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When decolonization is hijacked

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Abstract

This article asks how we should reconceptualize decolonization when it is hijacked by authoritarian/fascist forces. It focuses on the notorious Bhima Koregaon case in India in which 16 intellectuals/human rights defenders from across the country were imprisoned without trial as alleged terrorists. It shows how, on the one hand, decolonization is hijacked by the Hindu authoritarian regime and, on the other hand, colonial artifacts are resymbolized by the colonized to oppose oppression by native elites. It urges attention to the questions of who is mobilizing the language of decolonization and why. It argues that the most important anticolonial intellectuals may not use the language of decolonization and may not be in universities, but on the streets, with social movements, and in prison. It proposes that contemporary decolonization debates center processes of domination and oppression created by the state and global capital nexus, processes that are cultural, psychological, political, and economic. These processes are shown to entrench casteist/racist hierarchies, work through Indigenous elites, and create internal differentiation within marginalized communities, eschewing a unitary concept of indigenous ontology/cosmopolitics/worldviews. Calls for an emancipatory politics, such as that of decolonizing anthropology or the university, would be well placed to center these global processes and local nuances.

KEYWORDS
caste, decolonization, fascism, Hindu Right, human rights, India, indigeneity, race

Resumen

Este artículo interroga cómo deberíamos reconceptualizar la descolonización cuando es secuestrada por fuerzas autoritarias/fascistas. Se enfoca en el caso de mala fama de Bhima Koregaon en India en el cual dieciséis intelectuales/defensores de derechos humanos de todo el país fueron encarcelados sin juicio como presuntos terroristas. Muestra cómo, por una parte, la descolonización es secuestrada por el régimen autoritario hindú y, por otra, los artefactos coloniales son resimbolizados por los colonizados para oponerse a la opresión por las élites nativas. Urge atención a las preguntas de quién está movilizando el lenguaje de la descolonización y por qué. Argumenta que

los intelectuales anticolonialistas más importantes pueden no usar el lenguaje de la descolonización y pueden no estar en las universidades, sino en las calles, con los movimientos sociales y en prisión. Propone que los debates de la descolonización contemporánea centren procesos de dominación y opresión creados por el estado y los nexos con el capital global, procesos que son culturales, psicológicos, políticos y económicos. Estos procesos se muestran en el afianzamiento de las jerarquías racistas/de casta, trabajan a través de las élites indígenas y crean diferenciación interna dentro de las comunidades marginadas, sesgando el concepto unitario de ontología indígena/cosmopolítica/cosmovisión. Los llamamientos a una política emancipadora, tal como esa de la antropología o la universidad descolonizadora, podrían estar bien situados para centrar estos procesos globales y matices locales. [descolonización, derechos humanos, casta, raza, indigeneidad, fascismo, derecha hindú, India]

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, decolonization has become a buzzword in many spheres of life. Decolonize the university joins decolonize the museum, decolonize the garden, and even decolonize yoga. Fevered discussions of decolonizing the social sciences and humanities are rife though it is not always clear what is being addressed. Decolonizing anthropology, or for that matter history, sociology, geography, or development studies, has come to mean a range of different things but includes what and how we research and teach, as well as the broader university context including appointment processes. The "decolonial turn," as it has come to be known, has brought a critically needed democratizing energy, sentiment, and spirit to the university as it has to specific academic disciplines. But for reasons explained in this article, the use of decolonization can also be troubling, even dangerous.

Decolonization is not a new call in the university. In anthropology, the first volume with that name, edited by Faye Harrison (1991), emerged more than 30 years ago. It was the Association of Black Anthropologists' first invited session at the annual American Anthropological Association meeting. But in fact, Kathleen Gough (1968) had highlighted that anthropology was a child of imperialism two decades before Harrison. Talal Asad (1973) followed with *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. Harrison's agenda to transform the discipline, question the "canon setting of anthropology," and move further toward an anthropology for liberation has deep roots (see also Mintz, 1974; Bourgois, 1989; Trouillot, 1988, etc.).

Like Harrison, Gough (1968) promoted an anthropology committed to and engaged in the struggles against racist oppression, gender inequality, class disparities, and international patterns of exploitation and difference rooted in largely capitalist world development. Harrison and her collaborators (1987, 2) went further and said, "The major impetus for transformation or theorizing (about colonial and neo-colonial structures of power and economic relations) must come out of the experiences and struggles of Third World people … and the 'belly of the beast,' namely the 'internal colonies' within the so-called First World."[1]

Despite this history of anthropologists who challenged structural injustices and intersectional inequalities *and* took scholarship from the margins as a central point of engagement, such approaches have stayed on the disciplinary fringes. Indeed, as late as 2021, the presidential address of the American Anthropological Association, titled "Decolonizing US Anthropology," argued a range of topics should have been central to a decolonized discipline but were not: from slavery and structural violence, forced migration and displaced people, to the critical study of extractive industries, industrial agriculture, and monopoly capitalism (Gupta & Stoolman, 2022).

Zoe Todd (2018) said the contemporary decolonial turn is finally "forcing anthropology … to engage with some of the underlying structural injustices that keep it from *truly* decolonizing." The current call for decolonization has made it necessary for academics to put their curriculums, and the structures in which they produce work, under "canon fire," as aptly put by Andrew Sanchez (2018).

The most extreme call for this "curricular decolonization" (Lewis, 2018) has been to ditch the cannon. Rhodes must fall, Edward Colston drowned in Bristol Harbour; "Oh, look I had 30 white authors on my reading list, and now I have 15 Brown and 15 Black authors." Another approach has been to, "balance things out." Place Gandhi next to Churchill in London's Parliament Square; "oh, now I have 15 white and 15 nonwhite authors." Reading lists were adjusted, buildings and libraries renamed.

Sometimes the possibility of healthy debate turned into professional, generational war (Sanchez, 2023). When Marshall Sahlins (2017) lamented that anthropologists no longer taught classical anthropological texts and themes, he was accused of racism, white privilege, ethnocentrism, and appropriation of nonwhite culture. Ghassan Hage (2017) came to Sahlins defense: there is a difference between respecting someone and agreeing with someone. If you don't recognize Sahlins as an elder, clearly you don't wish to be part of the anthropological tribe. Fine, there are plenty of others, Hage (2017) said.

More constructive ways are being forged. Sanchez (2023) suggested the intellectual decolonization of anthropology need not be a war-like project that strips things away but a project of expansion, considering a broader range of ideas, methodologies, and human experiences—an impulse in any case integral to the ethnographic imagination. Gupta and Stoolman (2022) found practical ways forward: "canonical texts [should] be put into conversation with those of minority scholars whose work is seldom acknowledged, with the history of the period, and with the history of the relations between ethnographers and their subjects," and ask, "new … questions of these canonical texts."[2] Their thrust is to challenge what they call "white-norming." Todd (2016, 19) urged anthropologists, "every time you want to cite a Great thinker who is on the public speaking circuit these days, consider digging around for others who are discussing the same topics in other ways."

Beyond reading lists, and intellectual repositioning, the current call for decolonization has pressurized universities to take more seriously EDI—equality, diversity, and inclusion—and center ethnic and racial inclusion. Numbers were highlighted: ethnic minorities account for less than 10% of the top ranks of the British professoriate (Gopal, 2021). The figures were worse for Black professors. Appointment processes needed to center EDI in ways that they didn't before.

At one level this all seems great. However, with Rishi Sunak and Suella Braverman at the helm of the UK government when I first wrote this article, it is plain that EDI does not translate to challenging structural inequalities and injustices central to colonization; in fact, it may even be part of a process of recolonization.

Indeed, scholars have questioned the use of decolonization. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (Tuck & Yang, 2012), working on the United States and other settler colonial nations, stated, "Decolonization is not a metaphor." It is not about improving our societies, schools, or methods. It is not just about culture. In fact, the decolonial desire can get entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and re-inhabitation that furthers settler colonialism. For Tuck and Yang (2012), decolonization must have material implications, reparations of Indigenous land and life.

Olufemi Taiwo (2022) went further with his critique of decolonization. He argued for the separation of Decolonization 1 from Decolonization 2. Decolonization 1 was the national liberation movements from European colonial domination that spread across Africa and Asia in the middle of the 20th century, through which the colonized won political freedom, which Taiwo said is over. Decolonization 2, Taiwo (2022) argued, has become a catch-all trope, used to perform contemporary morality or authenticity, in which the ex-colony throws out "any and every … artefact, idea, process, institution and practice that retains even the slightest whiff of the colonial past." These include values and institutions like liberal representative democracy, governance by consent, and the sovereignty of the individual. Taiwo (2022) asserted Africans are not passive victims, unable to decide for themselves which colonial legacies to reject and which to adapt for their own futures. He warned against idealizing a precolonial past and pointed out that some values which decolonizers want dumped were present before European colonies and were levers for change for the national liberation movements. Taiwo (2022) had enough and charted an entire book, *Against Decolonisation*.

I don't entirely agree with Taiwo (2022) or Tuck and Yang (2012). Taiwo's separation of Decolonization 1 from 2 is crude. Clearly, there are people who continue to see themselves as colonized even if they live within liberal democracies: Palestine and Kashmir are just two examples. I also don't share the hope Taiwo (2022) holds in postcolonial state sovereignty: the prioritization of political freedom, while important, often overlooks the economic subjugation on which colonialism was dependent and which persisted beyond national political liberation and continues to be perpetuated by elites in many postcolonial nations.

Tuck and Yang (2012) don't suffer from the same problem but reductively limit decolonization to reparations of Indigenous land and life. Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino (2020) objected: African Americans who experienced slavery didn't have land in the first place; they had nothing. Andrew Curley et al. (2022) reached a middle ground marrying the experiences of African American slavery with those of Indigenous people: we need to ask what our scholarship does for the literal reparation of land and life. The thrust of Tuck and Yang's (2012) wider point stands: decolonization is not a metaphor and must be about material transformations.

In anthropology, there are reasons to be concerned with claims that the ontological turn (focusing on the radical alterity of people and their cosmopolitics) is the decolonial turn because it requires the permanent decolonization of thought (Viveiros de Castro, 2009). This is especially so when its proponents divorce the "ontological turn" from "fighting for indigenous peoples' rights in the face of the world powers," as have Holbraad et al. (2014). As Todd (2018) poignantly highlighted, anthropologists work cannot be separate from the struggles of the people we study, even if we ignore those struggles in some kind of alleged ontological purity of scholarship.

Indeed, critiques have rightly argued that the focus on the radical alterity of Indigenous people required by the ontological turn, an ontological purity away from wider structures of power relations and political economy, is an exercise of flattening, essentializing, and universalizing and that it doesn't address how some worldviews become dominant over others (e.g., Bessire & Bond, 2014; Bovensiepen, 2021; Graeber, 2015; Lazar, 2022). Moreover, it is also dangerous and unethical. As Mona Bhan and Radhika Govindarajan (2023) powerfully show, the same arguments of the ontological purity of Indigenous people and the focus on their cosmopolitics have been appropriated by fascist forces.

In this article, I join the voices of caution against the uncritical embrace of decolonization for my research is situated in a country where decolonization has been dangerously hijacked by authoritarian right-wing forces. Yet rather than abandon the spirit of decolonization altogether, I suggest a particular kind of decolonizing is the need of the hour.

If the purpose is to achieve cultural, psychological, economic, and political freedom for those who continue to be dominated, oppressed, and marginalized, any decolonization effort needs to examine, understand, and challenge the global processes through which these inequalities and injustices are produced. There is a need to move beyond repainting curriculums, adding a few more minority faces to our faculties and student

bodies, and also beyond a research agenda in which decolonization is a project of simply achieving postcolonial political sovereignty or translating a radical alterity, alternative cosmopolitics, or other worldviews. Decolonization initiatives need to center a theoretical analysis of the processes through which contemporary imperialism—of which colonialism is a part—and the resistance against it works. I argue that these processes are inseparable from the workings of global capital and involve a nexus of the state with national and multinational corporate interests. On the ground, this relationship evolves in different ways in different times and places, but in my field sites has created brutal processes of accumulation by dispossession through the military might of the state, entrenched social inequalities such as caste, as well as enhanced nuanced processes of differentiation within Indigenous communities, unequally dividing communities internally through an intersection of class, caste and gender.

I suggest too that our disciplinary role should promote an anthropology of praxis in our universities, one that is astute to when and how decolonization gets appropriated, even hijacked, for the goals of recolonization. But that also crucially prioritizes the struggles and theories which emerge from those who are fighting for liberation against their domination, even if they themselves don't necessarily call what they are doing decolonization or anthropology.

THE CONTEXT

My thoughts on decolonization derive from my scholarly engagement with India over the last 24 years. My immersive ethnographic research was in the forested hilly regions of the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, long considered an internal colony of India, where I lived among its Indigenous forest dwellers—Adivasis—people cast right out of the caste system and treated by most outsiders as *jungli*, that is wild, savage, and barbaric. Many Adivasis historically retreated into the undulating forests away from the barbarism of the state. There, they maintained values and practices often at odds with the rest of Indian society, the subject of my first book, *In the Shadows of the State* (Shah, 2010). Adivasi autonomy was helped by battles they fought in colonial times which led to the legal preservation of their land and forest rights, and which got enshrined by the independent Indian state through the constitution giving them some material security and cultural autonomy.

These Indigenous rights were often being undermined in the name of "development"—whether for dams, mines, or military bases but it was not till India liberalized its economy from the 1990s and welcomed foreign investment, that the military onslaught intensified to overrule those protective laws to enable the expropriation of resources for capital accumulation. Multinational corporations had been promised access to the rich mineral reserves that lie under Adivasi territory (coal, iron ore, bauxite, kyanite, mica, gold, diamonds). Brutal counterinsurgency operations were mounted in those forests from 2008. Tens of thousands of Adivasis were dispossessed, incarcerated, or killed in the name of countering a banned underground Marxist-Leninist Maoist insurgency—also called Naxalites—simmering in India for more than half a century who had created their guerrilla strongholds in the forests of central and eastern India.

Between 2008 and 2010, I lived among the Adivasis in one of the two guerrilla strongholds in the country and studied both the spread of the insurgency and the counterinsurgency, the outcome of which was my second book, *Nightmarch* (Shah, 2018). Later, in a country-wide collaborative project, which resulted in a coauthored book, *Ground Down by Growth* (Shah et al., 2018), I examined how India's story of economic growth had also been experienced by Dalits—considered to be at the bottom of the caste system and treated as "untouchable." When it became impossible to return to the Adivasi forests where I had once lived because of the intensity of the counterinsurgency, I stayed abreast through local intellectuals in different parts of the country—human rights lawyers, Indigenous and Dalit rights activists and artists, and academics.

Some of these people, from 2018, found themselves also targeted by the state and imprisoned without trial under draconian anti-terror laws as banned Maoist insurgents—Urban Naxalites. The research, analysis, and activism of these intellectuals/human rights defenders and a case that has resulted in 16 of them being incarcerated (Figure 1) —the Bhima Koregaon case—and what it shows about the collapse of democracy in the world's largest democracy is the focus of my latest book, *The Incarcerations* (Shah, 2024), and central to the thoughts on decolonization I present here.

The structure of my article is straightforward. I begin with the empirical situation from which my theorizations emerge—the Bhima Koregaon case. I analyze the case in relation to discussions on decolonization and end with a few reflections on the university context.

THE BHIMA KOREGAON CASE

Maharashtra state, western India, January 1, 2018. Anita Sawale, a feisty 39-year-old Dalit anti-caste activist, told me that she was excited about the festivities that lay ahead that day but had no idea of the horrors that would unfold.

Anita left her home in the suburbs of Pune city with her family that morning in a large convoy of motorbikes and vehicles. They were all dressed in white and waved blue flags, the two colors of the Ambedkarite movement—named after the eminent Dalit Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who drafted the Indian constitution. They headed for the "Vijay Stambh" or Victory Pillar, a gray stone obelisk which towered 60-foot-high over the river Bhima at the village of Koregaon, to mark the sacrifice of their Dalit ancestors who had died there in an 1818 battle (Figure 2).

According to the stories passed down by Anita Sawale's father, the Victory Pillar at Bhima Koregaon commemorated the day Dalits had brought down the Peshwai Empire, an upper-caste empire under which Dalits had to wipe away their presence with a broom attached to their back and hang

FIGURE 1 BK-16 Incarcerated. Illustration by Siddhesh Gautam. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

FIGURE 2 Dalit pride celebrations at Bhima Koregaon, 2017. Photograph by Vishal N. Y. Kharat. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

spittoons around their necks so that their saliva would not pollute the land.[3] Commemorating this historic Dalit victory against caste violence at Bhima Koregaon gave new strength to the contemporary Dalit fight against continued caste oppression.

The Victory Pillar was in fact commissioned by the British East India Company as a British war memorial to mark "one of the proudest triumphs of the British army in the East," as declared by a large marble plaque on its walls, for the Bhima Koregaon battle had consolidated British colonial rule over India. The Dalits whose victory Anita and others were commemorating at Bhima Koregaon had been soldiers in a regiment serving the British East India Company. Military service in the East India Company was a way for Dalits to escape their daily humiliation by upper castes and secure a better livelihood. By the time Anita went to celebrate the Bhima Koregaon battle, the British-built war memorial had become iconic for Dalits to mark one of the few victories *they* had in battle over upper castes in India.

January 1, 2018, was going to be the most significant celebration yet for it was the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Koregaon. Some said that 600,000 people were expected to attend the commemoration. But most would have to turn back.

Before Anita and her family reached the obelisk, they found themselves in the middle of a riot. Youths with swords and big iron rods were running toward them, waving the saffron flag of the Hindu Right. Rocks and Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Dalits. Motorbikes and cars were in flames. There was nowhere to shelter. All the shops, hotels, and petrol pumps were shut. The police simply watched. Alongside slogans to Hindu gods, the mob chanted, "Victory to Shambhaji Bhide. Victory to Milind Ekbote."

Anita and her family managed to escape but were outraged by the events. Reports said that a mob of more than 2000 men had attacked Dalits that day.[4] At least 40 vehicles were burned as were several Dalit houses. Shops and restaurants of Dalits were vandalized. One person was killed.

Two days later, Dalits protested at the violence unleashed against them at Bhima Koregaon. Large parts of Mumbai came to a standstill. Anita, coming from a long tradition of anti-caste activism, filed an FIR, a first information report, at her local police station, against Shambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote, whose names the mob had chanted.

At the time Anita didn't know who Bhide and Ekbote were. It turned out they had deep links with the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the 100-year-old mothership of Hindutva, the ideology of Hindu supremacism, seeking to cast India as a Hindu nation and whose political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had been in power since 2014.

Bhide was said to be close to Narendra Modi. Ekbote was at the forefront of cow vigilante activities which in the past few years fatally lynched Muslim and Dalit youth allegedly found with beef. Both Bhide and Ekbote had large followings in the area.

Ekbote had apparently visited Bhima Koregaon a few days before the planned commemorations and held a press conference to declare January 1, 2018, a "black day." He is said to have distributed pamphlets which questioned the celebration of a British victory and said the Bhima Koregaon programs created a rift *between* Indians.[5] Ekbote allegedly urged everyone to ensure a *bandh* (a shutdown) of Bhima Koregaon, on the very day that hundreds of thousands of Dalits were to gather for the bicentennial commemoration.[6]

I don't have space to go further into Bhide, Ekbote, and the riots (see Shah, 2024). Suffice it to say that they were reminiscent of what Paul Brass (2011) called "fire tenders," people who keep ethnic tension alive through inflammatory inciting acts, who carefully plan and normalize over time the moves of potential rioters.

Anita herself told me a friend warned her that riots were nothing new. They happened many times in the country, not least in Gujarat state in 2002, when more than a thousand Muslims were murdered under the watch of Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat. There too police did not stop the butchering mobs. Critiques were brutally silenced. Anita was told that what had happened in Gujarat was now happening in the country at large. Nevertheless, she bravely persisted with her case. Ekbote was arrested by the Pune police on March 14, 2018. It seemed justice may prevail.

However, within a little over a month, everything changed. Ekbote was released from prison and an entirely new narrative of the Bhima Koregaon violence emerged.

In two multicity raids across the country, in June and August 2018, the police targeted the houses of human rights lawyers, professors, writers, journalists, trade unionists, poets, and artists—in Delhi in the north, Hyderabad in the south, Ranchi in the east and Mumbai in the west. Computers and mobile phones were seized and, over the next 2 years, 16 people were arrested and incarcerated. Among them, I found 10 people I knew, including three who had been invited guest scholars at the London School of Economics.

The police claimed that it was in fact these people that had incited the Bhima Koregaon riots through an event called the Elgar Parishad, "A Loud Appeal of the People," hosted in Pune the night before. They said incriminating letters were found on the computers of some of the arrested and there was enough electronic evidence to show they were all connected to banned Maoist insurgents—they were "Urban Naxalites." They said that some had even plotted to assassinate Prime Minister Modi.

The 16—known as the Bhima Koregaon 16 or BK16 (Figure 1)—were imprisoned under anti-terror laws under which bail is near impossible and trials take years to even begin. Six years since the first arrests, there is still no sign of a trial. I give you a snapshot of the BK16 and what they worked on as this is important for the arguments about decolonization I develop:

Sudha Bharadwaj spent most of her childhood in Cambridge, UK (where her mother, a brilliant Indian economist, was a visiting fellow), but in her twenties shed the privilege of her caste and class background and made the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh her home. She is one of the few trade unionists in the world who fought for the rights of informal sector labor on precarious jobs, as part of a union known as the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, or Chhattisgarh Liberation Front. At the age of 40, Bharadwaj trained as a human rights lawyer and expanded her work from labor rights to Indigenous land rights, fighting land grabs by multinational corporations for mining operations. In the decade before she was arrested, Bharadwaj had investigated state atrocities against Indigenous people to clear them off their land. She had used environmental litigation to uncover the planned land grabs by big business, worked with social movements to raise awareness of people's rights and to mount protests against the illegal takeovers of their territory. At the time of her arrest, Bharadwaj was 57 years old and a visiting professor at the National Law University in Delhi.

Stan Swamy, a Jesuit priest, tragically died at 84 in judicial custody 6 months after he was incarcerated during the COVID pandemic. Swamy was born into a high-caste, land-owning family in Tamil Nadu, southern India, but had also cut ties with his privileged background and made Jharkhand his home. Swamy fought for Indigenous rights for more than 30 years and nurtured many grassroots Adivasi activists to fight against land grabs by multinational mining corporations and the building of large dams and army firing ranges (Swamy, 2021). He was so immersed among the Adivasis that much of his activism was attuned to the emerging divisions and class stratification *within* their communities. In the decade before he was arrested, based on a research report he convened (Bagaicha Research Team, 2016), Swamy had filed a petition in the Jharkhand High Court against the government for imprisoning thousands of Adivasis, Dalits and other marginalized communities without trial as alleged Maoist terrorists.

Several of the others also worked on Indigenous land rights or had spent decades fighting for Dalits and Adivasis who had been imprisoned without trial in other parts of the country. For example, Mahesh Raut, a grassroots, forest-rights democracy activist, just 31 years old when arrested, was mobilizing Adivasis against iron ore mining in the forests of Maharashtra (Pathak et al., 2017). Or Surendra Gadling, also based in Maharashtra,

a 47-year-old, Dalit human rights lawyer who inspired and nurtured several Dalit human rights lawyers. Also imprisoned was the 46-year-old, Delhi-based prisoners' rights activist and researcher, Rona Wilson.

Apart from Sudha, there were three other professors all of whom had worked on minority rights: Shoma Sen, a 59-year-old professor of English literature and department head at Nagpur University and women's rights activist who had also written about Dalits and Adivasis (Sen, 2017, 2019). Hany Babu, a 54-year-old associate professor in the Department of English, Delhi University, whose research was mainly on erudite ideas of syntax in English literature but who had fought to make the university campus more democratic for Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, and other marginalized communities.

And there was the 69-year-old Anand Teltumbde, a Dalit professor at Goa Institute of Management who had written many books on caste, Ambedkar, the impact of Hindutva and neoliberal capitalism in dividing Dalit communities in India, with some turning to the Hindu Right (Teltumbde, 2005, 2010, 2018c, 2020a, 2020b). Teltumbde had also authored hundreds of articles on these subjects including as part of a regular column called "Margin Speaks" in one of India's most well-regarded journals, *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Like Anand, several other of the incarcerated also worked for the Dalit cause. These included the Mumbai-based Dalit poet, writer, and publisher, Sudhir Dhawale who was in his fifties when jailed. And the three Pune-based cultural artists of the Kabir Kala Manch, a troupe of bards who sang powerful songs against caste oppression and inequality—Jyoti Jagtap, Sagar Gorkhe, and Ramesh Gaichor—all in their thirties when incarcerated.

Other cultural artists were also arrested: for instance, 78-year-old Varvara Rao from Hyderabad, a well-known revolutionary poet, writer, literary critic, and activist (Rao, 2010; Venugopal & Kandasamy, 2023).

Sixty-year-old Vernon Gonsalves was a political commentator, writer and activist as was his friend the 44-year-old artist and cartoonist Arun Ferreira who had trained, like Sudha and Surendra, to be a human rights lawyer (Ferreira, 2014).

Sixty eight-year-old Gautam Navlakha had been a journalist for *Economic and Political Weekly* for three decades. A pioneering scholar-activist of the plight of Kashmiris since the late 1980s, Gautam had drawn attention to the human rights abuses by state counterinsurgency forces, researching and cowriting seminal reports such as "India's Kashmir War" (Bose et al., 1990), and co-convening the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir (IPTK, 2009) which found thousands of unknown, unmarked mass graves into which Kashmiris murdered by the Indian security forces had been thrown. Later, Gautam worked on parallel state atrocities in the northeast of India and in the Adivasi forests of central and eastern India. On all these issues, Gautam authored two books on insurgency and counterinsurgency (Navlakha, 2012, 2014), public reports, and hundreds of articles.[7]

I'll come back to what the BK16 and their work illuminates about decolonization but for now, note that I see them all as counterhegemonic intellectuals whose analysis developed closely in relation to their deep-rooted activism among Adivasi, Dalit, Muslim, and other marginalized communities. Above all, in various ways—whether through their poetry, songs, or writing—they were fighting the inequalities and injustices created by the Indian state and its tryst with global capital.

Scholars, activists, and scientists from all over the world protested against these arrests. Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, and Robin Kelley signed petitions, recorded video messages, wrote news articles, and spoke out. Amnesty International and Oxfam released statements against the arrests. The UN Rapporteur Mary Lawlor declared that Stan Swamy's death will always remain a stain on India's human rights record. Protests were held in different parts of the country. There were social media campaigns. #MeTooUrbanNaxal trended on Twitter for a while. But all fell on deaf ears.

This is not the place to discuss at length the shocking ways in which the Hindutva instigators of the riots—Ekbote and Bhide—were let off the hook and blame for the violence placed on an entirely different event and an entirely different cast of characters—the BK16—who weren't even present that day at Bhima Koregaon. It is also not the place to share how Pegasus spyware was used to snoop on the incarcerated. Nor the place to reveal how US cyber forensic experts showed that the computers of some of the BK16 were not only hacked but the evidence, on which the police case rests, implanted. There is no space to dwell at length into the life stories and work of BK16. All these issues are dealt with at length in *The Incarcerations* (Shah, 2024). Rather, in this article, based on my longstanding ethnographic research on Adivasis and Dalits, and what I have learned about the BK16 and the trial they have been snared in, I want to highlight a few significant issues in relation to interrogating decolonization.

THEORETICAL ANALYSES

To take stock of what transpired: First, this is a case in which Dalits reappropriated a British colonial war memorial for their liberation from an internal elite; the upper castes. It shores up the fact that the distinction between the colonized and colonizer is not Black and White, or rather, not Brown and White. The colonized are themselves divided and include those who subordinated their own people (upper castes colonizing Dalits) and those internally colonized feel the process is ongoing (Dalits in contemporary India).

That colonialism worked through internal elites is of course an old insight (e.g., Cohn, 1996; Dirks, 2001). The persistent role of internal colonialism or neocolonialism with nationalist elites subjugating their own communities has troubled some of the most insightful anticolonial activists and writers. It is too often forgotten that Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) and Frantz Fanon (1963) were both writing above all against this internal colonization, even if they had different solutions.[8] If wa Thiong'o and Fanon focused on how British and French colonialism created internal colonizers in Kenya and Algeria, in India caste oppression and hierarchies predated the British co-option of native elites. My point, however, is that we need to be

astute to the internal divisions within communities, largely ignored in contemporary decolonization debates which draw a simplistic binary between colonizer and colonized. (See also the powerful critique that Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui [2012] makes of Walter Mignolo [2002] and Catherine Walsh: they ignore the internal dynamics of subalterns, the process of internal colonialism, and create new empires based on a depoliticized discourse of decolonization.)

Second, the Bhima Koregaon commemorations show that these internal divisions may lead to unexpected alliances—in this case, Dalits were soldiers in the British army fighting other Indians they saw as their everyday oppressors. From the Dalit point of view, Dalit ability to serve in the British army was in fact a way to escape their own colonization by India's internal elites, the upper castes. Ironically, the battle which Dalits symbolically celebrate to mark their victory over their internal colonizers in fact also led to the British colonial control of India.

Third, Dalit celebrations at the obelisk show that colonial memorials (or statues for that matter) could be reinscribed with a new history that subverted their original purpose. At Bhima Koregaon, people denied a history—Dalits—had successfully re-signified a war memorial erected to represent British victory over a competing empire as *their own* victory over upper castes. A colonial monument became a symbol of resistance against persistent subordination by native elites. Commentators may debate the accuracy of that version of history (Teltumbde, 2018a, 2018b) but that may be irrelevant for the concerned oppressed groups.

Fourth, the language of decolonization can be used in the service of right-wing authoritarian populism (Gopal, 2021; Sharma, 2019; Sundaram, 2022). The RSS and Modi supporters have portrayed Modi as India's first decolonial prime minister. The narrative of history on which they base this argument is that the main opposition, the Congress Party, which led the Indian independence movement from British rule, was in fact dominated by colonial stooges. They also claim that prior to the British, India suffered from hundreds of years of colonial rule at the hands of raping, pillaging, looting Mughals. Modi is therefore the first prime minister who is genuinely freeing India from its colonial baggage, returning India to its "true" Hindu Vedic roots, uniting a nation divided by colonizers.

The RSS leaders and its right-wing academics, who now have offshoots overseas including in London, even met in 2017 at a conference called "Decolonization of the Indian Mind" (Sharma, 2017).[9] Books are being produced. For example, J. Sai Deepak's (2021) *India that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution*, argues that while colonization of the Indian landscape may be over, the Indian mind continues to be possessed, handicapped by a historical narrative set by outsiders.

Ekbote's objection to the Dalit celebrations of the Bhima Koregaon battle, which seemingly ignited the riots of January 2018, is part of this broader RSS narrative of decolonization which has deep roots in its Hindutva intellectuals (Golwakar, 1960). The Hindutva proponents say a British victory over a Hindu kingdom should not be venerated by Dalits and that such celebrations divide Indians as they reproduce the colonial division of Dalits versus upper castes.[10]

This is the same spirit with which Modi and the RSS tried to silence the 2023 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) documentary *India: The Modi Question* which highlighted Modi's complicity in the massacre of more than a thousand Muslims and the persecution of those who testified against him.[11] The week it was released in the United Kingdom, it was blocked in India. Tweets, WhatsApp messages, and social media posts about it were banned. Students who tried to arrange screenings at universities faced power cuts[12] or were threatened by their university that if they screened the film, attended a screening, or protested the persecution of students in other universities who had screened it, they would face institutional action.[13] Modi's government officially said the documentary reflected a "colonial mindset."[14] Meanwhile, in London, Modi supporters in the diaspora, appropriated Black Lives Matter slogans to mount protests outside the BBC in Portland Place with placards reading, "Hindu Lives Matter."[15] The BBC was summoned to the Delhi High Court in a case filed by a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Modi's home state Gujarat as it had allegedly defamed India.[16]

More generally in India, this Hindutva narrative of decolonization has been used to violently target minorities. Muslims have long been Hindutva's internal enemy, increasingly made into second-class citizens (Jaffrelot, 2021). Mughal history has been wiped out from school textbooks and curricula. The country's only Muslim-majority region, Kashmir, is India's Palestine (Maira, 2014; Osuri, 2020; Osuri & Zia, 2020; Zia, 2020) and has suffered prolonged settler colonialism (Bhan et al., 2022). Whatever little autonomy Kashmir was given from India was stripped away by Modi as soon as he consolidated power in 2019, winning a second term as Prime Minister. One of the many impacts will be a new wave of settler colonialism bringing Hindus to dramatically transform Kashmir's demographics away from its Muslim majority (Jaffrelot, 2021; Zia, 2019).

Targeting Adivasis and Dalits is more nuanced: the message is selective incorporation rather than the outright rejection that Muslims face. Adivasis and Dalits together make up as much as 25% of the Indian population and are important political constituencies and vote banks for the BJP. For those who converted to Christianity to escape the caste system, the message is to leave that foreign/colonial religion and return to Hinduism. Hindutva organizations have long tried to woo Dalits into their ranks and infiltrated the Adivasi forests (Desai, 2007; Froerer, 2007; Vitebsky, 2017). Dalit and Adivasi anticolonial heroes have been appropriated by Modi, most notably Ambedkar and Birsa Munda (Teltumbde, 2020a). Indeed, Dalit and Adivasi activism has increasingly also become the decolonial currency of the Hindu Right.

Fifth and finally, and perhaps most importantly, what my analysis of the Bhima Koregaon case reveals is that those who in fact found themselves violently attacked and put in prison under anti-terror laws are the contemporary world's quintessential anti-imperialist anticolonial intellectual-activists. They would not use the language of decolonization to describe what they do because it has been hijacked by the Hindu Right. Yet, the BK16, and others like them, are those who for years have done the quiet work of thinking and fighting for the liberation of India's dominated and oppressed

groups—Adivasis, Dalits, and Muslims—and they have done so in very particular ways that I believe matter for all contemporary anticolonial, anti-imperial intellectual-activists:

- They have written articles, books and poetry, but they have all also worked closely with grassroots social movements taking on both the state and capital.
- They have eschewed an identity-based politics and instead built alliances between different groups of people.
- They have fought right-wing, authoritarian forces but also, especially, the inequalities and injustices created by the Indian state and its relationship with national and multinational corporate interests.

For instance, those of the BK16 who focused on Dalits, saw the fight for Dalits' rights being intrinsically linked to their everyday material struggles, a struggle against the way neoliberal capitalism in India has further stripped labor and land rights. They saw this struggle uniting them with others fighting the same forces, especially Adivasis. They argued against a Dalit identity politics that made Ambedkar into a godlike icon and warned that this iconization enabled Dalit co-option into the Hindutva forces all too easily once Modi too venerated Ambedkar. Instead, they called for Dalit-Left alliances while at the same time recognizing that casteism is used as a means of oppression even by the Left. This is perhaps most clearly articulated in the songs of the Kabir Kala Manch, the writings of Sudhir Dhawale, and especially in the many books and hundreds of articles of the Dalit intellectual Anand Teltumbde.

Notably, in the years after the Modi regime came to power, a cross-caste, leftist movement was building in different parts of the country. This was an alliance of Dalits—led by Dalits in particular—but also Adivasis, Muslims, and other marginalized communities. It challenged the BJP and its economic policies, provided an alternative for Dalits and Adivasis away from Hindutva, and gained inspiration from some of those incarcerated in the BK case like Anand Teltumbde.

Those of the BK16 working on Indigenous rights similarly showed how the Indian state had made a pact with national and multinational corporations. And how, in the hills and forests of central and eastern India, this resulted in brutal state-sponsored counter-insurgency operations which enabled the undermining of laws protecting Indigenous territory, while allowing security forces, outside settlers, and corporate interests to colonize Indigenous territory, extract its wealth, and dispossess many Adivasis.

Again, for the BK16, these were not abstract academic arguments but deeply linked to their work with social movements on the ground. If Stan Swamy had nurtured a generation of Indigenous rights activists in Jharkhand, Sudha Bharadwaj had inspired a range of women lawyers in Chhattisgarh, to work "both in the courts and on the streets" as she put it.

Moreover, some of their grassroots initiatives challenging the state and capital were successful. For example, among the many multinational corporations that Stan Swamy and Sudha Bhardwaj fought was the empire of Gautam Adani. Over the last decade, Adani had become Modi's favorite corporate ally. The result was that he rose from a small-time diamond merchant to build a global empire that made him—until recently—the second richest man in the world, richer than even Bill Gates (Mishra, 2023).[17] For over a decade, the state-corporate relationship was reciprocal. The BJP had introduced electoral bonds in 2018 that allowed political parties to be gifted limitless corporate donations without declaring their origins, though the banks which issued the bonds were controlled by the ruling party. This was declared unconstitutional in 2023 but by then the BJP was one of the richest parties in the world.

Yet, despite its power, the Adani Group was not able to enter Godda District in Jharkhand to build a power plant while Stan Swamy was not jailed. The Adani Group also did not have easy access to the coal reserves under the Hasdeo Aranya forest in Chhattisgarh where Sudha and her team of lawyers were working. In short, until they were incarcerated, Sudha and Stan, alongside other activist-intellectuals like them—were successfully fighting the most important decolonial fight—taking on both the Indian state and global capital.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

So where does all this leave academics in the university context? The Bhima Koregaon case warns that decolonization can and has been hijacked by authoritarian forces. As Indians with "Hindu Lives Matter" placards demonstrating outside the BBC London offices show, this is not just a concern about what is happening in some faraway land. In fact, it has already emerged in university contexts outside of India.[18]

The years agonizing about reading lists in the United Kingdom, from where I write, have brought marginalized voices to them. Universities also embarked on rewriting their history to uncover the legacies of empire and slavery, resymbolized and re- or co-named buildings, in the hope of making them less alienating for marginalized communities.[19] But a liberatory politics needs to go further. If the purpose of decolonization is the fight for the cultural, psychological, economic, and political freedom of those who continue to be dominated, oppressed, and marginalized, a central task must be to examine, understand, and challenge the contemporary global processes through which those inequalities and injustices are produced and sustained.

For this, it is important to remember that there is a limit to what can be achieved through minor changes in the university. The university can't be decolonized apart from much broader changes in society and the economy (Bhambra et al., 2018; Gopal, 2021). It is not just the impact

of neoliberalization and austerity cuts that has seeped into universities in the West. Anthropologists have highlighted that audit cultures make us control each other (Shore, 2008; Shore & Wright, 2000; Strathern, 2000) and shown the rise of a professional-managerial class in which the university had become a branch of the ruling class in its own right (Graeber, 2014). In the context of the United States, Piya Chatterjee, and Sunaina Maira (2014) argue that the university is in fact part of an imperial state where dissent is being met with repression.

Yet, the university can still be the "undercommons of enlightenment," as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (Harney & Moten, 2013; Moten & Harney, 2004) say from the United States, "a place where work gets done, subverted, and where the revolution is still black, still strong" (Moten & Harney, 2004, 102). As Priyamvada Gopal (2021, 883) in the United Kingdom says, if we take the "production of knowledge seriously as a vital contributor to systematic transformation … we can be a site where questions are frontally addressed towards wider change." Indeed, Dominic Boyer (2022), in the United States, suggests, universities are still places of refuge. At a time when universities in some parts of the world have come under frontal attack by right-wing forces with acute repression of academic freedom as they have in India (Apoorvanand, 2018; Sundar & Fazili, 2020), it is important for those of us in places where it is still possible to do what we can to grow those spaces of refuge along the lines Harrison (1991) suggested. That is, center the critiques, constructions, and theoretical deliberations of scholars (and I would add activists) belonging to traditions that have long confronted and challenged neocolonial structures of power and economic relations—whether from the Global South or the "belly of the beast"—those who are connected to real struggles of liberation on the ground.

The academics, artists, lawyers—intellectuals and human rights defenders—incarcerated in the Bhima Koregaon case have for me been such people. So let me summarize here what they and the case they have been incarcerated for have taught me about decolonization: We must be wary about the binaries drawn in decolonization debates between the colonizer and the colonized, pay attention to internal elites among the colonized, and consider the possibility that colonial symbols may be mobilized in new ways for a contemporary anticolonial politics. Anand Teltumbde (2005, 2020b) highlighted that Dalits benefitted from British imperialism in unintended ways against the internal imperialism of upper castes. In a similar vein, Hany Babu (2017), one of the other incarcerated professors in the Bhima Koregaon case, argued that it is English not Hindi that has "emancipatory potential" in India. This is because caste hierarchy is replicated in language: Hindi and Sanskrit preside at the top, so the most deprived sections of society were "clamoring for English" to step outside the hierarchy even though it was the language of British colonizers (Babu, 2017). Dalit myth-making around the Bhima Koregaon war memorial is an example of how there could be creative ways of unveiling, reviving, and embedding hidden histories around contentious symbols —whether statues, obelisks, or texts. Whether it is buildings, monuments, or the anthropological canon, it is possible to critically re-engage all without necessarily destroying them.

At the same time, there is a need to be astute to the fact that the language of decolonization may become a weapon for internal elites to argue for what is in effect a recolonization promoting a dangerous atavistic idea of indigeneity/ethnicity that violently silences marginalized people. This is evidenced in the appropriation of Black Lives Matter symbolism by proponents of a Hindu authoritarian regime as "Hindu Lives Matter," and that turns Muslim minorities into second-class citizens while incorporating Adivasis and Dalits on exclusionary terms. This reappropriation of decolonization by the authoritarian Right is not unique to the Indian context. It has parallels in other parts of the world, not least Turkey (Adar & Ibrahim Yenigün, 2019).[20] Leon Moosavi (2020, 347) signaled that nativist decolonization may be advocated by political elites from the Global South whose actual purpose is to further their own populist political agenda. Indeed, Achille Mbembe (2015) warned not to topple the statue of Cecil Rhodes to replace it with Hitler. We must ask who is mobilizing and appropriating the language of decolonization and to what ends.

In such a context, and otherwise, the most important anticolonial anti-imperial intellectuals may not use the language of decolonization and may not be in the universities. They may be on the streets, with social movements, and in prison. They may never even have held university positions in our disciplines though they may have made some of its most important (usually unrecognized) contributions.

Indeed, I would argue—and I know I am not alone—that one of India's most important contemporary anthropologists of caste is the Dalit intellectual Anand Teltumbde, incarcerated as one of the BK16. Teltumbde never held an anthropology position. This is unsurprising in a country where anthropology is a colonial discipline still largely caught in racial measurements. But neither did he hold a sociology position: the subject was dominated by upper castes. Teltumbde was in fact a professor of management but wrote anthropology books by night.

Perhaps most important for a theoretical analysis of contemporary decolonization is that it must center the processes of domination and oppression created by the state *and* its relationship with national and global capital. Indeed, there is a nexus between state terror and neoliberal capital. In the contemporary world, the fight against these processes—as the plight of the BK16 intellectuals show—can be dangerous.

As Teltumbde (2010, 2018c, 2020) has argued, these processes serve to entrench caste, as capitalism uses caste differences (see also Lerche & Shah, 2018; Bourgois, 1988; on ethnicity in Latin America). Bursting the myth of those who argued that caste was a feudal relic that would erode with modernization, capitalism, and market expansion, Teltumbde proposed that neoliberal economic expansion thrives on caste, showed how atrocities against Dalits rose during the three decades of Indian economic liberalization and globalization, and said that accumulation and dispossession was dependent on caste oppression. This theoretical analysis is in keeping with the anticolonial intellectual activists who fought for the US Black radical tradition and argued for an analysis of racial capitalism (Kelley, 1990; Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 1983). Or those who marry Indigenous rights with class struggle as in the Canadian Idle No More Indigenous movements (e.g., Coulthard, 2014; Melamed, 2015).

Colonialism, capitalism, and racism/casteism have always worked together, but in the contemporary world this is more important than ever and involves a project of cultural/psychological, political, and economic domination. Too often decolonization debates have centered a cultural critique

(anthropology's old project), a psychological critique (decolonization of the mind), or a political critique (a politics of sovereignty or recognition—adding more Black and Brown faces) but not a material one (livelihoods). There is a need for all.

Moreover, the processes of contemporary colonization through the state and capital are complex, for they not only work through Indigenous elites to re-entrench differences like caste/race but also create internal differentiation within oppressed/marginalized communities. Indigenous/Dalit communities are themselves divided, for example along class and gender lines, as Stan Swamy (2021) and Anand Teltumbde (2005, 2018, 2020) both explicitly recognized, with some turning into an internal elite. These are arguments that have been well-backed by other Indigenous scholars (Shah, 2018b; Xaxa, 2021). This internal differentiation is important to highlight for it eschews any unitary concept of Indigenous/Dalit ontology/cosmopolitics/worldviews.

Resistance against these processes can therefore never be just about an identity-based politics, shooting down any notion that only a Black person or a Dalit or an Adivasi has the right to speak for another Black person, Dalit, or Adivasi (see also Xaxa, 2021). Rather, resistance needs alliances between different oppressed groups and their supporters, advocates, intellectuals; alliances which are regional, national, and international.

It is also the case that different groups may be fighting for different political outcomes, based on their divergent histories and political aspirations. For instance, as Gautam Navlakha argued, Kashmiris have the right to self-determination (see Navlakha, 2016). Whereas, in Navlakha's (2012) writings on Adivasis, the preeminent fight was against multinational mining corporations backed by state counterinsurgency taking away their land and forests. Solidarities need to be forged keeping in mind and respecting these differences.

For those of us for whom the university is not just about the status quo but about social transformation, harboring spaces of critique, challenging inequalities, and injustices, promoting economic, political, and cultural liberation, I believe these insights highlight a need to move beyond the fads or "turns" in our disciplines. James Laidlaw and Paolo Heywood (2013) aptly critiqued this trend in relation to the ontological turn in anthropology, "one more turn and you're there." My plea is no more turns in anthropology—whether it's the ontological, ethical, or decolonial. Decolonization has brought positive changes to the university, to teaching and research, in ways that other trends have not. Yet, as I have highlighted here, like any other term, it should not be uncritically embraced.

Indeed, it is time to move beyond the turn tables of our disciplines and promote an anthropology of praxis within the universities. This is above all *a process* through which our theories of the world emerge dialectically from our grounded, field-based critical analysis of different imaginations and actions to transform the world. At the heart of this process is a relationship between theory and fieldwork that is embedded in a critical analysis of the materially grounded, cultural, psychological, political, and economic struggles of liberation of the people we work with. Through such an approach we can reclaim ethnography as a potentially revolutionary practice (Shah, 2018b) and create anthropological theory for a politics of liberation.[21]

There is of course no blueprint for each of our engagement in that politics of liberation. However, at this critical moment in time, with the rise of authoritarian forces everywhere and brutal suppression of those fighting against inequalities and injustices, I hope many of us will ask ourselves what we can do from our differentially situated positions for the freedoms of our persecuted interlocutors/comrades/allies. This is the reason why, when one of the editors of my last monograph asked me to write a book on the colleagues incarcerated in the Bhima Koregaon case, I felt that I could not refuse, no matter what the human cost of undertaking such a project was for me. When Indian writers, journalists, and scholars feared persecution for investigating this case, I felt my relatively privileged position at an elite UK institution gave me the responsibility to draw global attention to the extraordinary lives of the BK16 incarcerated colleagues and the social justice causes they fought for, and what they taught us about the collapse of democracy and the making of a better world (see also Shah, 2022). Writing alone can't change the world, but it can hopefully take us a step toward it. As Arundhati Roy (2023) says, "It would be presumptuous, arrogant, and even a little stupid of a writer to believe that she could change the world with her writing. But it would be pitiful if she didn't even try."

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ENDNOTES

[1] See the useful conversation with Faye Harrison by Carole McGranahan and Uzma Z. Rizvi (2016).

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTQ_YBeXCSY

[3] "In Poona, the capital of the Peshwa, the untouchable was required to carry, strung from his waist, a broom to sweep away from behind the dust he [treaded] on lest a Hindu walking on the same should be polluted … [and] an earthen pot, strung from his neck wherever he went, for holding his spit lest his spit falling on earth should pollute a Hindu who might unknowingly happen to tread on it" (Ambedkar, 1936, 18).

[4] https://thewire.in/law/independent-inquiry-pune-police-inaction-bhima-koregaon-violence

[5] https://caravanmagazine.in/crime/pune-police-bhima-koregaon-22-firs-uninvestigated-eyewitness-statements-unrecorded-main-conspirator-bail. See also https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/crime/bhima-koregaon-riots-pre-planned-report/articleshow/65761859.cms

[6] https://www.theleaflet.in/one-year-of-bhima-koregaon-case-part-ii-why-Elgar-parishad-spooked-sambhaji-bhide-milind-ekbote

[7] Some of Gautam Navlakha's articles are found here: https://www.gautam-navlakha.net/writings.

[8] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) who was close to the Kenyan independence movement, but saw the Kikuyu elite take over Kenya only to reproduce their relations with the British, argued for the need for Kenyan elites to decolonize their minds through vernacular languages. Fanon (1963) too was targeting native elites and indigenous capitalism as much as he was colonial rulers and stressed that the complete annihilation of colonialism including in the bodies and minds of natives, was an inherently violent process.

[9] There is a fascinating dimension to these debates in the relationship between Hindu neotraditionalism and environmentalism. Although Emma Mawdsley (2006) does not use the language of decolonization, she warns that some of the simplistic environmental discourses that posit an East-West dichotomy, romanticizing the relationship between Hinduism and the environment as an alternative to Western capitalist development (e.g., Shiva, 2001), will be very easily swept into a discourse of Hindu chauvinism and nationalism.

[10] The most influential ideologue of the RSS, Golwakar, had himself critiqued these Dalit commemorations: "There is a 'Victory Pillar' near Pune, raised by the English in 1818 to commemorate their victory over the Peshwas. An eminent leader of the Harijans [Dalits] once addressed his caste-brethren under that Pillar [presumably he is referring to Ambedkar here]. He declared that the pillar was a symbol of their victory over the Brahmins as it was they who had fought under the British and defeated the Peshwas, the Brahmins. How heart-rending it is to hear an eminent leader thus describing the hated sign of slavery as an emblem of victory, and the despicable action of fighting as slaves of a foreigner against our own kith and kin as an achievement of glory! How utterly his eyes must have been blinded by hatred, not able even to discern the simple fact of who were the victors and who the defeated! What a perversity?" (Golwakar, 1960).

[11] The BBC documentary, which reveals an unseen and confidential UK government report on the Gujarat riots which found Modi responsible for the violence and talked about the riots as "ethnic cleansing," rests on the work of many Indian journalists and filmmakers who also documented the Gujarat pogrom.

[12] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/24/india-university-warns-against-screening-bbc-documentary-on-modi

[13] https://twitter.com/SaibBilaval/status/1619311061630590977?s=20&t=UnKDWdtZ7-9pjUyj59X4Dg

[14] https://www.reuters.com/world/india/bbc-tax-raids-shine-light-indian-media-freedom-under-modi-some-journalists-say-2023-03-04/

[15] https://twitter.com/bbc_protest/status/1586343236750409728?s =20&t=UnKDWdtZ7-9pjUyj59X4Dg

[16] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-65670818

[17] This was until the US-based Hindenberg research showed Adani to have pulled the greatest con in corporate history and caused a dent in his fortunes. https://hindenburgresearch.com/adani/

[18] See the controversies around the recent LSE (2023) and Oxford (2021) Student Union President elections: https://theprint.in/world/indian-student-blames-hinduphobia-for-disqualification-from-lse-election-student-union-says-he-broke-rule/1496911/.

[19] See "Legacies of Empire" project at Cambridge, whose champions in particular colleges have involved anthropologists, for instance Marilyn Strathern at Girton (https://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/girton-reflects) and Yael Navaro-Yashin at Newnham. https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/blog/2020/07/22/exploring-the-legacies-of-empire-and-enslavement/

[20] https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/38646

[21] Ethnography is not the preserve of anthropologists and we should embrace all those who want to use it but at the same time ensure that it is not just about providing a case-study but about centering a dialectical relationship between fieldwork and the making of theory (Shah, 2017).

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