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DR LEZLEE BROWN HALPER
CHINA

First TIBET, Now XINJIANG

COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER



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Stone base relief, Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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This year is grinding to a close, so what will it be in 2021?

More wars for religious or commercial purposes or
perceived historical lands or injustices?
Cultural genocide ... like the deconstruction
of indigenous cultures for homogenisation by a godless State?
Child abuse?
Human slavery?
Beheadings of teachers for expressing freedom of speech?
Another Mass Extinction, perhaps humanity?
More insidious revelations that expose the all-pervasive
criminality of governments, international politics
and sections of the Media?
And is the UN still a coffee shop for the rich and powerful
to hang out and where honour exists among thieves?
And are the medusa-like social media barons
new lords of the manor?
Do they control our hearts and minds
and our freedom of thought?
And is this the age of *artificial* intelligence?
And is tourism fast becoming *online* voyeurism?
And is *woke liberalism* the bastard offspring of fascism?
And has *exceptionalism* become a fundamental right?

– Mark Ulyseas, *2020 Year of Living Foolishly, Again?*

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Dr Lezlee Brown Halper

DR LEZLEE BROWN HALPER

First TIBET - Now XINJIANG: CHINA IS DETERMINED TO CRUSH ITS MINORITIES.

Education is an essential tool in the nation building process. In China, as in other countries, the education system is a vital part of a wider socialization process which reconfirms cultural norms and supports party loyalty. Beijing has promoted cultural homogeneity not only through educational curricula but also through the determined use of the Han language.

Under the guise of “modernizing” its minority groups, the Chinese began this process with Tibetan school children in Lhasa decades ago. But it was not easily accomplished as Beijing first discovered when People’s Liberation Army (PLA) invaded Tibet in 1950. The problems began with the Tibetan language which did not possess the words needed to adequately convey the political ideology espoused by the PLA. The Communists had to invent new linguistic categories.

In 2002 in the course of my research, I attended a class in a Tibetan primary school in Lhasa. Students were not learning Tibetan but rather Chinese, the language that would enable them to go on to higher learning and better employment. Parents worried that children would lose their native language. Today, the curriculum for school age children is taught entirely in Chinese, forcing Tibetan parents who choose to have their children learn in the Tibetan language to pay higher fees.

As in Tibet, Beijing has infused the region with Han Chinese in an attempt to force the Uighurs, via an “ethnic unity” campaign, to assimilate into the Han culture. In 2017 the CCP began rounding up and detaining Uighurs and other ethnic Muslims including Kazakhs and Uzbeks, forcing them into re-education camps. Initially the Chinese denied the existence of the camps and called them “vocational training centers” where ethnic populations can learn new skills. However, Uighurs who have escaped paint a dark picture of torture and rape as they are forced to renounce their faith, learn Mandarin and swear loyalty to the Party.

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Throughout the past six decades the Chinese have sought to deconstruct the Tibetan culture not only by diminishing the Tibetan language, but by constraining religion as well. After suppressing the 2008 Tibetan uprising, the Chinese continued to persecute Tibetan monks, destroying monasteries or turning them into tourist attractions for those permitted to travel to the region; even possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama today is considered a crime that carries a prison sentence.

In June of this year, a new campaign of “behavioral reform” was initiated which mandates the destruction of prayer flags, a centuries old symbol of the Tibetan culture and spirituality. In extending the crackdown on Tibetans, President Xi Jin Ping announced at the seventh Tibet Work Forum in August, his plans to strengthen party unity in Tibet by “building a fortress to ward off splittism.” This latest bid for absolute control over Tibet prioritizes an intense educational campaign to “combat separatist activities” including “patriotic” reeducation of the younger generation of Tibetans. “Ideological and political” education in all schools has become mandatory.

For decades, the Communist Party of China (CCP) has attempted, largely without effect, to teach Tibetans a revisionist history to bring them into the “Motherland.” Yet, as Beijing has tightened its grip, Tibetans have become increasingly desperate: There have been more than 150 self-immolations since 2009. There is a heavy police presence in Lhasa underscoring the troubled authoritarian civic culture.

The Chinese government is now extending these repressive “reforms” to Xinjiang, an autonomous area in Western China and home to approximately 11 million Turkic –speaking Muslims. As in Tibet, Beijing has infused the region with Han Chinese in an attempt to force the Uighurs, via an “ethnic unity” campaign, to assimilate into the Han culture. In 2017 the CCP began rounding up and detaining Uighurs and other ethnic Muslims including Kazakhs and Uzbeks, forcing them into re-education camps. Initially the Chinese denied the existence of the camps and called them “vocational training centers” where ethnic populations can learn new skills. However, Uighurs who have escaped paint a dark picture of torture and rape as they are forced to renounce their faith, learn Mandarin and swear loyalty to the Party.



Wall Street Journal – <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-shifts-to-new-phase-in-campaign-to-control-xinjiangs-muslims-11580985000>

Youtube screenshot - Wall Street Journal – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swCf6Z5REwI>



As recently as July, the Chinese ambassador to London, Liu Xiaoming, was shown footage by the BBC, authenticated by other governments and western intelligence services, of Uighurs kneeling, blindfolded with their heads shaven being pushed onto trains. The Ambassador would not explain the scene and said the people could be separatists or even actors from the US or other Western countries. He called the reports “lies of the century” and refuted claims that Uighurs are being mistreated. He also denied proven reports that China is conducting massive sterilization on women to control the Uighur population. The forced detention of at least 1 million Uighurs and other ethnic Muslims was condemned by 23 UN nations who called upon China to respect international laws, including the freedom of religion.

Outside the camps Uighurs are subject to intense surveillance in their daily lives. To this end, the Chinese use facial recognition cameras and QR codes (Quick Response) that have been installed on homes. This allows officials, with a quick scan of the code, to obtain personal details and check on the activities of the occupants. The Chinese claim this is simply a way to monitor the population and the delivery of services.

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This year Washington signed into law the “Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020.” This Act holds accountable “perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses such as the systematic use of indoctrination camps, forced labor, and intrusive surveillance to eradicate the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of Uighurs and other minorities in China.” In addition the U.S Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Chinese companies and farms in the Xinjiang region where many of the Uighur internment camps are located. The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act gives the United States the ability to impose human rights penalties on individuals. In addition, the US House of Representatives passed a new and more comprehensive Tibetan Policy and Support Act, updating a bill last passed in 2002; this is now waiting to be passed in the US Senate. Included in the legislation is the right for the Tibetan Buddhist community, not Beijing, to choose the next Dalai Lama. The United States is also pressing to open a consulate in Lhasa.

While the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia has had a degree of autonomy and has not been subject to the police state tactics used in Tibet and Xinjiang, many fear it won’t be long until Beijing attempts to force assimilation onto its ethnic populations. Inner Mongolia is home to 4.2 million ethnic Mongolians and unusual, wide spread protests broke out in August when the Chinese announced, a week before school opened, that language instruction in Mongolian would be replaced with Mandarin in three subjects for all minority children in elementary and middle school.

The Economist - How China is crushing the Uighurs Long beards, veils and some halal products are banned in Xinjiang. Screenshot - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRBcP5BrffI&t=288s>

Chinese repression in Tibet and Xinjiang also bodes ill for Hong Kong in the coming months. China's new national security law implemented in the semi-autonomous city is vague but has broad, sweeping powers. With its enactment, peaceful and legitimate protesters were rounded up; some were arrested for simply carrying political signs and flags. The authorities can now claim these actions "endanger national security" as the law becomes a catch-all for offenses deemed a threat to Hong Kong's security. As the CCP tightens its grip, the people of Hong Kong, particularly political activists, who face stiff prison sentences, are fleeing to Taiwan in dangerous sea conditions.

Young school children were not happy. They chanted "Our mother language is Mongolian" as their school textbooks were replaced with Chinese ones.

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What do we take from this?

History shows us that nations large and small—democratic and autocratic—have sought to consolidate and homogenize the space they rule. In the US this was seen in the centuries-long struggle to incorporate the Native Americans into the dominant Anglo-Saxon polity. Teachers were tasked with Christianizing their students. In the 19th and 20th centuries Hopi Indians, for instance, were sent from reservations to boarding schools, often against their own and their parent's wishes to become wards of the state—an experience common to many Native Americans tribes. Similarly, the experience of the Maoris of New Zealand reflects the same education issues as Native Americans and Tibetans. The education policies for the Maori reflected an official policy of assimilation based on the assumption of European superiority and colonization.

Thus China's policy toward ethnic minorities is not unique. In each of these instances the inability to find an acceptable balance between the state's desire for cohesion/control and the ethnic group's demand for cultural and religious self-determination has brought only limited progress. As nations embrace cultural diversity, China will encounter greater difficulty in pursuing these restrictive policies. Global opinion has turned sharply against Beijing as China's unyielding hand is seen in an ugly process of cultural deconstruction. Washington's global status is on the line. Long-standing American principles of free speech and assembly are implicitly challenged by China's grotesque policies in Tibet and Xinjiang. The United States must not surrender its moral high-ground on these questions to Chinese authoritarianism.



TIME - Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama, On Relations With China, Inner Peace & More - Screenshot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhhe07B99iE>

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DR CAUVERY GANAPATHY

TIBET: A TANGLED CAUSE

Abstract

Most issues in international relations acquire multiple identities. Oftentimes, the only purpose this serves is to compound a singular or simpler issue to begin with. The narrative of the Tibetan issue is an instance of such entanglement. The Tibetan issue, to a large part of the world, much of India included, resonates at the level of an ethno-cultural and religious suppression which is fast devolving into a humanitarian crisis. However, to consider Tibet through that prism alone- as it is most commonly done- is to overlook its significant strategic relevance, and to be willfully in denial of what, this commentary argues, is at the heart of the unquiet peace along the Sino-Indian border. The purpose of this commentary is two-fold - One, to upraise the strategic relevance of Tibet and argue that it may perhaps be time for it to feature more prominently in New Delhi's strategic outreaches, and two, to upraise a hope that the struggles of a people long suppressed not be made a casualty of great power politics.

In a strategic arena intrinsically tied to considerations of Chinese behavior and approach, there appear two areas that New Delhi could increase its focus on in the near future. While the Andaman Islands with its vital positioning at the mouth of the Malacca Straits qualifies as one, the Tibetan plateau may well emerge as the second. It is a configuration that would irk Beijing endlessly and not one that would, should or could be made blithely in any measure either. The fact of a contiguous land border that India shares with China and the remarkable growth in the PLAN's capabilities and their increased presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), present the opening of fronts that India must confront more actively and imaginatively. These two territories, then, offer a most cogent markings of a strategic theatre that India needs to cultivate. The central intent of this commentary is to focus on the second option – Tibet

Dr Cauvery Ganapathy

The Tibetan issue represents an anomaly in that, what is also a critically important strategic issue is being dealt with by most nations, as a humanitarian one. To an objective observer, a humanitarian issue must take precedence in any case, it would appear. However, international relations and global politics has been a testimony to the fact that when it comes to decision-making, it is most often the strategic issues that enthuse an expedient and invested response from governments. The tragedy of the Tibetans has been that their cause is largely universally considered a humanitarian one and consequently gets featured much lower on the list of priorities by nations other than China, while significantly, the Chinese themselves see the Tibetan issue as one of strategic importance and national security.

While Tibet forms the main focus of this commentary, a brief note on the Andamans is called for, given the reference made to it. The Andamans is a strategic asset that New Delhi appears poised to finally exploit most potently in its approach towards Chinese presence in the IOR. The landing of a US Poseidon P-8 on the island in late September, 2020 should be taken to be indicative of a much more open stance on the part of India to accept and utilize the strategic value of the Andaman Islands at a time when the Chinese presence in the IOR appears to be increasing. The Andamans, in many ways, acts as a gateway to the Malacca Straits, indisputably the most critical chokepoint where global energy trade is concerned. This development must be contextualised also in the backdrop of the conclusion of a series of military logistics agreements that India and the US have recently signed, beginning with the LEMOA and the COMCASA and concluding with the BECA and MISTA earlier this week. The fundamentals of all of these agreements rests on enhancing the scope of interoperability between American and Indian naval forces. Attendant to any such intent must necessarily be a robust positioning in the IOR, and the Andamans offers an unparalleled location to base such a collaboration out of.

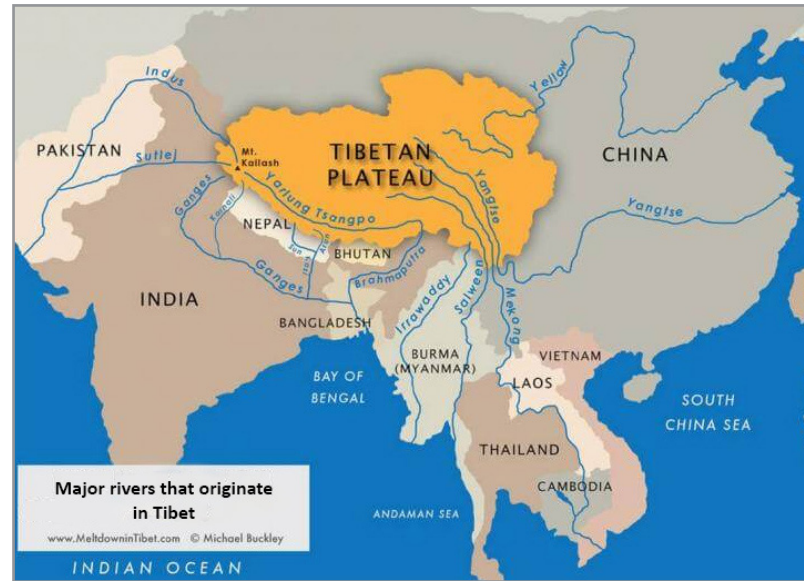
On Tibet

Tibet and the Tibetan cause have resonated internationally over the past seven decades. The central point of interest relates, quite understandably, to ideas that emanate from the realm of humanitarian considerations. The struggles of the Tibetan people, living in exile in large part, have come to acquire the status of a great humanitarian tragedy being played out since the last century and is one that appears to have caught the public imagination like no other. Yet, support and advocacy for it remains conditional upon the troughs of political relations with and within other countries.

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A Senior Tibetan Officer of the Special Frontier Force (SFF) Nyima Tenzin, was killed in a landmine blast Pangong lake, Indo-Tibetan border. Ram Madhav laid a wreath for Nyima Tenzin and later met his family. Photo: Twitter



Major rivers that originate in Tibet: Yarlung Zangbo/Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze, Yellow, Indus, Sutlej, Dulong Jiang/ Irrawaddy, Bhote Kosi, Arun, Karnali, Trishuli.

It is in this backdrop that the importance that Beijing accords to the cause of controlling Tibet and its diffidence to any apparent international condemnation must be understood, while attempting to locate the apparent ambivalence of other countries to the issue.

This commentary urges a ‘reconsideration of Tibet’ along parameters of relevance other than the humanitarian one. One could take pains to underline yet again that an issue should be most critical by virtue of it being a humanitarian one alone, but it would seem like harping on a truism which would serve no purpose. Instead, if the raising of an issue to the level of strategic – and other-considerations is what would accord it the immediate and unqualified credence and support it deserves, then that is what must be done. A change in the narrative is required for Tibet.

While the Dalai Lama is and will perhaps remain the most recognizable symbol of non-violent protest, there comes a time to reckon whether an approach needs to be supplemented. The bold strides that the elected Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has recently been making is perhaps just such an option. Similarly noteworthy are the multiple steps that the US Congress and the most unlikely of administrations in US history, has taken to be openly supportive of the Tibetan cause and raise the prospect of retributions.

A similar change in narrative on the Tibetan question may perhaps be useful within India too. India’s position on Tibet, for one, could well be classified as one of calibrated empathy. There are the undoubted acts of statesman like courage – or, strategic foresight, as many with the benefit of hindsight over India’s Tibet policy would perhaps argue - that allowed for a fleeing people to be provided a home within Indian territory. Yet, instances of allowing their struggle to become a victim of the changing moods of the country’s domestic political disposition as also the vagaries of international relations abound equally, and more.

India would need to upgrade the strategic importance it openly attaches to Tibet for a change of such a narrative to take place. To begin with, underlining Beijing’s view of Tibet and the undeniable strategic value it places on the territory should find a mirror in India. Tibet’s critical relevance to Beijing emanates from a twin concern –

The first, that it is the periphery that could make the Chinese core susceptible. The Chinese predicate it on their traditional strategic understanding of ‘*neiluanwaihuan*’ which believes that any chinks in the domestic armour makes one susceptible to foreign aggression; Second, that it is the the literal

To China, the significance of Tibet may be identified as both strategic and tactical. Strategic because, in addition to its position as frontier land, there are ten river systems which originate in the Tibetan plateau and the control of which is a crucial area of interest. Controlling Tibet, then, translates into gaining control over the destinies of all the downstream countries that depend on access to these rivers for their sustenance. Water security is a natural, non-negotiable concern for every country - as a result, it is also a threat multiplier. Since the times of Mao, Tibet’s promise of freshwater and the agrarian bounties of its fertile soil have made it absolutely essential for the Chinese state to have complete and unfettered access to Tibet and its resources. These resources now also include the mining of critical minerals.

fountainhead from which Chinese water security and territorial hold of the downstream countries of South and South East Asia emerges. The weaponization of water that the Chinese could implement with a total control of Tibet, would be as effective as any resource war that the world has seen so far.

In the intertwining of these two identities that Beijing has ascribed to Tibet, lies the misfortune of a people that are finding themselves in the crosshairs of what is essentially a strategic and tactical calculation that is deeply invested in wiping their very identity out.

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Second, tactical because, of the identification of Tibet as ‘the palm that holds the five Himalayan fingers’ of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Nepal and Bhutan, together- an idea that finds extensive exposition in Mao’s thoughts. This positioning of Tibet makes it absolutely imperative for the Chinese to maintain a hold over it if they wish to enjoy any tactical advantage of higher ground entry into the five territories. In this context, it may be underlined that what transpired in Ladakh earlier this year should not perplex anyone that has followed the patterns of Chinese actions where any perceived Indian focus (whether through the building of infrastructure, or movement, or legislation) on any one of these five ‘irritant points’ calls for an immediate redressal through return to status quo, often at the cost of precipitating a conflict.

One telling indicator that this is the Tibet that the Chinese see, are the heads under which a visible Chinese policy towards Tibet may be classified and compared with to their traditional policies elsewhere. Chinese political history appears to favour the pillars of defense, development, migration and homogenization through ethnic classification in peripheral areas, that it considers as principle national security risks.

This is, in fact, a pattern that marks every overreach of the Chinese state along regions which could qualify as its periphery- it begins with Tibet and stretches through Xinjiang, Taiwan, Inner Mongolia and finally, Hong Kong.



<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3037032/united-states-wants-united-nations-take-dalai-lama-succession>

The CCP's approach to Tibet demonstrates these four features in ample measure. Building on these and consolidating them are the instruments of surveillance and subjugation. This consolidation of the periphery is implemented through an easily discernible pattern-

First, through propaganda to create a milieu that would make the need to 'protect' the territory a given; Second, to undermine the social and cultural elites; Third, to arrange for migration of the majority population into the territory; and, fourth, to make this newly migrated population stakeholders by integrating them into a model of economic growth that is irrevocably tied to the aegis of the core-in this case, the CCP in Beijing.

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Building on these precepts are the two flagship projects in Tibet- the Qinghai Tibet Railway and the South-North Water Diversion Project, both unique enablers of the Chinese state's apparent defense and strategic objectives. A continuing reticence on part of actors such as India to build on the momentum the US has been building, in expressing and demonstrating their support for the Tibetan cause would lead to an easy implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, which in turn would further the entrenchment and control of access to Tibet that these two projects already accord Beijing. Furthermore, another problem with the BRI succeeding in a place like Tibet is that it would then increase the stakeholders in the oppression of the Tibetans- a virtual death-knell for their struggle for freedom.

Now, there is no reason to believe that New Delhi thinks of Tibet in 'non-strategic' terms. However, it is necessary at times to reflect a view through action, when an implicit understanding alone does not suffice. Doing so would send effective signals to Beijing about the stake and importance that India accords the Tibetan issue. Simultaneously, it would also remove the garb around the considerations that must necessarily be offered to the other cause- that of Tibetan identity -which has ended up a casualty of larger strategic imperatives. There was a refreshing change noted with the presence of a senior minister from the BJP at the funeral of the fallen Tibetan soldier recently. However, this act of open recognition and support was immediately undercut by the deleting of the Minister's tweet referring to his attendance and homage.

There is an inherent value in a nation being identified with the normative choices it stays true to. To not openly recognize and stand by the struggles of a people that have now even come to serve in our defense forces should, then, generate a moral compunction that leads to reckoning.

The creation of silos could sometimes offer creative solutions. To identify the Tibetan cause as a strategic one that must be fought accordingly and assurances accordingly offered, would be to create a space where the simultaneous and related suppression of the Tibetan way of life could then be separated from the equation and whereby the support offered to the Tibetan activists would not be rendered meaningless or even farcical. It would help liberate the struggle of the Tibetans from the tragic and tiring role it has come to play as a pawn of appeasement or threat in Great Power rivalries.

The World Wars began as conflicts of identity and ethnicity. It is incumbent to remember that a cause like Tibet which has for too long functioned as a pawn of convenience in international politics is occurring in a geographic region that in itself is a powder-keg that could not be easily diffused if it were to blow up. A challenge is prepared for and can be managed. A threat, on the other hand, usually demands a response, which generally does not offer the leeway of a leisurely considered action. To cultivate the Tibetan plateau (and the Andamans) and position it as central in India's strategic calculus, then, may be a way to recognize an imminent challenge and get ahead of it before it morphs into becoming a strategic threat that may need to be answered, uncomfortably.

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DR SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA

INDIA AND GERMANY IN AFGHANISTAN: PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION

Introduction

India and Germany have made tremendous investments in Afghanistan since 2001. The present levels of violence combined with the uncertainties associated with the peace deal are impacting Germany's and India's role and commitment in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Despite sizeable investment in Afghanistan by the international community for the last 19 years, the task of stabilizing Afghanistan seems farfetched. Dwindling international financial assistance and lack of economic stability in Afghanistan is leading to a constant flow of refugees out of Afghanistan, rise in unemployment, and increase in criminal, narco and insurgent activities. Most of the development projects initiated by the international community in post-2001 Afghanistan are winding down or have been abruptly closed leading to an economic crisis in the country.

Amid concerns over backsliding of the country into further chaos and violence, Germany and India who have been important stakeholders in rebuilding Afghanistan need to explore and build platforms of cooperation for the long-term stabilization of the country. Given the convergence of interests in the stabilization of Afghanistan and strategic partnership, Germany and India are uniquely positioned to cooperate in stabilizing Afghanistan. More importantly, as Germany and India aspire to play a major role in the international arena, Afghanistan would be a test case of how these both countries develop joint strategies in conflict resolution, global governance, and formation of an alliance of multilateralists in a rapidly changing global order. The new "Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific region" is an important development to take note.

Dr Shanthie Mariet D'Souza



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in dialogue with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Germany's role in Afghanistan:

Germany's engagement with post-2001 Afghanistan depicts a positive role in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country in wide ranging sectors. Germany has contributed significant amount of resources to a large number of projects in the country. Since the creation of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), administered by the World Bank, in 2002, Germany has contributed almost 47 billion AFs. In November 2017, the Afghan government and the German KfW Development Bank signed a financial agreement according to which Germany pledged to contribute another 6.44 billion AFs in aid to government.

And yet, peace and stability remains elusive in Afghanistan. A report by the German Foreign Office on military and civilian engagement in Afghanistan, published in March 2018, provided a rather gloomy picture about the progress made thus far. According to the paper, the security situation in the country has deteriorated substantially since the withdrawal of NATO forces in December 2014. "Combat actions, (terror) attacks and the risk of kidnapping now allow for investments and consulting services only under strict security precautions and make long-term, sustainable-oriented engagement by international specialists difficult."

The report establishes a link between the worsening security situation and the constraints it puts on effective provision of civilian assistance. Germany is being able to providing civilian assistance in "safe and accessible regions", according to the report. The developments on the ground demonstrate the limits of security dominated approach and the need to move to a more comprehensive approach of economic stabilization of Afghanistan.

More importantly, the report concludes that "Afghanistan is one of the world's main exporters of refugees." The reasons for this are "above all, unsatisfactory economic development and corruption, the security situation and population growth." It's conspicuous that economic development appears first in that list, with the lack of security coming second.

In face of the rapidly deteriorating situation and rising number of refugees, there is an immediate need for German policy makers to reformulate and re-orient the present policy towards economic stabilization of the war ravaged country.



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani with Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India,

India's role in Afghanistan's reconstruction:

India has contributed to the economic reconstruction of war-ravaged Afghanistan since 2001. Avoiding a security-centred role, India adopted a 'soft power approach', re-establishing cultural and historical links between the two countries; providing development aid; and assistance for economic, social, civilian, political, and administrative capacity building.

Stability in Afghanistan would help India address its energy needs from and build trade routes with Central Asia in the long-term. Afghanistan's role as a 'land bridge' is crucial for fulfilling these objectives.

The other primary interests include security and having a stable democratic regime in Kabul. India has emerged as the largest regional donor country, having pledged more than US\$3 billion and invested in diverse areas including healthcare, education, infrastructure, social welfare, and in the training of politicians, diplomats, and police.

The withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan since 2014 has continued to be a source of anxiety and uncertainty in Afghanistan, as well as in the region. In New Delhi too, there are concerns about an unstable Afghanistan yet again turning into a springboard for destabilisation and terrorism, with a direct impact on India's security. There are worries that a steady deterioration of conditions on the ground may limit India's long-term economic engagement with Afghanistan.

The popular goodwill that has been generated for India by its development and economic assistance may not be sufficient enough to sustain India's economic engagement, reconstruction, and development activities.

As New Delhi grapples with the rapidly changing dynamics inside Afghanistan and in the region, whether India can continue its present role in Afghanistan is a subject of growing concern in the strategic and policymaking circles in New Delhi.

The need for developing partnerships of collaboration seems to be taking place at a time when the type and period of US presence and commitment remains unknown in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan where both India and Germany have a lot of stake can be an apt theatre for developing and strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Such cooperation, however, needs to emerge from the trap of the usual methods adopted in that country so far and need to evolve an alternate strategy for stabilization.



<https://dailiasianage.com/news/245426/peace-and-development-in-the-indo-pacific-region--i>

Convergence of Interests

The present state of affairs in Afghanistan is, therefore, is a testament to the fragile achievements of the international community. Enormous resources have been spent and yet, the achievement remains far too disproportionate to the efforts on the ground. Clearly, there is a need for an alternate approach to stabilizing Afghanistan. It has to be beyond piecemeal approaches, transactional relationships and has to be based on convergence of interests. The deteriorating security situation and political uncertainties impinge on Germany's and India's concerns and interests.

India and Germany signed a strategic partnership in May 2000. The bilateral relations were augmented to a 'new level' in 2017. Centred so far mostly on trade and development, the bilateral relations need to look for new and innovative areas of close cooperation.

Afghanistan where both India and Germany have a lot of stake can be an apt theatre for developing and strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Such cooperation, however, needs to emerge from the trap of the usual methods adopted in that country so far and need to evolve an alternate strategy for stabilization.

Way ahead

There is to need to use alternate approaches to stabilize Afghanistan based on the strategic partnership between India and Germany. Both countries need to convert their convergence of interests in Afghanistan by building clusters of collaboration in three sectors- security, political and socio-economic.

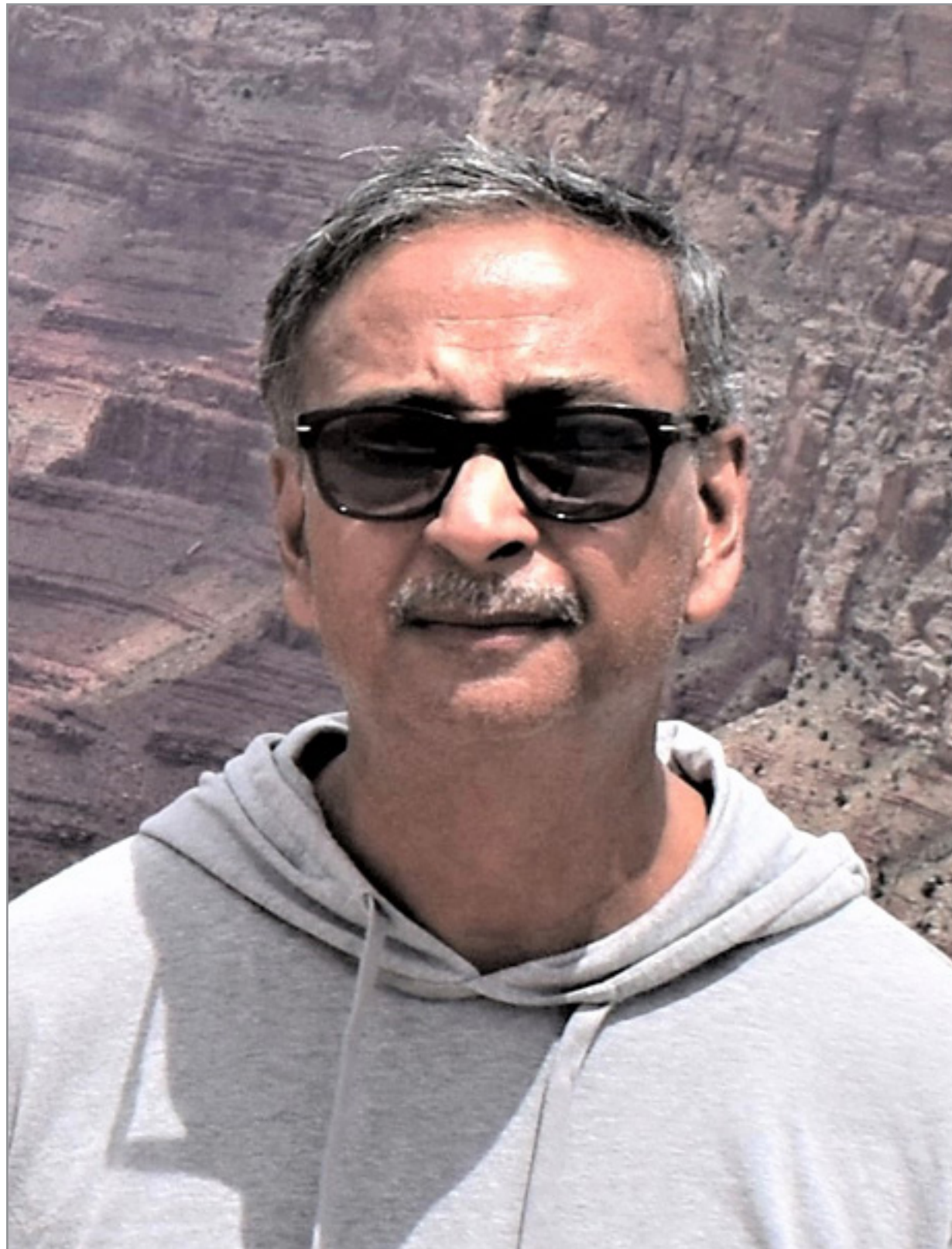
This would further strengthen India-Germany relationship and help carve their role as major powers in conflict resolution and global governance at a time when both seek an expansion of UN Security Council. In times of shifting global power dynamics, an alliance of democracies and multilateralists could play an important role in the global world order. Such cooperation would be within the broad ambit of the 2017 upgradation of the bilateral relations to a new strategic level.

Moreover, the new "Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific region" released by the German government in September 2020, signaled a significant change in the country's approach towards the Indo-Pacific and has been welcomed by India. These guidelines also provide an unique opportunity for India and Germany to increase their levels of cooperation and engagement in Afghanistan. Joint projects, investments and trilateral mechanisms in the economic and political sector would help in the long term stabilization of Afghanistan.

As Afghanistan traverses a difficult transition period, India and Germany can work together in building on the gains of the last decade and half and at the same time demonstrate their commitment on issues of global governance and conflict resolution.

Dr Kanchan Mukhopadhyay is Tagore National Fellow, Anthropological Survey of India. He has obtained his master's degree in anthropology from University of Calcutta and doctoral degree from Vidyasagar University. He has worked for Anthropological Survey of India for most part of his career largely in eastern and north-eastern parts of India and in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Food and Power: Expressions of Food-Politics in South Asia by Kanchan Mukhopadhyay - Tagore National Fellow at Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Culture, Government of India (SAGE India, 2020, Hardcover; ISBN: 9789353883768) [LINK](#)



DR KANCHAN MUKHOPADHYAY

FOOD AND POWER: EXPRESSIONS OF FOOD-POLITICS IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia is known for linguistic, religious, diverse creativity, and wide gastronomic variation. Significance of gastronomy in the region is immense, social rank of a person or of a community is often equated with food practices. Those with higher socio-economic status and political power often present their food ethos as universal and impose those on others.

Framework of hegemonic ideologies found in the region and methods of dominating over *others* are generally known. But varied forms of power relations in the pluri-cultural situation, especially from perspective of the dominated ones, are not known adequately. This book includes several studies, some auto-ethnographic, dealing with varied forms of power relations expressed through food-politics.

In his chapter on food tradition of Chandal, a low-ranking caste of Bengal, Saradindu Biswas has discussed how groups enjoying higher rank looked at their food practices. In the Puranic tale of Raja Harishchandra, the king had to masquerade as a Chandal and eat substances unfit for human consumption. Biswas has mentioned anti-hegemonic ideological and political movements organised by some Chandals since nineteenth century.

Dr Kanchan Mukhopadhyay

Francis Kulirani has discussed another act of defiance that took place in Kerala, there *avararnar* or low-ranking castes were not allowed to dine with *savarnar*, high-ranking castes. *Avarnar* leaders organized reform movements, *saha-panthibhojanam* or dining together became a form of protest and it gained popularity. While celebrating centenary of *saha-panthibhojanam* in 2017, eminent persons of the state admitted, caste boundaries could not be demolished completely.

A similar phenomenon was observed among the Santals of West Bengal by Kanchan Mukhopadhyay; this indigenous community challenged domination of the *diku*, socio-economically powerful Hindus, many a times. More recently formally educated Santal neo-elites identified beef and rice beer as part of their tradition, tabooed items for the *diku*, and used *tradition* as a political tool.

Urmimala Sarkar Munsu has discussed use of symbolic power of food by student community to counter tyrannical authority of an Indian university. When authorities tried to empty public space in the campus during night, a roadside late-night tea stall cropped-up to symbolically occupy the space. On other occasions hunger strike was used by students to assert their resistance; both actions have been interpreted as performative.

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Some authors have studied certain understated forms of food politics. Dharitri Narzary has highlighted socio-political significance of material culture of food among the Boro people, an indigenous community of Assam, and mentioned how Hindu ethos tried to demean Boro food practices. Pork and some other edibles were described as unclean; processing food by fermentation, smoking, drying, and roasting as foul. Such discrimination, Narzary has argued, helped the Boros to reinvent their tradition.

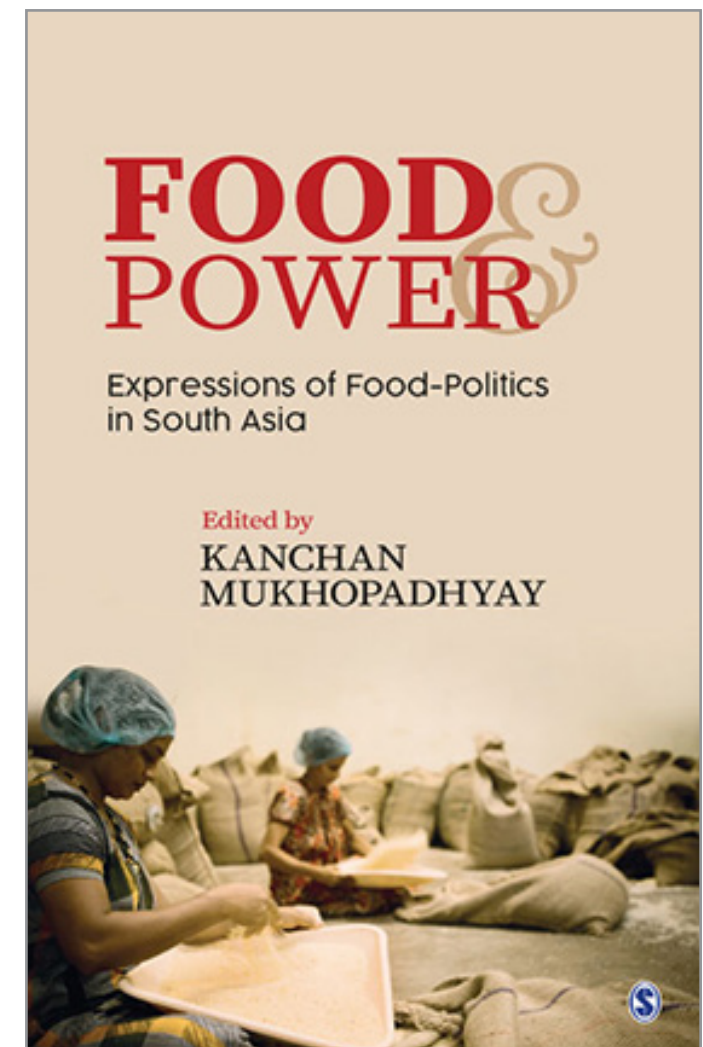
Nabakumar Duary has studied use of space in a rural market in West Bengal; traders occupying central part of the market often are from upper or middle layers of society, they sell universally consumed items like groceries, fruits, and vegetables. Traders, who are allotted peripheral space, are mostly from lower socio-economic strata; they sell meat, fish, home-made alcoholic beverages, and non-cultivated food items. Such locally produced food allows the marginal people partial self-sufficiency.

Study of food practices among South Asian sex workers and their children are scarce. Chhanda Mukhopadhyay found food intake of brothel dwellers of Kolkata city to be irregular and highly dependent on street food. Some of them were addicted to alcohol and other narcotics. Irregular working hours, financial insecurity, lack of social control, and marginalisation have been identified as principal reasons responsible for such behaviour.

Relation between food and ethnic identity among the Karen of Andaman Islands has been examined by Shiba Desor and her co-authors. The Karens migrated from Myanmar about a century back, in Andamans they practiced fishing, agriculture, livestock keeping, and foraging. Restricted access to resources and influence of dominant ethos in the islands have changed their food practices; still, they retain distinctiveness of their cuisine as it is an important identity marker.

In her study of the Mangniyars of Rajasthan, Ratna Dhar has noted flexibility of their identity. Mangniyars serve Hindu Rajput families as musicians and genealogists; they are Muslim by religion but ranked as low caste. Their resilience is evident from the way they eat food at Hindu patrons' place; Mangniyars carry their own plates to eat food from, their caste rank demands that. Still, they refuse to accept meat from Hindu patrons, who are not halal eaters.

Drawing examples from classical musicians of North India, Svetlana Ryzhakova has highlighted links between music and food. Sometimes food is metaphor, the long and difficult process of learning music is compared with cooking. Sometimes food is real, gastronomic preference of a musician is considered indicative of consumer's personality. Ryzhakova has noted, most musicians travel a lot, encounter different lifeways, and often flout community-specific food norms.



Book available at :
<https://stealadeal.sagepub.in/food-and-power-kanchan-mukhopadhyay-9789353883768.html>

Some authors have critiqued ideologies and policies based on hegemonic doctrines. Zia Us Salam has discussed evolution of cow from dietary preference and sacrificial offering in ancient India to political animal in modern times, he has related the development with colonial policy of dividing people in religious lines. Anti-beef stance of some political groups is not ideological – because they show beef-tolerance in places where majority are beefeaters, he has argued.

Role of gender politics in educated urban families of West Bengal has been examined by Moumita Dey, she has noted that generally women are not allowed to decide what they should eat or drink. The author has argued, often women themselves are responsible for perpetuation of inequalities, many of them try to excel in gender-specific roles.

Shibani Roy has narrated her childhood food experiences as member of a middle-class Bengali Hindu family in Delhi and noted co-existence of cosmopolitanism and parochialism in the neighbourhood. The space of family kitchen was governed by orthodoxy, which made the then young author question the conventions. The chapter has been enriched by another autobiographical narrative, that of a lady from a Muslim aristocrat family from same part of the city.

Sreenathan M has covered a large span while exploring relation between food-culture and food-lexicon in socio-culturally heterogeneous Dravidian ensemble. He has argued, culture-specific words reflect a society's cultural experiences. Considering archaeological, historical, ethnological, and linguistic evidences, he inferred that grammar of Dravidian food culture reflects linguistic identity as well as patterns of convergence.

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Amitabha Sarkar has flagged a vital issue; he has studied a small subsistence level forest-dependent community, Dandami Maria of Bastar, and examined impact of industrialization on them. Forest resources not only fulfil their material needs, it is extension of their spiritual world. Sarkar has described plight of a village where mining operations turned subsistence cultivators into industrial wage workers and has noted that other villages are awaiting similar fate.

The Trans-Himalayan community of Spitiens were dependant on traditional agro-pastoral economy before government introduced various development programmes in 1960's. Sumit Mukherjee has evaluated the transformation, now the people are making good profit from production of green peas and apple, but largely consuming food grown elsewhere. In a cold dry region with limited arable land, the new cash-crop economy has affected their self-sufficiency in food.

Vishvajit Pandya and Madhumita Mazumdar have discussed changing foodways of the Jarawas, a hunting-gathering community of Andaman Islands. Earlier, welfare agencies and settlers offered food to *befriend* them. Once befriended, the state assumed them to be hungry and started feeding them. The authors have noted how rice became part of gastro-politics; while welfare agencies discourage distribution of rice among Jarawas, that can make them dole dependent, some settlers give them rice in exchange of foraged items.

Natural resource base of Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, habitat of several indigenous communities, was interfered with when a dam was built and large tracts of land submerged, and when migrants from the plains were settled. Ala Uddin has discussed how the damaged ecology affected food security of earlier inhabitants, who consider locally available food to be nutritious and medically beneficial – scarcity of such items has affected their sense of wellbeing.

Om Gurung and Uddhav Rai have discussed semi-nomadic Chengpa community of Nepal, they were hunter-gatherers and slash-and-burn cultivators. Government settled them down to develop their lifeways, without providing any viable alternative livelihood. Interference of the nation state in ideological matters has marginalised them further.

This wide array of subjects, varied forms of power relations manifested through different modes of food transaction that have been scrutinised using multiple analytical tools, are expected to enhance our understanding of social-cultural diversity, especially of expressions of food politics, in South Asia.

Nitu Kumari is an Assistant Professor at Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU), Nagpur. She teaches legal history and international law. She is currently doing her doctoral research from Human Rights Studies Programme, SIS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Excerpted with permission from Rights of the Girl Child in India: Struggle for Existence and Well-Being by Nitu Kumari, Assistant Professor at Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur (SAGE India, 2020, Hardback; ISBN: 9789353882846) [LINK](#)



Nitu Kumari

DR NITU KUMARI

RIGHTS OF THE GIRL CHILD IN INDIA

Girls and women are an integral part of society. However, various social and cultural phenomena undermine their vital contribution to society and marginalize them from mainstream sociocultural existence. This marginalization makes them vulnerable in a male-dominated society. Patriarchal inheritance creates a male-dominated society and an atmosphere where women and girls are least acknowledged.

Least participation in the formulation of sociocultural norms, and discriminatory religious and social beliefs create very challenging conditions for girls and women. It is very difficult for them to raise their voices against this exploitative nature of society.

The girl child faces many difficulties and this needs more attention as women empowerment is not possible without the empowerment of the girl child. This book is an attempt to trace the root cause of the problems associated with the most vulnerable section of the society, that is, women as a whole and the girl child in particular.

The main idea is to bring forward regional variations of this problem, how problems of the girl child became an international issue and called for efforts of the international community to find a universal solution. Since this book is primarily intended to address the issues of women, the issues of the girl child become more evident.

An in-depth inquiry into the marginalization of women in society leads to the reason behind the vulnerability of the girl child at the initial stages of life.

India is famous for its diversity; however, this diversity cannot be seen in the condition of women in the country. Almost in all states of India, the position of women is lower than that of men. Inferior position in a male-dominated society deprives women in various sectors; women and girls are marginalized from the main section of society.

This book views itself as an integral part of the global and regional discourse on the issues of the girl child, child rights and human rights, along with the national and international initiatives for the welfare and development of the girl child. It underlines the international ongoing debates and current reflections on the issues of the girl child and women. Necessity and desirability of the deliberation on girls and women's issues and programmes and policies that address the challenges of these sections are also important subject matters of this book. To begin with, this book traces the historical roots of women and girls' position in society. It starts with the difficulties of children and how children become more vulnerable at the time of war and conflict as they are unable to defend themselves. The debate and deliberations over the age of the child are discussed and it also explains the need for children's identification as independent rights holders.

After the discussion of challenges related to children, it explains the girl child's peculiar problems, which make them so vulnerable. Then it discusses how the issues of the girl child are not merely regional or national; the marginalized position of women and girls is present in almost all societies across the world. As this is a global issue, it needs the attention of the international community and a collective approach with which this matter can be countered at the grassroots level. Many national and international books raise the issues of vulnerable sections such as issues and challenges of tribal women, black women and refugee women. This book's aim and objective is to trace the issues and challenges of the girl child and women in various sectors as they are vulnerable in every section of society. In this context, this book traces the history of international approaches to raise the issues of the girl child at an international level. It highlights the international conventions, treaties, declarations and norms set for children's welfare and development. It also emphasizes the implementation of these norms and challenges.

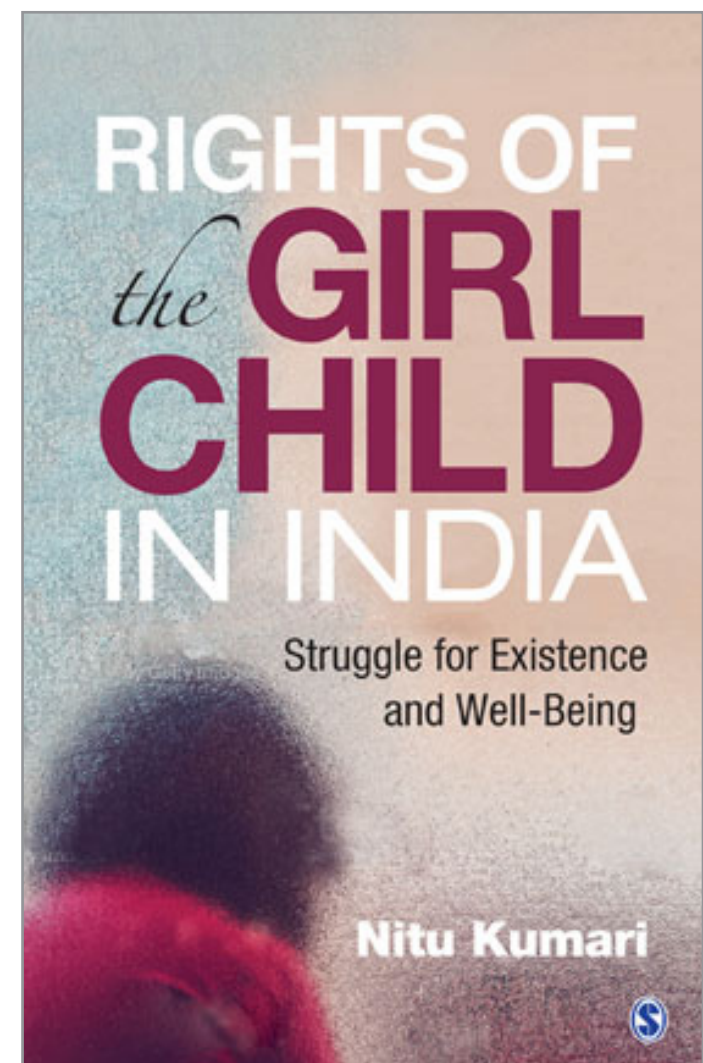
This book can be used to understand and trace the world community's role in women and child welfare and development. The role of the League of Nations and that of the United Nations (UN), two of the world's most important international organizations, in the inclusion of all sections together and promotion of equal rights and opportunity for all is worth mentioning. Collective security, that is international peace and security, is the basic tenet of the UN Charter; in this context, this book upholds the fact that without the upliftment of girls and women, the world cannot be secure and peaceful. Readers who are interested in gathering information about the peculiar challenges of girls, about international norms and standards, as well as international conventions to protect and promote the rights of girls and women, can be benefited from this book.

The role of states towards women and girls' welfare is extensively analyzed in this book. It also covers the regional approaches to address the issues of girls and women. For instance, regional organizations, South Asian and African countries' approach on the girl child protection.

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The socio-legal and judicial approach to address the issues of girls and women is extensively discussed in this book. In this context, this book is also very relevant for the readers who are interested in states and non-state policies and programme on the gender inequality issue. It has also discussed the dimension of human rights regarding harmful traditions against girls and women; international human rights seek to address the challenges faced by women and girls.

In these aspects, this book is significant for those who have an interest in studying the human rights' approach towards vulnerable segments of society.



Book available at :
<https://stealadeal.sagepub.in/rights-of-the-girl-child-in-india-nitu-kumari-9789353882846.html>

Katie Costello was born and raised in Hubbard, Ohio, USA. Her greatest passion in life has always been to help animals. She is lucky enough to be a licensed veterinary technician and owner of The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center where she helps animals through behavior work. A vegetarian since she was 6 years old and a vegan for the last 13 years, she currently has 6 dogs, 6 cats, 6 chickens and 2 roosters and 3 farm pigs that are amongst her dearest friends. She is founder of 2 non-profit organizations, K-9's for Compassion (Co-founded with her father), a therapy animal group and The Together 3 Journey, a service dog organization. She has been on the board of many animal organizations throughout her life, including Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary and C.H.A.I.N. (Community Helping Animals In Need). She enjoys freelance writing about (mostly) animals for different magazines, with her favorite being Live Encounters! <http://thecaninecampustraining.com/>



Katie Costello

KATIE COSTELLO

IN ALL THINGS FIND BEAUTY

"the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being?... The time will come when humanity will extend its mantle over everything which breathes..." Written by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Brilliantly said so many years before his time. I found this quote when I was in high school, and it started me down a different path.

Animals have always been my answer to everything. When I was a child and growing up I loved to go to my grandparents farm. I was little, and didn't have an understanding of what a farm was. I would spend endless hours watching the cows, collecting chicken eggs, playing with the baby pigs, and on special days, my Grandmother would open the door to a small barn where a barn owl would turn his head, open his eyes and give us a "Whoot", or we would go looking for Argiope spiders. Their striking yellow and black bodies and their amazing webs were always something I loved to see. At the pond we would watch the frogs jumping as we walked by, and the butterflies dancing in the fields were always plentiful. Caterpillars were in the garden, and lady bugs for good luck were always near the grapes.

I learned at that early age of less than 5 what a wonder we had in all the different species in the world. At 6 I realized part of what was happening on the farm, becoming vegetarian, followed by becoming vegan years later. My entire life has been an adventure of learning more and more about animals and respecting that they are sentient beings.

I had a dog named Charlie from the time I was born until I was 5. Charlie was a mixed breed basset hound who was incredibly tolerant. I lived in the country where there weren't many children to play with and Charlie was my best friend. I also had 2 cats that I loved dearly, and these sweet creatures would sit in little chairs with me and we would have tea parties, and get on the swings and pretend we were at a carnival. They were my playmates and my friends.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

I remember my Grandmother buying me a book for Christmas called “Animals can be almost human” that I would read over and over. As I grew those books lead to deeper understanding. I would study the with the wildlife explorer cards that had facts about animals from around the world. I couldn’t read enough, and every year brought a bigger understanding, and understanding brought more respect, and respect brought more empathy, and empathy brought more wonder. It was, and still is, a never ending cycle that brings me a greater understanding of animals. Figuring out why they perform different behaviors, studying different species and figuring out why they do certain things is so much fun. I delved into identification books.

I appreciate all creatures and recognize that we share this earth with them. Of course, some are more difficult than others. I have to admit when I am saving a tick and taking him back to a remote area in the woods I totally understand why people might think I am crazy. Or my relentless need to try to stop people from killing flies or gnats. But, I need to be consistent. We can’t pick and choose which animals are worthy of life. That isn’t for us to decide.

And the “I” part of this is where I really hope to impress upon you. From pet ownership, to farm animals to critters in the garden, we decide, from a very human point of view, who gets to live, and when they die in many cases.

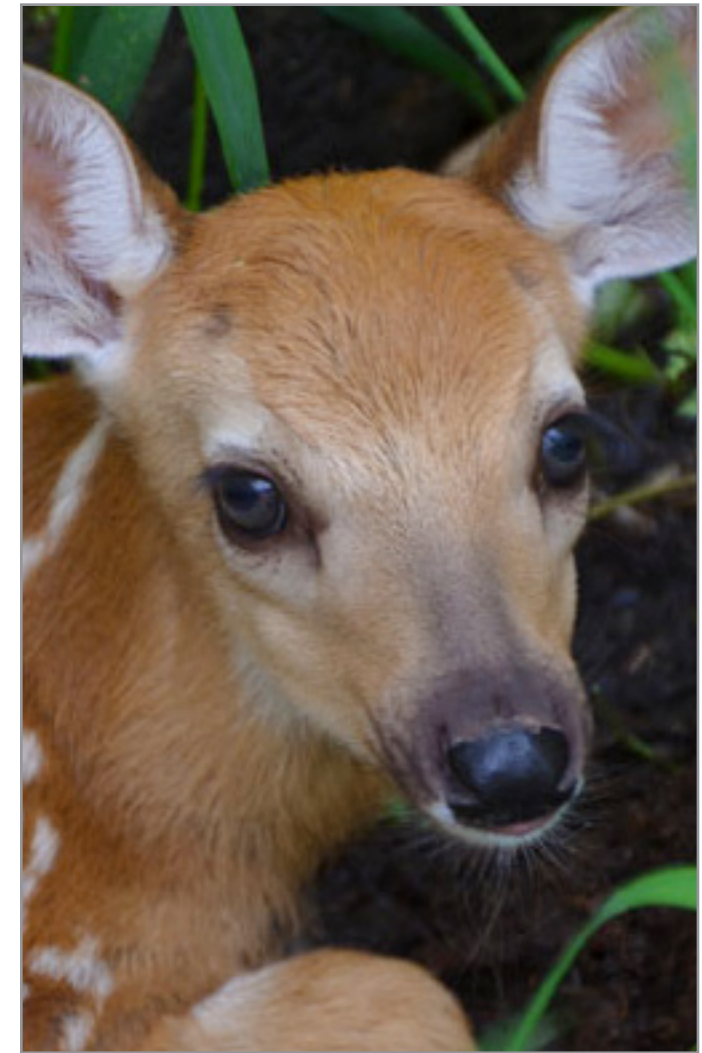
Even people that don’t love animals should have respect for them, for the sentient beings that they are. To recognize that they are breathing, they have a life, a brain, most have the same organs that we have. They aren’t exactly like us, and they don’t need to be to be worthy of their own lives. Dogs can smell a dead body a mile under water or 3 miles under earth. Cats know that a mouse is walking in a field many yards away. I challenge you to try those feats. They have lives, they have a desire to continue to live, and they can reason, fear, and care for young, at a bare minimum.

Why is it that we from our human perspective get to choose such things? Our pets are “property” in the eyes of the law, and farm animals have even fewer rights. It seems incredibly barbaric to think that in 2020 we are still killing animals to eat. Yet, this all goes on every second in every corner of the world. Somewhere along the way we were told that “this is the way it is” and we have believed it. I challenge you to think from their perspective, and see if you feel differently.

Puppies cry when taken from their siblings and mom. Cows have a soul wrenching sound when removed from their mom that goes on for days. Yet this is a routine thing that is done. This is accepted practice by humans.

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57 billion-yes, billion land animals and one trillion aquatic animals will be consumed in the next year. That is 1 trillion, 57 billion sentient beings.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

I remember as a young child knowing there were so few vegetarians let alone vegans. The numbers keep growing. This is becoming more and more accepted. I hope to inspire maybe a few from this article, as a matter of fact. We have an open barn policy where anyone can bring vegan food to our pigs and feed them. The reason for this is that we want people to get to know them. See the amazing creatures they are.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

In looking for a good definition of sentience, I really liked Gary Francione's, *"A sentient being is a being who is subjectively aware; a being who has interests; that is, a being who prefers, desires, or wants. Those interests do not have to be anything like human interests. If a being has some kind of mind that can experience frustration or satisfaction of whatever interests that being has, then the being is sentient."*

I have 3 pet pigs. 2 were thrown from a truck headed to the slaughterhouse on a random day at 5 am. Their names are Thelma and Louise. The first 2 weeks that these girls were safe at home they were scared to death. They would sleep touching each other and NEVER leave each others side.

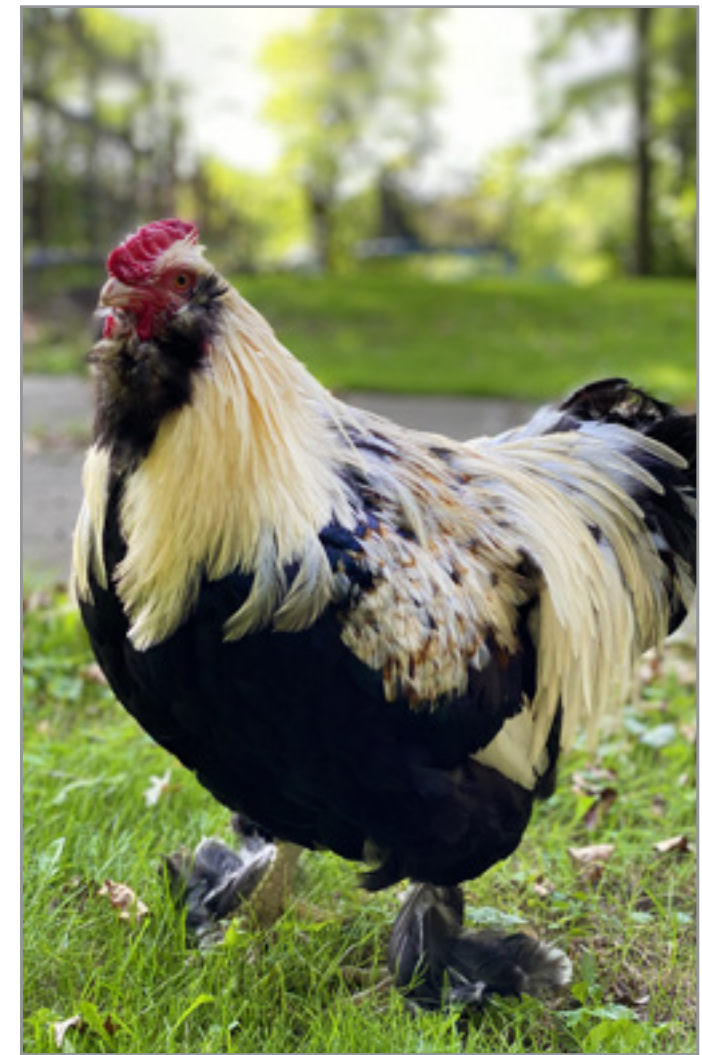
Once, Thelma got up to walk around the pasture, and I watched as Louise awoke, realized that Thelma wasn't touching her, and stood up running and squealing. The panicked look in her eyes broke my heart. This subsided after they realized they were safe.

When I picked them up in the median strip on route 80 where the accident happened, there were blue paint lines across their back. Marking them for market. I remember crying that day. I saw these beautiful creatures that were so scared. And yet, an entire profession found it okay to kill them. I also cried because on that truck they were the only two that were thrown from it that day.

Nearly 50 pigs were killed from the weight of the other pigs as the truck lay on its side. And, sadly, even after all of that trauma, the rest were picked up and taken to slaughter. The news media arrived and asked to interview me, which I did. I will never forget the one reporter rolling his eyes at me, and saying "But what about the farmer? Don't you care about him?" Talk about missing the point. The truth of the matter was that I wasn't "stealing" those pigs. I got them to safety and I went back and handed my business card to the person from the USDA, and told him I would happily pay that farmer full price for the pigs, but they weren't going to slaughter. Pigs are said to be the fourth smartest mammal on the planet. Yet, they are killed in horrific ways for food, food that isn't a necessity.

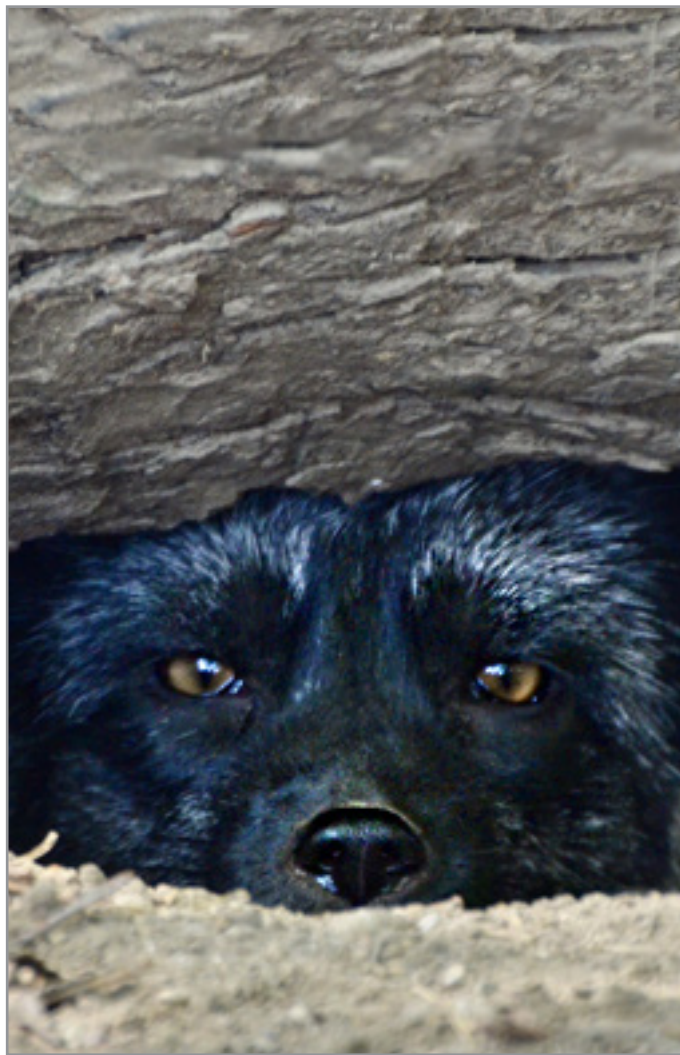
I think if people saw the process things would be very different. We can hide behind a huge profession geared at making sure you never see the truth, and there is big money behind that. Most see a packaged container that looks nothing like the animal who died for it. This is acceptable.

I remember as a young child knowing there were so few vegetarians let alone vegans. The numbers keep growing. This is becoming more and more accepted. I hope to inspire maybe a few from this article, as a matter of fact. We have an open barn policy where anyone can bring vegan food to our pigs and feed them. The reason for this is that we want people to get to know them. See the amazing creatures they are.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

My call to action? Spend a moment admiring nature, hug a cow or a pig, save an animal from a local shelter. Move an earth worm off the sidewalk, catch the bee in your house and move him outside. These simple things make a huge *huge* difference in their lives. Respect for all beings should be deserved. Look at their world through their eyes, and not your own. Study their behavior. You just might be surprised by the truth and find a whole new world unfolding. Maybe, just maybe, if you look, you too can find beauty in everything.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

Realize that there are other choices and you don't have to kill them. Thelma and Louise are great *spokespigs* for veganism. They love belly rubs, being brushed and petted.

Once I was at a county fair. I watched as a boy was crying because his pig was sold and he felt so badly. I stood watching horrified. I watched as his friends made fun of him, and he replied "I don't care, he is my friend." I went over to the boy and told him I would do everything in my power to adopt that pig and he could come and visit. I called the company that bought him, I offered to match their cost and was told no. I told the boys story and offered to pay double. "You are being ridiculous. This is what happens. You can't have him." I have never went back to that fair or any other that has livestock. I think of that boy every day that in another situation would be applauded for his compassion, but because of the pervasive lie that this is what pigs are for, and a society that buys into that, this child was taught that his feelings were ridiculous, and that this is the reality of life. I wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper and while certainly some supported me, I also unleashed an outrage that was turned towards me because of my beliefs.

How is it that some societies value some that others eat? In America dogs and cats, and pot belly pigs are pets, yet in some Asian countries dogs, cats and pot belly pigs are eaten. In America cows are eaten while in India cows are revered.

How do we decide this? So we criticize and have disdain for people that eat dogs and cats-because we value them in our society, at the same time sitting down and eating cows, pigs or chickens. There is a break in the system. All questions that I think we should be able to think through and reason.

Every day I go out of my way to make certain I am not stepping on ants, I move earthworms from sidewalks and streets and move them back to the earth, and I rush to gather wooley bears off of the street so they aren't hit. I smile with every single one I save. A turtle crossing a road I will grab and move to the water, and anything injured on the side of the road I help. What can possibly be wrong with that? I often think that if everyone would extend that courtesy to all animals, how much happier the world would be. Spiders grow up in generations in my house and we admire them and their perfect works of art webs.

My call to action? Spend a moment admiring nature, hug a cow or a pig, save an animal from a local shelter. Move an earth worm off the sidewalk, catch the bee in your house and move him outside. These simple things make a huge *huge* difference in their lives. Respect for all beings should be deserved. Look at their world through their eyes, and not your own. Study their behavior. You just might be surprised by the truth and find a whole new world unfolding. Maybe, just maybe, if you look, you too can find beauty in everything.



Photograph by Katie Costello.

Barry Delaney is inspired by the colour, energy and DIY attitude of punk. He fled the grey Dublin of the early 80s, to travel the world and fell in love with film photography. Eked a living doing various manual and technical jobs. Twenty years later, Barry began taking pictures again. It started on the streets of Dublin, his home town, and moved on to other parts of Ireland and across the sea to America. In 2008, Barry won the TG4 Irish photographer of the 21st Century. Barry has had 4 solo exhibitions in Dublin. Last year he completed a retrospective of his inner city Dublin work in the historic GPO, Dublin. along with his debut *Dublin book* - *Stars and Souls of the Liffey* - he hopes to release his next book *Americans Anonymous* next year.

BARRY DELANEY

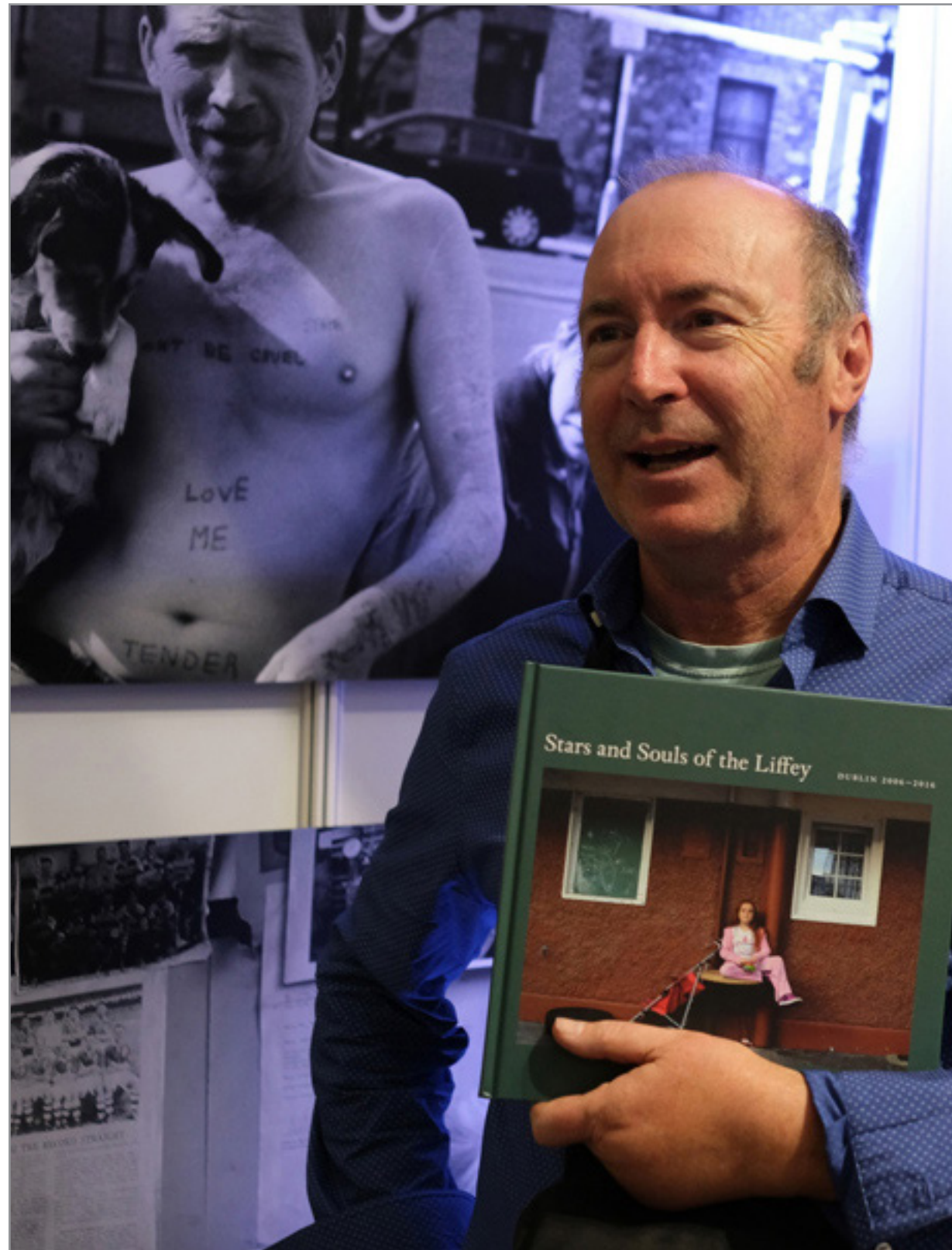
NEW YORK CITY

I moved to New York in the early 80's, my Grandmother gave me a Minolta camera before departure, and it was there that I became a photographer.

My stay in NYC was brief and life defining, New York gobbled me up and I left Port Authority on a Greyhound bus two months later beaten, wounded and penniless. But I experienced life, and grew up in that 2 months and became the 20 year old man, I actually was, and a photographer.

It was a different city to today, the Avenues, the Subway and Times Square were not yet gentrified, yet each time I return I still get that thrill when I see the New York skyline, back then it was like arriving on the set of Taxi Driver, my stomach still churns with excitement and dark memories when I see it. My last trip over was for the 2016 election, I could smell something was happening, but when I arrived in Times Square on November 9 (my birthday) something unthinkable was happening, Donald Trump was actually winning, and then he did. The city literally went into a 2 day depression, I travelled around dazed and photographed, then hopped a midnight bus from Port Authority (again) re-tracing the journeys from my youth, into the Rust Belt - Ohio / Pennsylvania deep into the Appalachian mountains to see how and why this had happened. Twice, the bus itself broke down and I over-nighted deep in Appalachian country. It was ther I got to understand the Why, this was broken America, crippled by unemployment, despair and opiates. The photographs from this journey will be put together into my next book - *Americans Anonymous* - coming soon.

These are the images from what I saw on the New York leg of this trip.



Barry Delaney



01.



© BARRY DELANEY



© BARRY DELANEY



05.



© BARRY DELANEY



© BARRY DELANEY



© BARRY DELANEY

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.



FACES

ARTWORK BY

WOLFGANG WIDMOSER

I have known Wolf (as he is affectionately called) for nigh sixteen years.
His art has moved from form and mesmerising colour palettes
to the occupation of a spiritual space that ensnares the viewer
into Wolf's own time zone.

The following artworks confront us with our *other* selves,
in a manner of speaking,
and questions the basis of our perception of faces...
faces that we, perhaps, encounter every day, without seeing...
a reminder that we are children of the stars
searching for our origins in each other.

- Mark Ulyseas

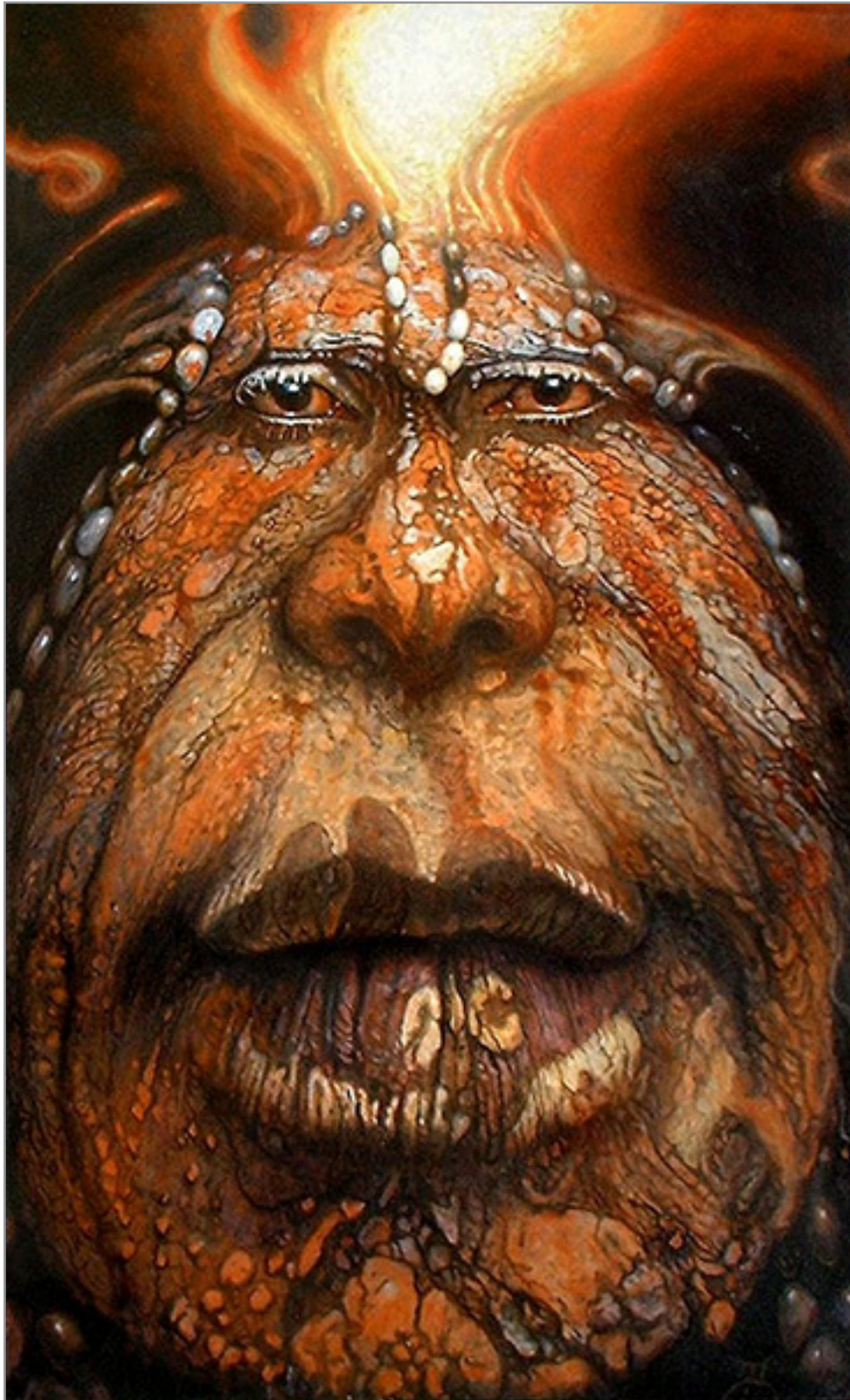
Wolfgang Widmoser



Plato - oil on canvas 112 x 180 cm



Red eyes - oil on canvas 112 x 180 cm



Fire and earth - oil on canvas - 112 x 180 cm



Nero - oil on canvas - 112 x 180 cm



Chief - oil on canvas - 180 x 112 cm (collection Fabio Delisi)



Warrior - oil on canvas - 160 x 100 cm



The shaman - oil on canvas - 160 x 100 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 7 years ago I started my own small photography studio business with a small team named *Flashback - The Memory Makers*. [FACE BOOK PAGE](#)



SOURAV JOURDAR KĀŚĪ

*Photographs of the ancient Hindu city
founded by Lord Shiva.*

These photographs of this ancient city reflects the deep religiosity of the Hindu devotees, the acceptance of light and dark, life and death, and the ongoing conversation with the Gods.

Kāśī, the name originates from the Vedas, is also known as Benares or Varanasi. It is the holiest of seven sacred cities in Hinduism and Jainism. Lord Buddha is believed to have founded Buddhism here around 528 BCE when he gave his first sermon, *The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma*.

The celebrated Chinese traveller Xuanzang, also known as Hiuen Tsiang, who visited the city around 635 CE, attested that the city was a centre of religious and artistic activities.



© SOURAV JOURDAR





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© SOURAV JOURDAR





© SOURAV JOURDAR







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 photo-grapher. 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*). In August 2020 the fourth publication, *Live Encounters Books*, was launched. He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 200 publications (till December 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*. <https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/> <https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/e/B01FUUQVBG>



MARK ULYSEAS

2020

YEAR OF LIVING FOOLISHLY, AGAIN?

This essay was written and published in 2008. Since then I have updated it every year. Except for a few lines here and there the basic essay has remained in its original form. It is a reminder to us that the inhumanity of humanity has not changed. In fact it appears to be growing in intensity.

This year is grinding to a close, so what will it be in 2021?

More wars for religious or commercial purposes or perceived historical lands?

Cultural genocide... like the deconstruction of indigenous cultures for homogenisation by a godless State?

Child abuse?

Human slavery?

Beheadings of teachers for expressing freedom of speech?

Another Mass Extinction, perhaps humanity?

More insidious revelations that expose the all-pervasive criminality of governments, international politics and sections of the Media?

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

What happened to the good old days when we used a blanket instead of a heater? All this talk of saving the world is pointless. Everything is done half-heartedly. Let's make a resolution for the New Year to decimate the planet. Destroy all our natural resources, pollute the rivers and farm the seas to extinction. At least we would be doing one thing properly.

Is the UN still a coffee shop for the rich and powerful to hang out and where honour exists among thieves?

And are the medusa-like social media barons new lords of the manor? Do they control our hearts and minds and our freedom of speech? And is this the age of *artificial* intelligence?

And is tourism fast becoming *online* voyeurism?

And is *woke liberalism* the bastard offspring of fascism?

And has *exceptionalism* become a fundamental right?

There is so much to choose from. It's like a supermarket out there with all kinds of man-made disasters available on the shelves, one has simply to reach out and grab one. 2020 is ending on a note of negotiated delusions with the Climate Change Conference. What happened to the good old days when we used a blanket instead of a heater? All this talk of saving the world is pointless. Everything is done half-heartedly. Let's make a resolution for the New Year to decimate the planet. Destroy all our natural resources, pollute the rivers and farm the seas to extinction. At least we would be doing one thing properly.

On one hand we talk of peace, love and no war. On the other hand we bomb, rape, pillage, annex and subdue nations with money, military power and retarded religiosity.

For instance, let's take a quick look at Afghanistan. The British couldn't control the tribes in the 19th century, the Russians failed miserably and the Americans with their assorted comrades in arms, poor souls, are being killed along with thousands of faceless unarmed Afghan civilians. I suppose life is cheaper by the dozen. Hasn't anyone got a clue as to what the Afghans want?

What about certain parts of the Middle East, areas that have become mass open air abattoirs for the mindless slaughter of innocent people? Do you think they will run out of people considering the number of killings that are taking place? Education there is history – like the death of a six year old killed by a bullet deliberately fired at close range. It stems from the barrel of a gun. The pen is for signing death certificates.

And is tourism fast becoming online voyeurism?
And is woke liberalism the bastard offspring of fascism?
And has exceptionalism become a fundamental right?

Statistics are essential in war zones. They can always be rearranged to suit one's perceived objectives. The little numbers represent people; mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, relatives and friends. A neat way to manage these numbers is to write in pencil so that an eraser can be used judiciously. And as the death toll in war ravaged countries rises, a hysterical caucus threatens a host of other countries for deviating from the 'acceptable norms of international behaviour' like illegally invading countries on trumped up charges and bombing innocent folk back to the stone age...like former colonial masters in their dying throes.

And are these the same countries that accuse China of ruthlessly dismantling the vibrant ancient Uighur culture, brainwashing and incarcerating the Uighurs in *re-education* camps whilst the Islamic countries appear *deaf, blind and dumb* to the slaughter of their fellow brethren?

And is Tibet now lost forever in the dragon's jaws?

This dragon has unleashed a terrible virus (a natural phenomenon?) on the world, killing hundreds of thousands, shutting down tourism and all but destroying economies. Meanwhile it has quickly recovered from the scourge and is now selling merchandise in the millions across the world. Is this the soul of *Profit & Loss*?

Africa, the Dark Continent, what can one say about its peoples and their ancient civilizations that have slowly been corrupted by large corporations and foreign governments meddling in the affairs of the states: Buying and selling governments on mammoth proportions? Oh for the days of the Rwandan blood bath. Everything is quiet now, no excitement and drama except for bloody popular uprisings, theft of natural resources and other inconsequential happenings like the sudden spread of highly infectious diseases and mass kidnapping of school children for forced marriage and conversion...and the continuing practice of female genital mutilation, which appears to be a thriving business across the world where doting parents in western countries take their little girls on 'vacation' cuts while their governments lecture Africans on the scourge of female genital mutilation.

What about the sub-continent, India? Do they still abort female fetuses or do they bury them alive, now? Burn women who don't bring enough dowry? Is rape intrinsic to the male mindset? Do they continue to decimate wildlife? Persevere in the destruction of the environment? And do millions still exist on the threshold of life and death? And is the arrogant Indian Middle Class growing to newer levels self-indulgence?

The Japanese and an assortment of other ‘civilised’ countries, Norway in particular, are so considerate to the world at large. For countries that pride themselves on rejecting nuclear weapons they have a rather odd way of showing their respect for the environment. I am referring to the mass killing of whales, dolphins and other sea creatures on an industrial scale. Actually you must admire their concern. Ever considered the fact that they maybe ridding the oceans of monsters that take up so much space and are a serious health hazard to humanity? However, will the planned dumping of radioactive waste into the ocean by Japan be its main contribution to preserving the environment in 2020?

And is protection of the holy cow more important than feeding hundreds of millions of people living below the poverty line? And are politicians continuing to feed off the socio-economic-religious insecurities of its people? And are sections of its media turning into manic performing artists, deliberately taking sides in political dramas and *creating news* for ratings?

Forgive me... I missed that little country to the west of India, the homeland of terrorists and an illicit nuclear arsenal – Pakistan, an army that has a country. Poor chaps they’ve had such a tiresome year with the constant ebb and flow of political violence and religious fundamentalism peppered with suicide bombers that probably the common folk want to migrate to the West... can’t really blame them. Their new government is its armed forces’ ventriloquist doll. The common folks’ only desire is to live in peace to pray, work and procreate. Meanwhile their government has switched debtors from the West to China that in turn commercially colonised this country bleeding it by a thousand loans.

Now let’s see who is left on the black board? Hmmm...the indigenous people of the Amazon are still fighting a losing battle with the powers that be to stop the plunder of their home, the rain forest, the green lung of mother earth, which is on fire. South America appears to be lost in translation. We never seem to get a lot of news from there except for soccer, drug lords, plunder of the marine world and the continued exploitation of the poor and defenceless by rapacious governments sponsored by those from the North and elsewhere. It has become the battle ground of powerful countries that use the common folk as cannon fodder.

Let’s leave all this violence for some tuna, shark fin, whale, and dolphin meat. The Japanese and an assortment of other ‘civilised’ countries, Norway in particular, are so considerate to the world at large. For countries that pride themselves on rejecting nuclear weapons they have a rather odd way of showing their respect for the environment. I am referring to the mass killing of whales, dolphins and other sea creatures on an industrial scale. Actually you must admire their concern. Ever considered the fact that they maybe ridding the oceans of monsters that take up so much space and are a serious health hazard to humanity? However, will the planned dumping of radioactive waste into the ocean by Japan be its main contribution to preserving the environment in 2020?

I think Japan’s neighbour China has the right approach. It has dispensed with the cumbersome concept of human rights and its implementation. In its place totalitarianism with a large dose of plutocracy has been suitably installed. It uses its neighbour, a mini nuclear state, as a stick to threaten countries in the region.



West Bali National Park (Taman Nasional Bali Barat), photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

As 2020 downs its shutters the price of a human body has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world, including in the civilised nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2021, thanks to continuing war, growing poverty and disease.

There are many countries that lecture China on its human rights. Wonder who has a perfect track record...The world's last self-proclaimed superpower? A super power that continues to interfere in the affairs of other nations by supplying state of the art weapons that are often used against civilians living a hand to mouth existence? I suppose the term 'collateral damage' is more palatable than the word... murder. There is a killing to be made on the sale of armaments but little or no desire to urgently help its own people devastated by natural disasters like massive fires and super storms and joblessness and crumbling infrastructure.

Civil liberties are essential for the survival of a nation and so is the health of its people. In some areas of society where common sense has been the victim, Nature has found a way of retaliating with diseases like Ebola, AIDS, Swine Flu and Zika, infecting millions and helping to keep the population in check: Of course, with a little assistance from humankind's scientific community who often test drugs on unsuspecting illiterate folk, in the holy name of finding new cures, while making a profit.

But Nature has a conscience. It has distanced itself from the prevailing pestilence, COVID-19... a deadly virus that originated from the den of the dragon...a Biblical-like plague not from God, but from the godless.

Meanwhile, humanity is susceptible to dangerous new strains of super bacteria resistant to antibiotics.

As 2020 downs its shutters the price of a human body has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world, including in the civilised nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2021, thanks to continuing war, growing poverty and disease.

And once again, as we have done in the past, this Christmas and New Year we shall all sit down to sumptuous meals, drink whatever fancies our taste buds, shop till we drop and pamper our overweight children and pets. It's the season of happiness, love and family especially for the homeless, injured and maimed children of wars, missing people in Afghanistan, Syria, Xinjiang (Uighur), Tibet, Yemen, Hong Kong and elsewhere, asylum seekers, political detainees and the fringe folk of the planet. They will surely be very happy and content with what they see, hear, feel and touch this festive season.

From genocide to environmental disasters to a devastating infectious virus it has been a roller coaster ride through many countries and peoples and cultures and religions. This journey will end only when we truly comprehend the reason as to why we have been put on this planet by a power far greater than we can ever imagine.

Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you.

2010 - 2020

11
YEARS

Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
VOLUME ONE DECEMBER 2020



COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER