roost and Dalits languished at the bottom. Dalits are important in this construction of neo-Brahmanic future: as the scaffolding of its structure as well as the single biggest threat to it. It is therefore that they are handled with extreme caution and deftness in the theory as well as practice of Hindutva.

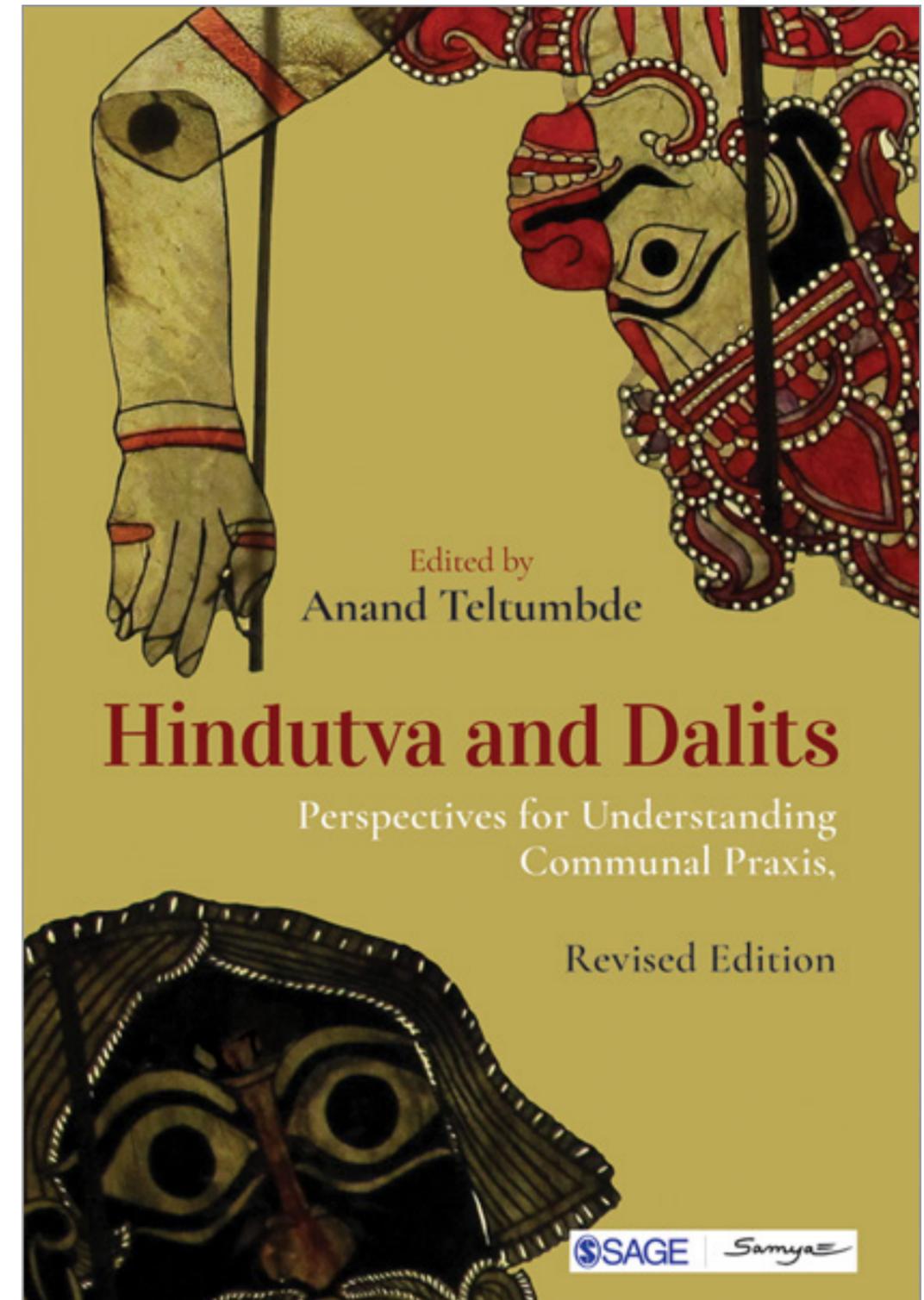
Dr Anand Teltumbde

It was a characteristic RSS way that had elevated Ambedkar to its pantheons of greats in the early 1980s after ignoring him for decades. It provided the justification to the Dalit leaders, who opportunistically jumped on the winning horse of BJP to claim that it was more for Ambedkar and hence Dalits than any other party. Ram Nath Kovind, a Sanghi Dalit from Uttar Pradesh, belonging to a Kori caste was made president. It paid some electoral dividends, thanks to the ineptitude and short-sightedness of the opposition parties, most notably, the Congress.

Since 2014, when Narendra Modi, after his dozen-odd years of autocratic rule in Gujarat, ascended to power at the centre, this equivocation in relation to Dalits has been in open. One of his theatrical masterstrokes has been his classic display of obeisance to Ambedkar in various ways such as taking constitution as his holy book, touching the steps of the parliament house with his forehead and direct vocal attributions of his rise as an ordinary person from OBC category to Ambedkar. He then declared to construct “panchatirth” (five places of pilgrimage) for him: At Mhow where he was born, the London house where he was supposed to have lived, the Diksha Bhumi at Nagpur where he converted to Buddhism, his Delhi residence where he breathed his last and the Chaityabhumi at Mumbai where he was cremated.

It was a characteristic RSS way that had elevated Ambedkar to its pantheons of greats in the early 1980s after ignoring him for decades. It provided the justification to the Dalit leaders, who opportunistically jumped on the winning horse of BJP to claim that it was more for Ambedkar and hence Dalits than any other party. Ram Nath Kovind, a Sanghi Dalit from Uttar Pradesh, belonging to a Kori caste was made president. It paid some electoral dividends, thanks to the ineptitude and short-sightedness of the opposition parties, most notably, the Congress. As these overtures towards Dalits continued, the Dalits began getting beaten on streets. The radical voices were particularly targeted. The suppression of Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle in IIT Madras and Ambedkar Students Association in Hyderabad University which culminated into the death of a promising scholar Rohith Vemula stood as notable examples. The infamous case of Bhima-Koregaon further exemplified the attitude of the regime towards Dalits. It not only defiled the Ambedkarite legacy of this event, but also criminalized noted Dalit activists and scholars labelling them as Urban Naxals. The recent controversial handing over of the case to NIA in the wake of non-BJP government mulling over review of the case exposed the centre’s sinister role in fabrication of this heinous plot.

The book was conceived in the wake of the Gujarat riot against Muslims in 2002, which may arguably be seen as the biggest single factor in the rise of Narendra Modi. In these riots, there were reports that claimed that Dalits participated on the side of Hindutva. While there was an element of truth, it was amplified to externalise the sin and reinforce the traditional hatred for Dalits as the vile people. Dalits played a significant role in Modi’s election. The BJP needed Dalit votes for scaling up its electoral standing to augment its numbers in Rajya Sabha. At the strategic level, during the tenure of Balasaheb Deoras, the chief of the RSS, Dalits came to be a significant target, because of their fragmentation but unifying potential around the Ambedkar icon.



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As regards Dalits, the endemic agrarian crisis gripping the countryside make a stray landless Dalits who got educated and employed in the public sector to appear relatively better off than others inducing a grudge against them. BJP openly spoke against the Muslims. With regard to Dalits, its self-projection as sans caste Hindu party, accusing others as playing vote bank politics, indirectly assured that it is against the caste-based reservations to the Dalits.

The inclusion of Ambedkar in their pantheon of greats and floating a special vehicle, Samajik Samrasata Manch to work among Dalits were the outcomes. Since early 1980s these moves went on with a characteristic tenacity of the Sangh and made some inroads in this unlikely community. The BJP had captured more and more reserved seats and by the late 1990s it rose to challenge the Congress and actually captured power.

The format of the book was conceived commensurate with the complexity of the problem in two parts: the first one dealing with theoretical aspects (historical, ideological and political) of the evolution of the Hindutva vis-à-vis Dalits and the second part its practical manifestation in various parts of the country. The idea was spoken out to the noted scholars who enthusiastically supported it. After their draft papers were received a one-day workshop was organized to discuss the papers and with its inputs the book was edited. Its publication in 2005 evoked a good response in India and abroad but for some reasons it remained out of print for all these years, which also happened to be the years when BJP was out of power albeit not out of action. BJP fully exploited the sloppiness of the scam-ridden UPA II. In contrast Modi had proved himself in Gujarat that he could serve the capitalist interests better than anyone. It is this pact between him and the global capital that catapulted Modi to become prime minister. He systematically struck chord with the masses and consolidated his constituency of the *Bhaktas*. Dalit support had played a significant role in his success; BJP commanding more number of reserved seats than all parties put together.

While this could be easily noted, what escaped attention of even the astute political observers is the indirect role played by Dalits in consolidating the constituency of his *Bhaktas* who account over one-fourth of the population. BJP exploited the baser sentiments of the Indians against Muslims and Dalits. Muslims are seen as aliens, who took away a chunk of India and lacked in loyalty to this land. Dalits are seen as inferior people, the parasites who thrive at the cost of others because of reservations. For the most part, there has not been much social osmosis between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

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The book while titled to be focused on the relationship of Hindutva with Dalits provides a broader perspective of the contemporary politics in India in which the Hindutva politics has thrived and is out today to annihilate the idea of India that was shaped through the sacrifices of our people who fought the mighty British.

BJP used Hindutva politics to polarise people and consolidate its constituency and followed neo-liberal policies to maintain support of capitalists. This, however, posed contradiction: Whereas Hindutva appealed to its constituency of lower and middle strata, it was potentially not liked by capitalists as it tended to create social disturbance, which is not desirable to the business. Similarly, while the neoliberal policies thrilled capitalists, they hit the lower and middle strata hard. This contradiction could be managed only within a short term. The first term of Modi was consumed in prototyping; the second term was needed for its implementation and consummation of the Hindu Rashtra. Based on this analysis, I had professed, Modi would not leave any stone unturned to win it. While the prospects of his winning looked increasingly bleak, I maintained that he would win by greater majority than before. The pace of change since his win in May last year testifies to this overall prediction.

By now Dalits have fully realised BJP's deception. Within a short time of just five years, the BJP has almost annulled the gains of their struggle of a century. They began to feel the heat of impending Hindu Rashtra which is effectively pushing them back into the hell hole from where they barely emerged. These changes needed to be explained while reissuing the book. A longish introduction and certain revision to the text catered to this need. The book while titled to be focused on the relationship of Hindutva with Dalits provides a broader perspective of the contemporary politics in India in which the Hindutva politics has thrived and is out today to annihilate the idea of India that was shaped through the sacrifices of our people who fought the mighty British.

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Dr. Zafar Iqbal

DR. ZAFAR IQBAL

RESPONSE FROM THE EAST TO THE WESTERN DISCOURSES ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is much talked about, but least understood, construct, Contemporary advances on the Islamophobia construct are fast paced; nonetheless, they carry more doubts than crystallizing it for a better understanding. In addition, to have a simple and square understanding, Islamophobia has more often been associated with 'fear or hatred of Islam and Muslims'. Not only hostility, prejudice, racism, Orientalism, and many other cynicisms are baptized as Islamophobia, but also some of the scholars resort to inventive approaches to explain and theorize Islamophobia.

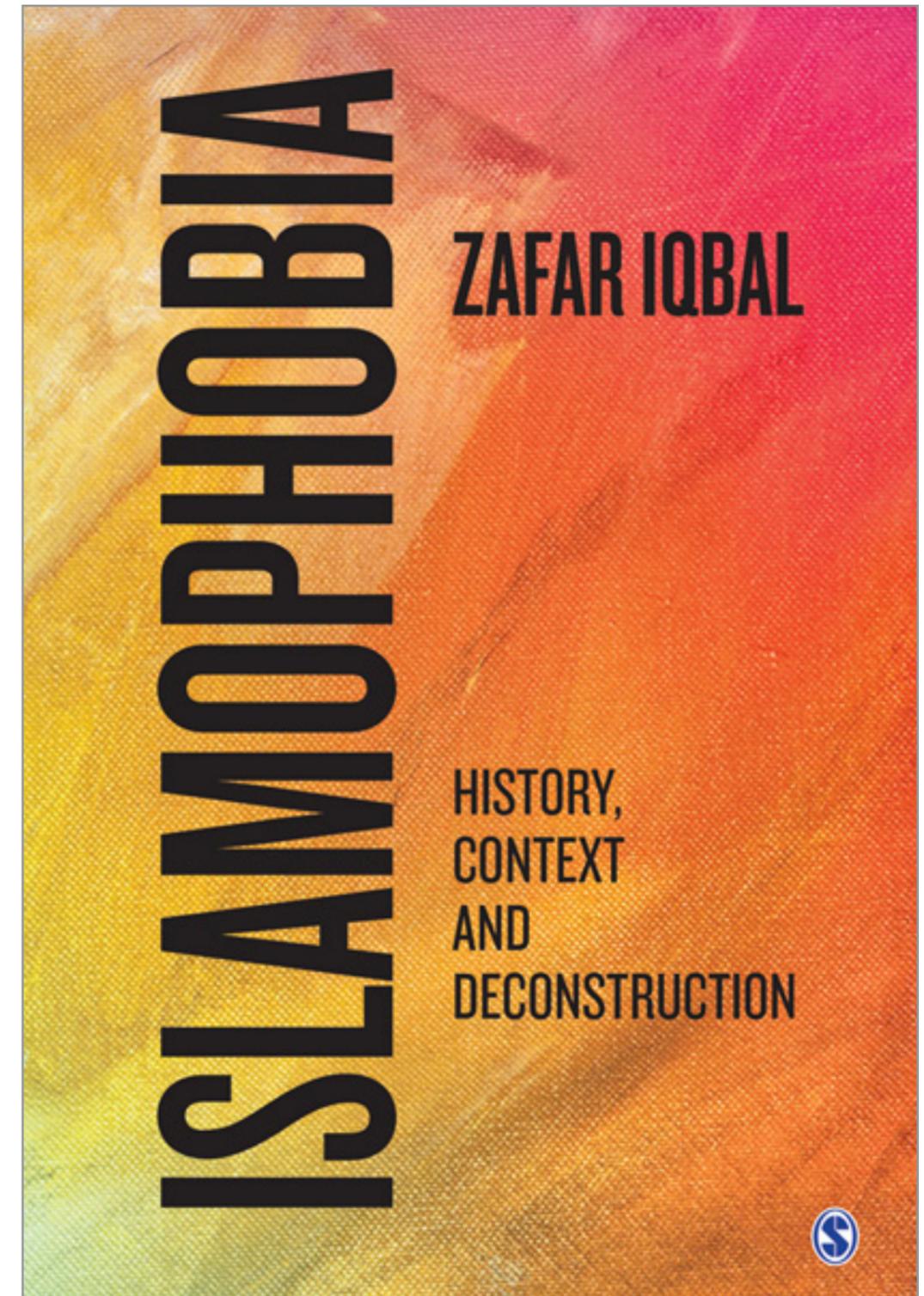
The term Islamophobia has been used in abundance since the release of Runnymede Report in 1997, and more so after the 9/11 tragedy. So far, a large body of literature has been produced on it in all disciplines of social sciences but seems to have been produced in haste and, hence, does not provide scientific means to study the phenomenon and propose possible solutions to stop its further fostering in our societies. This literary piece '*Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction*', which took more than a decade to accomplish, is an attempt to identify the problem in a scientific fashion by delineating on its conceivable antecedents, and ways to measure it for possible policy ramifications for the governments and the policymakers.

One of the significant aspects of this scholastic effort is that it provides an alternate way of studying the phenomenon, more focused on providing diagnosis and prognostic solutions to avoid further degradation of the relations between Islam, the West and the rest. The author claims that Islamophobia needs to be studied scientifically to investigate the antecedents (or reasons) of the problem in a given social system, which might differ in various societies, but with the same set of manifestations almost everywhere.

For many among us, and especially for those who are least interested in history, Islamophobia is a media construction, the roots of which can stretch maximum to the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s. The tragedy of 9/11, however, fueled and crystallized the hatred and enmity towards Muslims. With this Islam also came in the limelight as an ideology and religion posing serious challenges to security and peace of the West. Hardly a few scholarly works surfaced to trace inimical relations between Islam and other religions between the First World War and 9/11. Even the bestsellers such as *Clash of Civilization* by Huntington and *Orientalism* by Edward Said did not bother tracing the roots of Islam versus West strained relations in the history. Nonetheless, even a peerless glance at history gives us huge stuff to theorize the relations between religions and provides a diagnosis of the 'problem' and prognosis for a peaceful future. This book of course stands unique in the sense that it traces Islamophobia as a phenomenon from the history and attempts to break some of the myths prevailing in the contemporary literature including that of Huntington's view that Islamophobia was born after the demise of communism, as a new enemy to the West; and Holliday's viewpoint that Islamophobia is towards Muslims, and not towards Islam.

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This book explains how the fear of Islam travelled through ages, adding more ills into its ambit and escalating to a level of a generalized fear of Muslims today. It also challenges many established theories including that of the influential post-colonial writer and critic Edward Said's view that Islamophobia is European hostility and prejudice towards Arabo-Muslim people. The author envisages Islamophobia as a corpus bundle of phobias with multiple facets/dimensions. All of its dimensions/antecedents might not have caused anti-Islam or anti-Muslim sentiments in a society, but may be one as the primary reason coupled with some other secondarily. Anti-Islam and anti-Muslims' feelings could be because of socio-cultural and economic problems emanating from Muslim populations and their ghettoization in some pockets as one of its facets. Historic prejudice and racism have also been contributing to fostering Islamophobic sentiments in some societies, especially in relation to Muslims and Islam since centuries.



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This book points to the emergence of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim discourses among academic, professional, and public spheres which established a contradictory policy of state systems both fearing and fostering radicalization in a process 'securitization' of Islam. The author mentioned different dimensions of securitization of Islam and Muslims and offered remedial measures to counter this escalating phenomenon.

Similarly, civilizational clash and political threats may give birth to Islamophobia in some societies. Contemporary unrest in the Muslim world and security situations at some places might also have affected masses' feelings towards Muslims and Islam.

The book also identified the socio-cultural dimensions of fear of Islam and Muslims. The author pinpoints that threats emanating from the phenomenon of Islamophobia generally fall in security and terror domains. Prejudice and racism towards Muslims and Islam are some other antecedents or outcomes of Islamophobia, profoundly discussed and deliberated in talks and literature with the construct. Continued historic dislike of Muslims and fear of Islam as a subjugator or destroyer of other cultures and religions more often than not diminish the significance of debates on socio-cultural and economic domains of Islamophobia, which are relatively more practical threats in some countries of the world, but are not exclusively limited to Muslims only. Growing Muslim population in Europe alone could send deafening alarm to those who value their socio-cultural norms and traditions, and they, with a great sense of insecurity, are watching the indicators/developments that could indulge them into severe economic impasses. Apparently, Muslims are seen as a singular unit in the USA, but they are extremely divergent groups associated with different religious fractions and are divided on their ethnic, linguistic and regional affiliations. Nonetheless, Islam under its ideological umbrella makes them identify as a singularity. This creates uncertainty about Muslims among the westerners, which may fall under the 'fear threat perception' domain.

In the wake of 9/11 tragic epoch, concerns about Islamophobia have increased and terrorism is now perceived to be the key threat for international peace and security. Consequently, several groups of people have been represented as a security threat. This applies to Muslims, in general, whether a minority group or majority in a country, and the religion of Islam, in particular. Anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobia have been generated to the extent where Western identities and values are perceived to be threatened by Islam. Therefore, Muslims and Islam have been securitized on different occasions across Europe and the USA.

This book points to the emergence of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim discourses among academic, professional, and public spheres which established a contradictory policy of state systems both fearing and fostering radicalization in a process 'securitization' of Islam. The author mentioned different dimensions of securitization of Islam and Muslims and offered remedial measures to counter this escalating phenomenon.

The author pointed out that Islamic invasion as cultural and civilizational commodities is the basic threat to the West because Islamic values can challenge the Western civilization. The Islamic code of conduct provides an alternate to Western cultures. The other problem is the politicization of clash of civilization. The Arab culture and the Islamic culture considered as the same in the West...

The book also identifies 'Political Islam' or perception of Islam as a political threat to democracy in the West as one of the important antecedents/dimensions of Islamophobia which has further divided into sub-dimensions. The author clarifies that the phenomenon did not emerge in the wake of Islamic resurgent movements in the twentieth century; rather, this perception comes from the history. The book also discusses 'Othering' as Islamophobia and pointed out that media at various occasions act as a catalyst in creating othering discourse. It can incite and infuriate the thought process of individuals who already have negative feelings about others, which may be any individual or group, or any community, such as Muslims in the West. The author laments that Islam is the name of negativity as it is being cultivated through cultural commodification of mainstream news and entertainment channels of the Western world. It has been described by numerous scholars as such and explained the dominant discourse(s) of orientalist instrumental in constructing Muslims as 'Other' and this particular rhetoric has occupied significant space and time on broadsheets, broadcast gadgets, silver and TV screens. The tone of this anti-Islam rhetoric has been accelerated rapidly and tremendously due to penetration of computer-mediated communication through social media websites, chat groups, web pages and blogs, etc. He argues that such Islamophobic rhetoric more often packed with negative connotation towards Islam and Muslims and more often the product of racism, xenophobia and stereotyping images.

The book also discusses the West's fear of Islam in civilizational perspective which has many causes. The author pointed out that Islamic invasion as cultural and civilizational commodities is the basic threat to the West because Islamic values can challenge the Western civilization. The Islamic code of conduct provides an alternate to Western cultures. The other problem is the politicization of clash of civilization. The Arab culture and the Islamic culture considered as the same in the West, and the political conflict between Islam and the West and Arabs are misperceived as the conflicts between Islam and the West, which is either political or cultural; nonetheless, it is not religious at all. It is important to reiterate that the West is not only the USA, and also there is a huge cultural difference between the native Muslims of the West and immigrants Muslim. The terrorism or extremism associated with Islam is also a cause for the identity crisis among Muslims in the West. There is need to identify cultural values, which Muslim have, on the basis of ethnicity, regionalism, nationality and cultural belongings. The identification of Muslims should be as the followers of Islam, which is much broader than their association with any country, region, ethnicity or race.

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Rekha Chowdhary

REKHA CHOWDHARY

JAMMU AND KASHMIR, 1990 AND BEYOND

For understanding the current politics of Kashmir, it is important to focus on the period since 1990. The period assumes importance not only in the context of metamorphosis that the state underwent due to the onset of militancy and separatism but also because of major shifts in the competitive politics. The armed militancy accompanied by massive popular separatist surge in the early 1990s resulted in the near-total collapse of the democratic politics in Kashmir. The ascendancy of the separatism and the prevailing violence during next one decade or so, made it difficult for the democratic political space to regain itself. It was not before the 2002 Assembly election that democratic space could find some ground. However, there was a gradual but steady extension of this space in the next one decade or so. By the time the 2014 Assembly election took place, the vibrancy of the competitive politics in Kashmir was quite well established

What was peculiar about the expansion of democratic space in Kashmir during this time was that it was taking place in the larger context of separatism. While separatism continued to assert itself, the mainstream politics started attaining relevance and gaining legitimacy. As a result, one could see the parallel existence of the democratic and separatist spheres of politics. However, the two spheres did not remain untouched by each other. At many points, there was a blurring of boundaries and significant overlap between the two.

The expansion of democratic politics, however, did not take place at the cost of separatist politics. Despite the decline of militancy, separatism continued to inform the political responses of Kashmir. Though the major separatist organisation, the All Party Hurriyat Conference was quite weakened due to the multiple splits in 2003, the separatist sentiment was quite forcefully asserted in the period after 2007.

Separatist politics, to begin with, was manifested through the armed militancy. It was after the 1987 Assembly election that the first generation of local militants, mostly belonging to JKLF started crossing the border. By 1989, militancy had been fully launched in Jammu and Kashmir.

Militancy at this stage enjoyed approval of the Kashmiri society and was backed by popular separatist sentiment. Massive protest demonstrations in 1989-90 period reflected the wide-spread separatist sentiment in Kashmir. However, as militancy came to be controlled by Pakistani and *Jehadi* elements, it lost the local support. By the end of the decade of 1990, militancy was so de-legitimised that even within the separatist leadership there was a rethinking about it. A. G. Lone, a senior separatist leader gave a call in 2001-2002 for the end of militancy. In a debate that he entered with Syed Ali Shah Geelani, another senior separatist leader, he questioned the role of *Jehadi* or foreign militants in Kashmir and asked for their ouster. Referring to the political and indigenous nature of Kashmiri separatism, he rejected Geelani's assertion that it was part of global Islamic agenda. Though Lone was assassinated soon after making these comments, the shift in Kashmir's separatist politics was already visible. By 2003-2004, Militancy was declined in a substantial manner.

The exhaustion with violence and popular urge for peace and normalcy meanwhile contributed to the restoration of the mainstream political space that had completely gone under in the post-1989 phase. Though the electoral politics was revived in 1996, however, it was with the 2002 Assembly election that the mainstream party politics could attain popular support and legitimacy. Every successive election was intensely competitive, sufficiently participatory and reflective of the expansion of democratic space.

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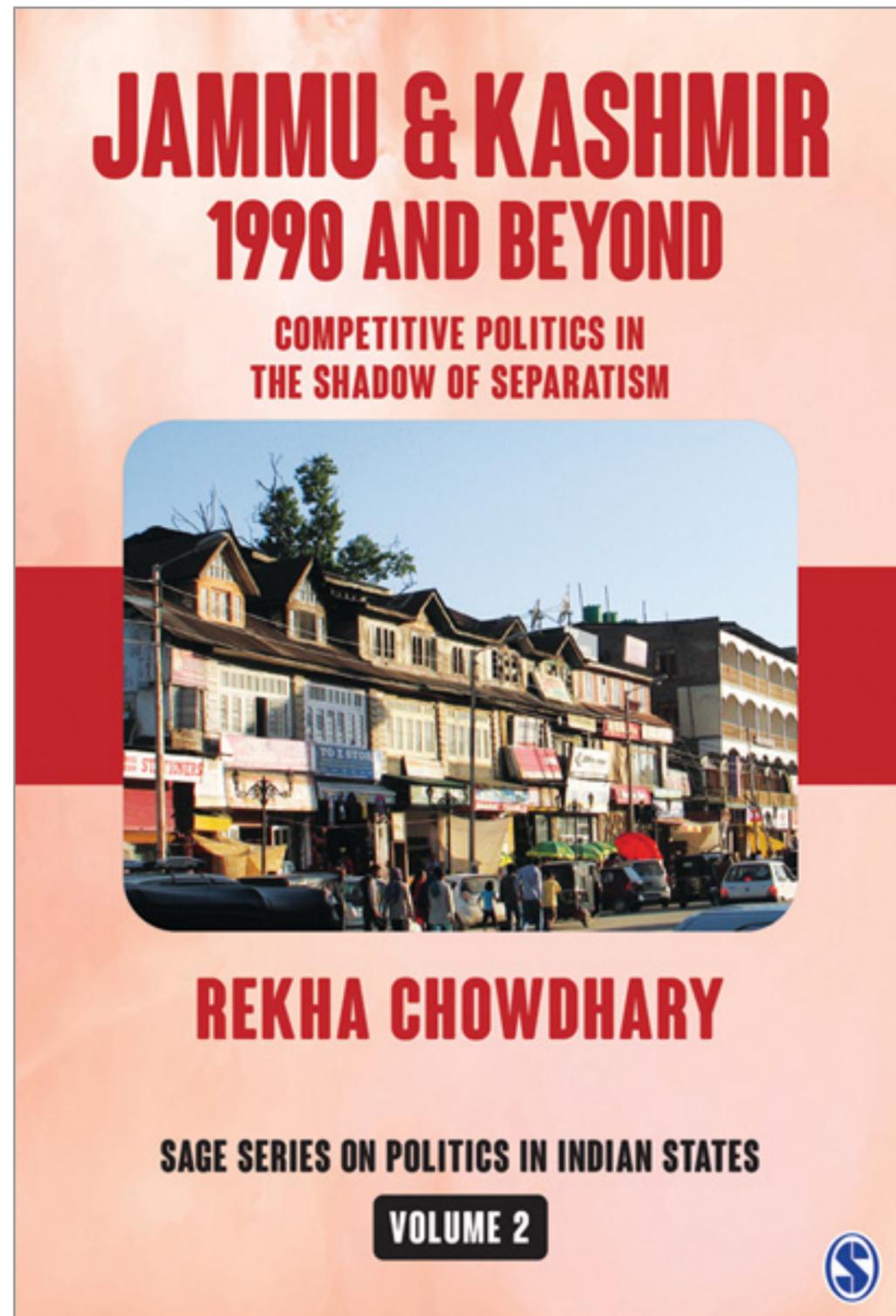
Kashmir witnessed one of the most massive separatist upsurge in 2008. The protest against the Amarnath land order took a separatist turn. A similar separatist upsurge took place in 2010 that lasted for five months.

Another strategy used by the political parties to gain legitimacy for its politics within the overall separatist environment was to draw a distinction between the mainstream and separatist politics and in the process emphasising the relevance of each of the two spheres without any contradiction between the two.

It was therefore under the shadow of separatism that the democratic politics expanded itself in the period after 2002. Unlike the earlier times, the elections did not face the crisis of legitimacy. The 2002 Assembly election that was conducted under the glare of international media, attained the reputation of being fair and transparent. Though the extent of participation was quite low, compared to some of the later elections, what led to its legitimacy was its intensely competitive nature. With the newly launched PDP giving a tough fight to the National Conference that monopolised the regional politics of Kashmir till now, there was shift in the very nature of the party politics. With other parties like the People's Conference also joining the competition along with Congress, National Conference and the PDP, the perceptions about the electoral politics changed. Rather than being seen as 'farical' or 'manipulated from above' each successive election attained the reputation of being competitive and participatory.

Facing the challenge of relevance in the context of separatist politics, the political parties used various strategies. Initially it was the PDP that sought to ground itself in Kashmir's politics by borrowing the agenda of separatist politics. Most of the issues raised by this party were those which till now were seen to be exclusively in the sphere of separatist politics. This strategy was later followed by other parties including the National Conference. While the 'mainstreaming' of the separatist agenda helped the political parties gain acceptance, it also helped in expanding and legitimising the electoral space.

Another strategy used by the political parties to gain legitimacy for its politics within the overall separatist environment was to draw a distinction between the mainstream and separatist politics and in the process emphasising the relevance of each of the two spheres without any contradiction between the two. While the mainstream politics was supposed to deal with the 'day-to-day' issues of 'governance', the separatist politics was to deal with 'long-term' issues linked with the conflict and its resolution. By drawing a self-imposed limitation on the mainstream politics to the issues of 'governance' only and by leaving the sphere of conflict politics open to the separatists, parties were able to chalk a role for themselves within the larger context of separatism. This distinction also made it easier for the common people to be involved in the mainstream politics. With no contradiction between their act of voting or getting involved in the electoral politics on the one hand and their separatist sentiments, on the other - they could participate in both the spheres of politics and easily switch from one sphere to another.



At the moment of transition, from the state to the Union Territory, the politics of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in Kashmir valley is in the frozen mode. Neither the separatist nor the mainstream politics is being articulated at the moment. What will be its shape in the times to come? It is a big question and to have some answer, one would need to refer to the history of Kashmir's politics in the last three decades.

Interestingly, this distinction was accepted by the separatists as well and they would many times acknowledge the extension of the democratic space by arguing that the people needed to fulfil the day to day needs related to jobs, roads, water and electricity etc and participation in such activities did not mean that the larger 'Kashmir cause' was being sidelined.

The parallel existence of the democratic and separatist spheres of politics and the way the two intersected and impacted each other makes it a unique case study. For the purpose of analysis, the study of Kashmir's politics in the period beyond 1990 therefore makes an interesting reading.

Interestingly, each of the two spheres of politics is dynamic and has been undergoing various shifts. The separatist politics after going through the phase of militancy and the post-militancy, entered the phase of 'new-age militancy'. The 'new-age militancy' is the term used for the militancy as it has erupted in the post-2015 period. It reflects not only the revival of the militancy but also its newly found legitimacy. After being de-legitimised in the later years of 1990s, and after its near complete decline by 2004, militancy has once again become central to the separatist politics of Kashmir.

The democratic politics similarly has gone through various phases, After the phase of its decline in 1989-90 period, it started expanding itself in 2002. By 2015-2016, it had once again reached a phase of crisis. Much before the abrogation of the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, the democratic space that was thriving till 2014 Assembly elections, started facing a crisis. This situation of crisis was reflected during the bye elections for the two Parliamentary seats of Kashmir. So huge was the crisis that the bye-poll in the Anantnag constituency had to be deferred indefinitely and in Srinagar Constituency, it was held in 2017 without much effective participation of the people.

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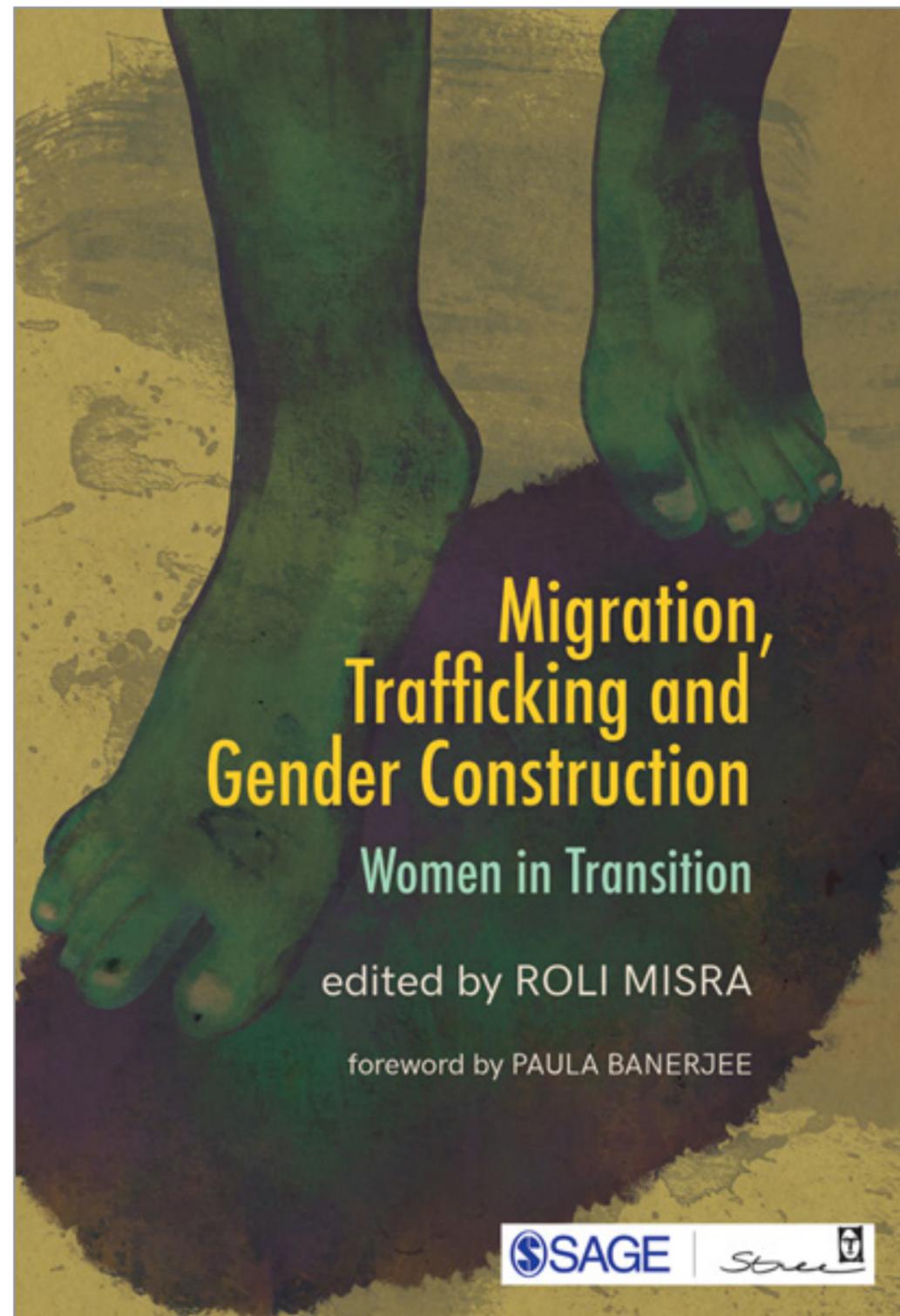


ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ROLI MISRA MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING AND GENDER CONSTRUCTION: WOMEN IN TRANSITION

Migration studies have emerged to be an important research and study area in post-colonial times across the globe. It is widely read as an academic subject and also otherwise. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon defined migration as “an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future, It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family” (Ban ki-moon). Migration is a process that expresses the need for emancipation or a desire for amelioration. Poverty, persecution and economic opportunity are some of the well documented reason for migration. Displacement of population has led to renewal of nations in the history of civilizations. Increasing scholarly consciousness towards migration, in its wake has brought a realization that any theory of migration must include dimensions of race, religion, nationality, sense of belonging and nostalgia.

Migration has a coercing effect on those who move, not only in fundamental or cultural terms, but also as it may bring in its wake, abuse, exploitation, emotional and psychological turbulences. Looking at the process of Migration from the socio-economic-psychological window, facilitates the understanding of the phenomenon, not only as a “progression”, but also as an “expression”.

Associate Professor Roli Misra.



<https://in.sagepub.com/en-in/sas/migration-trafficking-and-gender-construction/book272401>

The essays from India, Bangladesh, Finland, with references to Ukraine and Russia and the Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia, provide a gendered perspective of Migration. In the context of migration, leaving home behind it is observed that the type of “native foreigner” is the type of strategy based on total assimilation, when the migrant gives up his own cultural identity and joins the cultural mass existing in the host country.: “the synthesis type”.

When we analyse, migration from this purview, its dynamics with different groups of gender, caste, ethnicities can be surveyed distinctly. Of the multiple causes of migration, a dominant one is economic migration. With changing times women comprise a large component of this migrant population. Earlier they mostly comprised family members of male migrants. But now they often migrate as active agents. As a result, they not only contribute to remittances sent back to the home country but also contribute to the economy of the host country. Their new found economic role has in turn shaped their own identity as well as compelled the host country to take cognizance of their contribution. This has resulted in the host country devising different policies to accommodate these women as well as help them in different ways. In order to comprehend these multi-dimensional peculiarities and nuances, it is essential to widen the horizontal base of studying Migration and look beyond the rudiments of ‘push’ and ‘pull’.

The aim of this book entitled, *Migration, Trafficking and Gender Construction: Women in Transition* published by Sage Stree, New Delhi (December 2019) is to bridge the research gap in available literature on gendered aspect of migration and also to provide a reading material to the researchers, academicians and readers as a ready reckoner. Women’s experience of displacement needs to be acknowledged as women are important stake holders in rehabilitation. Policies must address their problems. Migration impacts women differently. Displacement leaves women with a sense of uprootedness. Traditionally home has been the domain of women and loss of which leaves them with a sense of longing. This book is a compilation of essays on gender story of migration in the backdrop of histories of invasion, trauma, separation and violence. It brings together essays from different parts of the world to address issues like what causes migration, how migration at times is voluntary and at times enforced, and how women deal with this movement.

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Conflict, distress and violence have been in inducing paroxysms of migration waves, since the dawn of civilization. The conflict and distress side of migration and its impact on woman has also been announced in the book. The tale of Pre-War Migration and political distress that gave birth to nearly a million Bosnian Immigrants has been captured in the milieu of image of empowerment of Bosnian female immigrants. This book, in an attempt to present a comprehensive rendition of women migrants, also stresses on their role as sole heroes of the care economy.

This volume, through eleven chapters, captures a comprehensive picture of gender sensitised version of migration by highlighting not only the perils faced by women migrants, but also, highlighting their quest of emancipation from what has been bestowed upon them, which testifies their strength and valour. Hope this volume serves as a reader's delight.

The advantage of this strategy is the fact that the migrant can negotiate between more cultures, trying to understand them, to combine and to mix them together. The disadvantage is the partial loyalty, especially when the individual reaches a conflict situation between these cultures. Irrespective of causes, most countries have now become home to a diverse multicultural population.

The process of bearing and raising a child, demands a plethora of physical and emotional strength, which becomes even more challenging when coupled with the distress caused by migration. Lastly, the book presents the socio-psychological fallout of migration in context of women by considering the case of identity of female members of the nations of former Yugoslavia whose parents immigrated to Slovenia. This book is a pioneering presentation of Hybridity, identity bricolage, among female second generation migrants of Slovenia, and their dilemmatic disposition of 'caught in between and uprooted. The decisions of women are shaped by multiple factors, individual needs, aspirations along with availability of jobs etc. Once women migrate they on one hand may face certain restrictions in terms of social and cultural rights/liberties, however on the other hand the very act of movement may have enabling and empowering capacities. These various factors need to be looked into to understand the phenomenon. This volume, through eleven chapters, captures a comprehensive picture of gender sensitised version of migration by highlighting not only the perils faced by women migrants, but also, highlighting their quest of emancipation from what has been bestowed upon them, which testifies their strength and valour. Hope this volume serves as a reader's delight.

Most countries have devised various techniques to cope with the inflow of migrants. These steps aim at assimilating the migrants in some way or other to ensure that there is no social upheaval in the countries. Migration has generally been looked as a male phenomenon, however, essays contained in the book, offer a timely and significant version of how transition impacts and ascertains so much for women. Essays on the plight of female migrants of Bangladesh and Assam, present a picture of migration that challenge the conventional viewpoint of "female migrate for marriage" at the same time, accounting for paths of migrant women Blemished by the under currents of gender stereotyping at work place, lack of representation in network, cultural discrimination, and sexual abuse. Migration vulneraries all, but for female migrants the risks are even higher.

It is ironical how at times, families stricken with such vulnerabilities, adopt mechanism that put their own daughters and sisters in jeopardy. This system of dispossession has been introduced in the book, in the form of the persisting predicaments of Adivasi (tribal) minor girl migrants in India, to whom, poverty and illiteracy push into an endless indentation of trafficking. The atrocities on internally displaced tribal women migrants, sexual abuse bestowed upon them in makeshift camps, have also been positioned and described in context of cultural and ethnic clashes of the Bodo Movement, an episode of Gruesome violence in the blood stained history of Assam, India. Another episode that highlights increasing traces of Xenophobia, Nationalism and ethnic cleaning, the Rohingya crisis (Myanmar) which is rightly called the biggest refugee crisis of the time, has been presented in a gender sensitized arrangement.

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Stephanie Saldaña grew up in Texas and received a B. A. from Middlebury College and a master's degree from Harvard Divinity School. She was a Watson and Fulbright scholar and has won several awards for her poetry. She is the author of *The Bread of Angels*, about her time living in Syria, and the recently published *A Country Between*. She is also the founder of Mosaic Stories, a project to tell the stories of endangered cultural heritage in the Middle East (www.mosaicstories.org). She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and three children. www.amazon.com

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Author of *The Bread of Angels*

STEPHANIE SALDAÑA

**Crossing the Bridge to the Past:
Reflections on Damascus, Syria.**

L.P. Hartley famously wrote that “the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” When I set out to write this piece, a friend of mine mentioned that I was sitting down to do the unenviable task of writing myself into the story of my own past. And while I agree that the past is a foreign country that all of us are in some way exiled from, in this case it is even more true, for the past I wish to write about is a world that I used to live in that no longer exists. I am writing about Syria: a country that I loved and that changed my life forever, and which is now in its third year of a devastating civil war. Never has the past felt so much like a country where things were different, and that now has disappeared.

In 2004, when I was twenty-seven years old, I finished my Masters at Harvard Divinity School and set out to spend a year in Damascus, Syria, on a Fulbright fellowship to write about the Prophet Jesus in Islam. As a scholar of Christianity and Islam I knew that Damascus was one of the richest cities in the world in which to study Muslim-Christian dialogue, a place where Muslims and Christians had lived side by side since the earliest days of Islam, and where Arabic speaking Christians were still a thriving minority, forming one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. The Syrian landscape was a living testimony to a Christian past, studded with the ruins of monasteries from the Byzantine Empire. The Umayyad Mosque, which sat like a jewel in the heart of the old city of Damascus, with a towering minaret known by locals as the “Jesus minaret”, was once the cathedral of St. John the Baptist, and remained a site of Christian pilgrimage. Tradition held that in the earliest years of Islam, Muslims and Christians had shared the space, each praying in their own respective section.



Stephanie Saldaña

I found a room in a sprawling, enormous house just off Straight Street, the famous street where St. Paul fell from his horse after being blinded by a vision of Jesus. My neighbor, a 73-year old Armenian who called himself The Baron, quickly adopted me, insisting that I drink tea with him at least three times a day and commenting on everything from my clothes to my desire to study Islam. There was no way that I could know that he would not only be my neighbor but that he would become my home...



The old city of Damascus. Photograph courtesy Stephanie Saldana

I had traveled to Syria several times in the past, and I had always wanted to return there for research. Yet while I justified my journey in scholarly terms, in ways I was only beginning to understand I was really running away: from a broken heart, from a family history of depression and madness, and from a life in which I had found myself, despite my years in Divinity School, somehow exiled from God. The following twelve months, which I write about in my memoir *The Bread of Angels* (Doubleday, 2010), would see me wrestle with God, with myself, and with everything I imagined my life would become, at times losing nearly everything.

When I arrived in Damascus that summer, I had nothing more than the two black, wheeled suitcases I brought with me from Boston, and a map of the city to help me find my way. I set out to search for a house in the only way that I could think of: by knocking door to door in the ancient Christian neighborhood of Bab Touma, where locals sometimes rented rooms out to students. It was the height of the U.S. led- war in Iraq, and perhaps not the smartest moment for an American girl to go knocking house to house in Damascus, Syria. Yet eventually I found a room in a sprawling, enormous house just off Straight Street, the famous street where St. Paul fell from his horse after being blinded by a vision of Jesus. My neighbor, a 73-year old Armenian who called himself The Baron, quickly adopted me, insisting that I drink tea with him at least three times a day and commenting on everything from my clothes to my desire to study Islam. There was no way that I could know that he would not only be my neighbor but that he would

It was not just any desert, but the ancient monastery of Deir Mar Musa, a stunning 6th century monastery hanging from a cliff face and accessible only by a flight of 350 stairs. I was there to meet Paolo Dall'Oglio, the Italian abbot of the monastery, who had invited me to do the month long Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a month of silence and meditation. During that month, I would be asked to confront all of the demons of my past, and to meditate on the gospel of Matthew. Finally, I would need to make a decision about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I had no idea of what that choice would be. All I knew was that something had to change.

become my *home*: that he would teach me about war and about survival, and that, most of all, he would teach me to speak the Syrian dialect of Arabic.

The Baron had lived through the Lebanese Civil War, and in his past life - before he lost his entire fortune - he had been a shoe salesman. Though he was now very poor, in the afternoons he entertained me with tales of his old life, stories of wooing women and selling shoes, playing football and traveling to Milan and Tehran. After I finished listening to his stories, I wandered into the narrow streets of the famous Old City, the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, and found myself in a world more diverse than I thought possible, where Armenians, Kurds, Sunnis, Shiites, Iraqis, Circassians, Palestinians, and even a few Jews lived, and where it didn't seem surprising that my Christians neighbors still spoke Syriac, a dialect of the Aramaic language Jesus once spoke. In the early evenings I would enter the Umayyad mosque and watch pigeons circle the Jesus minaret. As the sun set, the courtyard was magically transformed into a river of light, so that the children playing in it seemed to be illuminated.

Those moments of light illuminated the darkness, and yet the darkness remained. I was an American in Damascus during the height of the U.S. led invasion in Iraq, and the tension was palpable. I could not enter a taxi without the driver grilling me about American foreign policy, which I stumbled to discuss in my failing Arabic. In my language classes at Damascus University, America was a common topic. Secret Police were everywhere. In fact there was nothing secret about them, and they came to my house off Straight Street and openly questioned me. In the meantime, the streets of the Old City flooded with refugees fleeing the war in neighboring Iraq. With tensions rising between the American government and Syria, many of my neighbors feared that they, too, would be invaded. I, too, was scared.

In November of 2004, George Bush was re-elected as president of the United States, and it quickly became clear that the war was only going to get worse. That week, I packed my bags, and headed to the desert to change my life.

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Though Paolo was a devout Christian, he believed that Islam was part of his own spirituality, that Islam was not an accident, but part of God's plan for the world. He did not think that mere co-existence between Muslims and Christians was enough, but he believed in dependence: that the Muslims and Christians of Syria needed one another to be whole. He even named his desert monastic community *Al-Khalil*, the special name that Abraham, the "friend of God" and father of Muslims, Christians and Jews, is given in the Quran... In the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises, I meditated on the stories of the gospels until I could picture the characters in front of me, could ask them questions and wait for their response.

When I reached the top of the stairs, Fr. Paolo was waiting. I had never met anyone like him, with his voice booming across the courtyard. He was imposing: six foot four, with an unruly beard and enormous hands, a burly Roman who looked more like he belonged on a rugby pitch than in a monastery. Completely fluent in Arabic and yet constantly gesturing with his hands like an Italian, he had first come to the monastery in 1982, when it was still in ruins, and decided to rebuild it into a monastery dedicated to dialogue with Islam. Every year, alongside Christian pilgrims, thousands of Muslims climbed the stairs to visit with the local community, where they would eat and even pray. Though Paolo was a devout Christian, he believed that Islam was part of his own spirituality, that Islam was not an accident, but part of God's plan for the world. He did not think that mere co-existence between Muslims and Christians was enough, but he believed in *dependence*: that the Muslims and Christians of Syria needed one another to be whole. He even named his desert monastic community *Al-Khalil*, the special name that Abraham, the "friend of God" and father of Muslims, Christians and Jews, is given in the Quran.

For an entire month, in the silence of the mountains and the desert, I prayed. In the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises, I meditated on the stories of the gospels until I could picture the characters in front of me, could ask them questions and wait for their response. I remembered what a priest had once told me, that you know that you are really immersed in the Exercises when the characters start telling you things you don't want to hear! And they did. And yet the spirituality of my childhood, that I had been exiled from so long, came back and lived beside me, day after day in the desert where monks had come to pray for 1500 years.

In the evenings I came and sat across from Fr. Paolo, and we spoke of my past, of my fears, and of my hopes. He spoke to me of fear as a gift, something to be confronted, as something that always comes to us on the way to faith. This is why, in both the Old and New Testaments, angels always appear and whisper: "Do not be afraid." For fear comes when blessings come. I listened to him, and in a way that has happened in monasteries around the world since the beginning of Christianity, Fr. Paolo became a spiritual father to me, listening to me, until day after day I slowly climbed my way back to God. By the end of a month in the desert, not only had I reconnected with my faith, but I had decided to become a nun.

Yet as the saying goes: *man makes plans, and God laughs*. In the months following the Spiritual Exercises, I returned to Damascus, became ill, and lost faith again. This time I was nursed back by the unlikeliest of people; a famous female Sheikh by the name of Huda al-Habash, a teacher renowned for her deep knowledge of the Quran. In Damascus, at a young age, she had founded the city's very oldest Quranic school for girls, where hundreds of girls came to memorize and study the Quran.

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Though she knew that I am a Christian, she invited me into her home to study the Quran with her, and together we explored the Quranic verses on the Virgin Mary. With her I read about a Mary who is young and alone, and who is one day asked to carry a burden that seems almost too heavy to bear: to give birth to Jesus. She wanders into the desert in labor, at one moment so despondent that she wishes that she could die. And then she has the child.

Day after day I studied and recited the verses of Mary from the Quran, amazed by her story. Here was resurrection in the story of a young girl: life coming in the midst of despair. Those weeks, I recited the Quran with my female Sheikh, and slowly became well again. I drank endless glasses of tea with the Baron, my Armenian neighbor. I befriended my neighbors, in particular an Iraqi refugee named Hassan, a poet who taught me that poetry exists everywhere, even in the midst of war. I fell in love with the Syrian dialect of Arabic. And I discovered that the resurrection I had been searching for in a monastery in the desert was all around me, in the dirty, mad, tense, and beautiful streets of Damascus. I was made new, in the place I least expected it to happen.

That was ten years ago. When I set out to write a memoir, *The Bread of Angels*, I thought that I was simply capturing in writing a year that changed my life forever. For Syria did change my life: I found a home, I found God, I found two spiritual teachers. I fell in love with a country. Before the end of my time there, I would meet the man I would marry.



The monastery of Deir Mar Musa in the snow. Photograph courtesy Stephanie Saldana

I last spoke to him on Skype in July of 2013. He was calling me to say good-bye, for he was going again into Syria, this time on a dangerous mission... Two weeks later, he entered Syria to negotiate for the release of kidnapped prisoners, and was kidnapped himself by ISIS, an Islamist militant group associated with Al-Qaeda. No one has heard from him since. When I think of him now I think of hope, of a tiny seed—the size of a mustard seed—planted in the desert.



Children at the Umayyad mosque at sunset. Photograph courtesy Stephanie Saldana

Yet *The Bread of Angels* will now be remembered for something I never intended: for capturing a world just before it disappeared. For as we know now, that incredible diversity I experienced in Damascus, that world where Sunnis and Shiites and Alawites and Kurds and Christians lived side by side, was a thing of magic when it worked. But the moment in which it did not, that very diversity became a tinderbox for civil war.

Though I left Syria in 2005, I never left completely. Fr. Paolo remained my spiritual father for the next ten years. When I married instead of becoming a nun, he flew to Europe to say the wedding mass. When I had children, he traveled to Europe to meet them. A nun from the monastery is my son's godmother. Fr. Paolo and I remained as close as two people can be who are not family, our destinies tied to one another forever during a month of silence and prayer in the desert.

Yet I could never have known a decade ago what would happen to him and the country he had grown to love during the more than 30 years he made it his home. As the Syrian Civil War began to take shape, and as civilian casualties began to mount, Fr. Paolo increasingly became critical of the Syrian government. Eventually, he was forced into exile. Yet rather than stay away, he began to sneak in and out of the country illegally, visiting those in the north most affected by the war, and even negotiating the release of kidnapped citizens. I last spoke to him on Skype in July of 2013. He was calling me to say goodbye, for he was going again into Syria, this time on a dangerous mission. When we spoke, we talked about hope in the midst

Somewhere beneath this madness is a country that welcomed a stranger, a girl alone, from an enemy country, and embraced her and gave her a home. Surely this place still exists, of only in the hearts of those who once made it so - surely there is resurrection, even in the midst of these horrors—there must be.

of despair, hope “the size of a mustard seed”, the smallest of the seeds, able to give birth to the largest trees. It was a hope that could grow and give root even in the midst of war.

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My female sheikh, Huda al Habash, also went into exile shortly after the war began. I watched videos of young girls I knew from her mosque, many of them teenagers, marching as gunfire sprays in the background. I do not know when I shall see her again. Nor do I know where my old neighbor, the Baron is: though I have watched news of bombs going off near my old house, where St. Paul was thrown from his horse. Just as I have watched news of nearly every neighborhood I walked in being bombed. Even the Iraqi refugees I know have returned to Baghdad, where it is safer than the Damascus where they once sought refuge.

The monastery of Deir Mar Musa is largely empty, the monks and nuns in great danger isolated in the desert. In a nearby church, hundreds of families, most of them Muslim, have sought shelter, all of them fleeing violence and seeking food and warmth during the cruel winter. The villages I knew around the monastery have been the sites of some of the fiercest fighting of recent months, in a war that has now taken an estimated 130,000 lives. Barely a week goes by when I don't learn of a place I once knew that has now been destroyed: a city street, a market, a church or mosque. Recently I saw a picture of a bridge collapsed into the water, and it took me a moment to remember that I had stood on that bridge, that very bridge, collapsed into water.

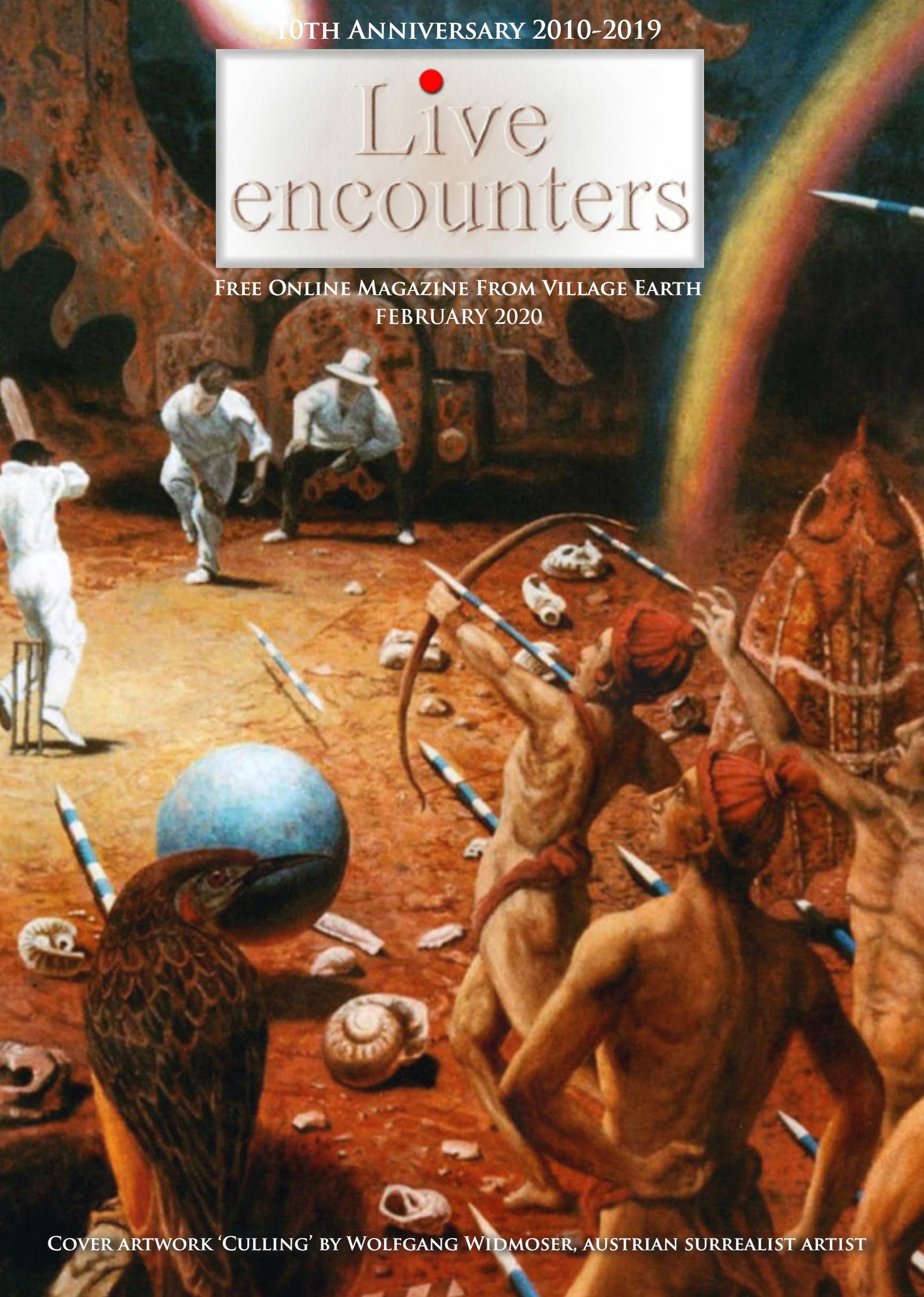
If I am glad that I wrote *The Bread of Angels* it is to remind myself, and perhaps others, that a different Syria once existed--- no, that it exists still, somewhere under the rubble of war. Somewhere beneath this madness is a country that welcomed a stranger, a girl alone, from an enemy country, and embraced her and gave her a home. Surely this place still exists, of only in the hearts of those who once made it so—surely there is resurrection, even in the midst of these horrors—there must be. I will never give up hope that the shattered bridge will be recovered from the waters, and rebuilt, and we will cross it.

Until then, I am glad to share the lessons and stories of friends, my neighbors, and my beloved teachers—one Christian, one Muslim. May we at least meet in these pages, and say: we are so very blessed, so lucky to know you - *if only for a moment. Inshallah, we will meet again.*

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