



Security at the Crossroads of Rights, Justice and Vulnerabilities

A Workshop : Report

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By

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG)

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INTRODUCTION

As part of the Research Programme on *Justice, Security and Vulnerable Populations of South Asia*, a one and half day workshop was organised by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) with support from Global Fund for Human Rights, as a follow up of the first Consultative Meeting. This was the second event of the said Research Programme.

A brief Concept Note about the Programme:

CRG plans to hold three workshops in 2024 on the theme of “Security, Justice, and Vulnerable Populations of South Asia”. The main statement of the programme can be found at -

http://www.mcrg.ac.in/Security_Studies/Security_Studies_Home.asp>. The first workshop was held in April 2024. The specific theme was, “Decolonising Security Studies: Justice, Security, and Vulnerable Populations of South Asia”. The concept note for the workshop along with its report, and other details can be accessed at -

http://www.mcrg.ac.in/Security_Studies/Security_Studies_Programmes_Events_2024.asp>.

The second workshop was held on 27-28 July 2024. The third has been planned for Chennai in September 2024.

The specific purpose of the second workshop is to relocate the security question in the context of the post-colonial societies of South Asia, their problems of underdevelopment, issues of basic rights such as of food, shelter, education, work, health, the adverse impact of internal conflicts and conflicts with neighbours on these societies, and their struggles for justice – all of which redefine the problematic of security compelling us to work for food security, social security, security from ecological and climate disasters, etc. Thus, the security question in the South is entangled with issues of life – life of the nation, people, and in particular lives of the vulnerable population groups in society. To grasp these entanglements is to resituate the security issue on the plank of biopolitical, or sheer physical, security of the impoverished classes of society involving millions of lives endangered by disease, hunger, absence of education and shelter, adverse climate change and ecological devastations, and the overwhelming precariousness of work and existence. The traditional approach to the security issue failed to reflect on the massive transformation in the last few decades, consequent to globalisation in countries of the South. It was unable to achieve any

understanding of the “insecurities” of marginalised people. These insecurities are real; they are not phantoms. The more the macro security of the polity is reinforced, the more it produces micro insecurities in society, leading to ethnic clashes, spread of homeland demands, conflicts over resources, public health disasters, and not the least, spread of racial, religious, community, and caste hatred, and mob lynching of the poor, vagrant, and the outcast. These insecurities have resulted also in making women from the impoverished classes the permanent underclass, forever unable to exit that condition of social incarceration. The issue of security is now at the crossroads of rights, justice, and vulnerabilities. It must not be the case that it will be only security of the state and the elites and insecurity of the rest.

Contemporary South Asia is marked by paradoxes that reflect the growing securitisation of states. Polities of the region are characterised by a division of insiders and outsiders, and thus by definition, citizens and aliens. Decolonisation happened through demarcation of borders of respective postcolonial states by departing colonial powers. In certain cases, where colonial rulers could not control frontier areas, they granted some autonomy to deter “outside” powers and buy peace in the region. In a historical sense, borders and boundaries of the newly decolonised countries of South Asia were demarcated through acts of partition. As a result, polities and geographies were permanently fractured, population groups in borderland areas were rendered homeless, stranded minorities were created, and migration was criminalised. Against this backdrop, ethnic, racial, communal, and caste hatred exacerbated creating fresh insecurities. The situation is now aggravated by neoliberal restructuring of economies resulting in everyday production of insecurities all around. One look at any postcolonial city shows how the secure upper-class world is always flanked by the world of the labouring underclass whose insecurity makes it possible for the upper classes to live - whether through sex, or extraction, or care.

These insecurities call for recognising the paramount need for justice. Calls for justice force our attention to the question of responsibility of the States to protect vulnerable population groups. They call on the polity to adopt as a norm of governance the principle of care and protection towards providing security to population groups debilitated by a condition of fundamental rightlessness and thus rendered gravely vulnerable. Security of life calls for the principle of responsibility for the lives of millions and to protect them from destitution, precarious life conditions, and the ever-present possibility of impending death.

The biopolitical approach to security and the paradox of macro-security of the state above and micro-insecurities below do not dismiss the legacy of the rights revolution that began with the eighties of the preceding century and proceeded apace in the next two decades. Yet as in India, with globalisation, precarious conditions of labour, agrarian crisis resulting in farmers' suicides in thousands through last two decades and farmers' protests, massive migration, and not the least the epidemiological and ecological crises - the rights agenda has turned to the issue of justice. And, now in the last fifteen years marked by massive inequality, destitution, disasters, and migration, the lower classes do not at all look to the market as their protector and guarantor of life. They demand direct responsibility of the state for protecting them. The question of responsibility has returned in this way. Who owns responsibility for the insecurities of people at large and the vulnerable sections?

Cities are crucial because they symbolise the eternal game of crime and security. Everyday life of the lower classes in the city is marked by, for instance, lack of safety of female commuters in public transportation system, lack of drinking water, housing and fuel, even lack of minimum sanitation facilities, various consequences of repressive approach to street vending, and insecurity associated with street level economic activities, resulting in two parallel figures of the policeman and the street vendor or the sex worker. Security cameras, civil guards, anticipatory arrests, creating a race of habitual offenders, and repressive techniques of surveillance and crowd control – these are marks of an urban biopower geared towards controlling lives and bodies of the popular classes. The question of security emerges at this intersection of issues of daily life. Hence is the important question: How do we address issues of urban justice? Parallel to the security-centric power at the top is the phenomenon of biopolitical practices from below. Trust building networks, solidarity efforts, practices of care and protection perched on an ethic of solidarity and hospitality, result in new social leaderships and various forms of self-organisation. All these mark the counter-power based on the biopolitical responses of the insecure marginal classes, most evinced in times of crisis, such as the recent cyclones in the midst of an epidemiological crisis, and the epidemiological crisis itself. To be sure, biopolitics from below does not dismiss the question of security, it approaches the question of security from the angle of trust, solidarity, and the overall question of life.

An agenda of peace and a dialogic regime assumes significance in the context of this question. Any notion of people's security requires us to understand the various informal ways citizens and the immigrants dialogue among themselves, practise friendship, and create a spirit of conviviality that counters the competitive and animalistic craze for urban property rights. Narratives of such streets, markets, or squares, tell us of the dialogic history of a city. Of course, anti-migrant riots are real; equally real are the practices of friendship and solidarity. Popular classes take in their strides the migrant's claim to the city, and one can find such an instance in the history of the Dharavi slum in Mumbai. All sorts of cohabitation are forged through these practices. Besides the pre-existing trust networks based on village, caste, language, and other community ties, new networks of trust develop. Likewise, in Kolkata, various networks of associations ranging from welfare bodies, clubs, societies, charity groups, informal educational programmes, women in care work, activist groups, etc., instill confidence among the popular classes that the latter are not alone. It is their city as well. In the democratisation of the city, social dialogues have a big role to play. One of the interlocutors will be the migrant population groups. Hence it is important to bring back the earlier calls for peace and rebuild the relevance of regional mechanisms and bilateral arrangements and treaties for peace and security. For, only with peace, a society can address insecurities, ensure rights, and strengthen institutions of justice.

For all these reasons, a strategic relocation of the security problematic at the crossroads of rights, justice, and protection of vulnerable population groups will inform the discussions in the workshop. As such, the method cannot but be intersectional. Yet, it is important to remember, the intersectional approach does not emerge by itself. It emerges only in the wake of a conjuncture of circumstances and forces. An intersectional approach will not dissolve the question of security. Instead, it will help us to understand the moments of conjuncture when the imperative of security has met with other principles of life. The activities to be carried out by CRG as part of this programme in the form of dialogues, workshops, webinars, research, public lectures, peace audit exercises, and network building will be informed by the above approach.

Workshop Proceedings

27 July 2024

1. INAUGURAL SESSION

The workshop began on the evening of 27 July and continued for the day of 28 July 2024. The evening of 27th commenced with an Inaugural Session that was meant to introduce the central theme and Approach Paper (prepared by Ranabir Samaddar and a few members of CRG) to the workshop. The main speaker of the session was **Ranabir Samaddar**, *Calcutta Research Group*, and the session was moderated by **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhuri**, *Rabindra Bharati University & CRG*.



Picture 1 : First Session- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhuri, Ranabir Samaddar.

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury initiated the session by welcoming the workshop participants and briefly introduced the workshop while highlighting the themes that would be deliberated upon in the sessions. In engaging with the meaning and concept of security, he spoke about platform workers referred to as partners in work but who are often deprived of their rights as workers, and mentioned more instances that would be explored through the workshop sessions. The sessions began with brief self-introductions by the participants.

Ranabir Samaddar introduced the Approach Paper, that is, the conceptual framework of the research programme and the workshop. He raised the point that given the present Indian scenario, security issues need to be considered in the context of the milieu of security as all-developing and then inquiring how a group or an individual working on justice, human rights and other related issues cope with the problem of security. The security problem and society as a victim, these issues have not been conjured up suddenly. The security question had been an expected viewpoint of human rights activists 20 years ago; in recent times the question of security as a social issue and the ways in which intergroup relations affect large sections of people, individual existence, women, children, can be considered as a dawning. Ranabir Samaddar drew attention to the working women who migrate back home, especially instances from the Covid-19 as a devastating epidemic, especially in the post-pandemic time, the right to health became an issue of security. This also makes one recall the uncountable people who lost lives and jobs during the pandemic. The idea of security, state and national security have been compartmentalised; however, with neoliberalism, security of life has turned into an overwhelming question. It is difficult to cluster or differentiate issues as either issues of life or problems associated with work.

Samaddar elaborated that the questions of migration and security at times breach the paradox of one wanting or requiring greater assurance of the overall security of the nation; such conditions bring more insecurities to the surface, i.e., greater the dimensions of insecurity, it is more difficult to ensure complete security. The speaker exemplified political and military decisions in Manipur and added that ensuring peace may have meant security earlier, but now, unless one has security, there cannot be peace; security is always anticipated and comes with its own risks, just like the market depicts risk and security in terms of finance. In reference to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Samaddar explained how conflicts are considered as dominant, while rights and

trust go hand-in-hand, reproduced as the opposite of risk - realities that have been reinforced by Covid-19. He stressed on the ways in which the perception of dominant risk keeps changing with time, and citing David Arnold, talked about the Surat plague of 1994, when there had been estimates of about one-sixth of the Indian population perishing due to plague. Post-Indian Independence the country focused on malaria in the health policies and plans, in 1950s and 1960s. The notion of security in the public mind metamorphoses, being dictated by rulers, political and defense priorities, with a continuous tussle between the orders of bottom tiers and upper tiers of society, in terms of the concept of security. The architecture of care and care economy have been corporatised today and care and protection operate in very different ways. Thus, the notion of security now becomes life-oriented at the crossroad of justice, with solidarity growing along with responsibilities and collective efforts, institutional duties, and a particular determination that works at approaching and addressing security issues through the understanding of vulnerability.



Picture 2: First Session.

In the brief question-answer session that followed, Arup Sen critiqued the ethics of care and society and asked if Foucault's assertion of biopolitics from below can bring back the class question or is the class question different, completely contradictory. Manish Jha added that there is a distinction made between certain groups being made to feel insecure, in terms of identity, religion, and then it becomes important to observe the methods taken up by academics in looking at insecurity perpetuated by power regimes. Samir Das suggested if one can think in terms of lower-class security as a transcendental plane that cuts across sections, class and religion. Paula Banerjee asked if the factors that affect security are immutable while the pandemic, along with disasters and environmental degradation have plagued security. Kalpana Kannabiran underlined care and care economy being the organisational principle of social justice. How the entire debate pivots on marginalised justice becomes vital for historicising the circumstances that shift the pivot of attention, earlier focused on violence, law, and rights. How might one differentiate and relate between violence, law and rights in terms of politics and the trajectory of discourse. Can one think of rights without law, and the fact that vulnerability and law have not been put together in the same connections, were some of the questions raised in the discussion.

Samaddar concluded by mentioning that security most often does not come with an all-encompassing definition, although fundamental differences come up with time, not immutable but vulnerable in terms of addressal. When one discusses security, at times crime is left out and thought of more as a byproduct that can be taken care of. Within experiences such as urban processes or life in cities, crime and cities coexist, though that does not mean that villages or rural areas may not be characterised by criminal practices. One cannot think of crime without the city, being born into urbanity, city dwellers bear the repercussions of urban processes. It is important to look into the ways of life on the streets, the subaltern life that controls the notion of security and portrays the class question when life in gated communities and slums is considered, life is found crowded with risks all the time.

2. Second Session - CONVERSATION: Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (The early years of WISCOMP)

The inaugural session was followed up by a conversation between **Meenakshi Gopinath**, *Director-Women in Security, Conflict Management & Peace (WISCOMP)* and **Paula Banerjee**,

Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) & CRG, on the formative years of WISCOMP of which Paula Banerjee was also a part of. Following is a snippet of the conversation that ensued. The session was moderated by **Samata Biswas**, *The Sanskrit College and University & CRG*.



Picture 3: Session 2- Meenakshi Gopinath, Paula Banerjee and Samata Biswas

Meenakshi Gopinath had joined the workshop online on Zoom and began with the assertion that decolonisation of the concept of security is essential in a way that supports peace building in a region. In reference to Rounaq Jahan's work, Gopinath stressed on the significance of revisiting the context, and that decolonisation cannot go about without justice, while cultural security is also integral. Steering the ethics of care spawned by digital platforms, today is equally important. The advent of the repertoire of globalisation may come with dialogues on security and trust, rather than the compulsion or need of militarisation in today's time. Wars in Ukraine and Palestine indicate that nuclear armament is not the only cause of concern at present. Gopinath highlighted that the trajectory in articulation of human security, life and dignity come at the human cost of violence, human need for sustainability, freedom from want and freedom from fear. The question of whether platform economy workers can be called a labour force, given the predatory circumstances and the lack of protection that they work with, was emphasised as a crucial point. There was discussion on

WISCOMP's experience on securitisation and building up critical studies as a prospect of security with observation of subversion of power politics and the ways in which the process had been reflected in the work of **Paula Banerjee**.

Paula Banerjee spoke about peace and insecurity while she worked in border areas. She shared her research experience as a collective thought process that attempted to bring together peace and security in the same frame. Banerjee underscored the role of WISCOMP having been a place of connection that looked at peace from a holistic point of view. Banerjee asked Gopinath on how the question of security drew upon peace.



Picture 4: Paula Banerjee

Meenakshi Gopinath in response referred to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its articulation, and spoke about reframing efforts with connectedness. WISCOMP's work in Kashmir came with lack of agenda and the lack of resources, in the face of mutiny and daily resistance, under uncertain circumstances that came with change of power regime. The speaker pointed out that crime remains integral to a city, though with architectural changes in a city it may be observed that the people on the streets, vendors, often disappear or are dislocated.

Paula Banerjee put forward the class and gender questions, while she asked if class always interjects the gender dimension? **Meenakshi Gopinath** discussed class as an omnipresent part of society and added that the understanding of security for women is not directed towards a reductionist approach. Gopinath emphasised on the Global North and Global South existing within the same national boundaries, with a few exceptions, in today's time. The concerns for security of water, land, food, having shifted to prominence of armaments which further changed in paradigmatic significance. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were colonial constructs that aimed at looking into problems from a Global South angle. Humanisation of security and vulnerability of women need to be looked into from multiple dimensions, while also giving importance to the reconfiguration of the approach or consideration of people who are affected by security issues.



Picture 5: Session 2.

Video link of the entire inaugural session and second session of the conversation can be found [here](#).

3. Third Session- Constitution and Security of Vulnerable Population Groups

The panel on “**Constitution and Security of Vulnerable Population Groups**” moderated by **Samir Kumar Das**, *University of Calcutta & CRG*, was a dialogue between **Faizan Mustafa**,

Vice Chancellor Chanakya National Law University, and **Kalpana Kannabiran**, *Jurist-Council for Social Development & CRG*, discussing the relationship between insecurity, vulnerability, rights, law, and justice.



Picture 6: Session 3- Kalpana Kannabiran

Kannabiran's presentation gave a historical account of the growth of civil liberties as it developed in India through an act of both erasure and manifestations, while **Faizan Mustafa**, through an eloquent journey of his lived experiences showed how the identity of belonging to a particular community shapes the present political and builds layers of insecurity and deprivation. The panel nuanced the question of how these silences and erasures bear on history itself as history by definition is empiric and the tools of the discipline prove the multiple possibilities of justice and assert itself. According to her, it is important to contemplate the question of the inter-relationship between law and justice and relate it to the constitutionality of certain laws and policies when looked at from the point of view of the vast protection laws that live on the binary of exclusion. Laws, many of which now found their places in the criminal law regime, create the foreground of the relationship between law and justice and vulnerabilities through the medium of that relationship. Therefore, it is not a static understanding of vulnerabilities but of multiplying vulnerabilities. It is necessary to understand how one thinks the question of security is linked to

human dignity and autonomy in a time when deep ruptures between law and justice are produced continuously and in turn reproduce vulnerabilities. In this protective role of law, this whole emphasis on care is informed by the large corpus of prior work on cultural politics of care through the feminist lens in the Global South and the Global North. How do we understand the current discourse on care through the insights that have been provided to us historically by feminists around questions of care, violence, caregiving, and the double burden of work? So, the idea of caregiving is not just in terms of cultural politics of care, but it also has to do with the sexual division of labour, the dual burden and the responsibilities for the unpaid care work that women had borne and all of that entire body of work gets called in. So, the idea of care today cannot be opaque. It immediately calls for memory in problematising the notion of care that has been provided through feminist discourses. The third point is: How do we understand vulnerability in the context of family, family violence, and routine dispossession of women in family? It is often said that intersection is an opaque category. But in practice, it need not and not always, is an opaque category. What happens is that it is being used as a catchphrase, which renders it opaque and nonsensical. The first-time intersectionality was mentioned as a category with family violence and racial violence and the vulnerabilities of the Black women who were subjected to domestic violence and racial injustice/discrimination. How do we address vulnerabilities produced by the intersection of two or more vulnerabilities? Crenshaw's initial formulation of intersectionality has moved forward beyond its initial periphery. She intends to cut through the catch-all governmental term of intersectionality and go back to where intersectional theories started and their development today in terms of looking at other sites and how intersections get articulated at sites outside the United States. A fair deal of work has been done on intersectional studies like that of Mary Romero's *Research Handbook on Intersectionality* have essays from across the world that attempt to open up the category and render it more nuanced and meaningful in terms of race, class, gender, indigeneity, environment, etc. There are a whole range of sites where vulnerability expresses itself in different ways. So, it is important to recover intersectionality, vulnerability, law, and justice from its reductionist formulations in government and UN forums and meaningfully use the term intersection to see through it rather than a screen of acceptance. So, it is important to sidestep and think as to how the category of intersection may be productive for us. The idea of intersectionality according to Kannabiran is the ways in which it raised the question of vulnerability as situated at multiple locations at the same time and therefore cumulative, i.e., accumulated vulnerabilities

leading to cumulative disadvantages. So that's where one needs to unpack the term intersectionality. The bulwark of civil liberties in India has largely focused on state violence like custodial violence, encounters, etc. But it is important to see how one broadens those articulations of civil liberties. Most advocates of civil liberties talk about preventive detention law and refer back to the first case of *A.K. Gopalan vs the State of Madras* or take a case study of a specific city like that of Hyderabad, the war on Communists waged by both the Razakars as well as the Indian Army. Archival records of the trial of twelve Communists show that they were sentenced to death by Nizam's government and the penalty was not lifted even after the takeover of the state by the Government of India in 1950–51. Then it required lawyers and civil rights activists to appeal to the Supreme Court to get their death sentence commuted. Similarly, Operation Polo by the Government of India to take over Nizam's forces to annex the territory to the Union of India. However, the Nizam did not give much force and accepted the advance. But the Operation continued to shoot Communists at the site. A few memoirs speak of Communists being shot at sites in the hundreds. While this incident is archivally documented, the massacre of Muslims of Hyderabad remains officially undocumented where ordinary Muslims who were not necessarily connected to the Communist party or Razakars yet were killed. This complete silence of the massacre of the Muslims until the past few years when the community has started to preserve literary, oral, and other heritages documenting the time of the massacre. Recently there has been a spate of work on this incident by A.G. Noorani, Sunil Purushottam, Afsar Mohammad. But why does it not enter into our understanding of the vulnerabilities of the Communists at the hands of the Indian state? It was not seen as part of the civil liberties formulation at that time. So, when we speak of vulnerabilities and the state as perpetrating vulnerability, then there are cases, encounters, and massacres. Hence, erasures are part of the creation of vulnerabilities. At the same moment, one can see multiple kinds of vulnerabilities that are created through multiple forms of violence perpetrated by the same force at the same time. So, how would one then understand the question of security guaranteed by the Constitution in a temporal case when we look into the reference of the case of the Communist death penalty challenged in the Supreme Court in 1950–51 in terms of violence perpetrated by the state or what kinds of violence perpetrated by the state shall be spoken about and what shall not be spoken about. Then one might question whether this history influences or does it at all influence one's comprehension of vulnerabilities of particular peoples through the remainder of the course of history.



Picture 7: Faizan Mustafa

Therefore, when one looks into the history of a postcolonial nation, how do they see the progression of vulnerabilities? It raises the question of identity, politics, state formation, and it also talks about the ways in which the old gets threaded into the new in insidious ways and how one should begin to unpack that. So rather than looking at one as a historical study and the other as studies of civil liberties, it is necessary to seek a methodology of integration and intersection using which one can rewrite the history of civil liberties through the history of erasure and encounters together and link these vulnerabilities to state violence. What is advocated and what just slips and remains undiscussed until many decades later is where the conjecture lies. The feminist discourse has tried to pierce through the veil and question of silence. In the context of social justice, Bhargavi Davar said that we cannot think of social justice without mental health. The question is not just of disability as an ominous category but the specific forms of disability creating specific kinds of vulnerability in relation to law, institution, and not just state impunity but civic impunity when we talk about violence. In the 1960s Kilvenmani massacre in Tamil Nadu, primarily Dalits were burnt alive. At that point, the incident did not enter academic discourse. Only two people wrote about it.

The Caste System Turned Upside Down by J.P. Mencher and writings by Mythily Sivaraman were the only few who were academically talking about Kilvenmeni, after the marriage equality case when Meenakshi Gopinath was talking about gender plurality, the rights of non-binary people. These cases bring the question of the kinds of vulnerabilities that might be dealt with when there is already a vulnerability in civic and criminal law. One can think of it as a starting point, as was done in a study a few years earlier, by looking at vulnerability and dispossession together. There cannot be a single approach to addressing the question of vulnerability but needs a customised differential approach to addressing these vulnerabilities that escapes the arm of the law and state practice that come together and breach any possible connection between restitutive law and justice. So, one is actually going back in time like the Durkheimian notion of return from restitutive law to repressive law and the demand for mechanical solidarity as the only legitimate way of being.



Picture 8: Session 3.

Taking the discussion further at the micro level, **Faizan Mustafa**, commenting on community politics said that the feeling of being absolutely unwanted in their own country or not being acknowledged by or sometimes deprived by the administration of the rights to have rights is the

beginning point of making someone understand what it is to be vulnerable as no one wants them or wants to protect them. Such insecurities lead to the very quoted notion that one might not feel unwanted but the group to which that person belongs is ridiculed, then it creates a feeling of hurt creating a new commotion of communitarian feeling of reclaiming rights. Globally this insecurity is not just limited to any particular community, but even civil society activists are facing incarceration for expressing their opinion. This shakes the basic foundation of trust in the Constitution or governance. Equality of justice is regressing at a disappointing scale, more so as such cases are specifically listed for review and the procedural denials lead to the idea of lesser lives and breed the idea of lesser justice, especially for those who are minorities and how they are represented popularly. Pushed to the boundary, these vulnerable populations over decades of mistrust, ultimately lose faith in justice. And then the only security they can get is to wield the goodwill of the majority. The current political scenario has reached a point in terms of hate, othering, and alienation, which is difficult to retract. What kind of trust people can have in law and the Constitution in terms of giving them security, the sacred covenant which is to build bridges between people and the state, if the Court remains on the same page with the ruling power and loses independence of the judiciary. With regard to the recent ruling of the courts with cases of identity and belonging, it is important and necessary that we need to look back to the 1949 concept of injustice. While referring to injustice it is natural to talk of some kind of expression of anger or resentment as one is treated discriminatorily. But it is implicative when such natural reactions come only from the minority communities. And therefore, it becomes necessary to convince the majority that the minority is not a threat to the existence of the nation and then can there be only a dialogue on security and justice. Understanding injustice is understanding history in situations. Helplessness amongst a section of society, who feel being unwanted changes the understanding and predictability of the electoral politics of a nation. There is a wall of seclusion in understanding injustice.



Picture 9: Session 3



Picture 10: Discussion-Session 3

28 July 2024

Session 4: Research In Progress

Session 4 which was also the first session of 2nd day of the workshop- 28 July 2024- was chaired by **Paula Banerjee**. Four researchers working on their research papers (abstracts could be found [here](#)) as part of this research programme presented their work-in-progress in this session.

The first presenter in the panel was **Ritam Sengupta**, *O.P.Jindal Global University*, who presented on “**The Digital Delivery of Social Security and the Industrialization of Digital Insecurity**”.



Picture 11: Session 4- Ritam Sengupta

Sengupta put forth the point that the imagination of any kind of execution of social security in India seems to be deeply and *irreversibly* entwined with a model of delivery that is mediated primarily by digital identification, as for instance, the biometric authentication by Aadhaar that most Indians use as means of presenting themselves as verifiable entities to the state. Sengupta

argued, the case of bringing Indian lives into the fold of digital identification has created a set of new insecurities and this is what his contribution to this project is primarily exploring. Digitalisation, in the way it is practiced currently in India, actually comes in the way of social security measures rather than aiding the operation of it. In other models of welfare prevalent in India or in other countries, the aim has been to strengthen public amenities like health and education to enable more effective participation in the labour market and the economy. The new welfarism is more cynical in the sense that it is primarily aimed at decommodifying to a certain extent, some of the core means of surviving the significant inability of certain portions of the population to participate in the economy. Moreover, this kind of welfarism is not in the nature of universal social policy aimed at citizens and is rather a kind of targeted intervention producing a new category of the beneficiary or the 'labharthi'. The labharthi in turn is linked with the party and its supreme leader through a patrimonial connection instead of a rights-based framework. Aiyar contrasts this kind of techno-patrimonial welfarism particularly to the UPA era emphasis on creating legal allotment of fundamental rights to food, education and work for all citizens of India. Finally, another significant implication of this new welfarism is its eschewal of any discussion on taxes and redistribution. The critical claim of this techno-patrimonial state-making is pivoted on cutting out intermediaries through digital identification of beneficiaries. To enrol for digital payments for instance, there is now a new institutional intermediary with computer access – a CSC agent or Common Services Centre agent - who is tasked with overseeing benefit transfers in six villages. CSC agents are responsible for collecting applications and forwarding them at the block level, but agents are not held accountable for any delays or errors in the process. There is still little by way of a grievance redressal mechanism on this count.

The second category of insecurity that Sengupta talked about is implicated in the digitalisation of social security in India. While making this point, he referred to his earlier work on the subject of digital datafication in contemporary India, where along with Prof. Manish Jha, they had argued that there is something akin to a primitive accumulation that is involved in the forced conscription of Indian citizens to the order of digital capitalism through Aadhaar, demonetisation, and the like. What is at stake in these measures is not simply a facilitation of private and public service like benefit transfer or payments. Rather they brought forward a possibility of enrolling the millions in India's informal economy into a value-making project. This would not entail a formalisation of their roles and functions with adequate government recognition. Instead, it would actually bring

them into a monetised economy where their actions in a world of exchange could be datafied to serve the credit and social media industry to a certain extent. The more explicit measures of the government like its regulation and legislation on Data Protection was best seen as part of this initiative, to make data more portable rather than more private. Sengupta commented, there are grave side-effects of this. This would be the case of leaks of private data, commercial frauds, identity thefts, and mal-use of identification technology towards violent ends of exclusion and persecution. In a very general sense digitalisation entails that the process of authenticating one's identity is disembedded from social negotiation or the multiplicity of it and rendered vulnerable to singular executive action. There are other more ordinary and yet markedly destabilising implications of digital insecurity thought in this way. The One Time Password or the OTP, that eases us into digital lives and livelihoods has also become the primary vehicle of this kind of digital insecurity. There is of course some irony to this. In looking back we can surmise that it is not really the bottom rung of digital beneficiaries who are usually the object of such fraud. In fact, we can think of the new shadowy economy based on what Sengupta referred to as the 'industrialization of leakage' in contemporary India. The digital insecurity of some has in this sense produced a counter economy for others. This is not to be celebrated. But this is only a mirror image of the governmental enabling of big tech by way of diluting data protection measures considerably.

The next presenter **Sucharita Sengupta**, *CRG*, spoke on "**Migrants' Security: Assessing the Global Compact of Migration (GCM) for "Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration"**" pointing out that the GCM was adopted in Morocco On 10 December 2018, the United Nations Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees was adopted by 164 countries.



Picture 12: Sucharita Sengupta

In a first in specificity, it spoke explicitly of *human security* while addressing complexities surrounding migration and displacement. *Thus, at the heart of the global compacts is the question of security for migrants and refugees.* The important question to ask here is whether security of migrants can be assured through the Compacts- what do contemporary instances in South Asia show? This note thus argues there is a need to examine international conventions like the global compacts, that vow to “securitise” lives of migrants, either corroborating or in discordance of ground realities in the context of South Asia. Sengupta structured her presentation into- first on a few key points of what the compacts constitute mentioning South Asia in the context, second, highlight a few points that shed light on the murkiness that is embedded in the compacts, and, third, the meaning and implications of human security and whether an institutional paradigm of security like the global compacts that also talk of state-border security can crystallise into human security. Can they provide security to Migrants? In this context, Sengupta explicitly spoke on the key features of the compacts. For the positives, The Global Compact on Migration (GCM) for improved migration governance puts migration and their human rights at the center. It lays out migrants are vulnerable to various threats, including exploitation, violence, and discrimination

and as a result, the GCM emphasizes the need for states to ensure the protection of migrants regardless of their social positions. This entails access to basic services such as healthcare, and protection from arbitrary detention and deportation. The compact prioritises security and protection as core principles. It also recognizes the reality of criminalization of migrants and consequently, talks about the root causes of migration and providing access to fair procedures and effective protection. Although the GCM seeks to make migration human rights centric, gender responsive and child sensitive, how much that is getting implemented on ground in the region is still debatable. The South Asian Regional Trade Union (SARTUC) reviewed the scenario in the five countries that have adopted the GCM and concluded that South Asian migrant workers still face widespread discrepancy. Despite adopting the GCM, the outbreak of the Pandemic exposed several fault lines surrounding migrant labour in India and South Asia and vindicated the need for and importance of protection and support of migrant workers and their families. Sengupta then went on to point out the anomalies of real situations where the GCM falls short to provide security. The above discussion depicts the entire process of the Global Compact on Refugees and for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration thus necessitates a reflection on the old approaches to refugee protection. The crucial point is that the global community should put more emphasis on strengthening refugee protection in an era of increased migration. Although the GCM talks of focussing on Human Security, conflating it simultaneously with border securitising goals shift the focus. The intention is good but ample loopholes in the wordings can and as instances indicate result in ineffective implementation. Sengupta concluded by putting forth, the conventional definition of international security relegated human displacements and refugees to the periphery. The connection between migration and security too was thus considered a threat for borders and a source of conflict among states, hence governance of generally migrants and specifically refugees was a key component of security studies back in the day. UN primacy on Human Security and the discourse of rights for one and all where primary focus was put on people and communities from the 90s marked an evolution of the notion of security.



Picture 13: Rajat Roy

Rajat Roy, *Journalist & CRG*, spoke of his research “**The Land Question**”. Land question, or the right to land by the common people had always remained as the core issue of conflict. From colonial days to the present era, the land question had always remained as the root cause of their further precarity, marginalisation and deprivation. The problem persisted as instead of initiating an informed dialogue between the stakeholders to resolve the crisis, the State, in colonial days and even after that, has assumed the role of the sole arbitrator in the case of land acquisition. Roy in his presentation and research has made an attempt to examine the land issue as it stands now. Immediately after the initiation of the neo-liberalisation in the ‘90s, the corporate-government nexus went for a huge land grab movement in the name of forming Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The farmers started resisting that and violent conflicts took place in Nandigram, Singur and Bhangar (all in West Bengal), Kalinga Nagar and POSCO (both in Orissa), Khammam (A.P.) Vidarbha (Maharashtra) and many other places in the country. The farmers’ protest forced the political establishment to come up with a new legislation that substituted the archaic land acquisition act. The new act is called Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013. Popularly known as the R & R Act, the

new law was expected to work as a practical solution to the ongoing agitation among the farmers. However, there are reports that a number of cases of land-disputes are locked in various courts, and some fresh agitations are being reported from U.P., Punjab and elsewhere. For example, in July, 2024, Sangrur (Punjab) farmers are up in arms against a plan to set up a cement plant there and raise an environmental issue. In U.P., in Prayag Raj district a protracted resistance by the landowners demanding higher compensation took place in 2016 when a mega power plant started operating there. Last year in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri, state police had to resort to force the people out of the site for a proposed oil refinery. All these indicate one thing: the new R & R Act could not be the panacea for the land (acquisition) issue.



Picture 14: Session 4-discussion

Roy argued, if one takes the case of Andhra Pradesh's proposed new state capital Amaravati, 33,000 acres of land are to be acquired. The government realised that it would be difficult to buy off the entire land mass at the ongoing market price. So, they devised the land pooling system, whereby people were asked to donate their land at a relatively low price. But to compensate them,

the government offered them a portion of the land after developing that for commercial use. The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA)—Amaravati’s urban planning agency—recognised that the scheme’s success would depend on whether it was inclusive and fair to those being asked to give up their land. A draft of the scheme was made widely available to the public, with 30 days given for public feedback and objections. Government officials visited various villages to consult residents on the design, size and location of their returnable plots. Landowners could see for themselves the plot subdivision plans for their villages and address their queries to the officials directly. The CRDA took the landowners’ feedback seriously, incorporating their suggestions into the revised scheme. As a result, out of the 24 villages approached to give up their land, 22 agreed within four months of the scheme’s announcement. Following this, the returnable land plots were allocated through electronic lotteries for fairness. These lotteries were held at the villages, with landowners receiving confirmation of their plot allocation via mobile message. Their plot allotment letters were also printed and handed out to them immediately, with softcopies made available online. Thus, while some people have resisted and did not join this land pooling approach, their land is being acquired by following the guideline of R & R Act. One must not forget that Gujarat has started this land pooling system with some success but one must concede that in both these states, it is very sparsely populated compared to states like West Bengal and Kerala. Roy argued, it must be kept in mind the diverse nature of the land holding pattern in various states, and accept that no single model would do for the entire nation. The case of Magarpatta is another instance. Located 7km from Pune railway station, it is the first project in which farmers pooled their land and created a small township, rather than selling their land to a real estate developer. The name of the township came from the clan’s name. The township was built after forming a company where all the farmers, who donated their land, are the stakeholders. This township already has a commercial area, residential area, hospital, schools, shopping mall etc. and 30% of the land has been left out for greenery. To conclude Roy said, it can be seen that already a few alternative models are being tried in various parts of the country in regard to the use of farm land for commercial, industrial and urbanisation purposes. There could be other models too. But, the success of any model is necessarily based upon one fact: the landowners must also be made stakeholders to the developmental projects.

The final speaker of the session was **Samir Kumar Das**, *Calcutta University & CRG*, who spoke on “**Peace and People’s Security: An Agenda for Neoliberal Times.**”



Picture 15: Samir Kumar Das

Das's talk geared around the following:

1. CRG's four-volume work on South Asian Peace Studies published between 2004-2008 was aimed at making a departure from the conventionally understood Security Studies by disconnecting it from conflict and war on one hand and reconnecting it with such ethical values as rights, justice and democracy. These three values of rights, justice and democracy are said to form a triad given their largely overlapping nature.
2. The conventionally understood Security Studies would have defined peace as security that is keyed to the doctrine of balance of power. Most of the Indian Universities continue to offer Security Studies of this variety in the name of Peace Studies.
3. By 2010, we started facing criticisms mainly on three counts: (a) Peace in the name of establishing the ethical values is essentially a power game, for, most of the recent interventions in international politics have taken place in the name of establishing 'freedom' and 'democracy' as Universal values. Peace in such cases turns into an instrument of exercising hegemony. (b) Peace

defined with reference to such Universal values has already turned into an ‘industry’ and poorer countries compete among themselves for receiving foreign funds in the name of establishing peace in their respective countries. (c) Peace-making is too large an issue to remain confined to the conflicting parties.

4. The context has substantially changed during the last two or three decades. The liberal utopia of recognizing the ‘inalienability’ of life has given way to the “the sovereign right to kill or its covert attendant, the right to maim” (Puar 2017:X) thanks to the ‘neoliberal restructuring and production of insecurities’, as the Concept Note eloquently illustrates. The differential value of life is now grossly displayed in such instances as pandemic, denial of livelihood opportunities to unskilled manual labour, climate disasters and agrarian crisis posing a threat to food sovereignty and security. As a result, peace today – unlike at the time of the Rights Revolution in the 1970s and the 1980s - is required to reckon with the more fundamental and first order question of life per se and its survival. Rights have been reduced to secondary importance. Never before in history has the biopolitics of people’s security acquired so much importance as it has now. Peace has to redefine itself as ‘people’s security’ in the context of neoliberal restructuring and production of insecurities.

5. The paper seeks to develop an agenda for people’s security: (a) A large number of people, for instance, simply loses their life or lives a life that makes her neither a healthy and rights-bearing body nor ‘lets her die’. (b) Civil society organizations provide no answer to this chronic biopolitical insecurity. The pandemic, as CRG studies have shown, offered an opportunity of experimenting with different forms of people’s solidarity. Solidarity becomes people’s answer to biopolitical insecurities. One may gainfully draw on Modern Indian Social and Political Thought to decipher and make sense of such experiments - instead of borrowing from Western Political Theory. (c) These experiments also tell us how people ‘live dangerously’ and yet live a ‘secure’ life.

Session 5: Security of Migrants, Refugees and Borderland People

The session was chaired by **Ruchira Goswami**, *National University of Juridical Sciences*, who began the proceedings by adding a trivia about what Indians really think of Nagaland, a state in India’s Northeast. Referring to a social media post that she came across earlier in the day, Goswami noted that states like Nagaland, once hub of insurgency and having visible cultural differences

with the rest of the country, is still known as a disturbed area even though presently the situation is way different from what it used to be 10 years ago. This trivia also set the tone of the discussion that followed when the session's speaker **Neingulo Krome**, *Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights*, spoke.



Picture 16: Session 5-Neingulo Krome

Krome began by sharing an experience he had at a particular hotel in India, something which he wasn't experiencing for the first or the last time either. Krome noted that while checking into a hotel somewhere in the heartland of India, he was asked by the manager if Krome was an Indian. This was despite showing Indian Passport as his identity proof. According to Krome, this general ask that many Indian harbour for not just Nagas, but for any one from the Northeast who doesn't look like a quintessential Indian and has Mongoloid or other racial features, calls for a deeper inspection of the ideas of justice and security because the threat to these emerge from notions of otherisation. Nagaland has been a troubled state for the longest time owing to its historical and geographical position within the Union of India. The Naga people used to be a motley collection of tribes with their indigenous systems of governance until the advent of the British and then the takeover of the Naga territories by the Union of India. The loss of indigenous sovereignty made

the Nagas take up arms against India following their demands of cessation from India. This made the Indian Government impose the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in Nagaland. By its nature, the Act bestows the Indian Armed Forces with the power to treat civilian Indians as potential threats to the nations if it suspects any anti-Indian activity.

With the growing rise of 'nationalism' among Nagas in the decades of the 70s, 80s and 90s, Krome was beaten and arrested due to his involvement in the movement. He mentioned that till the point he worked for the movement, he was considered a potential threat but as he began to work in the peace movement and assumed the role of an arbiter in the process, his position changed. Krome then went on to discuss in detail the peace process in Nagaland and his role in it and also the stances that the Government of India took throughout the discussion that were held between the Government and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). He talked of the failure of the Government to initially understand the demands of the Naga people who were fighting for a cause they thought to be just. But the Government of India treated the Naga demand as a stray demand without taking into cognizance the historic foregrounding of their demand. After years of atrocities by the state on its citizens, finally when a section of the Nagas decided to initiate peace talks, the situation started getting better. Organisations like the Naga Mothers Association played a great role in mobilising the peace process.

Krome noted three key factors that hindered the peace process:

1. Continuous repression and violence
2. Faction among the Naga groups that make the peace process difficult
3. Acts like Abrogation of certain Articles.

The apathy of mainstream media houses to get the Naga message across, the failure of the Bureaucrats to understand the demands and negotiate between the dissenting groups also played a huge role in aggravating the crisis. However, Krome also talked about the good side of the Peace Talks highlighting the swift acknowledgement of the rights of the Naga leaders and assuring them of cooperation in overseas negotiations. Krome noted that it would not be right or just to blame the Government solely for the violation of the rights of the Naga people as the insurgent organisations also went too far with their activities. However, with the present Government and

with the likes of Narendra Modi, Rajnath Singh and Ajit Doval at the helm, the Peace Talks have seen successful negotiations with peace getting restored in Nagaland.

Throughout his talk, Krome stressed on the importance of clarity of communication in peace talks highlighting that the Naga problem rested a lot on the lack of it. For a very long period of time, the Government of India did not well understand the demands of the Nagas thus leading to a long period of bloodshed, violence and a stripping of the rights of the people. Justice and security can only prevail when there is fluid communication between concerned interlocutors and application of brute force will only lead to slowing down of the process and progress of Peace Talks. Krome also noted the interjection that CRG had made during the Peace Talks in Sri Lanka.

At the end of the discussion, Bharat Bhushan commented on the contributions of Krome in the Peace Talks. He noted that even though the Naga Peace Talks did not meet the same success as the African reconciliation process, it has been able to figure out its own path nonetheless.



Picture 17: Ruchira Goswami



Picture 18: Session 5

Session 6: Media Communications and Perception of Security

Hari Sharma, *Director, Purak Asia, Nepal*, chaired this session having four panellists.

Manish K Jha, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*, was the first speaker of the session. He talked about the different dimensions of security, media, and communication. Security in the sectors of labour migration played a crucial role in this context. The idea of insecurity worked in different sectors. Jha spoke about macro security in the concept of protecting gig workers and the recent judgement passed by the Supreme Court regarding Kanwar Yatra. According to Jha, community security has been challenged, especially in numerous incidents against minorities all over the country. He also discussed the idea of the formation of security and insecurity from the domain of security discourse—the absence of the idea of Food Security in many sectors of the professional field. Jha spoke of different ideas of security, including security at unconducive working conditions. Jha mentioned the unbearable work atmosphere at the construction sites and how the migrant workers are affected. They must work during the heatwave to maintain everyday food and livelihood. Jha criticised the food-security policy in India, which cannot control hunger,

and migrant workers are bound to work in vulnerable conditions due to the lack of food security. Jha also blamed the polluted atmosphere, which caused a deterioration of the health of the migrant labourers and pushed them into the high-risk zone of health hazards. On the other hand, gig- or platform-based workers are more vulnerable as they have no fixed wage rate.



Picture 19: Session 6- Manish K. Jha

In most cases, their earnings depended on the orders they got. As a result, they have to deal with different kinds of insecurities, making their life more vulnerable. Jha also mentioned the incident of fire at the Rajkot Gaming Zones, which took the lives of the unorganised workers who worked in lousy conditions. He explained how media houses were not paying much attention to it. The same thing, according to Jha, applied to the death of Sanitation workers. Jha brought the idea of Necropolitics to discuss the vulnerable condition of migrant workers. He said labourers' insecurity was not a major political issue before the COVID-19 pandemic. It made changes in the discussion of life. However, callousness and lack of interest from the local or national media increased the idea of insecurity. He concluded his talk by saying that the various levels of insecurity are one of the main challenges for migrants especially who work in unorganised sectors.

Samata Biswas, *The Sanskrit College and University & CRG*, began her talk by focusing on building a solid network to ensure social security. She referred to incidents in Bangladesh, giving us an idea of different layers of security concerns. She details how the anti-quota statement in Bangladesh and demand for job security for everyone gradually transformed into widespread anti-government protests, which eventually led to the government's fall. The Awami League government gave the independence to apply the new CyberSecurity Act to the police force against the protesters. The government banned several social media platforms, and the news was telecasted across media channels and YouTube. The ban was imposed in the name of security. Biswas described how the then government established a culture of threat through state machinery. They used the security acts and different state protection mechanisms against legitimate protests. Biswas connected the Awami League Government's steps with those of other South Asian countries, especially India, and criticised the new Media and Communication Bill, a draft incorporating social media journalism. According to Biswas, it was a threat to the social outcasts. She named several newly released Bengali films that adversely projected people from minority communities. Biswas kept her faith in the civil society initiatives that raised the demand for assurances of security from the basic amenities of life. She hoped the new network-based initiatives, especially on Peace Action Networks and Housing and Livelihood networks, could build a new solidarity initiative. New media-based networks would play a crucial role in that field. However, the lens of justice and vulnerability, when brought to bear upon the question of human security, would /should show—state mechanisms are inadequate, nay, complicit in the creation of new vulnerabilities in the neoliberal world, and therefore, new insecurities. A network focused on human security is always vulnerable—working against the imperatives of neoliberal capital, in postcolonial societies fraught with fissures along gender, caste, religion, ethnicity and class—against the logic of militarisation and for peace. A peace audit of postcolonial societies in South Asia can only be undertaken socially—by mapping the top-down approaches to national security and securitization measures with the micro, local, specific yet generalized constructions and pockets of vulnerabilities produced at the intersection of the virtual and the real, the digital and the embodied, the regional and the transnational.



Picture 20: Samata Biswas

The third speaker of the panel was **Bharat Bhushan**, *360 info & CRG*. He discussed the role of the media in securitisation policies in South Asia. He described how the new securitisation policies transformed every media issue into a security issue. He said that the alignment of media activities towards migrants and minority communities is viewed through the lens of security. He mentioned the recent conflict between the Meitei and the Kuki communities in Manipur, which projected a different story altogether. He also mentioned the idea of security from different perspectives.

Regarding the lack of economic security among the most vulnerable communities in India, Bhushan commented that the problem had only been visualised during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the crisis does not end there. Cultural practices of the minority communities had been targeted. Talking about the cultural differences between Assamese and the Muslims in the Barak valley, Bhushan said that the Assamese and Hindus of the mainland had threatened the Muslims of Assam. According to Bharat Bhushan, these communities felt insecure because of cultural identities, and the state could not give any assurances. The ethnic identity question, which created insecurity among the different groups in the Northeast, was one of the reasons behind the recent conflicts.



Picture 21: Bharat Bhushan

Bhushan also talked about the changes in the definition of security. The state had diluted the differences between National and Human Security. As a result, the media translated any threat to national security as a threat to human security. Therefore, the local knowledge system about security does not match the understanding of the media. Therefore, the concerns about food, water, and gender security had not come to the limelight. The concern about ensuring democratic rights had been translated as a threat to national security by some mainstream media houses. Therefore, alternative media became a necessity. Bhushan emphasised the role of political parties, civil society movements, and social media in understanding the challenges in the name of security. According to Bhushan, these elements would act as pressure groups to ensure or argue for justice and security. Alternative media could play an essential role in this.

Jayanta Bhattacharya, *PTI, Tripura*, was the final speaker of the panel. He talked about how life is vulnerable on both sides of the Tripura border. The crisis started with the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1972 and the new border fencing policies in 1975. These treaties resulted in overlapping land areas on both sides of the border, and the people living near the borders suffered the most. Bhattacharya told the stories of the different kinds of border crisis in the villages near the Noakhali border. He said that at least 43 of such villages suffered from cross-firing between the border

security forces (BSF from India and BGB from Bangladesh), facing massive human trafficking, smuggling and many illegal practices. The relations between the villagers and the Border Guarding Forces (BGF) are extremely hostile and they treat them as anti-Indian. Ill-treatment meted out to them by the Border Guarding Force (BGF) and abject poverty has led a section of people to connive with a section of criminals in Bangladesh, who resort to smuggling of drugs and human trafficking. The border is highly porous and the barbed wire fencing is broken in many places. Bhattacharya said that the lives of the people on both sides of the border depend on the army and the role of the provincial governments. According to Bhattacharya, Tripura is one of the most significant human trafficking routes, but the media projected the story through a biased lens. As most people who lived in the border areas belonged to marginal communities, the media thought that most of them were considered a security threat. According to Bhattacharya, the belief circulated widely in the mainstream media and big cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Dhaka. He described several actual life incidents where people became the mediators, but not more than that. This misrepresentation of identity caused a large amount of vulnerability for the people who lived in surrounding areas.



Picture 22: Jayanta Bhattacharya

The discussions after the presentation raised many important issues, including the role of the border security forces, free trade, mainstream and alternative media, and the complex nature of local politics. The panel ended with the chair's closing comments.



Picture 23: Session 6-discussion

Session 7: The South Asian Perspective

The session was chaired by **Manish K Jha**, and the speakers were **Siddeque Wahid**, *Shiv Nadar University*, **Meghna Guhathakurata**, *Research Initiatives Bangladesh*, and **Hari Sharma**.

Siddeque Wahid discussed the broad outlines of macro and micro security for vulnerable communities in South Asia. He did so by delving deep into the history of insecurity and a chronology of the political insecurity versus security to explain the juxtaposition. He mentioned that the concern for security is preceded by insecurity and that the historical and political background of this process (macro insecurity) has left the people of South Asia in a dangerously vulnerable position. He also discussed in detail a historiography of the process of securitisation that took place in the last 500 years and the kind of changes that have occurred in the last 100 years

following the escalation and de-escalation of colonial empires across the world. Colonial expansion, once a macro threat, gave rise to micro security threats as colonial powers withdrew. He terms the withdrawal of colonial powers as a watershed moment in the history of security as new insecurities came up eventually. Major shifts in power resulted in unprecedented changes in power structures as they had been in place since the sixteenth century. Following the colonial expansion and subsequent withdrawal of the empires, massive shifts in the ideas of governance and polity happened alongside changes in power dynamics and centers of power also shifted thus creating newer insecurities. The understanding of these insecurities continues to be a work in progress that can't be glossed over while engaging in studies of security and insecurity. Wahid noted that such insecurities have exacerbated all the more with the emergence of newer dynamics of gender inequity, climate change, etc. He concluded by saying that both macro and micro insecurities need to be studied in consideration to each other.



Picture 24: Session 7- Siddiq Wahid

Meghna Guhathakurata spoke about the threat to the security of life in the face of climate change in Bangladesh. She made a case study of the settlement on the banks of the river Atrai in Bangladesh. On one hand, people living on the banks of the river lost their homes and land due to erosion. On the other hand, they also locked heads in conflict with a dredging company engaged

in clearing the shallow river bed of the river. The heavy metallic sound of the dredging machines drove away fishes from the river thus giving a blow to the livelihood of the settlers whose primary source of income is fishing. These people derive their sustenance from the river but the dual whammies of erosion and missing fishes rendered them without homes and income sources. A group of villagers took the dredging company to court but existing laws mandated in favour of the company. Guhathakurata brought home the importance of legal machinery and the revisions it needs in order to meet the needs of a world that is changing rapidly with unprecedented threats like climate change loom large. She noted how climate change and related environmental degradation render gender violence as women face adverse effects facing the brunt of domestic violence, excess responsibilities, etc. She also said, the impact of climate change is felt by everyone, but not equally. Gender norms and power dynamics shape how women and men of different backgrounds experience or contribute to insecurity in a changing climate. This is also true for different diverse groups of marginalized people, youth and others with no voice or different abilities. UN Women through their research has found evidence that women and men's vulnerability to the impact of climate change is determined by the differences in their socially ascribed roles. Hence the concept of climate justice is necessarily gendered and needs to be linked to the concept of gender justice. Feminist analyses have shown that concepts and processes of justice are informed through patriarchal notions and values deeply embedded in each society, not least in Bangladesh. Interestingly both climate changes and patriarchal norms are systemic and pervasive phenomena in Bangladesh. Climate change brings in a new dimension to dealing with the age-old power structures and dynamics embedded in patriarchal norms and values and hence affect women and girls in adverse ways. In a recent study on Conflict Dynamic and Conflict Transformation in Three Ecological Zones in the Context of Climate Change, it was revealed that institutional weaknesses at the local level, lack of responsiveness and accountability of Local Government Institutions (LGIs) and local actors, poor governance, and the dominance of power-elite relations were major causes of vulnerability in climate change situations. Patriarchy emerged as a significant factor, with women being the primary victims of violence at both the community and household levels. Furthermore, the fragmentation of social capital, driven by competition over resources, occupations, and food collection, has been noted as a primary cause of conflicts due to climate change. Climate change has affected livelihoods, particularly those dependent on the environment, challenging existing social capital and networks that have been the mainstay of

survival in rural areas. Traditional community or family values of sharing have often been overtaken by ruthless market economics. All these have important implications for gender justice issues, which open up new frontiers of

knowledge and practice for service providers and local governance and justice mechanisms.



Picture 25: Meghna Guhathakurta

Hari Sharma was the final speaker of the session and he drew from both the presentations and making associations with the state of affairs in Nepal. Acknowledging Wahid's observation, Sharma spoke about how the condition of Nepal has become precarious following shifts in the centre of power. He noted how the changed dynamics between Nepal and India owing to security threats have hampered the dairy farmers of Nepal living in the border areas. India does not allow Nepal's cows to graze in the Indian vicinity in areas close to the borders thus making it difficult for the Nepali farmers to arrange fodder for the cows, but China allows the same along its borders despite being a walled country. Sharma spoke of the need of strengthening accountability

mechanisms at all levels, widening the scope of democratic participation and inclusive dialogue at local level to find solutions. The main challenges in Nepal at national level come from antifederalists, monarchists, anti-secularist. These opposition tendencies are encouraged by frequently changing alliances resulting in government changes hampering governance and delivery both at the center and provinces. There is widespread tendency to blame frequent government changes to the proportional election system. Whereas the local level political dynamics is shaped by resource and patronage politics. Despite emerging governance challenges violence has not relapsed since the 2006 peace agreement. However, the unsettled question of transitional justice still haunts Nepal's peace prospects. Other challenges come from large scale youth migration for job opportunities abroad. Rural areas are empty as people are moving to urban areas in search of livelihood, services, and opportunities. This has led to crowded urban spaces with new political challenges which have a bearing on rights, justice and vulnerability. Myth that Nepal lives in villages is changing. Finding solutions to these major issues are important through strengthening accountability mechanisms at all levels, widening the scope of democratic participation and inclusive dialogue at the local level to find solutions. Civil societies and social movements have to engage with political parties in ensuring voices of people at risk and at margin are heard and respected. It has become too costly to leave politics to political parties and politicians. Sharma concluded by saying, we need to find ways connect people with democratic politics beyond electoral participation.



Picture 26: Hari Sharma

Manish K Jha made the final remarks and closed the session.



Picture 27: Session 7

Session 8: Concluding Remarks

The one and a half day workshop came to an end with concluding remarks from **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury** and **Ranabir Samaddar**.



Picture 28: Ranabir Samaddar and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury spoke of the key points that have emanated from all the discussions at the workshop:

- It has been discussed whether we can define security without talking about insecurities that we have to move beyond the dichotomy of security and insecurity.
- Issues, instances and situations discussed in context of South Asia through all the panels of the workshop validate the necessity to reimagine the scope of security and justice.

Ranabir Samaddar spoke of the themes explored in the two workshops done so far under the research programme - whether they have correctly conceptualised the problematic. While the first workshop held in April paved the way for discussion and showed there is need to take the dialogue forward. This workshop, the second meticulously did that- not only to conceptualise the problematic in theory but also to give it a working framework- to understand the part of implementation. This is still a work in progress and Samaddar retaliated to the need to have one more workshop to see where the problematic has been adequately comprehended. He also spoke of future events like holding public lectures and dialogues on the thematic not only in West Bengal

but in other parts of India. He also spoke of organising three webinars by the end of the year and to do one or two translations of existing works on the theme. There were a few suggestions from the audience/participants as well.



Picture 29: Conclusion Session

The workshop concluded with a formal vote of thanks from Sucharita Sengupta.



Picture 30: The Participants of the Workshop

List of Participants

1. Arup Kumar Sen
2. Bharat Bhushan
3. Coline Schupfer
4. Debashree Chakraborty
5. Faizan Mustafa (Patna)
6. Hari Sharma
7. Jayanta Bhattacharya (Agartala)
8. Kalpana Kannabiran, Council for Social Development, India.
9. Manish K. Jha
10. Meenakshi Gopinath
11. Meghna Guhathakurta
12. Neingulo Krome
13. Partha Sarkar
14. Paula Banerjee, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand.
15. Rajat Kanti Sur
16. Rajat Roy
17. Ranabir Samaddar,
18. Ritam Sengupta
19. Rituparna Dutta
20. Ritwajit Das
21. Ruchira Goswami, National University of Juridical Sciences, India.
22. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Rabindra Bharati University, India.
23. Samareesh Guchhait, Calcutta Research Group, India.
24. Samata Biswas, The Sanskrit College and University, India.
25. Samir Kumar Das
26. Shatabdi Das
27. Shyamalendu Majumdar
28. Siddiq Wahid (Kashmir/Delhi)
29. Subhashree Rout
30. Sucharita Sengupta

