

Editorial

Friday, April 21, 2018

Songs of the dark days

Times are a changing- but the sort of changes happening in our state is nothing to write home about- or rather everything that should be made public.

It has become a breeding ground for unscrupulous elements where the name of the game is "instant wealth". Gone are the days when enterprising people, by dint of their sheer tenacity and unwavering pursuit made fame and fortune.

The "get rich quick" mantra being increasingly subscribed to by the younger generation has begun to bear fruit- rapes, murders, extortions, thieves and burglary, drug trafficking and corruption- the list growing longer by three days. The race to amass wealth- even at the cost of giving up one's peace of mind and the hearth and home have taken precedence over the concept of a peaceful and fruitful easy life. Conscience and morality have been shoved off to the furthest corner of one's mind- shedding the last remnants of humility to enter the temple of mammon. The result is a society where might is right and truth is relative. Honesty and sincerity is at a premium and the ideology of high thinking - simple living having been replaced by the reckless aim to attain power and influence. Humility and respectfulness has begun to be looked down upon and is being equated with weakness- a trait to be avoided. Truths are being sold and brought at a price and the collective mentality has started to revert back to the Stone Age where survival of the fittest holds true. Making things worst are the growing number of indolent youths accustomed to luxury and exhibitionism influenced in no small measure by the western cultures but failing to capture the essence of the dignity of work and the regard for fellow humans that underlines the basic principles of these western societies.

Abusing the powers entrusted to them and turning their official domain into their personal fiefdom is the order of the day for bureaucrats and politicians while the common people are left in the lurch with a feeling of betrayal and alienation in their minds. This has created a chasm that is growing wider with each passing day leading to a feeling of suspicion and getting cynical of the steps the Government is taking up for the professed good of the public. This social turmoil paves the way for a breed of human parasites living off the sweat of another's labour- intimidation and fear being their weapon of choice and not thinking twice about taking lives if their whims are not catered to. Shouts of negligence and deprivation trying to drown out the screams of the unfortunate public destined to lead a life of uncertainty and fear.

Tolerance is no longer a virtue and wealth is the benchmark of a person's worth- never mind the means one used to acquire it. Public memory has inexplicably shrunk to let matters pass- if only to wash their hands off the trouble of facing the bitter reality or to rectify it. Rationality has succumbed to power and ethics is an alien notion. A bleak future is in the offing- it is for us to stand up and stand fast- for the life we lead the way we want to. It is in us to walk with our heads held high and taste the sweat and the fruit of our own labour.

At the end of the day what really matters is an unburdened mind and a good sound sleep.

More State News

"RIMS Director attended the High Level HR Committee Meeting of Institute Body of JIPMER"



IT News
Imphal, April 21,

Prof. A. Santa Singh, Director, RIMS, Imphal was appointed as member of the high level HR Committee of the Institute Body of Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Pondicherry. He is the first person from North East India and first JIPMER student to be in the Apex Body. He is also member of Governing Body and Standing Selection Committee of JIPMER. Prof. Gurmeet Singh, Vice

Chancellor, Pondicherry University, Shri N. Gokulakrishnan, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Puducherry, Prof. (DR.) K.L.N. Rao, Former Prof. & Head (Pediatric Surgery), PGIMER, Chandigarh are the chairman and other members of the said HR Committee of apex body Institute Body of JIPMER, Puducherry. The meeting of the HR Committee of the Institute Body of JIPMER was held today at Board Room, Puducherry. He also attended the meeting along with other 4 members.

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By- N. Munal Meitei

Manipur, literally meaning "a jeweled land", is a state nestled deep within a lush green corner of Eastern India. In a very short but about sixty years back, when our populations were small, we had the most beautiful scenic and our elders felt our state to bea heaven. And thus, the Japanese army, Mrs. St. Clair Grimwood, Lord Arwin etc. slipped off their all-out praise to our state. But due to indiscriminate felling of trees coupled with many other ecological challenges, now we start to face the environmental crises. Therefore it will be meaningful for us to celebrate the Earth Day today.

World Mother Earth Day is celebrated on 22nd April every year since 1970 to remind each of us that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance. Our Earth is the only planet in the universe where life is possible. It is very necessary to maintain the natural assets of the earth in order to continue the life on it. In the rush of the crowd, the most intelligent creature of the God, so called the human is slowly losing its humanity and forgot to take care of the planet and started using its resources very ruthlessly. If we go on continue with our present habits then mankind will require two planets by 2030.

The founder Gaylord Nelson was felt with tragedy of the massive oil spill in the Santa Barbara, California in 1969 which led him to focus on

World Earth Day 2018

the public consciousness of the air, water and soil pollution as well as implementing the environmental protection measures. He also selected on this day and season keeping in mind that there would be less disturbances of the exams for the students or common public, to give more attention on celebration of Earth Day. Today, earth day is one of the most important global events because all the environmental and ecological challenges happen on earth and therefore it is the largest civic-action day to remind for the safety of the planet.

Earth Day is a day of political action and civic participation. People march, sign petitions, meet with their elected officials, plant trees, and clean up their towns and roads. Corporations and governments use it to make pledges and announce sustainability measures. Faith leaders, connect this day with protecting the humans, biodiversity and the planet where we all live in.

With this day, we used to provide the people to share with every knowledge to develop and make the environment safe for all living beings. It is quite better to know the possible ideas and plans to cultivate a better environment for the welfare of the people. So people should use limited resources as per their needs to make the resources available for the future.

It also recognizes a collective responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations. The theme for Earth Day 2018 is "End Plastic Pollution."

Today there are millions of people who are degrading the environment and making it polluted from years to years by which the environment is getting damaged day by day. This degradation of the environment can cause lots of problems to our many

types of limited resources. This can directly or indirectly affect the daily life of the people in a negative way.

Withcoming of Earth Day we need to know that every people should act to protect the people to save their environment. An environment safety is very important for every people to save lots of resources as well as makes better surroundings for the better growth of the resources. Our environment is necessary to maintain the natural resources available on the Earth to continue the life on the earth. It is necessary for the people to remain active and positive to maintain and grow the resources to such an extent so that they can fulfill the needs of much of the people on the earth.

People should decrease the use of the plastic bags to decrease the water as well as soil pollution from poisoning and injuring marine life to the ubiquitous presence of plastics in our food to disrupting human hormones and causing major life-threatening diseases and early puberty. The exponential growth of plastics is threatening our planet's survival. Our goals should include ending single-use plastics, promoting alternatives to fossil fuel-based materials, promoting 100 percent recycling of plastics, corporate and government accountability and changing human behavior concerning plastics.

To end plastic pollution campaign, we may educate people statewide to take personal responsibility for plastic pollution by choosing to reject, reduce, reuse and recycle plastics, and promoting local government regulatory and other efforts to tackle plastic pollution. And also empower journalists across the state to report on the problem and its emerging solutions.

Now a day, everything is being packed in the plastic bags or given in it by the shopkeepers. In sum, we may use the power of Earth Day to elevate the issue of plastic pollution

in the state and inspire and demand effective action to reduce and control it. Presently, 300 million tons of fossil fuel based plastics are sold each year worldwide and 90% of that is thrown away, destroying our food, our water and our health. Each segment of society bears the responsibility for this. This is a serious matter that our governments are unable or unwilling to take the health risks of plastic and are not moving to ban single use plastics and non-recyclable products. And we are also at fault because we haven't made the break from single use plastics even though alternatives are now on the markets.

Education is the foundation for progress. We need to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of plastic pollution and aware of its unprecedented threat to our planet. We need to empower everyone with the knowledge to inspire action in defuse of plastic pollution. In Manipur, though there is ban on use of some plastic grades, people are using with many harmful plastic grades without any restriction. So everywhere we find plastic and plastics. The streams and nallas following in our locality are bogged and landfilled with plastics. Due to large scale plastic use in Imphal and its surrounding, the Nambul river which drains into Loktaklake, the biggest fresh water lake in the Eastern India is over threatened with plastic physically and biologically.

Now, the time has come to tell our leaders that the states should not take more plastic randomly as of today. It is a very serious challenge. If enough of us get behind for a total ban on single use plastics and use only the biodegradable grades, and then we can begin to heal our land, lakes, soil, our wildlife, and our future and the children. Therefore to take part on the worldwide celebration of Earth day today, let's think twice before doing anything that will harm our mother Earth.

Rape as a political tool in India

By Mariya Salim

The gruesome rape and murder of an eight-year-old Muslim girl in Kathua district of Indian-administered Kashmir is a chilling reminder of how sexual assault is used as a tool to instil fear among those belonging to the minority communities in India.

There have been many Indians, especially on social media platforms, who have repeatedly claimed that one must look at this rape as a gender violence crime. But to turn a blind eye to the events that took place before and after her murder and to her belonging to the Bakarwal nomadic minority would be grossly unfair.

The official investigation has already shown that there is a hate crime element to the rape and murder - in other words, the victim being attacked by her murderers had a lot to do with her being a Muslim Bakarwal.

The charge sheet reads: "In the course of investigation, it transpired that [one of the accused] was against the settlement of Bakarwals in Rasana Kootah, and Dhanyal area, and always kept on motivating the members of his community of the area not to provide land for grazing or any other kind of assistance..."

[Two of the accused] were also against the settlement of Bakarwals in Rasana, Kootah and Dhanyal area who had already discussed this issue [...] to Chalk out a strategy for dislodging the Bakarwals from the area. They were blaming the Bakarwals on one pretext or the other and used to threaten them..."

This apart during investigation it transpired that a particular community had a general impression that the Bakarwals

indulge in cow slaughter and drug trafficking and that their children were turning into drug addicts...

Thus during investigation it has become abundantly clear that the accused had a reason to act against the Bakarwal Community and hence the conspiracy ultimately resulting into the gruesome rape and brutal murder..."

One could easily see in these lines elements of the demonising stereotypes that have provoked attacks on minorities across India in recent years. In 2017 alone, accusations of cow slaughter (forbidden in most Indian states) against minority communities resulted in dozens of mob lynching and 11 deaths.

Furthermore, tensions between the Hindu majority and minorities have also resulted in communal violence in the past in which women and girls have been specifically targeted, as was the case in Gujarat in 2002 and Uttar Pradesh in 2013.

In this sense, it is difficult to see the sexual assault and murder in Kathua only in the framework of gender violence. Unfortunately, we live at a time when rape has become a political tool to instil fear among minority groups in India.

Support for the suspect rapists
Before this brutal case made national and international news, the Bakarwal community struggled with pressure from members of the Hindu majority not to make noise about it. The family and their lawyer were repeatedly threatened not to speak out; some members of the community left early for the mountains. Her parents were forced to take her brutalised body to another village to bury because baton-wielding locals did not allow them to lay her to rest in the place

where she used to live.

But even more disturbingly, after the suspects in the case were arrested, locals organised protests in their support. On February 15, thousands joined the demonstrations in Kathua to demand the release of special police officer Deepak Khajuria - one of the accused.

The march was organised by the newly created right-wing Hindu Ekta Manch (Hindu Solidarity Platform, based in Jammu) and was backed and attended by officials from the ruling right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), including two ministers in the state government.

After much outrage, the ministers submitted their resignations, but one cannot but wonder why they were not expelled by the party immediately for being part of the protests. Similarly, Congress Party member Ghagwal Vijay Tagotra, who was also in the front line of the protest, was suspended but not expelled from the party.

It took national public outrage and the release of gruesome details of the violence unleashed on an 8-year-old girl in temple premises for the prime minister to come out and issue a general statement four months after the murder. This says a lot about how seriously a crime committed against a Muslim girl belonging to a nomadic community in a state like Jammu and Kashmir is treated.

But it hasn't only been Kathua locals and politicians who have reacted disgracefully to the brutal murder.

Public figures like Indian feminist and academic, Madhu Kishwar have gone as far as claiming that the crime was committed by "jihadi [sic] Rohingya" refugees.

Support for the Bakarwal community from tribal organisations has also been

conspicuously absent.

"The inherent bias against the Muslim minority community also displays itself in the fact that there have not been any joint statements made by de-notified/nomadic tribal organisations across the country condemning the incident faced by the nomadic family let alone standing in solidarity with them," told me one leader of an alliance of denotified tribes, who did not wish to be named.

As protests around the country take place to demand justice for the eight-year-old victim, we must ponder two points.

One, in the December 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape case, the family of the victim did not have to beg and plea for their safety and security; there were no protests in support of the six suspects and rightly so.

Two, not one of those named as the suspects in the gang rape of seven Muslim women during the Muzaffarnagar riots in Uttar Pradesh in 2013 are behind bars today. Society and media both forgot the women soon after they received a small amount of compensation as rape survivors. With this in mind, we should continue to demand not only that justice is served for the Kathua victim and her family, but also that it is seen as a hate crime.

We need to acknowledge that there is a problem with both gender and communal violence in our country.

(This article was first published in *Al Jazeera web portal, Imphal Times* reproduced in the interest of our readers. The writer Mariya Salim is a Kolkata born Indian with a degree in human rights law from the School of Oriental and African Studies.)