

Mexican and Indian Students' Embodied Contestations through the Identitarian Politics of 'Disposable' Bodies

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Titre / Título / Titolo

Luttes incarnées des étudiants mexicains et indiens à travers une politique identitaire des corps 'jetables'

Luchas encarnadas de estudiantes mexicanos e indios a través de una política identitaria de cuerpos 'desechables'

Lotte incarnate di studenti messicani e indiani attraverso una politica identitaria di corpi 'rifiutabili'

Abstract / Résumé / Resumen / Riassunto

The present paper is an attempt to read the recent students' movements in Mexico and India along comparable tropes, often from within paradigms of prescriptive neoliberal stances over the dead bodies of some rural Mexican-Indian and Dalit-Indian students. These movements perform embodied counter-narratives under the glare of international mass media and social media to contest and fight against dominant narratives linked to a grammar of undesirability of racial/ caste bodies. Public outrage in and around university campuses and city centres have been working towards a globalectics of unsettling discourses imagined through multiple voices of discord and disruption. Intellectuals, liberal citizens and students who are at the forefront of supporting their identitarian cause, have been facing the wrath of the police state and their representatives as they distort, disrupt and deny the hidden agendas of race and caste. Can we speak for the subalterns without being patronising and prudish? How do we translate our experiences of activism and engagement as thinking citizens of the planet? How do we posit our alternate mode of thinking as a kind of delinking so that we perform decolonization not only for them but also for ourselves in order to liberate them and ourselves from dehumanisation?

Le présent article cherche à lire les récents mouvements étudiants au Mexique et en Inde selon des tropes comparables, tenant souvent aux paradigmes de points de vue néolibéraux normatifs sur les cadavres d'étudiants mexicains amérindiens et d'étudiants indiens hors-caste. Ces mouvements manifestent des contre-récits incorporés sous les projecteurs de médias de masse et des médias sociaux internationaux afin de protester et de lutter contre les récits dominants liés à une grammaire d'indésirabilité des corps racialisés/castisés. L'indignation publique sur les campus, dans les centres urbains et au dehors tend vers une formation globale de discours déstabilisants imaginés à travers les voix multiples du désaccord et de la rupture. Les intellectuels, les citoyens libéraux qui sont à l'avant-garde du soutien à leur cause identitaire ont été confrontés à la colère de l'état policier et de ses représentants, parce qu'ils perturbent, défigurent et refusent les objectifs cachés des thèmes raciaux et de caste. Est-il possible de parler pour les subalternes sans fausse pudeur ni condescendance? Comment traduire nos expériences activistes et engagées en tant que citoyens pensants de la planète? Comment positionner notre façon de penser alternative en tant que mode de déliaison, de façon à agir la décolonisation non seulement pour eux mais aussi pour nous, pour nous libérer et les libérer de la déshumanisation?

Este artículo trata de leer los movimientos estudiantiles recientes en México y la India a partir de tropos comparables, sosteniendo a menudo el paradigma

neoliberal de puntos de vista normativos sobre los cadáveres de estudiantes mexicanos amerindios y de estudiantes indios sin casta. Estos movimientos manifiestan contra-relatos incorporados bajo los focos de los medios de comunicación y las redes sociales internacionales para protestar y luchar contra los relatos dominantes ligados a la gramática de lo indeseable de los cuerpos definidos por la raza / cuerpos definidos por la casta. La indignación pública en los campus y sus alrededores, así como en los centros urbanos se aproxima a un discurso desestabilizador de la formación global imaginado a través de las voces múltiples de la disidencia y la ruptura. Los intelectuales, ciudadanos liberales que están a la vanguardia de apoyo a su causa identitaria se han enfrentado a la ira de la policía del estado y sus representantes, porque perturban, desfiguran y se oponen a los objetivos ocultos de los temas raciales y de casta. ¿Es posible hablarle a los subalternos sin falso pudor ni condescendencia? ¿Cómo posicionar nuestro modo alternativo de pensar en tanto forma de desvinculación, a fin de hacer que la descolonización actúa no sólo para ellos sino también para nosotros, para liberarnos y liberarles de la deshumanización?

L'articolo ha come obiettivo una lettura dei recenti movimenti studenteschi in Messico e in India secondo tropi comparabili, spesso all'interno del paradigma neoliberale di punti di vista normativi sui cadaveri di studenti messicani amerindi e studenti indiani intoccabili. Questi movimenti presentano contro-storie costituite sotto i riflettori dei media e dei social network internazionali per mettere in discussione e lottare contro le narrazioni dominanti legate alla grammatica dell'indesiderabilità dei corpi razializzati/di casta. L'indignazione pubblica nei campus e nei centri urbani tende alla formazione globale di un discorso destabilizzante mediante molteplici voci di dissenso e rottura. Gli intellettuali, cittadini liberali che sono in prima linea nell'appoggio alle loro cause d'identità, hanno dovuto affrontare l'ira della polizia di Stato e dei loro rappresentanti, perché disturbano e si oppongono agli obiettivi occulti nel dibattito su questioni razziali e di casta. È possibile parlare per il subalterno senza falsi pudori né condescendenza? Come tradurre la nostra esperienza di attivismo e impegno come cittadini pensanti del pianeta? Come dar conto del nostro modo alternativo di pensare come una forma di de-conessione, di messa in atto della decolonizzazione non solo per loro ma anche per noi, per liberarci e liberarli dalla disumanizzazione?

Keywords / mots-clés / palabras clave / parole chiave

Students' movements, social networks, Mexico, India

Mouvements des étudiants, réseau social, Mexique, India

Movimientos estudiantiles, redes sociales, México, India

Movimenti studenteschi, reti sociali, Messico, India

Increasingly, we find that security forces of the state are being pushed to patrol and target its own citizens and its own immigrants (the legal ones too) as they reclaim citizens' rights which have been compromised to socio-economic and political neoliberalism. This situation which had trended very much in so-called 'third world' countries, has now also caught up with the USA and Europe. The Arab Spring had flowed into the Indignados gatherings in Madrid, the 'occupy' Wall Street at New York and then at the Times Now Square in London, and the recent Nuit Debout in Paris! The young people, both citizens and potential citizens have been at the forefront of these moves to occupy public spaces en-masse to protest against inequalities, austerity measures, job layoffs and worsening labour laws.

Yet, at the same time, governments are finding it increasingly difficult to control crowds who occupy sanitized public spaces. Thus in Mexico, the Plaza de Tres Culturas or the Plaza del Tlatelolco has had a violent history of students being culled to cleanse a very important public place in the heart of Mexico City; it was occupied to protest against the extravagant spending of the 1968 Olympic Games. The protests were telecast live by international television. Even today, commemorative rallies are held every year on 2nd October by huge gatherings of people from all walks of life and have become a ritualistic march to the Plaza de Tlatelolco to mourn the 1968 massacres. It was until then the official space showcasing the hybrid identity of Mexico as three sets of buildings of the three traditions surrounded it: a pre-Columbian remnant of Aztec temples, a Catholic church of Santiago de Tlatelolco and a modern housing complex as well as the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government offices. With the massacre, this Plaza re-constituted itself as now it became stained with the blood of several hundred 14, young Mexican boys.¹

¹Significantly, the plaza was also the venue which reminisce death of 14,000 Aztec soldiers in their last attempt to save Mexico from the Spaniards on 13th August 1521. Another violent event linked with this space is the massive earthquake of 1985 killing 8000 peoples when tents set up in the plaza housed the survivors.

In New Delhi, protest spaces in independent India have always been pre-assigned and watched over by the state to ensure 'order'. Thus, the Jantar Mantar and the Azad Maidan are two of the most important spaces where any kind of protests are allowed. Recently however student revolts have often broken such norms and have indulged in breaking into unassigned public spaces, disrupting traffic and general activity of the citizens. The very first public performance by JNU students before the media took place in Delhi after the event of 16 December 2012 of Nirbhaya/Damini.² It was certainly an important milestone since it appropriated the entire public space which showcased New Delhi as a formidable capital city with its sheen and geometrical architecture, gardens and road in front of international television, just like in Mexico.

The Disposable Bodies' Narratives

The disposable bodies were those of very bright and promising young men of their respective states who became undesirable as they were marginalised thinking bodies, which were contesting dominant national narratives. They were branded as miscreants, terrorists or mere trouble makers and hence they had been killed, jailed or disappeared. The protestors also were young boys like the dead ones whom they were out to mourn or whose judicial killings they opposed. Hence the deaths, arrests, incarceration or expulsion executed by the respective states seeking legitimacy for police or military action, could not allow the public mourning of these undesirable bodies nor any discussion on the issue of ethics of capital punishment surrounding them. The protesting rural Mexicans, the JNU students, the Dalits and the Kashmiri Muslims are bodies united over situations of mourning undesirable bodies, of raising questions over the ethics of the killings, even if they

² A 23 year old woman while travelling by bus in Delhi along with a friend was brutally assaulted and gang raped by six men on 16th December, 2012. Nirbhaya is the name given to the woman by the media.

were of terrorists. All this had become a prohibited discourse as a jingoistic neoliberal nationalism played to the international gallery of progress and development, of happiness and orderliness.

On 26th September 2014, some undergraduate students of a rural teachers' training college The Normal School of Ayotzinapa 'stole' state buses to mourn and participate in the 46th annual commemoration of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre (as they had been doing for so many years, after which they would park the buses back in their depots). These students were thereafter fired upon at random, six were shot dead and many were left injured. 43 students went missing and have never been seen again. There are many rumours surrounding their disappearance and the government has been in denial mode and has blamed some drug cartel for their deaths. Parents and citizens continue to protest, but there seems to be no positive response. The 43 disappeared students (and the 6 shot dead) were from rural Mexico, socially and politically at the lower rung of officialdom or state hierarchies. (The JNU students were also from such background and many of them were first generation university students of their communities/families). They were training to be teachers for the children of peasants and were highly motivated and ideologically inclined to the left. Huge protests in large numbers have since been organized across the country.

In JNU Kanhaya Kumar, the president of the students union and some others also were arrested allegedly for shouting anti-India slogans following controversies surrounding a Kashmiri poetry-reading meet organized by an ultra-left group of students on 9th February, 2016 where they were debating the issue of capital punishment meted out to a Kashmiri terrorist Afzal Guru. Right wing students' group tried to disrupt the event and there was some scuffle, following which they lodged a complaint with the administration who subsequently called the police. Sedition charges were levelled against these students for allegedly shouting anti-India slogans of "Azadi" (Freedom). The only proof which the Delhi Police had were some video

shots of the event which were also widely circulated on prime time television news. The whole student community and the faculty, cutting across different political ideologies except the ruling right wing regime, felt outraged because it turned out that the videos were doctored and false.

In August 2016, Hyderabad Central University banned five students from backward communities from all spaces on campus and their scholarships were stopped. This was the result of a similar pattern of vigilante politics of the ultra-right students' wing as in JNU. When the five above mentioned students were debating the issue of capital punishment, of a terrorist like Yakub Memon, the right wing students reported them to a local politician and to the vice-chancellor. Consequently one Dalit student, Rohith Vemula was driven to suicide. Protest mourning, meetings, hunger strikes and open street debates and lectures could not be tolerated and just like in JNU, the police entered the campus and beat up the students and took them away in vans to undisclosed jails. The whole Dalit community across the nation was up in arms against the government. Students and faculty of the HCU were beaten up and Dalits across the nations continue to be heckled and lynched to death.³

When the events at JNU happened, one argument raised by the dissenting faculty and students was that how would government respond had it happened in Kashmir itself? Anti-India slogans around dead Kashmiri militants were/are? common there. Today it is regretful that this feeling was to be a hopeless premonition of the state of affairs as it was to turn out in Kashmir very soon. When Burhan Wani, a Kashmiri terrorist, was shot at on a Friday on 8th of July, 2016, thousands of Kashmiri peoples joined the funeral procession, defying the national narrative of patriotism, discipline and order. The police and the army have the-

³ Atrocities against Dalits is a very ancient practice in Hindu society. Dominant political parties therefore have refused to acknowledge that today it is not just a social problem but a political one as well. This, they think, absolves them of any responsibility with regards to the violence unleashed on them by vigilante groups of upper caste "cow protectors".

reafter indulged in pellet gun shootings at protesting mobs of young Kashmiri mourners who eventually became stone-throwers. This has resulted in death, blinding or maiming of thousands of Kashmiri youth.⁴

What is common to all the above mentioned events is the bodily performative of assemblies engineered in order to occupy forbidden spaces. They perform in order to communicate with the highest centres of power sited in the university administration and the respective governments. This attempt to generalize, however, does not in any way intend to homogenize all assemblies. The reasons for tracking the commonalities is to take note of how bodies work like another grammar, another language and another discourse which is loud and clear and just as they also occupy virtual spaces such as the media and social media, they unsettle the most unjust logic of dominant narratives. The Mexican government blamed it on a drug cartel, the Indian government has put the blame on opposition parties, on the leftist faculty of JNU and on Pakistan. In all the cases, government heads have indulged in denial and false charges on agitators and a refusal to engage with the affected peoples/bodies in any humane manner.

It is interesting in this sense to note that the Normal School and in JNU, student bodies and the Faculty have joined the cause of the mourners and have exposed the ulterior motive and the dehumanization of the state machinery. Both the universities have historical birth stories. The teachers college of the Raul Isidro Burgos Normal Rural School of Ayotzinapa, is one of 16 institutions around Mexico that arose following Mexico's revolution nearly a century ago with the aim of training teachers to raise literacy and standards of living among the rural poor. The JNU emerged also from the Ne-

⁴The dead bodies were those of Indian citizens, but, like the Dalits, they are undesirable bodies as they are Kashmiri Muslims. "Burhan Wani's funeral was attended by thousands of people, and despite restrictions, the funeral venue was so crowded there was no space to conduct funeral prayers. Wani, 22, is largely credited with reviving and legitimising the image of militancy in Muslim-majority Indian-administered Kashmir." (Bukhari). For details of the Kashmir issue see the links mentioned in the bibliography.

hruvian vision of a socially just, scientific and liberal ideology of a newly formed nation with special efforts to accommodate and empower the most disadvantaged sections of the Indian society. Given the times of neo-liberal opportunism, the Normal School and the JNU have become unwanted hurdles.

Doing Spaces at Normal & JNU Campuses

Inside the Normalista School the ambience is very interesting as in this newspaper description.

Visiting the Ayotzinapa Normal School is like entering a time warp, or landing in Communist Cuba. Portraits of Che, Marx, Lenin, and Engels adorn the interior walls, accompanied by images of the 1970s Mexican guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas. Its nearly 600 students are all male and live on the campus amid rallying slogans for a variety of social causes.

.... On most days, the campus feels like a tiny city of teenagers and twenty-somethings, although the population now includes a jumble of relatives of the *normalistas* who were apparently kidnapped by the Iguala municipal police.

The words "If I go forward, follow me/If I go forward, push me/If they kill me, avenge me/If I betray you, kill me," are visible on a wall in the main building, one of nine that are used as dormitories, classrooms, and dining halls. A sign over the main entrance reads: "Ayotzinapa, the cradle of social consciousness". (Melissa del Pozo).

The same could be said of the JNU campus where students groups also write their left narratives all over. They also take issue with gender and Caste wars, Palestine, Latin American politics and religious dogmatism. The Normalistas and a large majority of the JNU-ites come from very poor backgrounds of indigenous peoples, peasants and tribes. The Normalistas train to teach the children of peasants and working class and are hence highly motivated and ideologically left leaning. They have been known to be speaking out against governments trying to argue for private edu-

cation. Hence they have had nothing else except their embodied occupancy of public spaces through which to speak and rally their causes without any political or financial clout. Careless press and television channels have blamed them as being a fallout of drug mafias/mafia? trying to disrupt the development of Mexico. The JNU-ites are mostly post-graduate and doctoral students who will be occupying very important ranks in government and international institutions. The Normalistas' and the JNU-ites' opposition to any education reform is also linked to their distrust with conservative Catholic/Hindutva ethos programmed towards selective deletion of progressive Mexican/secular Indian histories. "Most private schools are church schools, with an ideologically conservative curriculum. For example, the study of the millennia of powerful pre-Spanish Mexican civilizations has been largely abandoned here, even though most Mexicans have indigenous ancestors. Study of the founders of Mexican independence - Miguel Hidalgo, José Morelos and Benito Juárez - who stood with the poor, is marginalized." (Linden).⁵ Indian education programmes are also trending towards similar narratives.

Appropriating Public Spaces in Mexico

The situation with respect to the Normalistas was a response to the violent shooting of 6 students and the disappearance of 43 as they were out to participate in the commemorative event of 2nd October at Tlatelolco Square. Mass occupancy of prohibited zones in Mexico City by protesting students and teachers have had very little means to engage in any reasonable dialogue with government agencies. They nevertheless marched

⁵ India also has been seeing similar struggles headed by teachers and students of public funded Central Universities. The onslaught of the hindutva machinery (an upper caste Hindu onslaught) also attempts to trivialize our culture of pluralism and constitutional secularism. The violence against the Dalit students who are today empowered to speak for themselves is a serious threat to upper caste privileges. The death of Rohith Vemula, in this context is most significant.

down to state officialdom and performed occupancy in order to highlight the absence of the disappeared bodies.

A week later, on October 14, a protest convened in front of the office of the *Procuraduría General de la República*, Mexico's Office of the Attorney General. A few office workers remained inside the building, watching us through glass walls and the locked outer gate. A group of students struggled to enact a political performance in a space too small to fit the mass of demonstrators, calling out the names of the missing students one by one, each time responding with "*ausente!*" ("absent!"). A stage was erected, where the mother of one of the disappeared expressed her gratitude for the outpouring of popular support and her rage at the Mexican government. There were a few more speeches, after which most of the people started to disperse. (Norman and Roa)

Protest marches spread across cities in Mexico as this event served to highlight? earlier disappeared students, mass graves of students, faculty and activists from other universities as well. There could be no way that these marches could be controlled in spite of continued use of police brutalities. Placards read "The State is Dead" and when families, friends and sympathetic faculty of the disappeared students met, they saw no hope nor any scope for reform. They henceforth have joined hands with the Zapatista Liberation Movement to try working towards an alternative way of struggle and belonging from below.

Ayotzinapa thereafter also saw thousands of citizens hit the street with placards of the dead boys which read "Vivos se lo llevaron"/ (They took them/him/her away alive) on 26th September, 2015. This happened one year after the actual disappearance when some investigations by the "Inter-American Commission on Human Rights confirmed the doubts of many when they released a damning report on the federal investigation and challenged the government's version of events." (Alfred) The relatives of the boys went on a 43 hours hunger strike (to stress the number of 43 students gone missing) and made a list of demands to the president. Then they marched down the streets of Mexico carrying banners against the State. Many were carrying images of the ma-

cabre and demonic remnants of the dead, stating justice, liberty and democracy. The relatives of the students lead the march and called it the 'March of National Indignation'. They also carried banners which read "Fue el estado"/ "It was the State". It was a peaceful rally, until the police charged on them followed by violent clashes. There was shock and anger and protest marches also spread to some other towns. The drug cartel confirmed that these 43 students had been handed over to them by the police, after which they were burnt and their bodies dumped in some rubbish heap.

Protest marches, public meetings and social media across the globe spread out condemning the event. Very interestingly, the JNU Students Union also expressed solidarity with the cause of the protesting students of Ayotzinapa as they organized a public meeting on the issue on 2nd December, 2014. A writer, Shuddhabrat Sengupta, a concerned Mexican citizen living in Delhi, Julia Libertad and a Delhi based Mexican artist, Natalia Ludmila were invited to speak in the event.⁶

The 'Construction' of Azadi Chowk in JNU.

For the present context, what is very significant is the founding and naming of the Azadi Chowk or Freedom Square right in front of the Administrative Building of the JNU this year. Earlier it simply used to be called the Ad-Block. However, the occupation of this space by the undesired bodies of liberal students and teachers, forbidden words and ideas constituted it as the Azadi Chowk. It is also significant that it undid the whole discourse of spaces assigned to different kinds of bodies depending on a division of labour paradigm, and what in the present context also is an arrangement of caste/class/gender variants: the bureaucrats and the administrators, the faculty, the students, the non-teaching staff and the peons, gardeners, cleaners and janitors. The university campus clearly designed the architectural spaces among the residential complex of the campus so that these categories of personnel inhabit different kinds of residential and working spaces. An

aerial view of the campus could reveal this arrangement very easily.

Significantly and ironically, the administrative building where the VC's office is located is shaped like a Mayan pyramid and translates impressively its formidable power. Student jargon has been mockingly calling it the Pink Palace (as it is made of red sandstone) thus puncturing the authoritative masculinity of the structure with the feminized triviality of 'pink' and with the burlesque mockery of a democratic and secular public institution labelled a 'palace'. The structure of this citadel of power had never been so visibly dark and foreboding as what it has turned into now. The appropriation of the Ad Block as the 'Azadi Chowk' has completely re-hashed it into an area watched over by the security as never before, but it has also come under the glare of the media. The Azadi Chowk has become a space for mourning and protesting the prohibited bodies such as those of Rohith Vemula and the Kashmiri boys. The constitution of the Azadi Chowk is therefore important insofar as it becomes a safe zone for protesting students to actually be able to speak truth to power, through sloganeering, posters, speeches and debates.

Speaking Truth through Embodied Spaces

For the elite classes/castes in Mexico and India, the marginalized student groups such as the Normalistas, the HCU Dalits and the JNUites look like the causes of public disorder and national shame. They are blind to corporatist agendas of neoliberal governments who want to steer education agendas away from actionable and thinking citizenship to propose instead an education geared to produce more skilled workers for the industry and its operational sustenance. According to this bourgeois class, The Normalistas are

...viewed as part of a world of poverty and disorder, a place of low standards, where corruption is endemic.... for years,

⁶ I thank Dr. Parnal Chirmuley for giving me the details of the event as she had helped the JNUSU organize it.

a repetitive flow of one-sided editorials and news hammering the normalistas and the normal schools has dominated the major Mexican media outlets. The Iguala massacre occurred in this context. This organized drumbeat against the normalistas has left many Mexicans thinking the normalistas are a monstrous problem. Chucho, a middle-class chauffeur, seemingly a decent, hard-working, honest man, told me that the Ayotzina-pa students were “looking for it” and “got what they deserved.” The political context has framed these young people as a chauffeur’s mortal enemies.” (Linden).

Amidst such hostilities, the students in Ayotzina-pa had to hit the streets to break the deafness of the university administrative bodies. They continue to stall government plans of education reforms involving teaching of English and computer studies, they fight against “standardized” faculty review and against the selling of the posts by retired faculty to the highest bidder. The Normalistas claim that unless they resort to violent acts like hijacking of buses or breaking window panes of officialdom, nobody listens to them. They don’t want English in their curriculum because most of the students don’t even speak Spanish properly. Also computer studies would be of no use to faculty training to teach in rural Mexico.

The JNU and the HCU students drew a lot of wrath from ultra-nationalists inside and outside the campus. The Dalit students of HCU were punished for practicing non-Hindu rituals or so-called ‘demon’ worship on campus and JNUites were alleged to be unholy communists who ate beef, drank liquor and had orgies all over campus premises. HCU and JNU students responded by going on indefinite hunger strike.

Many students who had been suspended or put in jails, along with many others who had not, joined the hunger strike. Bodies performing resistance with hunger, singing, theatre, lectures by eminent scholars occupied the roadside at the HCU gate and at JNU’s Azadi Square.⁷ Support letters, emails, social media posts and performing artists came pouring in as many friends, ins-

⁷ The HCU administration banned any gathering of students’ groups inside the campus premises. So they occupied the roadside in front of the main gate of the campus.

titutions and international communities also occupied this space. Family members of the dead Rohith Vemula and of the protesting students also lent their embodied presence at JNU’s Azadi Chowk. The most impressive closure boundary of the Azadi Chowk was drawn by the formation of a human chain by faculty one weekend when students, friends and relatives of the hunger struck students, celebrities, intellectuals, lawyers, filmmakers, television anchors and what have you joined hands and marched down peacefully across the arcade.⁸ They were bare bodies, unarmed and in peaceful protest and very vulnerable to police action. The struggle, like in Mexico, continues till date.

Conclusions

The embodied occupancy of Campuses of the Normal School, the HCU and JNU, by disposable bodies have transformed them into hybrid spaces of struggle. These bodies challenge officially sanitized spaces of control and power to turn them into liquid spaces which work to enable agency to the mass of dissenting bodies. They gather around hunger-struck ones to speak for the dead, the beaten and the heckled, the shot at by bullets or pellets and/or tortured and disappeared ones. The Normalistas, the HCU-ites and the JNU-ites have thereafter garnered mass support at open public spaces, appropriating them in different ways. Thus bodies themselves convert into another language, another kind of speaking and another kind of thinking by refusing to move, by silences, by gestures, by simply holding hands or by chanting slogans, by sharing their vulnerabilities and by performing actionable protests in open prohibited spaces. They also perform to receive the blows of state action as they have no other ways of writing their dissent. While they call out to awaken the state, they also draft, design and decolonize with their bodies national narratives of conflict and un-belonging.

⁸ Although harassment of democratically elected student bodies in many universities was rampant, this paper only dwells on JNU and the HCU for brevity.

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