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The background of the cover is a surreal landscape. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured rock formation rises from a desert floor. On top of this rock sits a large, glowing blue liquid droplet that has just hit the surface, creating a complex, multi-lobed shape. The droplet's surface is highly reflective, showing highlights and shadows. In the background, rolling sand dunes and rocky hills stretch towards a horizon under a clear blue sky. The overall color palette is dominated by the blue of the droplet, the tan of the desert, and the dark tones of the rock.

DR NAMRATA GOSWAMI
Emerging Technology Challenges

COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

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Phra Phuttha Maha Suwanra Patimakon, Golden Buddha, Wat Po, Bangkok.
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As 2021 downs its shutters the price of human body parts has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world (transplant tourism), including the civilised nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2022, thanks to continuing war, growing poverty, disease and transmigration of people (illegal migrants?).

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.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

– Mark Ulyseas, *2021 Year of Living Foolishly, Once Again?*

CONTRIBUTORS

DR NAMRATA GOSWAMI - GUEST EDITORIAL

MARK ULYSEAS

DAVID MORGAN

ASST PROF ANANDITA PAN

SWATI JENA / T.N.HARI

JILL GOCHER

GUNJAN VEDA

DR NITU KUMARI

STEVE DESMOND

Dr. Namrata Goswami is an independent scholar on space policy and Great Power Politics. Recently, she has been invited to teach at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, Arizona State University for their Executive Masters in Global Management, Space course. She is a consultant for [Space Fund Intelligence](#). She was subject matter expert in international affairs with Futures Laboratory, Alabama and guest lecturer, India Today Class, Emory University. She worked as [Research Fellow](#) at MP-Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi; a [visiting Fellow](#) at Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Norway; La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia; [University of Heidelberg](#), Germany; Jennings-Randolph Senior Fellow, United States Institute of Peace; and was a Fulbright Senior Fellowship Awardee. She was awarded the Minerva grant by the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense to study great power competition in outer space. In April 2019, Dr. Goswami [testified](#) before the U.S-China Economic and Security Review Commission on China's space program. Her co-authored book, *Scramble for the Skies: The Great Power Competition to Control the Resources of Outer Space* was published in 2020 by Lexington Press; Rowman and Littlefield. Her book on *The Naga Ethnic Movement for a Separate Homeland* was published 2020 by Oxford University Press.



DR NAMRATA GOSWAMI

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR USE BY TERRORIST GROUPS

Terrorism is the use of tactical means (violence) for strategic end goals, usually political in nature. The end goals vary, from regime change, policy change, territorial change, social control of the population to status quo maintenance. The effect that terrorist groups aim to achieve for political purposes is targeting the civilian population of a state with violence to create fear, and question the monopoly of legitimate organized state violence. Means like Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, ambushes, attacking hotels and civilian population centers (malls), kidnapping for extortion, and showcasing presence through such acts, is part of terrorist strategy. With the emergence of certain technologies and their future potential, the ability of terrorists to engage in violent destruction could only get more lethal, unless counter measures are set in place in anticipation of such security threats. Emerging technologies are those technologies that are in the process of being developed, are not widely available, but with the potential to become widely available, and consequently change and impact decision making, commercial markets, military tactics, and strategic thinking.

Emerging technologies are characterized by “radical novelty, fast growth, coherence, prominent impact, uncertainty and ambiguity”¹

They can have both positive and negative impacts. Automated drones, for example, can be utilized to deliver much needed necessities in remote areas not connected by roads but could also be utilized by a terrorist group to target someone.

Dr Namrata Goswami



Taliban release drone footage of Afghan suicide attack – Oct 22, 2016



Yemen's Houthi rebels have recently started using drones in their attacks on Saudi Arabia [Stepane Kalin/AP]. Al Jazeera 14 Sep 2019.

It is in this regard that this article identifies some of the key emerging technologies that could be utilized by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the newly reconstituted Taliban in Afghanistan. ISIS regional affiliates in Afghanistan, Africa and Southeast Asia could resort to buying and utilizing such technologies on the dark web with devastating effects. The six emerging technologies that I highlight includes automated drones; Artificial Intelligence (AI); outer space; biotechnology; deepfakes and cryptocurrency. Terrorist groups have already utilized all of them in their elemental form today but as the technology gets cheaper, better and more widely available, the potential for harm to civilian population could increase. States that suffer from terrorism need to anticipate these changes and prepare today. The article offers certain recommendations towards the end on how to deal with this emerging scenario.

1. Drone Technology

Automated drones have both civil and military operational value. Predator drones have played a key role in U.S. counter terror efforts, both as combat weapons and for gathering Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR).² With the cost of off the shelf drones getting cheaper and becoming widely available in the global commercial market, terrorist groups have utilized drones for propaganda purposes, ISR and combat operations. Examples include the first use of drones in a combat capacity by ISIS in 2016 when it used a drone to target and kill two Peshmerga soldiers and injure French military personnel that were working with them in counter ISIS operations.³ In 2017, ISIS established a unit they called the “Unmanned Aircraft of the Mujahideen”.⁴

Interestingly for ISIS, the usage of drones performed propaganda, showcasing presence, and combat roles. Drones were utilized in ISIS propaganda as showcasing their ability to question the aerial sovereignty of a state by easily violating air space, for filming ISIS military training and suicide bombings, and for targeting counter terror forces. As per the Transcultural Conflict and Violence Initiative at Georgia State University,⁵ data collected from ISIS Telegram chats between October 9, 2016 and December 30, 2018 revealed 19, 749 images of which 524 images showcased drone activities.⁶ The Taliban uses off the shelf Chinese made commercially available Phantom drones made by Dajiang Innovations Science and Technology. Taliban utilized a drone to film a suicide bombing in Helmand province in 2016 with a suicide bomber driving a Humvee into a police base.

The suicide bomber is filmed stating before the attack, “This is the happiest moment of my life. I am telling the Afghan stooge forces to repent and join the Taliban or we will use this equipment the foreigners gave them, against them and they can’t do anything about it.”⁷

According to Zabihullah Mujahid, the current spokesperson for the Taliban, in an interview to the Diplomat (2016), “the attack in Nawa was just one example. We have used it in other operations. We use this technology against the Americans and their servants in Afghanistan.”⁸ One of the other use of drones is Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs). In this, a drone can be equipped with VBIEDs, GPS enabled and automated, and cause damage on its target hundreds of miles away. Such an instance occurred in 2019 when 25 drones attacked two Aramco (Saudi Arabia) oil facilities, Abqaiq and Khurais, taking out 5.7 million barrels of crude per day. Abqaiq is the world’s largest producer of crude oil.⁹

The U.S., Europe and Saudi Arabia indicated that Iran was behind the attack from assessing the direction the drones traversed from (north) and not from the Saudi-Yemen border in the South.¹⁰ The Houthis of Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack and had earlier used drones to target rivals within Yemen.¹¹ Iran denied responsibility, with the United Nations stating that it was unable to independently corroborate that missiles and drones used in attacks on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019 are of Iranian origin showcasing the difficulty of attribution due to the distance between perpetrators and the drones, creating ambiguity.¹²

In 2018, a Syrian rebel group utilized 10 drones laden with explosive devices that descended on Russia’s largest airbase in Syria, Hmeimim and three other drones targeted Russian Naval CSS point in the nearby city of Tartu. While Russia’s anti-aircraft missiles shot down six drones, seven were brought down by disabling their GPS.¹³ On October 24, 2017, ISIS used drones to drop two IEDs on a Syrian army ammunition depot in Der ez-Zor Stadium destroying it.¹⁴ As on date, armed groups with a drone program (sustained use) are ISIS, Hezbollah, Hamas, Taliban, and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. Amongst those who have utilized drones for combat are the Houthis, ISIS and Hezbollah. The propensity of future use by terrorists of automated drones with GPS and software with facial recognition embedded, targeting specific individuals/groups is a growing likelihood. This brings me to the second technology that works as a force multiplier for drone technology.

2. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Encyclopedia Britannica defines AI as “the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings. The term is frequently applied to the project of developing systems endowed with the intellectual processes characteristic of humans, such as the ability to reason, discover meaning, generalize, or learn from past experience.”¹⁵

While the date for human level general intelligence or super intelligence when AI overtakes humans in computing capability to be realized, is forecasted to be around 2075,¹⁶ elemental AI is here, meaning the ability to equip drones with elemental AI like GPS guidance, and the ability to target individuals with software based facial recognition. A scenario that counter terrorism analysts worry about is the future ability of a swarm of drones (quadcopters) equipped with facial recognition targeting specific individuals. Terrorist groups can utilize such technology to cause civilian damage, and can create enough distance between the drones enabled by AI and the terrorist perpetrators to create challenges for counter terrorism operations. A video titled *Slaughter Bots*, highlight the ability of a swarm of drones engaged in targeted killings with software that enable them to communicate with each other turning them into ‘killer robots’.¹⁷ Drones enabled by AIs are of interest to terrorist groups because of their minimal costs, commercial availability, to conduct coordinated attacks, maintain distance of perpetrator from weapons systems both in time and location, and with the likelihood of creating more damage.

The future concern with killer robots is that these robots enabled with superior AI software can decide to choose targets to kill without any human intervention and can maneuver. Low flying drones can be hard to detect by a radar. According to Jacob Ware, “the lethal autonomous weapon has been called the “third revolution in warfare,” following gunpowder and nuclear weapons, and is expected to reinvent conflict, not least terrorist tactics.”¹⁸ The United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism and United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute in its report, “Algorithms and Terrorism: The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence for Terrorist Purposes” issued in 2021, stated that “although terrorist organizations have, to a certain degree, traditionally tended to employ various forms of “low-tech terrorism” such as firearms, blades and vehicles, terrorism itself is not a stagnant threat. As soon as AI becomes more widespread, the barriers to entry will be lowered by reducing the skills and technical expertise needed to employ it.”¹⁹



Collage by Mark Ulyseas.

Space terrorism is another future area of concern where terrorist groups can interfere with space assets given their growing role in supporting both civilian and military infrastructure. Techniques used could be jamming of signals, disruption, and diverting signals for terrorist propaganda as was conducted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) when it hijacked Intelsat 12 satellite owned by the Intelsat Ltd in Geosynchronous Orbit to beam their propaganda across the Indian subcontinent. What was astounding in this case was the LTTE's ability to override Intelsat Ltd efforts to disrupt this hijacking for two continuous years.

3. Commercial Space Imagery and Space Terrorism

Commercial space imagery including Google Earth and those available for a price in the open market can be utilized by terrorist groups for ISR. Such imagery of military bases, adversary troop deployment, roads, mountains and urban spaces have been utilized by terrorist groups to plot their attacks. In 2019, Google Earth accidentally revealed Taiwan's sensitive military bases including those that housed the U.S. patriot missile through 3D enabled images. What was visible in these new maps was Taiwan's National Security Bureau, the Military Intelligence Bureau, and a secret Patriot missile base creating a scramble to remove those images.²⁰

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4. Bioterrorism

Bio terrorism is the intentional release of biological agents like viruses, bacteria, and other germs to cause deaths and widespread panic. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a classification system of the biological agents that can be utilized in a terror attack that includes small pox, anthrax, equine, Q fever, typhus, botulinum toxin, plague, Marburg. Factors like infectivity, large scale production, and disease severity were utilized to create this classification.²⁴

Terrorist groups can infiltrate societies especially through social media to create fake news, websites, social media accounts that deliberately aims to spread disinformation, fear and chaos. They can create fake visual propaganda showcasing recruitment, training, and lethal weapon possession all enabled by AI. The video on Tom Cruise, a fake video of the actor enabled by elementary AI is scary due to its realism. Terrorists can create online fake profiles, extort money, raise money, spread malicious content, develop recruitment videos, disrupt law enforcement, by utilizing deepfakes as part of their repertoire.

In the U.S., there were anthrax attacks after 9/11 sent via U.S. mail, similar to the mail bombs that Ted Kaczynski (codenamed Unabomber by the FBI) sent between 1978-1995.²⁵ The future potential of terrorist groups releasing biological agents to cause terror amidst targeted audience is an emerging technology that needs to be of strategic concern.

4. Deepfakes

James Andrew Lewis defines deepfakes as “nearly seamless video and audio forgeries produced by artificial intelligence programs that yield seemingly realistic but fabricated images and sounds that portray people doing and saying things that never happened. Deepfake technology produces forgeries that are very difficult to detect, using software tools to create forgeries using existing images and videos that mimic the target's facial expressions, movements, and the intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm of their speech in ways that are indistinguishable from real images and recordings.”²⁶ Terrorist groups can infiltrate societies especially through social media to create fake news, websites, social media accounts that deliberately aims to spread disinformation, fear and chaos. They can create fake visual propaganda showcasing recruitment, training, and lethal weapon possession all enabled by AI.²⁷ The video on Tom Cruise, a fake video of the actor enabled by elementary AI is scary due to its realism.²⁸ Terrorists can create online fake profiles, extort money, raise money, spread malicious content, develop recruitment videos, disrupt law enforcement, by utilizing deepfakes as part of their repertoire.

5. Crypto Currency

Merriam Webster defines crypto currency as “any form of currency that only exists digitally, that usually has no central issuing or regulating authority but instead uses a decentralized system to record transactions and manage the issuance of new units, and that relies on cryptography to prevent counterfeiting and fraudulent transactions.”²⁹ Satoshi Nakamoto described cryptocurrency as “an electronic payment system based on cryptographic proof instead of trust.”³⁰ Due to its anonymity, difficulty in tracing online transactions, decentralized nature, and inconsistent regulations, terrorist groups are utilizing cryptocurrency to sell drugs, buy weapons, in the dark web. A book titled “Bitcoin wa Sadaqat al Jihad” offers instructions on how to transfer Bitcoins from North America and Europe to terrorist groups.³¹

Indonesian ISIS affiliated terrorist leader³² Bahrn Naim utilized Bitcoins to fund terrorist activities. While cryptocurrency has not emerged as the main channel for terrorist financing, its use by groups like Hezbollah, Al Qaeda and ISIS have been documented since 2014. Similar to social media usage, its utility as a source of terrorist financing has been highlighted by the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism.³³

Recommendations to deal with this future

Given the potential for the use of emerging technologies like AI, drone technology, space imagery, bioagents, cryptocurrency, deepfakes, there are certain early adopters that can play a critical role in countering these threats. Counter drone surveillance, though costly, is useful in this scenario. In the scenario of an attack, an electronic drone gun can be utilized. The best way to counter deepfakes enhanced with AI technology is to develop adversarial machine learning, through which a software program can analyze and finetune algorithmic concepts to human level data sets, and coded by humans, thereby increasing its ability to recognize deep fakes created by AI.

Regulation of cryptocurrency by states, creating units that develop this expertise, and making it difficult for terrorist groups to easily exchange cryptocurrency into hard currency can be effective counter measures but the problem still remains of its usage in the dark web, which is difficult to trace on a real-time basis.

Ultimately, the usage of weaponized drones enhanced by super intelligence could be stigmatized, if not entirely banned (because that is unlikely), resulting in terrorist groups avoiding its usage similar to limited use of biological and chemical weapons by terrorist groups given the widespread stigma associated with it.³⁴ We are still in deep waters without clear navigation tools with regard to the impact of some of these emerging technologies but it is time to start building those rudimentary tools to avert a future where the negative impact of emerging technologies outweighs their positive ones.



Collage by Mark Ulyseas.



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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'* 232 publications (till December 2021). 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

2021

THE YEAR OF LIVING FOOLISHLY, ONCE 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 2022?

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?

Theft of human organs?

Beheadings of teachers for expressing freedom of speech?

More public stabbings?

Another Mass Extinction in the making, perhaps humanity, by a rampant virus that continues to shut down parts of the world?



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Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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, were being killed along with thousands of faceless unarmed Afghan civilians. I suppose life is cheaper by the dozen. After a two-decade war the invaders have left the country in the hands of the great unwashed. Afghan women are now at the mercy of these pathological misogynistic aberrations of humanity. Will the ordinary Afghan civilians ever get to live in peace?

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

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 *social* media now the domain of roaming viral vitriolic mindsets looking for any *cause*?

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. 2021 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, were being killed along with thousands of faceless unarmed Afghan civilians. I suppose life is cheaper by the dozen. After a two-decade war the invaders have left the country in the hands of the great unwashed. Afghan women are now at the mercy of these pathological misogynistic aberrations of humanity. Will the ordinary Afghan civilians ever get to live in peace?



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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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.

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 death 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 millions, 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* - where people continue to get poorer while the rich get richer?

And has this virus given governments across the world another reason to muzzle inconvenient citizens and to seek more measures to *control* them?

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.

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 2021?

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?

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 2021?

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 economic power and loan shark activities to threaten countries that do not kowtow its line.

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 and other living beings, 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 2021 downs its shutters the price of human body parts has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world (transplant tourism), including the civilised nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2022, thanks to continuing war, growing poverty, disease and transmigration of people (illegal migrants?).

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.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om



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David Morgan is the author of *The Good Old Cause – Communist Intellectuals and the English Radical Tradition*, published in September 2020 by the Socialist History Society, of which he is the secretary. David is a journalist and editor who is interested in exploring the connections between literature and history. David is co-author of the recently published, *Writers of the Left in an Age of Extremes*.



David Morgan writes on culture wars and the war for survival.

DAVID MORGAN NAVIGATING A WAY OUT OF THE QUAGMIRE

With tragic irony, whose end result could be fatal for the entire human race and the existence of all living creatures on earth, the presentation to the public of a genuine transformative vision of the future is no longer being offered to them at elections by most mainstream political parties. The progressive political left, to whom people all over the world traditionally tended to turn in order to realise their hopes and demands for freedom, justice and equality, has long given up on the fight for the dream of a socialist future. Utopia has been erased from the map and deleted from political programmes. So, just at the very moment when the world needs it most urgently, the possibility of achieving social change has been withdrawn as a serious option. Modern politics has become concerned with managing public expectations and geared towards minimising the possibilities of disruptive social change. Politicians pursue policies designed to preserve the privileges of the elite. Elections cannot be permitted to upset the apple cart and threaten these privileges. In its responses to the climate crisis, mainstream politics is found to be utterly inadequate, without passion or purpose and with no real programme of action that anywhere near rises to the challenge.

The public, bereft of inspirational leaders, have been left to make sense of the world themselves and increasingly sought to organise at the grassroots level. This process has led to a dangerous disconnect between the professional political class and the public which has exacerbated the disrespect for politicians and led to a growing disgust with mainstream politics.

David Morgan

The debates around the COP26 Summit in Glasgow have focused public attention on the acute existential threat posed by climate change and forced us to become more aware of the utter inadequacy of our collective responses to date. The solutions agreed in Glasgow have not instilled confidence. Viewed in the cold light of day, the package agreed seems woefully inadequate. Corporate lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry and blinkered national vested interests appear to have won the day at least for the moment.

Though mass campaigns are encouraging as they indicate that people are deeply concerned about their communities and determined to save their world, grassroots initiatives and ad hoc social movements have limitations in what they can achieve in terms of effecting lasting social change. They are no substitute for political actions taken by national governments and at the international level. Decisions taken at international summits, within the boardroom and around the cabinet table are where the real power resides. These are the places where the voice of the people should be heard but their demands are not represented.

As if they cannot bear to look at what is happening around them, people are retreating into trivia as the world collapses about their ears. The debates around the COP26 Summit in Glasgow have focused public attention on the acute existential threat posed by climate change and forced us to become more aware of the utter inadequacy of our collective responses to date. The solutions agreed in Glasgow have not instilled confidence. Viewed in the cold light of day, the package agreed seems woefully inadequate. Corporate lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry and blinkered national vested interests appear to have won the day at least for the moment.

It is estimated that if all the pledges made by the various countries or “parties” at the UN conference were to be implemented successfully the world would still fall far short of hitting the 1.5C level set by most scientists as the essential target to avert the global warming catastrophe that threatens life for millions of people on earth. In fact, full implementation of the pledges agreed upon would see the world’s temperatures warming at between 1.8C or even 2.4C with disastrous consequences for millions of people, the extinction of entire nations and species. Thus, the outcome of the conference can hardly be judged a success. Conference organisers and much of the media commentaries have set out to mislead the public about the outcome, aware that the implications of failure are simply too hard to contemplate. Serious social unrest might eventually ensue if the belief spreads among the public that their world leaders have failed to live up to the climate challenge.

Even if the commitments were all fully honoured, that would still fall well short of what is required. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that there will be this full implementation without an effective mechanism for verification and monitoring and with the power to impose penalties for any back-sliding. There is simply no international authority in existence that can exert control or one that will be established and be endowed with these God-like powers.



Activists take part in a protest during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), in Glasgow, Scotland, Britain, November 8, 2021. (Reuters)



A general social malaise caused by addiction to social media with countless of our precious hours squandered online is contributing to a broader desensitisation that shapes the modern consciousness. Humanity appears to have entered into a new age of anxiety which is evident in social trends which show more people desperately grasping at bizarre conspiracy theories, retreating into arcane cults and displaying irrational behaviour; individual activities that are signs of a society in deep trouble and where displacement is becoming ever more prevalent.

Governments of the nation states who comprise the United Nations just have too much at stake and are unwilling to relinquish their national political rights. Moreover, the dominant mindset of the ruling elite seems unable to rise to the challenge that humanity is currently facing. The remedies proposed are those that will be profitable to business interests when it is actually the untrammelled industrial activities over previous decades that have done the damage in the first place. They view the success of sustainable solutions as achievable by effective branding and rebranding. They place the onus on the individual rather than on a systemic change, thinking that advertising campaigns urging consumers to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles will convince enough people that this is sufficient action to save us all from disaster.

But the global challenges are so hugely difficult for the ordinary intelligent person with a modicum of education to comprehend that the required solutions seem utterly beyond our grasp or imaginations. It is therefore far easier not to think about the consequences of where we are heading and to seek solace in fantasy worlds, which appears to be the preferred option taken by many people who are facilitated in this endeavour by the rapid and extraordinary advances in communications technology over recent years. The seductive power of the internet lies in the fact that it offers everything our hearts desire at the click of a switch. Users spend the bulk of their waking hours on their smart phones, texting, sharing photos on social media, commenting on other people's posts, browsing, surfing, obsessively following the glamorous lives of their chosen celebrities and playing computer games. Meanwhile, the real world outside, which is more hostile and difficult for us to control, is pushed from our view. But the hard truth, of course, is that these online fantasy worlds are no substitute for the real thing. People know this to be the case, but they feel a need to escape into their dreams rather than square up to the nightmare reality. Social media is actually quite anti-social as it stops genuine social interaction. Individuals are less likely to engage in proper conversation if their eyes are fixated on their small screens, dazzled like the proverbial rabbit staring into the headlights of an oncoming vehicle.

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Photograph: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/social-media-media-board-networking-1989152/>

Public institutions are implicated in the drive to censor and eliminate offensive artefacts and literary culture. Lists have been drawn up of apparently racist artists and writers whose family backgrounds are deemed to be tainted with slavery or profiting from slavery. Often the examples have been extremely tenuous, such as the case of the late poet laureate Ted Hughes, who has been added to a British Library dossier linking him to slavery and colonialism.

It is profoundly dismaying that despite the emergency brought about by the mess that advanced economies have made of the planet, putting human society and all animal life in jeopardy, contemporary political priorities are preoccupied with very personal issues related to questions of sexuality, race and gender. This rise of identity politics emerged coterminous with the rise of the post-war consumer society in the age of affluence in Western Europe and the United States; other regions have sought to emulate the example particularly in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism in East and Central Europe, which has also been accompanied by the decline in social democracy as a political force in the West. Identity politics and debates over advancing human rights have merged in issues of transgender rights and black people's representation which have come to dominate left-wing and liberal politics. It is ironic that even Green parties that were formed to develop practical policies to defend the environment have become increasingly immersed in debates over trans rights and racism. It goes without saying that all kinds of bigotry and prejudice need to be fiercely combated, but the amount of time spent on debating trans rights and anti-racism, as well as the amount of air-time and column inches in the press devoted to the same issues, is out of all proportion to the time given over to urgent existential questions that threaten the entire human race. A sense of proportion is definitely needed here. Modern parties of the left have sought to accommodate themselves to the most vociferous voices and small groups of activists can exert an undue influence.

Identity politics are an expression of a narcissistic culture where the individual is the supreme political category, seen as more important than either community, nation or class. The left once fought tooth and nail for internationalism and dreamt about transforming the entire world. Today, many political activists seem to see their main priorities as fighting for the rights of the tiniest minorities which they assume are being infringed. They push the issue of trans rights even though they might infringe the rights of others, such as women and children. Feminists, who were once the natural allies of the left, are now frequently branded as the enemy because they insist on defending the gains made by the women's movement and point out that women's rights might be put at risk by trans rights. The controversy raging over self-identity is a prime case in point. A politically aware person with a genuine international perspective could be forgiven for seeing the debate over self-identification as a self-indulgent luxury when set within the context of a world where millions of children daily go without food and where millions more still lack access to clean drinking water, despite those much talked about Millennium Development Goals. The retreat into identity politics is a symptom of a sick society, one that obsesses over questions of personal gratification at a time when the world is at an acute crisis point.

Identity politics equally encompasses questions of race and racism. While equal rights are essential for any decent society, the attempts to judge culture and redefine aspects of the past as racist can also be interpreted as symptoms of the modern sickness. Students now have few qualms about imposing censorship on their own professors if they find their arguments to be offensive. One example may suffice; a well-known British art critic, historian and popular presenter of television arts programmes, Andrew Graham-Dixon, was recently invited by the Cambridge Union to debate a motion, "there is no such thing as good taste". During the course of the discussion, he alluded to Adolf Hitler's Nazi policy of "degenerate art", which the student union decided was an anti-Semitic remark and moved to ban the speaker from ever speaking at the university again. Graham-Dixon was obliged to issue a humiliating public apology.

Universities are precisely the right and proper places for serious debates to be held even on the most controversial topics. The notion that professors and experts should be banned and censored simply for engaging in open debate is not only ludicrous; it is dangerous. If free speech cannot be preserved in the lecture rooms which are expressly designed to foster intellectual discussion, then society faces extremely serious problems indeed. It would be easily possible to compile numerous more cases of writers and academics who have been silenced and censored by angry students and hardened activists, such as Professor Kathleen Stock, a feminist philosopher, who was forced to resign from Sussex University after receiving death threats because of her position on transgender rights.

People need to show more humility and respect for one another's differences. Likewise, the present should not stand in judgment on the past. All generations throughout history have indeed sought to imprint their stamp on human culture and have attempted to remodel the future in their own image. The difference today however is that there appears to be a growing arrogance among members of the modern generation that leads them to neglect and disrespect the culture and heritage of earlier generations. They are too easily offended and seek to destroy and eliminate aspects of the culture that they dislike, or possibly don't understand.

Public institutions are implicated in the drive to censor and eliminate offensive artefacts and literary culture. Lists have been drawn up of apparently racist artists and writers whose family backgrounds are deemed to be tainted with slavery or profiting from slavery. Often the examples have been extremely tenuous, such as the case of the late poet laureate Ted Hughes, who has been added to a British Library dossier linking him to slavery and colonialism.

What does it say about the country's attitude to its cultural heritage when many people are more enthusiastic about pulling down monuments rather than preserving and protecting them? We need to learn from the past, not seek to displace it. Were this simply a question of old stones it should not preoccupy us for too much. However, the destruction and neglect raise critical questions of the nature of public memory and human sensibility.

Hughes, a Yorkshireman who came from quite humble origins, was found by the library's researchers to be a distant descendant of someone named Nicholas Ferrar who was involved in the slave trade some 300 years before Hughes was even born. That the poetry of Hughes, taught in schools and universities for decades and read by millions, should be tarnished by a supposed association with slavery because of activities that occurred some three centuries ago is absolutely absurd and moreover, it is deeply depressing because many potential readers will be put off from reading his poetry, much of which involve acute observations of nature and the environment; in fact, school children have been given an excuse for refusing to read his poetry. The British Library has done something quite wrong. Poetry reading should be more widely encouraged. The neglect of culture has a tremendous impact on public sensibility and on our consciousness. Reading poetry is good training for the mind and it deepens our awareness of the world around us and sharpens our responses to aspects of life and nature, for example. Poetry offers an antidote to careless thought and insensitivity, helping to create empathy for the suffering of others. Poetry encourages the reader to appreciate life, as critics such as F R Leavis would have insisted. The basic arguments in defence of poetry still stand. In this respect, current political correctness campaigns are highly suspect and short sighted.

Furthermore, in the English press over recent weeks we have read stories of the state of decay and dilapidation of the buildings that were once the homes of great writers such as the poets William Blake and John Milton. The idea that there are insufficient funds either from the public purse or from private donations available to preserve these examples of our national heritage tells us a lot about how little we appreciate this heritage. Along with this neglect, we need to contend with vociferous campaigns that have been launched to tarnish and defame the reputations of great artists, writers, scientists, scholars and the like whose legacy should be cherished. Well-intentioned as some of the actions may well be, the attempts to draw up lists of offenders and to censor works of art and literature that are deemed either to be racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic, are dangerous follies and extremely short-sighted. Campaigns established in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the rise of transgender rights have become dependent on threats, intimidation and moral blackmail to achieve their ends, many of which are questionable. Activists are frequently driven by arrogance and intolerance, demanding the censorship not only of the living but of the dead. Questions of self-interest are also involved with individuals jockeying for position and advantage at the expense of those that they seek to supersede. The issues are very complicated, but it is far from being simply one of seeking justice and recompense.

The broader neglect of our heritage is an indication of the much broader problem of human destructiveness, selfishness and ignorance. Recently, a photograph was posted online showing the appalling neglect of the celebrated British playwright Terence Rattigan's Family Memorial in Kensal Green Cemetery, London. Apparently, no one has assumed responsibility for the cleaning and preservation of the grave, and it had fallen into serious decay. Kensal Green is the final resting place of the writer's ashes, although visitors to the cemetery would never know this because his name has still not been inscribed on the memorial stone even though he died as long ago as 1977. During his career, Rattigan became one of the country's leading playwrights and screen writers. His plays like *The Deep Blue Sea*, *The Winslow Boy*, *French Without Tears* and *The Browning Version* were performed to sell-out audiences in theatres around Britain and were popular throughout the world. His plays still form part of the popular theatrical repertoire and at least one of his plays is currently in production at one of London's leading theatres. That his gravestone has been allowed to fall into ruin is an indictment of our society and what it takes to be important.

Fortunately, in the Rattigan case, a public appeal was launched online to raise funds for the maintenance of the grave and this has since received thousands of pounds in largely small donations, which means that this author's grave can be rescued from utter collapse. The response to the appeal shows that there are people who are prepared to be generous when they are made aware of such problems. But it should never have been allowed to fall into such disrepair in the first place.

What does it say about the country's attitude to its cultural heritage when many people are more enthusiastic about pulling down monuments rather than preserving and protecting them? We need to learn from the past, not seek to displace it. Were this simply a question of old stones it should not preoccupy us for too much. However, the destruction and neglect raise critical questions of the nature of public memory and human sensibility.

Those in possession of true humility realise their own limitations and try to do something about it, such as getting properly educated. Self-criticism is a first step towards self-improvement and part of a process of becoming a better person. The modern generation, brought up on smart phones and 24-hour connectivity, are increasingly unaware of their own foibles and refuse to confront their own weaknesses. In a culture of instant gratification, an arrogance bred of narcissism has become the new normal. People are reluctant to admit when they are ill-informed and insufficiently qualified to pass judgement on others.

The achievements of the best minds of past generations exist as our collective legacy and can provide the solutions to the current dilemmas that confront us as we work together to defeat climate change and build a better society, which are inseparable tasks. Our very survival depends on it.

They have the means to obtain culture, knowledge, awareness and enlightenment at their very fingertips, but they too often tend to opt for the most trivial, inane and intellectually unchallenging of pastimes, such as bad mouthing others and watching X-rated videos. Venting their ridicule of others remotely and belittling their victims have reached near epidemic proportions to the extent that hate crime is now a major challenge facing law enforcers.

Culture can be a great leveller and bring about a greater sensitivity among readers and users alike. Culture is essential to life. In order to save the planet, we need to respect ourselves, as well as each other and the culture of our people and develop an awareness of who we are as human beings through learning the history of our communities and relationships with others.

The classical historian George Thomson ends his last book on the folk culture of the Gaelic-speaking Blasket Island, which he had studied since 1923, with the following words which sum up the argument very well,

“The free play of market forces must be brought under control if our civilisation is to be saved from self-destruction, and that can only be done by the deprived and the dispossessed. When they take their future into their own hands, they will cast off their backwardness, and by releasing new forces, material and spiritual, raise civilisation to a higher level.”

Thomson was a true scholar but a committed one who believed in transforming society for the good of all. He was highly critical of how ancient Greek history and culture were traditionally studied and taught. As a Marxist historian, Thomson urged people to learn from the past and shape the future with knowledge and information derived from learning and studying the past, its successes and failures. In the preface to his book, *The Prehistoric Aegean*, Thomson wrote of the popular study of Greek history, culture and philosophy,

“Instead of being a message of hope for the future, as they (the works of Greek philosophy) were in the great days of humanism, they have become a pastime for a leisured minority striving ineffectually to find a refuge from it. Our Hellenic heritage must be rescued from the Mandarins, or else it will perish, destroyed by its devotees.”

Thomson’s optimism may well sound naïve today. But humanity as a whole at present has entered a period of profound crisis and is in urgent need of a “message of hope for the future”. We are obliged to marshal all our resources and learn from the past so that we can navigate our way out of the quagmire in which we have become mired. The achievements of the best minds of past generations exist as our collective legacy and can provide the solutions to the current dilemmas that confront us as we work together to defeat climate change and build a better society, which are inseparable tasks. Our very survival depends on it.



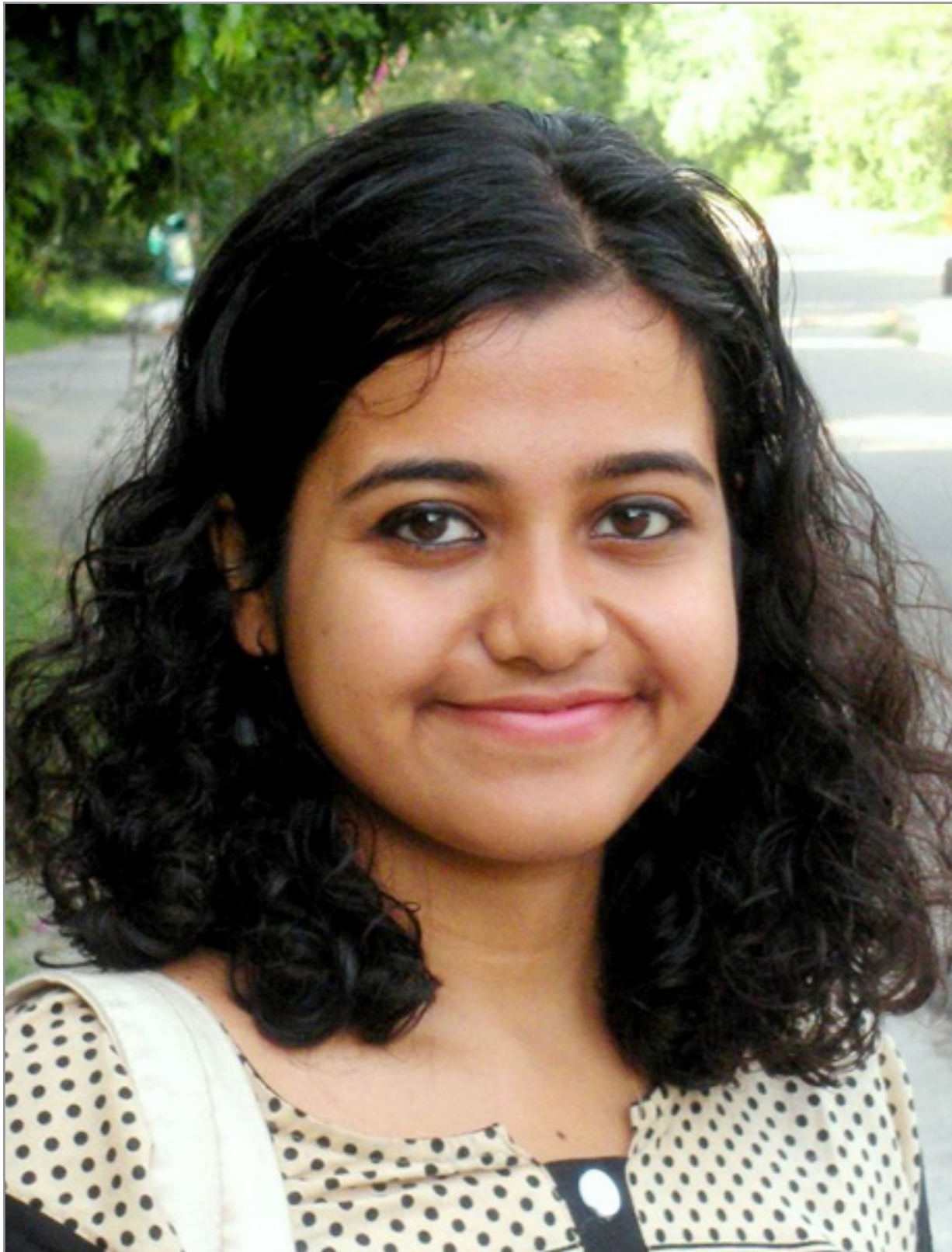
Photograph courtesy: <https://www.ifpri.org/topic/food-security>

Anandita Pan is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER Bhopal. Her research explores the myriad way in which 'Feminism' is viewed and practised in India, and puts special emphasis on women and nature, women and labour, and speculative narratives by women.

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ASSISTANT PROFESSOR ANANDITA PAN MAPPING DALIT FEMINISM

Caste and gender, as we know today, are two extremely porous concepts. Discussions and debates continue to persist regarding their definitions, scopes and relation vis-à-vis dominant and other marginalized positions. This has also given rise to the awareness that caste and gender, two seemingly exclusive categories, are in fact highly interrelated. *Mapping Dalit Feminism: Towards an Intersectional Standpoint*, explores such kind of understandings. Contestations pertaining caste, gender and identity, not only point at the hegemonic power structures, they also create a platform for counter-narratives to emerge. In such context, dalit feminism has proven itself to be a vanguard of an alternative perspective that challenges casteist sexism and shows new scopes for coalition across identities, communities, regions and religions. This mapping is done keeping the idea in mind.



Anandita Pan

To address the discourse of dalit feminism the texts in this book include literary articulations, movements, scholarly writings and popular culture. I use a comparative framework in all the chapters wherein I analyse dalit feminism vis-à-vis mainstream Indian feminism and dalit politics in order to elucidate the epistemological interventions dalit feminism makes and how simultaneously it transforms mainstream Indian Feminism and dalit politics. It is important to mention that this book does not intend to offer a single meaning to dalit feminism. The purpose here is not to give dalit feminism a definitive, totalizing shape. Quite contrarily, the aim of this book is to identify the underlying connections between the scattered events and show the specific conceptual contribution of dalit feminism. Hence, it aims for epistemological intervention and transformation. This mapping therefore also becomes a praxis in challenging totalitarianism in politics and theory.

The interventionist and transformative aspects of dalit feminism are explored in this book in the fields of difference, identity, representation, agency and positionality. The book elaborates on the key aspects of dalit feminism, i.e. its contradistinction vis-à-vis mainstream Indian feminism and dalit politics in redefining the categories ‘women’ and ‘dalits,’ and the concept of dual patriarchies in revising the contours of patriarchy and brahmanism through brahmanical patriarchy. Emphasising on the core theoretical framework of intersectionality, the book theorises dalit feminism by developing a new framework called ‘intersectional standpoint.’

In this context it is also important to elaborate on why I coined the term ‘intersectional standpoint’. As an intersectional standpoint, dalit feminism looks at how the systems of caste and gender function intersectionally. The focus on the process and functionality of systemic oppression expands our understanding of how these systems operate in other instances as well. As an intersectional standpoint, dalit feminism does not restrict its conceptual understanding only to dalit women. As a theoretical framework it provides a lens to reinterpret any text/event from a caste-gender angle. The concept of intersectionality, while critical of identity politics for its focus on a single axis of identity, also posits an alternative intersectional identity, which in the case of dalit feminism is the dalit woman. This book explores identity constitution by dalit women themselves. Dalit women’s autobiographies, read in contradistinction to autobiographies canonised by mainstream Indian feminism and dalit politics, reveal the savarnisation of ‘Indian woman’ and masculinization of ‘dalit’. They also explore the complexity and specificity of dalit women’s intersectional identity through the notion of dual patriarchies—brahmanical and dalit.

However, dalit feminism is not limited only to the self-articulations of dalit women which would trap it in the authenticity debate, it is also a political intervention. And this is evident in how it engages with the politics of representation. With respect to dalit women’s representations vis-à-vis sexuality and work, the book explores how dalit feminism problematizes mainstream feminist notion of agency through choice and challenges dalit representations of dalit women as victims. It also beyond the binarism of victimhood/agency and discovers newer ways of achieving agency through negotiation and solidarity.

This representational analysis shows that Dalit feminism is an epistemological project that intervenes in how/what knowledge is produced about dalit women and who can be/become a dalit feminist. Herein I investigate the contribution of dalit feminism to the entire project of knowledge production. It probes into the relationship between power and knowledge and sees how it affects the production of knowledge. By elucidating the framework of ‘intersectional standpoint’ through analysis of texts that are neither centered on dalit women nor are written/produced by dalit women, I show that a Dalit feminist standpoint is concerned less with who is speaking for/as a dalit feminist, and emerges more as a mode of analysis of a text/issue/event from a caste/gender angle that challenges dominant readings and transforms our understanding of intersecting systems of oppression.



Book available at :
<https://in.sagepub.com/en-in/sas/mapping-dalit-feminism/book276846>

The conclusion, therefore, shows that dalit feminism is not just about the identity-category, i.e. ‘dalit woman,’ but is an epistemology that uses the standpoint of dalit women to intervene both in the dominant systems of oppression and the resistance politics of mainstream Indian feminism and dalit politics.

Over the past two decades dalit feminism has been established not only at the institutional level through the publication of scholarly articles on the subject, but also through autobiographies and literary writings by dalit women in various regional languages that have then been translated into English as well as writings originally in English. These have marked an explosion of dalit women’s voices. The range of dalit feminist discourse is also evident through cultural productions and cultural critiques. Dalit feminism, therefore, has emerged as a distinct theoretical formulation, and this became evident through the vast multi-faceted discourse of dalit feminism, from literary texts, scholarly articles, cultural productions and political configurations. These recent debates show that dalit feminism has not only reached its peak in terms of emergence of dalit women’s voice in literary, political and scholarly spheres, the different conversations regarding autonomy and solidarity emphasize the need to have conversations conceptually between mainstream Indian feminism, dalit politics and dalit feminism. However, due to its vast spectrum, discussions about and approaches towards dalit feminism remain sprinkled around in the fields of activism, literature and popular culture. This book analyses this vast field to extract from it the underlying ideas and concepts that tie it together as a theoretical framework.

This book is important for several reasons. It makes an intervention into the ongoing conversations regarding caste and gender. The need for dalit feminism as a discourse that understands the intersection of caste and gender rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive systems of operation is especially relevant at present. Hence there is a growing relevance of this mapping. This book is also envisioned as an academic contribution. This will be a useful monograph for academicians and students belonging to a wide range of disciplines, namely literature, literary theory, sociology, dalit studies, gender studies, history and South Asian studies. Keeping in mind the ongoing debates and movements regarding caste system and gender discrimination in the country, this book will add an insightful perspective to these on-going dialogues. In fact, each chapter from the book can be prescribed by teachers to students as stand-alone essays to have a comprehensive idea of dalit feminism from different angles.

I would like to draw special attention to the appendix, which was curated keeping the academic importance in mind. This book proposes a framework, ‘intersectional standpoint’, to define the dalit feminist lens. The contribution of intersectional standpoint in dalit feminism to identify the simultaneity of caste and gender has been explored extensively in the consecutive chapters. Hence, the appendix includes some analytical readings on intersectionality and standpoint theory. It is followed by an annotated bibliography which provides a comprehensive list of some of the earliest and most well-known positions and debates on these frameworks. It is hoped that this appendix will be especially helpful for students and researchers of gender, feminism and women’s studies.

Swati Jena is the quintessential all-rounder, bold, curious and observant. Founder of WriteFor, she’s an XLRI alumna, TEDx speaker and LinkedIn Top Voice. A divergent thinker, she’s the kind of person who makes one go, “aha, I never looked at it that way”. Swati says it, as she sees it.

T.N. Hari wears different hats – author, angel investor, advisor to VCs, CHRO Big Basket. He is a strong first-principles thinker and has applied this approach to a wide range of issues from org building, to the changing start-up landscape, and diversity. He also speaks his mind without trying to be politically correct.

Diversity Beyond Tokenism, Why Being Politically Correct Doesn’t Help Anyone - published by SAGE
<https://www.amazon.in/Diversity-Beyond-Tokenism-Politically-Correct/dp/9391370632>



Swati Jena

T. N. Hari

SWATI JENA & T.N. HARI

THE ESSENCE OF DIVERSITY BEYOND TOKENISM

The idea of ‘*Diversity Beyond Tokenism – Why Being Politically Correct Doesn’t Help Anyone*’ book was love-at-first-sight; an emotion, writers are far too familiar with, when we are so consumed by the intellectual challenge of a subject, that we can’t take our mind off it. It wasn’t the idea of diversity per se, that excited us. It was the idea of *relooking at diversity* that made both co-authors feel instantly, that this book was meant to be. Herein lies, the core essence of what this book is (and isn’t) about. It is not a discourse on why diversity is important. The book rather seeks to explore: Does it matter? Why do we care? Is it worth the effort? As we wrote in the chapter, “Does Diversity Really Help Business?”: *Assuming diversity always helps or always hurts is incorrect. It is important to understand the business context and structure before weaving in diversity.*

As we explored how this book could evolve, we realized how both of us had been witnessing the diversity saga with *concerned-skepticism, practical-idealism and unassumed-inquiry*. And herein lies, why we wrote this book. If organizations are a microcosm of the society, then diversity should be a natural part of it. However, the manner in which businesses are implementing diversity, is rife with tokenism. We relooked at diversity using first principles.

In that spirit, we have used questions as the tool of choice, to explore how diversity could be approached within organizations. As we asked in the chapter, “Discrimination and Diversity”: ***“Is the narrative on discrimination driven by a reasoned voice, or are we drowning ourselves in reactive noise?”*** The question was driven by *concerned-skepticism* on how much businesses feel pressured to act in a certain way by social media outrage, and how much that really serves to remove discrimination in the long-term.

We wondered, “Women in Senior Management”, if the idea of mandating women board members was akin to a quota-system, which is one of the common arguments against affirmative action. We dug deep into it with *practical-idealism* by mapping a utopian situation against on-ground realities of hard-wired stereotypes about women. In, “Beyond Tolerance” we plunged into the unedited realities of how organizations implement or bypass education and age-related diversity. We looked into it with *unassumed inquiry* hoping to find wisdom on the larger question, *“Is focus on visible indicators of diversity misplaced?”*

The process of writing this book was a lot like performing a precision surgery, having to take apart several intricately-linked, seemingly-paradoxical aspects of diversity.

We had to make our arguments with care, constantly checking if one aspect contradicted the other. We observed how perspectives seemingly at odds with one another, were essential parts of the whole, we call diversity. Hence, while we argued in favor of affirmative action for women in “Does Diversity Really Help Business?”, we explored the principle of ***absolute equality*** in “Equal, not Same” and the need to address unspoken apprehensions of managers, in holding women professionals accountable for non-performance. On one hand, in “Women in Senior Management” we highlighted how women are bound by traditional gender roles to keep their career on the back-burner, and the need for that to change.



Book available at :
<https://www.amazon.in/Diversity-Beyond-Tokenism-Politically-Correct/dp/9391370632>

On the other, in “Discrimination and Diversity”, we pressed upon organizational solutions for managers hesitating to hire women, instead of shaming and penalizing the apparently discriminatory behavior.

Addressing each of these aspects individually may have been easier (***relatively*** easy to be precise), but arguing all the questions together in one book, required us to understand carefully how each vein, artery and nerve of diversity interacted with the other.

If diversity has to be discussed beyond tokenism, we cannot avoid understanding these complex inter-relations. Our attempt has been to make that complexity simpler, discernable and amenable to an informed discussion among all stakeholders – as it should be, and not just remain the bastion of diversity experts. It has taken a lot to write this book – time, pain-staking effort and intense reflection. Most importantly, it has taken courage.

We did not write this book as “experts”. Infact, we would go a step further to say – *this book could not have been written by experts*. Because as experts, we would have already committed ourselves to a point a view. Our focus would have been to tell, not ask. Our compulsion would have been, to be politically correct. In the chapter, “Dissent and Diversity”, we shared the story of Ray Dalio, whose business fall taught him to transition from, *“I am right”*, to *“How do I know I am right?”*

That is the question we have asked ourselves several times while writing this book. In the chapter “#MeToo”, we played devil’s advocate to the idea that inducting women necessarily means reducing sexual harassment. We asked the never-asked question on this subject – can women perpetuate, aid and abet sexual harassment? We have called to question the role of HR and business leadership in prevention of sexual harassment.

In “The Ideological Echo Chamber”, we pointed at the shaky grounds of popular diversity reports by likes of McKinsey. Through the book, we have looked at what appears to be double-standard approach of admired companies such as Unilever, Google and Zappos. None of these are with the objective of criticism, which would be unhelpful to overall objective of the book. We have taken the courage to do so, in order to highlight that approaching diversity with tokenism, leads even the best of organizations to act in a way that contradicts logic, and their stated beliefs. We could not have explored these aspects from the lens of experts.

We needed the courage to discard assumptions about diversity in popular narratives, and see things for what they are. So, have called out the emperor without clothes. We have pointed at the elephant in the room. We have belled the proverbial cat. We have done so, to simply to clear the way, for all stakeholders to now ideate how real diversity can be implemented within organizations. It was not just writing a book. We wanted to have the courage to create a *turning point in the discourse on diversity*.

We said in the closing section of this book, “Rewiring for diversity”, that the human mind in specific and the world in general, are wired against diversity. That’s because finding patterns makes it easier for the brain. If we know A, B, C, D fit into a pattern, once we have figured out A and B, we simply assume things about C and D. That is where stereotypes are born.

As we cautioned in, “Equal, not Same”, “Men-and-women are not same, *neither are women-and-women*.” That’s why pursuing diversity and truly benefitting from it, will need rewiring both at an individual and organizational level. Perceiving diversity demands a higher level of intelligence and attention from all of us. In “Dissent and Diversity”, we quoted the King in Alice in wonder-land, “*Begin at the beginning. Go on till you come to the end; then stop.*”

If you are reading this book, remember what the King said. Begin at the beginning, and go on till the end, and then stop. Because, this book, and diversity cannot be understood in parts, unless we seek to understand all the parts held together with their complex inter-linkages. Because the parts of this book, just like *love, itch, precision, courage* don’t make a predictable pattern. But together, they make sense. That, as we completed writing this book, we realized, is also the essence of *Diversity, beyond Tokenism*.

Jill Gocher, a Bali based international photographer, has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books – Asia's legendary Hotels, Periplus, Bali- Island of Light – Marshall Cavendish, Indonesia – Islands of the Imagination. Periplus, Australia – the land down under – Times Editions, Singapore, Indonesia – the last paradise – Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali. Photojournalist + Media Consultant, AmazonPage: www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher instagram [jillgocher](https://www.instagram.com/jillgocher)



JILL GOCHER

DELHI AFTER COVID

On the surface everything seems to be fine. Businesses are open, masks are affixed firmly to almost every face in the city to avoid the hefty fines administered by the government.

But look in to the eyes of a few and you will see the hardship that has been with much of the population for the past year and a half. Like everywhere it has been a huge challenge. On the bright side, one man, Saral Sharma who has been distributing food and love in the poorer areas during the pandemic has reported that the situation is pretty much under control with almost no covid remaining.

Now restaurants are reopening, hotels are enjoying guests again with added precautions. Street stall wallahs are plying their wares and families are again occupying prime positions on the streets.

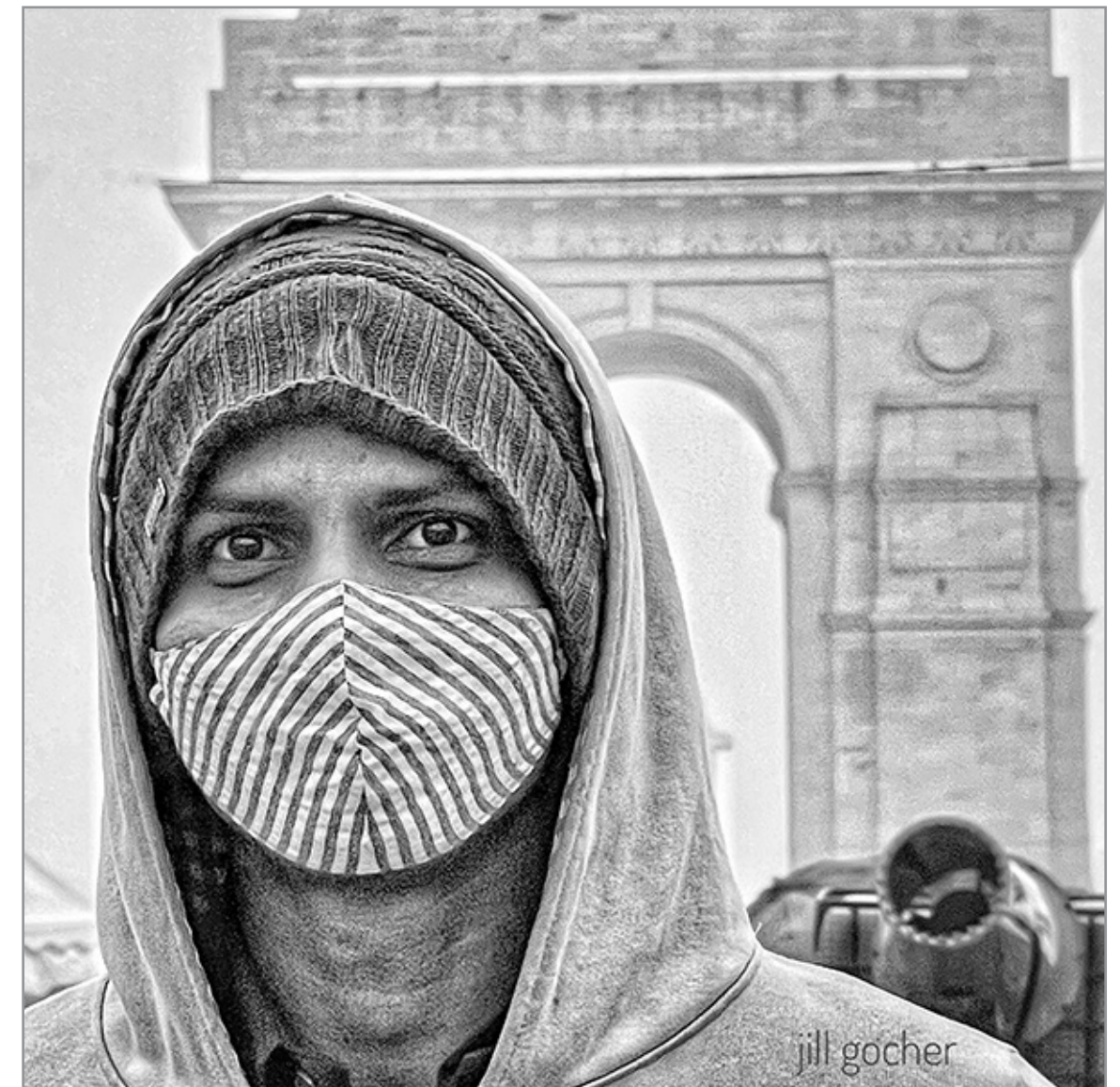
While hardships still lie just beneath the surface, the Indians are a resilient people and for me the main feeling I perceived was one of hope.

Yet while Delhi is observing every precaution, on Boarding a Rajasthan bound train, I was surprised to see not a mask in sight. While the train interiors had been stripped of all their soft furnishings - curtains, sheets, blankets and pillows to facilitate disinfecting, not one person was wearing a mask. Even those wearing one on entering the carriages, soon dispensed with them and life carries on.

Jill Gocher



Hand sanitizer in the metro. Temperatures are checked and the guards sit with king kong sized bottles of hand sanitizer ready to zap any bugs around.



The India Gate may be closed for renovations with tractors and hoardings and police bearing serious weaponry but it didn't stop this young visitor from posing proudly in front of the gateway.



A small road block of mask wearing strong men. not sure what they are saying. But their message is clear.



In the privacy of their own quarters these Tibetan boys enjoy some late autumn sun while the placid dog watches on.



The holy Yamuna which empties into the Ganges may be less than pristine, if not downright polluted, but it doesn't stop the Siberian seagulls wintering there or the pilgrims who come to make the spiritual dip.



Out on the misty Yamuna river, the Siberian seagulls crowd around anyone offering food.



This little doggy rests placidly atop a brick pile. A survivor of the pandemic, she has received much kindness as have many dogs in India during these tough times.



Restaurants are opening including this elegant classic in Connaught Place, patronised by two gorgeous old women enjoying a late lunch. how I longed to go have a word with them

This beautiful shrine by one of Delhi’s busiest thoroughfares has seen plenty of love during the tough times - and has possibly helped more than one individual survive.



Gunjan Veda is the author of *The Museum of Broken Tea Cups* (Sage-Yoda Press, 2020). A storyteller and an international development practitioner, she has postgraduate degrees from Harvard University and the University of Warwick. Gunjan has an abiding love affair with India's arts and crafts, and the artists who nurture them. She was formerly a policy-maker with the Government of India.

The Museum of Broken Tea Cups, published by SAGE
<https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/asi/author/gunjan-veda>

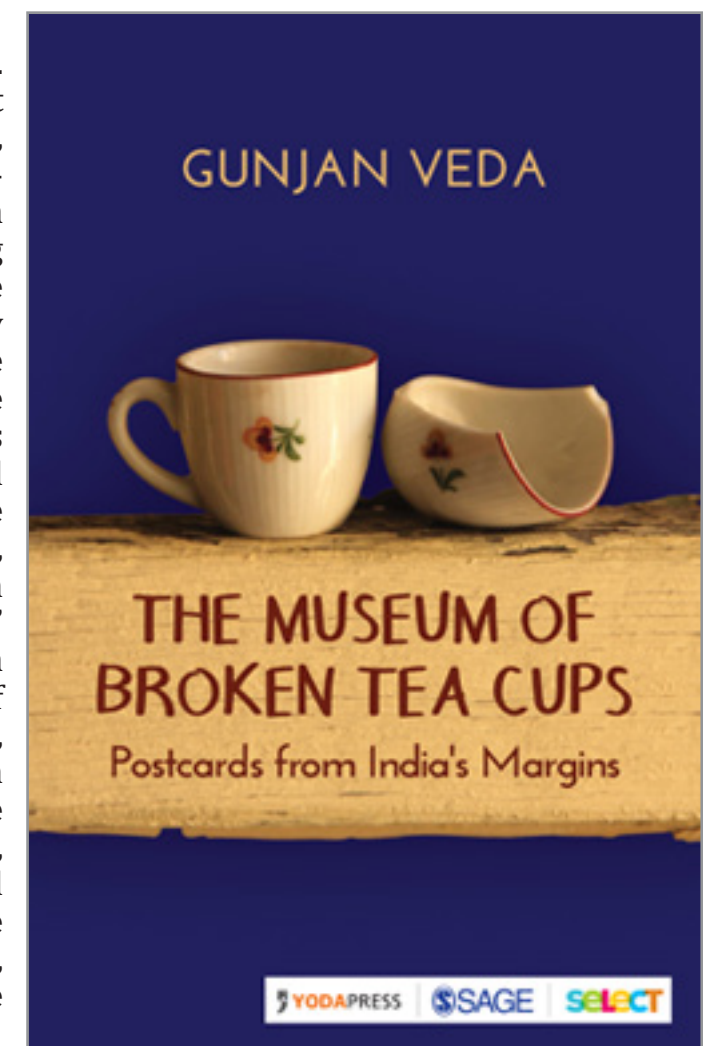


Gunjan Veda

GUNJAN VEDA

IT'S TIME TO BREAK SOME TEA CUPS

Six years ago my world came crashing down around me. The year was 2015. I had been approached by a non-profit organization, The Dalit Foundation, to write a book for their 10th anniversary. Only this book was not to be a regular publication commemorating the remarkable work done by the organization. That summer I began my research. I wanted to go beyond the headlines that spoke to the violence faced by Dalits in India, violence that is still under-reported, under-covered and on the rise. The National Crime Bureau Records show that in 2020, an act of violence against a person belonging to the "Scheduled Caste" was committed every 10 minutes, a 9.4% rise from the previous year.¹ If we look at the pre-pandemic world, in 2019, on average 10 Dalit women were raped every day.² So yes, despite the headlines that trend occasionally, the violence is definitely not covered enough. Yet, what perplexed me was the complete lack of coverage- reporting, books or otherwise - that spoke to the contribution of Dalit communities.



As I scoured the shelves of libraries and bookstores- physical and virtual- I came across a never-ending stream of celebratory books, in all field ranging from arts, cuisine and literature to business, sciences and social sciences. And yet, expect a couple of forgotten volumes on Dalit entrepreneurs, not one of them spoke about the contribution made by India's 200 million Dalits. It was as if we had systematically wiped out all traces of these communities except for a very limited political discourse (after all invisibilising a group of people and their achievements is a very political act that remains largely ignored) and the reluctant coverage of the violence that shrouds their life. Thus, was born *The Museum of Broken Tea Cups*, a volume that would curate the rich contribution made by Dalit artists and activists to our society.

I spent the better part of 2015, moving from village to village, and from bylane to bylane in cities and towns across the country, learning and unlearning what I knew of our music, our dance forms, our theatre, our crafts, and indeed, our idea of culture. In the blazing sun in Telangana and Maharashtra, under a canopy of stars in Orissa and Chhattisgarh, on humid mornings in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, I spoke to artists who had spent their entire life nurturing their music, musical instruments, story-telling skills, dances and weaves even as they battled deprivation and discrimination every step of the way. Gangaprasad, the 85 year old *naqqarchi* lamenting the demise of his favored instrument in Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Kuntavati Sika, the proud weaver defying tradition and patriarchy to carve a niche for herself in Banbaspali village (Orissa), Vithalbhai Kunjiram Nayak, the renowned Bhavai artist from Patan (Gujarat) sharing the origin of his art, Kaajal, the young Lavani dancer from Jamkhed (Maharashtra) whose *ghunghroos* had dashed all her hopes for family. Artists who had been ostracized even as their art had added colour, joy and vibrancy to our lives. Each a broken tea cup that I carefully collected for my book.

"A broken tea cup?" you ask.

Thirty-five years of living in India and yet it took me the writing of this book to realise that there is one ubiquitous symbol of caste-based discrimination in our country: the innocent looking, albeit often chipped, yellowed or damaged tea cup sitting outside our homes in the villages or, in a corner somewhere in the cities. Ironically in Gujarat, they call it the Rampatar, vessel of Lord Ram. We urbanites are more circumspect. We don't give it a separate name. We don't even acknowledge the casteism that underlies our actions. We just pride ourselves on our "hygiene" standards and maintain a separate set of utensils for the non-guests and non-household members, in the short the people without whom our lives would not function.

After all, "we don't know when they last took a bath," access to running to water and soap is not easy. We conveniently forget that we are talking about the people who keep our houses and our surroundings clean. We also forget that traditionally people from certain communities were forced into this role.

In 2003, the non-profit organization Navsarjan Trust, led by Martin Mcwan, a renowned Dalit activist from Gujarat, launched a 100-day foot march across the state, urging people to abandon the Rampatar and embrace the Bhimpatar (the cup of equality). Over 200,000 people joined the march, removing the forlorn looking Rampatars from the courtyards and outer peripheries of houses as they moved from village to village. Martin's dream was to collect these teacups to someday curate a Museum that would symbolize the end of discrimination.

As I heard these stories that summer, I remembered the solitary tea-cup sitting in my home and my world came crashing down. into the kitchen, took out the tea cup and threw it into the dustbin. "I am sorry I did not question this practice. I am sorry I taught you this. I cannot undo the past but here onwards there will be no separate utensils," she said.

Over the last 2.5 years, I have been intensely involved in the global conversations around decolonizing international development and shifting the power. I have been an active listener in the Black Lives Matter conversation and often asked myself how can racism, casteism, gender-based violence continue despite the good intentions of millions of people. The answer lies in that innocent-looking tea cup sitting somewhere in our homes. Unwittingly, we are all part of the problem. If we truly want an equal world, we have to begin with ourselves. We have to begin by hunting and breaking those tea cups.

The Museum of Broken Tea Cups is a small attempt at breaking the teacup in my own house. It curates the powerful and inspirational stories of Dalits, who have despite all odds, managed to script their own destiny as well as that of others around them. In its sun-baked courtyard you will encounter the vibrancy, the skill, the aspirations and the despair of nine-year old girls and 90 something artists. The book is a reminder that these remarkable stories are all around us. We only need to listen.

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, JNU, New Delhi. She has published many articles and books on gender justice, child rights, human rights issues, international politics, international organizations, legal history and contemporary legal discourse. Her recent globally acclaimed book is published from Sage Publication "*Rights of the Girl Child in India: Struggle for Existence and Well-being*". She is former member of the editorial board of the MNLU, Nagpur Contemporary Law Review, journal *Contemporary Law Review* (UGC care listed journal). She supervised LLM dissertation on the topics related to the rights of women and international organizations.

Rights of the Girl Child in India: Struggle for Existence and Well-Being by Nitu Kumari, published by SAGE India, 2020, Hardback; ISBN: 9789353882846) <https://www.amazon.in/Rights-Girl-Child-India-Well-Being-ebook/dp/B089VJ39FS>

DR NITU KUMARI

RIGHTS OF THE GIRL CHILD IN INDIA

Beijing Declaration in 1995 underlined the peculiar condition of the girl-child and endorsed the various initiatives to protect the rights of the girl-child. It is to be noted that many reforms and developments on children's rights were mentioned in multiple international and regional documents. It traces the matter of children from the Geneva Declarations 1924, League of Nations, UDHR, 1948, UNCRC 1959 and UNCRC 1989, and many more recent historical and landmark documents for the advocacy of the rights of children. The subject of the girl-child was separately mentioned in the year 1995 Beijing Declaration.

Before the Beijing Declaration, 1995 girl-child does not have a separate identity. Children themselves are very vulnerable to many natural or human-made disasters such as war and conflict as they are unable to defend themselves. This peculiar situation of children became more horrific if that child is a girl-child as they suffer due to childism and sexism. This book explains the girls-child and women's difficulties due to their sex and traditional societal norms. Girl-child struggle for existence and well-being is becoming an international issue, and it needs the immediate attention of the world community.



Nitu Kumari

Numerous issues related to the girl child is extensively discussed in this book. Such as the crisis of the identity of children as right holders, and definitional contours of childhood, children as a separate right holder. International, regional, and national conventions, documents, and treaties initiated with the subject of the child. After discussion over the child, the peculiar challenges of the girl-child need the immediate attention of the world community discussed here.

The issue of girl-child and women in many contexts is two sides of one coin as today's girls are the women and tomorrow's International organizations, regional organizations, declarations, and conventions initiatives for raising the issue of girl-child and women at the international level. It underlies that the patriarchal inheritance society and male-dominated legal advocacy deprive girls and women of various types of rights and opportunities. In this context, the girl-child faces numerous difficulties such as childism and sexism, patriarchal inheritance society, least participation in policy-making, harmful tradition and cultural beliefs; all these create a circle of the poor condition of girl-child.

Girl-child exclusion from the various basic rights such as adequate health and proper education, forcing them into child marriage leads to teenage pregnancy and many other challenges. All these peculiar things were promoted with the traditional norms and beliefs against girls and women's that women are the subordinate of man. This explicit and implicit exclusion from the various social and legal sectors leads to various negative impacts on women and girls.

Girl-child as a vulnerable segment in India causes and consequences of the harmful practices against creating a big rift between the male and female position in society. Female foeticide leads to the poor sex ratio, child marriage, and control over sexuality, which has heinous consequences on girls and women's health and social and economic position in society. Minimum education leads to the least economic independence.

Child abuse and mental trauma, sexual exploitation, religious dominances, and beliefs that promote the power polarization on males these various causes and consequences create a very challenging environment for girls and women to access adequate rights and freedom in society.

This endorses the victimization of women at social and economic platforms.

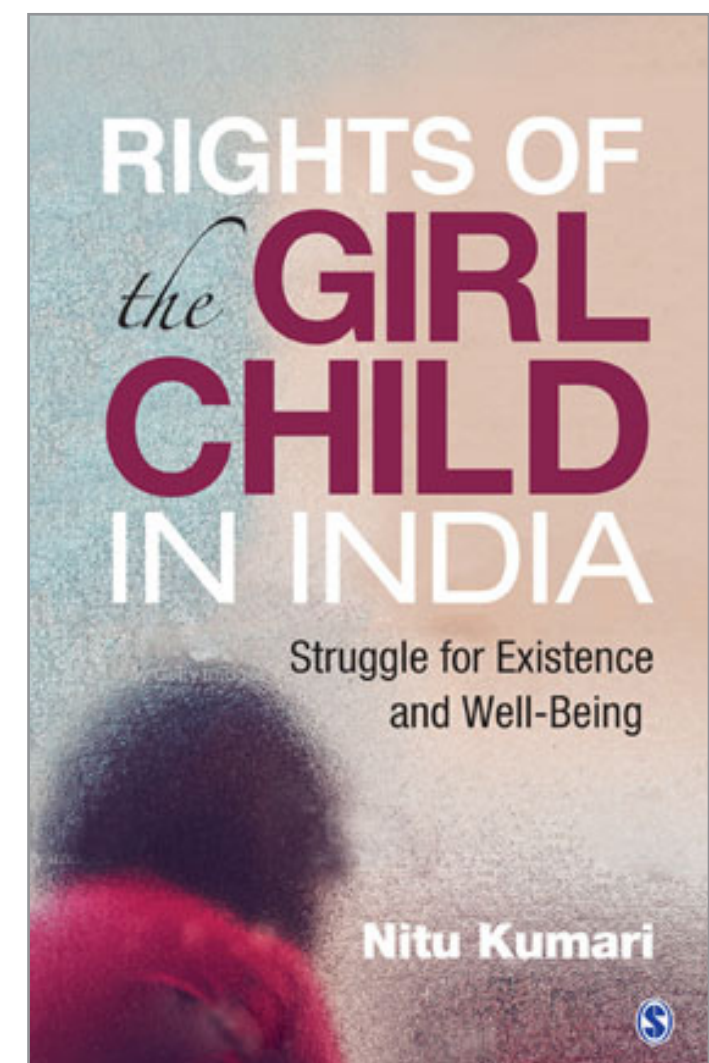
These implicit and explicit practices and traditions are actively countered by the law and legal discourse at the international and national levels. WHO, UNICEF, UDHR, UNESCO, UN WOMEN, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CSW, Beijing Declaration, and many more organizations, international declaration and conventions advocated about the rights and well-being of girls and women.

However, these regional and international initiatives are not ample to address the issue of the girl-child and women, and in many circumstances, they are insufficient to counter the actual problem.

For instance, in the Indian context, the consent of the girls and women in many matters is not taken into consideration, and in this practice, religious and cultural beliefs have a huge role.

Son as a symbol of status and only son can perform rituals of family killing the desire of girl-child in society and deprived girls and women from various aspects and rights.

Conclusion and this cultural relativism, societal norms, and horrific practices against girls and women negatively impact their overall development of them. Today girl-child is the women of tomorrow and in this context, the harmful tradition against the girl-child will affect the women as well.



Book available at :
<https://www.amazon.in/Rights-Girl-Child-India-Well-Being-ebook/dp/B089VJ39FS>

For example, from very earlier times, such as CMRA (1929), women and girls participation in policymaking is very less, and in this condition, women were dependent on the social customs and norms, which the male members basically set.

In many aspects, the law legitimizes the crime against women or the violation of women's basic human rights. Such as in many traditional practices, male members consider as legal guardians of women. In many places, statutory and customary law recognize male as a guardian of women and girls.

This creates a wider gap between the availability and accessibility of rights. Indian society is very diverse in context of religion, tradition, social and cultural beliefs, language. This diversity plays a very challenging role in collecting data on the peculiar condition of women and girls. This inadequate information creates a challenging environment to address the harmful tradition against them.

Customs and traditions are often used as tools to deprive women of their basic human rights. Despite various advocacies on child and women rights such as CRC and CEDAW, the issue of girls' basic rights and the girl child still awaited special reference. Child marriage is a form of slavery that promotes sexual violence, forced marriage without consent and forced chores. It also endorses non-consensual sexual relations.

International initiatives are not binding on Indian laws. In certain aspects, Indian laws and legal initiatives are silent on the violation of human rights. For instance, in many Indian legal procedures, marital rape is considered a criminal offense only if the girl is below 15 years. And at the same time, childhood is recognized until the age of 18 years, and sexual intercourse is permissible after 18 years. The marital rape of girls aged between 15 and 18 years is not recognized as a crime in IPC and other legal procedures.

The government's apathy towards implementing programmes and policies related to girls and women is that these are not very effective. The girl child is one of the most common victims of child trafficking and this trafficking leads them to slavery. Sex tourism, commercial sex and child prostitution are some reasons and effects of girl child trafficking.

With the help of states and non-state actors, the government need to emphasize the hard laws against this crime as well as the immediate action against those people or groups involved in this crime.

International and regional and state initiatives on the issue of girls women welfare need more recognition and expansion. The difference between the paper and practice notion also need to be considered as an important matter.

Human rights are equal for all. Suppose it is not properly provided by the states or in many contexts. In that case, laws are promoting discrimination on the basis of sex and gender it need the immediate attention of the world community. Formulation laws and legal initiatives are not far enough as the pathetic condition of girls and women is also rooted in the cultural phenomena. State and non-state actors and the effective legal tool the issue of girl-child can be counted from the root level.

A holistic approach needs to be added as a vital role in this context.

Steve Desmond is an English teacher and keen amateur photographer living in Vientiane, Laos. He has a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and over 18 years of experience in teaching English as a second language. Currently living in the countryside roughly 20km outside of Vientiane, he has previously lived and worked in Thailand, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Steve purchased his first camera, a Canon EOS 750D, just over a year ago and, since then, has spent nearly every weekend in the woods near his house taking pictures and cataloguing the local wildlife which he displays on his website: <https://stevedsmndphoto.com/>



STEVE DESMOND

LAOS - INTO THE WOODS

The short, 5 min walk to the woods marks the beginning of my weekly therapeutic, healing session; a cure for all the stress and strains that have built up over the week. Once immersed in the woods, I'm transported to a serene world where my normal day-to-day life is forgotten.

Being from England, I'm not used to the amazing array of creatures that can be found just a few minutes away from my doorstep. From venomous snakes, fabulously coloured long-horned beetles, beautiful butterflies, to scary, large tarantulas and scorpions; Laos has it all. Every trip to the woods is a new adventure, and I've yet to be disappointed; I always see some creature I've never seen before.

But change has come dramatically. What was once one large area has now, because of human encroachment, become four smaller woods. Unplanned development is destroying the fragile ecosystem. Perhaps in a few years the woods will disappear.

For me, it is a race against time to record for posterity images of the fascinating denizens of the woods.

Steve Desmond



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Radiated Rat Snake - *Coelognathus radiatus*



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Vietnamese Tiger Tarantula - Cyriopagopus Vonwirthi



Umbrella Paper Wasp - Genus Polistes



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Flat-faced Longhorn Beetles - Subfamily Lamiinae



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Russet percher - *Neurothemis fulvia*



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Wolf Spider - Family Lycosidae



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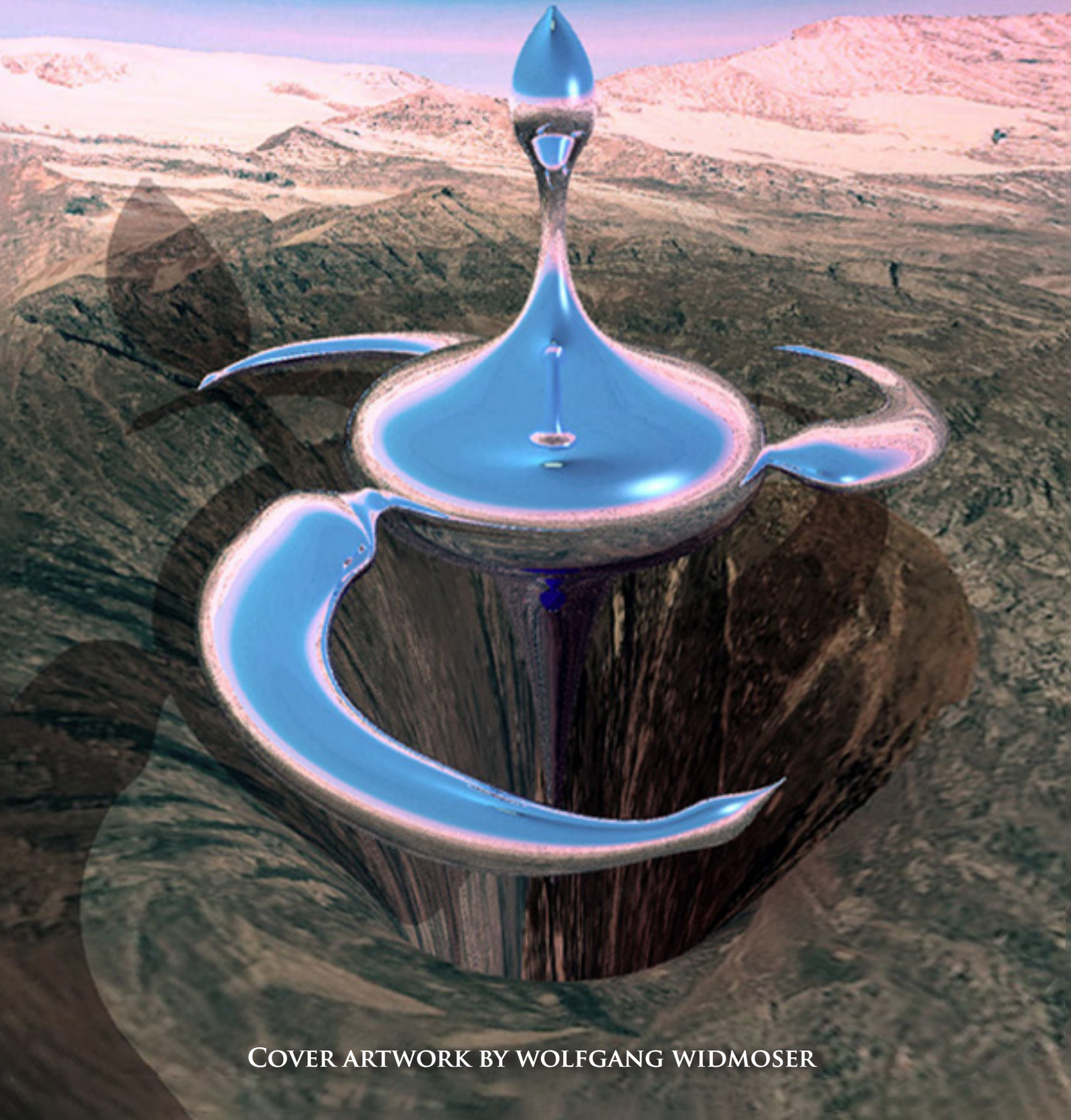
Eyed Rustic Moth - *Spirama helicina*

2010 - 2021

12
YEARS

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COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER