"They Paint Sedition on the Walls"

Toward a University of "Immigrants"

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ABSTRACT While publicly funded institutions in India have provoked the punitive ire of the ruling Hindu right and systematically invited acts of state terror, a new education policy drafted by the same ruling party advocates a wholesale return to a "liberal arts" curriculum. The essay attempts to demonstrate how the "liberal" has become the cultural logic of a communal-fascist regime, insofar as the regime is harnessing universities to its project of redefining citizenship in line with its recently passed citizenship laws. In this context, how might a hijacked "idea" of the university be reclaimed—and what are the possible futures of such a political maneuver? This essay suggests how a practice of imaginative labor at the university might be leveled not toward citizenship but toward lessons in immigrancy. It also addresses how a mass online transition—prompted by policy in the name of a pandemic—reconfigures rights of entry to this imaginative labor.

KEYWORDS National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, liberal education, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, jobless growth, night school, lifelong learning

Of Debt and Duty

Let me start with an anecdote about the latest trends in higher educational reform-planning being witnessed in India. After more than a year of the shuttering of physical institutional spaces—and a blanket digital transitioning that cared too little about structural inequities of access and competence[1]—Indian higher educational campuses were handed an austerity recipe for postpandemic futures. We were told that, in the event of a return to "normalcy" (that is, the status quo prior to what had been conceded as the "new normal"!), the conditions for classroom "work" would have to be permanently shortchanged. About half or more of college and university curricula had to be interfaced as data, to be individually and institutionally auctioned through smartphone purchases and learning-management software licenses, respectively.[2] Such "blended learning" modes alone, we were cautioned, could address the bemoaned lack of student participation in the traditional classroom situation.

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With a little hindsight borrowed from history, one realizes that the Indian state's concern for this "lack" within traditional pedagogy goes hand in hand with its fears of "excessive" student activity *outside* the classroom setting. When campuses were locked out in early 2020, students across the country had spilled out onto the streets, joining in chorus with thousands protesting against a right-wing authoritarian government's amendment of citizenship laws.[3] It is the university's co-contamination by an incalculable publicness that brackets the discussion in this article, both at its opening and its close. I contend here that the contemporary moment in India's higher educational policy-thinking embeds a chilling paradox: faced with the debilitating failure of neoliberal manifestos of "development," the communal-fascist forces in power have advocated a return to the "liberal" vocation of the university. The most immediate testament to this move is a planning charter called the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020*, published by the government while in the throes of the pandemic.

What do I mean by the "liberal vocation" of the university and an illiberal state's co-optation of it? Borrowing from the classical Greek codification of citizenship as consisting in the intellectual freedom to study the *artes liberales* (distributed across the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*),[4] the modern Humboldtian university's condition of possibility lay in the autonomy of disinterested intellectual practice. Premised on a Kantian use of reason as an end in itself,[5] academic freedom has been imagined as the minimal ground for a training in democratic citizenship. It is as if the pursuit of truth is a self-sufficient guarantor of the citizenly reflexes of democracy. To this extent, the liberal calling of higher education has advocated a critical distance from the (often intertwined) interests of the state and the market and has instead enjoined the practice of the intellect to a successful (or, sympathetic) exercise of civil-political liberties.[6] This is how a "liberal education" becomes the moral charge of a liberal-democratic state.

But, in the context of the state's attempted disappearance from the higher education sector—as part of neoliberal reforms—what happens to this moral charge? Taking a cue from the recent reformist trend as well as the policy document named above, the state urges a drastic implosion of physical infrastructures through "blended learning" templates or a uniform credit-transfer policy in what it calls an "Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)."[7] As a nationally acceptable repository of every student's educational competence and accumulation, this "bank" allows a student's credit-"earnings" to be traded across the nation and its institutions—almost as standardized debt currency. The "bank of credit" vocabulary is not fortuitous—in as much as it implies that higher education is always already an outstanding loan to citizen beneficiaries, for which one must be indefinitely and insolubly indebted to the state. In a polity where "citizens" capable of intellectual labor are, by their access to such rights, made into debtors of an inaugural creditor state, the only

response to state action can be oblatory—that is, in the moral behaviors of gratitude and obedience. Whatever remains of the public university, in the midst of its own theater of disappearance, is touted as an unpayable debt that the benefactor state must only disburse as charity at will. In return, obeisance is demanded as an obligatory relation that ties public spending to the publics that it subsidizes. Oblation is an acknowledgment of the redundancy of repayment and works toward securing the interoperability of fascist and neoliberal fortunes.

This article maintains that it is not surprising, therefore, that the NEP belaboredly urges an expansion of curricula to compulsorily include a "liberal arts" component in all streams and disciplines. Because as long as the use of autonomous reason within the university—through courses in critical thinking and multidisciplinary offerings—is *willed* into existence as a "primordial debt,"[8] the university will continue to reproduce fictions of civic-national belonging as determinants of who deserve this debt and who must pay. The civic experiment of liberalism will thus only go on to bulwark the manifold violences of an authoritarian state.

Faced with an ironic inversion of "liberal education" in the contemporary Indian university, this essay contends that a radical political agenda might entail surpassing the enchantments of citizenship altogether. In fact, it may augur well for the political futures of the university to engage with the life that it historically excludes. In this, the *immigrant*—as a figural category of the "limit," the "border," or the "outside"—is what must take over the imaginative contours of a critical pedagogy. Dealing with the condition of immigrancy cannot merely be a form of theoretical-intellectual adventurism. It requires apprenticeship to a form of imaginative labor that may be realized in night schools and tented classrooms—a politics of reappropriating public infrastructures and spatially consecrated orders of institutionality through the performative grammars of "squatting."

Citizenly behaviors are manufactured through practices of institutional (or extrainstitutional) sociality that lie *prior* to the university—in the reality or potentiality of access to schooling. So, why should the demand for intellectual freedom or democratic rights—the substantive agendas of liberal education—be the political calling of the university? This is the question that structures the object(s) of inquiry pursued in the sections below.

1. Beyond Historicism

The following reflections were provoked by a workshop's call to draft manifestos for "desired" and "default" horizons of "global higher education in 2050."[9]

But even as we imaginatively time travel into 2050, there is perhaps a need to pause before we begin. It is important that the lag be measured out first and taken stock of for us to know how huge a historical leap is required of our narrative imaginations here—specifically in the context that I speak from, which is India. In

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late February 2020, a bloody pogrom unfolded in the streets of its national capital Delhi—teaching, by the force of theocratic fiat, an order of punitive patriotism that also doubles as the imaginative precondition for citizenship.[10] Throughout the months that followed, and even as the entire nation was either locked indoors or thrown out of their daily-wage jobs and work-site shelters by the pandemic, special cells of the Delhi police were busy scanning WhatsApp messages of university students to name them as "masterminds" of the February massacre and throw them into jail.[11]

A few caveats are in order here. First, in using words like "lag" and "leap," I do not mean to uncritically invoke the "waiting room of history" model[12]—where cognitive distinctions of quantity and quality must necessarily structure the adventure of capital from the "First World" to the "Third World," from the "less developed countries" (LDCs) to the "highly developed countries" (HDCs), from the "Global North" to the "Global South." Subaltern historians have long labored to account for the scandalous neatness of such a model, which has now found its most predictable (but prescient!) destination in United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and World Bank wisdom.[13] Second, my inaugural stage-setting exercise—by naming a geopolitical referent in "India"—need not be interpreted as a postcolonial identity claim. Quite on the contrary, I aim to show how the desire for globality and the claim to identity cannot go hand in hand while imagining the fortunes of higher education. In fact, the "global" has to be treated with as much caution as the "nation" (or the "nationalistic")—if the university is to belong to a future at all. The now popular—and mistakenly "decolonizing"—mimetic operation of decoupling the "globe" in demographic aggregates of the "North" and the "South" began in the context of the Vietnam War but has already been called out as a Mephistophelian conjuring of globalized finance capital. While I will probe the insidiousness of such "decoupling" in a subsection below, I set out here by shunning both the historicist and the indigenist grounds as inadequate for thinking a "university of immigrants."

Mission 2020: (Super)powering Education

Indian universities were scrambling to ascend world-ranking charts and drawing up policy schemes for disinvestment (through something like a Foreign Education Providers Bill 2013),[14] when Prime Minister Modi arrived in May 2014. He reminded us of a decades-old prophecy made by an aerospace scientist of a president—that India was to enter the "superpower" club in 2020.[15] Scarcely two weeks before the exact hour of this honorary self-anointing, the nation exhibited its "superpower" worthiness by having its police and riot action forces break into a university library (in the heart of Delhi) and baton-charge unsuspecting students as if they were dreaded terrorists. CCTV footage from the scene of this rampage, released months later, showed armed military personnel raiding the reading halls while

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FIGURE 1. Students of Jamia Millia Islamia University forced out of their campus premises at gunpoint by the Delhi Police on the night of December 15, 2019. Photograph by Adnan Adibi / Reuters.

panic-stricken students begged for mercy.[16] The latter were then forcibly paraded out of the university, with arms flung in the air and guns pointing at them.

A little further into that same long night of Indian democracy, social media accounts flooded with videos of the Uttar Pradesh police breaking the gates of yet another central university in Aligarh, using stun grenades and setting fire to student hostels and deporting inmates to unknown locations.[17] This was merely the apotheosis of a five-year-long revenge plot that saw study circles banned, research fellowships withheld on charges of being "antinational," research scholars driven to commit suicide, student leaders accused of sedition and arrested, a Muslim student disappearing from a university campus, teachers suspended for staging "anti-government" plays, army tanks requisitioned as institutional exhibits, and national flags flown in to substitute patriotism for dissent.[18] And even as the ire of a fascist state was daily invoked by liberal metropolitan universities across the country, audit-based ranking exercises saw these same "star-crossed" universities emerge as frontrunners of "performance" capital.[19] Understandably, it was all part of the same policy script—insofar as the top rankers were marked out for financial autonomy, a benign euphemism for "defunding."[20]

Liberal Polic(y)ing

That the university must pay for its perceived hubris of critical thinking by being left to fend for itself is hardly a discovery anymore. It is neoliberal common sense. But all of this sound and fury was assumed to be a prelude to a more structural

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dismantling of the public education sector in India;[21] all along, the Hindu right spoke of adopting a new education policy. Every time the party came to power in the last three decades, it would embark on a project of locally "saffronising" curriculum content and textbook history.[22] Understandably, there was much resistance from small but powerful sections of the intellectual elite. That a stronger electoral mandate would translate into attempts at a more basic "structural reform" (of the educational ideological apparatus) was anybody's guess. The framing of a new policy for educational provisioning was thus long in the making. Initially, a committee (overpopulated by bureaucrats) shaped up a marketization plan in the form of a report in 2016, but it failed to catch the government's fancy and was dumped in favor of a reconstituted committee.[23] This new working group submitted its recommendations in late 2018, but the ruling party decided to go slow and silent on this until the following general elections in 2019. As political folklore has it, Modi galloped back into power—and less than a week into the formation of the next government, a draft *National Education Policy (NEP)* was ceremonially unveiled.

The liberal intelligentsia, which had by then earned epithets like "sickular libtards," "intellectual terrorists" and "urban Naxals,"[24] were suddenly taken by surprise. The policy draft marked a curious shift in higher education by arguing for a clear move away from the neoliberal register of "employability" to the demand for a "liberal education."[25] In fact, the revised and final *NEP 2020*—approved by the cabinet without as much as a tabling in the Parliament—dismisses "employability" as only a "by-product" of higher education[26] and instead advocates for compulsory inclusion of a "comprehensive liberal arts education," even in professional-technological institutions and courses. While "critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences" (*NEP 2020*, 36) have been named crucial for a complete retooling of undergraduate training toward liberal ends, the only "employability" concern allowed within the current policy hermeneutic for higher education comes with reference to the "socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs)" (*NEP 2020*, 42). (What this signals by way of a redistributive social justice claim—and how that bifurcates the liberal and vocational divide of knowledge vis-à-vis class, caste, and religious identities is stuff of a longer debate, which may be distilled from the sections that follow.)

Understories of "Growth"

What does the fascist appropriation of a "liberal education" framework signify for the future of knowledge production, and how does it compare with the history of India's recent political past? How might we place this polemical reversal—from the *neoliberal* to the *liberal*—against macroeconomic policy transformations? Inasmuch as it appears that the raison d'être of Indian higher education is no longer the mass production of skilled workers—but instead of *citizens* (in line with the

originary *artes liberales*)—are we witnessing a renewed historical alliance between populist unreason and state welfarism? In the process, are we indeed done with financialization? And, more importantly, how must a progressive political imagination react to this singular conjuncture: with reserved alacrity (as many Indian liberals did to the *NEP*) or with uncertain trepidation?

I would suggest that there is occasion for neither, because the move—however devious and unexpected—is absolutely predictable. Even though it was in the wake of the Washington consensus that the Indian economy officially opened itself up in mid-1991, it was not until the build-up to the global recession was portended (by the Enron and dot-com scandals) that the "Global South" actually earned credence in the international credit economy. While Western markets started tottering around the turn of the century, globalized finance capital sought an escape route in the "decoupled" economies of the South. This has been consummately documented by economic histories attending to the specific circumstances that created grounds for a proliberalization reform agenda in India.[27]

The purported failure of the "mixed economy" model of Nehruvian vintage—combining state regulation of public resources and import-substitutions—was drummed up through empirical indices of a "slump" in economic activity through the 1970s. The consequent widening of the state's fiscal deficit became the immediate cause and desperate refrain for a policy overhaul in favor of trade and financial liberalization. But, ironically, what this meant through the decade of the 1990s was a strategic withdrawal of the state from capital formation—through minimized public investments even in the social infrastructure sectors—while at the same time, there persisted an unwillingness to address the alarming levels of revenue deficit through direct corporate taxation. Access to international finance and the successive lifting of import controls did not necessarily boost market "competition," insofar as the state's increased nonparticipation in critical infrastructure provisioning (like power, irrigation, and transport) adversely affected the growth of domestic private investment. The "level playing field" that was thus sought also did not create any significant boost in export production, implying that much of the capital inflows were limited to bubbles of stock-market speculation by short-term portfolio investors. This only made the "real" economy even more volatile than before. Growth indicators in agriculture, industry, and services did not register the "boons" of the reform-transition until around the turn of the millennium. It was only when the lineaments of a deep "crisis" in international finance threatened prospects in the "developed" world that the "emerging market economies" (like India) started finding their place in World Bank discourse and came to be imagined as the bailout zone for transnational capital.

Tellingly, the rise of right-wing conservatism in electoral politics coincided with this wholesale push for "opening up" the economy in the erstwhile Bharatiya

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Janata Party government's (1998–2004) policy fundamentals around that time. Making clever use of the apparent betrayal of reform "promises" doled out by the political planners of India's newly liberalized economy, the Hindu supremacist BJP saw in their rise to state power an opportune moment to mint the global recessionary sentiment. Through fanatic attempts at selling equity stakes in the public sector, massive relaxation of import restrictions, and a stringent order of fiscal disciplining (through legislation like the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act 2003), the Indian government compounded its foreign exchange reserves and created a ready market for foreign-made capital goods in the manufacturing sector. Public sector companies and domestic financial markets were both tied to the fortunes of global investment and brought within their managerial grasp, while the IT sector's promises of the large-scale export of urban-metropolitan labor—without requiring the logistics of cross-border migrations—made way for a degree of "growth" fetishism rarely seen before.[28] Given India's demographic advantage and its potential cheapness for an international market, the government and its policy advisers made it appear that all that the country needed was a large-scale skilling of its "human capital."[29]

Who Let the Jobs Out?

A mass specialization of the workforce required a reconfiguring of policy shibboleths around higher education—and thus began the glorious period of neoliberal "academic reform." In 2001, at the Doha round of World Trade Organization negotiations, the then Indian government (ruled by the same BJP coalition) offered its higher education sector for multilateral trade investment.[30] Over the next decade and after, this culminated in the 2013 Foreign Education Providers Bill, which made a case for profitable foreign trade within the university sector, thus tapping into an unprecedented bubble of popular enthusiasm for acquiring educational degrees as a means for ensuring higher private lifetime incomes. Alongside this, a host of legislative measures (like the Model Universities Act of 2004) prompted university bureaucracies to routinely thrust resource-generation goals on all aspects of institutional governance, tailor curricula toward increasing vocationalization, and espouse hollow interdisciplinarity through multiskilling curriculum structures like the semester system, Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), or Choice Based Credit System (CBCS).[31] The National Knowledge Commission reports (2006–9), while coinciding with the crash of Western markets, enthusiastically predicted one of the steepest periods of expansion within India's *knowledge economy* simply because of its "demographic dividend."[32]

But, with universities turning into mass-production units for specialized labor, there came a bundle of contradictions—not because more and more Indian youth now desired a move away from rural sectors of agricultural labor but because

this "dream" of social mobility was largely propped up on the receding shadows of public expenditure. It is by no means accidental that the Mandal Commission's proposal for implementing reservations for "Other Backward Classes" (OBCs) in higher educational institutions was finally implemented in 2008, after nearly three decades of violent upper-caste resistance, legislative proceduralism, and prolonged judicial intervention.[33] The Indian university's gates were now flung open to structurally excluded student populations, just when the state's disinvestment from higher education had become a fait accompli. With dwindling state resources being channeled into the funding of education, the social returns on such investment (in the longer term) were largely ignored. Add to this the general retraction of public investment from rural infrastructural development as well as the curtailment of revenue expenditure through a determined shrinking of public sector assets—all in the name of "fiscal regulation." The developmental dream became a paradox: as increasing numbers of higher-educated laborers wanted to migrate away from their rural fortunes, cities crowded them out through steadily deteriorating conditions of informal work and itinerant livelihood. The combination of unregulated private initiative and the sadistic absenteeism of the state—in terms of either employment generation or rent control and regulation of living costs—only created structures for systemic precarity. The much-hailed IT "transformation," by virtue of its necessary circumscription within urban geographies of desire and circulation, dug deep into these cycles of expropriation by making the bulk of India's technology-dependent service industries double up as self-sustaining pools of underpaid underemployment. This might almost seem like the textbook fulfillment of the Keynesian prophecy.

Overall, there was a gradual desiccation of domestic demand, until even the conditions for credit-based consumption began to disappear. The resulting contraction of domestic markets naturally forced global investments to dry up, in their search for greener pastures. All of this was inevitable, in as much as the model of globalization exported to the South was underwritten by the same pathology of desire that passed for primitive accumulation. India's rite of passage into the post-productionist moment was now complete—in as far as capital-intensive industrial sectors were successfully downsized and made reliant on external material-technological transfers, while the excess labor thus released was now to be absorbed by a wholly privatized informal service economy.[34] In the process, intergenerational structures of debt peonage and "secondary exploitation" by private credit agencies became the sole force of a characteristically Indian trajectory of "jobless growth." If the *All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report 2019–20* is pitted against the latest *Periodic Labour Force Survey: Quarterly Bulletin* for April to June 2020—both of which have been published by the government's own ministries—it appears that against every twenty-seven enrollments in Indian higher education, more than

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thirty-four working-age men remain informally unemployed (on a current weekly status); for women, the proportion rises to thirty-six.[35] Going by the government's own survey records, the Indian labor market not only fails to gainfully employ the higher educated, but in fact the more educated one is, the longer is the waiting period for a job. Under such circumstances, the NSS data for the last Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) in 2017–18 conclusively showed that the worst casualties of the net job loss within Indian economy were the social groups of Muslims and OBCs[36]—both of which constituencies had turned out to be liabilities for a Hindutva dispensation dealing with the impact of post-Mandal reservations in higher education. By now it was clear that mere structural access to education does not guarantee employment; hence "employability" could not continue to be the prerogative of a new education policy. Colleges and universities are only fated to produce a disposable surplus population of skilled workers with no, or proxy, jobs.

Citizen Labs, Inc.

We knew all along that this economic debacle was coming[37]: Modi's election campaign in 2014 successfully channeled this everyday disaffection into a grand plebiscite on the demand for a Hindu "nation"—aimed against the spectral Muslim immigrant-infiltrator, scavenging the nation's land and jobs. But, after five years of blunderous policy engineering (through cruel maneuvers like demonetization and a centralized indirect taxation regime)[38] only deepened the crisis further, the Hindutva fanatics reterritorialized the *economic* plot back into the *cultural* carcass of a sentimental republicanism. In this, they took their cue precisely from what their antagonists had earlier accused them of muffling with vengeance—the practice of "critical citizenship" as the unconditional charge of public educational systems. The Humboldtian *allgemeine Bildung*[39] or Schiller's philosophical mandate for an "aesthetic education"[40]—in simpler terms, the national-cultural cause of progress that impelled the modern university's historical course—now seemed to have come a full circle in hegemonic Hindutva's claim to critical intellectuality.

The dispensable surplus of output population belched free by the Indian university could now be denied formal citizenship through legislative means, while at the same time securing legitimacy for the civic imagination thus produced through formal structures of "liberal education" (as in the *NEP*). One sees both of these happening in India at the moment. A new amendment in the country's citizenship laws seeks to use religion to proscribe and disenfranchise Muslim immigrant labor, and the amendment's eventual linking to national census data and a registration regime for citizenship declares a class apartheid through absurd demands for documentation of one's lineage.[41] The massive protests against this have made headlines, though the same rhetorical cobbling of an "infiltration" threat continues to militarize the border state of Kashmir, legislatively revoke civil rights

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protections for Kashmiris, and wreak the worst-ever communications blackout as a means to repress secessionist anxieties.[42] Concurrent with this and almost preempting the futures promised by the *NEP 2020*, Delhi University had its liberal curriculum rolled out and rammed in—with all references to Dalit-*adivasi* resistance, radical left social movements, people's theater activism, queer mythologies, and organized Hindutva terror excised from it.[43] If the censored, sanitized liberal must thus substitute pedagogical encounters within publicly funded higher education—and therefore mass-condition civic sensibilities via majoritarian conduct manuals—the truly liberal "liberal arts" have become the moral entitlement of the richest class-caste elite within obscenely expensive private university settings.[44] Simply put, the liberal is the new cultural logic of the communal-fascist university.

Making a "People": A Fascist's Handbook

Historically speaking, the policy demand for liberalism—in the sense of freedom unencumbered by legislative interference or the state's commitment to redistributive justice—has coincided with a tacit acceptance of authoritarian rule as its final enforcer. This is no novel experiment, and several scholars of political and economic trajectories of development in the West have gone on to show how accurately this alliance is forged or guarded.[45] While Wendy Brown has recently examined how the liberal presuppositions of free speech and free exercise have been juridically confiscated by business enterprises and made into alibis for strengthening right-wing populism in America, David Graeber has contended that market democracy could not but call upon the bureaucratic state and its invisible networks of structural violence to extract uninterrupted compliance.[46] But there is a crucial difference here—in that these accounts substantively forward the fetish for liberalism as an economic goal and merely flirt with its political instantiation as a ruse to secure "competitive advantage" in the market. In fact, "liberal authoritarianism"—as famously imagined by the high priest of neoliberal reason Friedrich Hayek[47]—is not a paradox but a mutually reinforcing condition for global finance capitalism.

Distinctively enough, the Indian state does not peddle the curricular-pedagogical remedy of liberalism as an instrument for achieving neoliberal economic ends, but rather as an acknowledgment of the failure of its markets for labor and goods. This by no means implies the search for an alternative to neoliberal charters of growth (as I shall explain), though it certainly steers away from allowing a nearly three-and-a-half-decades-old policy register from exhausting the reform(ist) vision.[48] Much to the contrary, there is a decided political slant to the meanings of a "liberal education" in the *NEP*'s vocabulary—which too must be carefully separated from the calculated beneficence of a welfarist state.

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How is this "political slant"—as I call it—apparent in the making of the policy document, and how must it be read in the context of the conjoined futures of liberalism and communal fascism? The successive revisions (and omissions) in the policy provide a clue here: the very first draft, submitted to the government in 2016 and junked soon after, had maintained in section 5.4 that "ideally the universities ought not to lend themselves as play grounds for the larger national rivalries, inequalities, inequities, and social/cultural fault-lines; these need to be tackled by society as a whole in other fora such as parliament, courts, elections, etc."[49] This coercive decoupling of higher education from political questions of justice or equity stitched up a neoliberal manifesto for evacuating every trace of democratic will from university campuses in toto. However, in a wholesale rejection of such reasoning, the final, revised *NEP 2020* declares its prefatory "principles" as "develop[ing] good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values . . . [thus] producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution" (*NEP 2020*, 4–5). The explicit move from an economic signposting of liberalism to its becoming a political character-building exercise is telling, particularly in its strategic use of phrases like "contributing citizens" and "good human beings capable of rational thought and action."

It begs asking: what is the instrumental form of this "rationality" that must animate the higher-educated citizens of an India-to-come? I would suggest, in an almost Derridean turn of argument (drawing from Jacques Derrida's conclusive reflections in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*), that the "grounding" of such self-sufficient reason lies in the unconditional sovereignty of the nation-state. It returns the rational to its founding irrationalism—a space of incalculable excess from which "good human beings" must be constituted as "people" and *given unto itself* as a gift. As a *self-giving*—in the sense of a solipsistic moralism of the "good," and of socially productive roles of those "contributing" to the making of a "good" nation—this is a space outside of reason, and therefore both "constitutive" of it as well as prior to the event of its "constitution."[50] It revels as the mob, the *multitudo*, the *Volk*[51] as a community of moral self-identification (as "good," "human," "contributing," "capable") in the nation. Subsisting as the hyphenation that estranges the *nation* from the yet-to-be *state*, this is a moment that freezes sovereignty in the "people" before it has become *one*. And here lies its charge for populist orders of rule. By being turned into what Derrida poignantly calls "a single point of indivisible singularity . . . of absolute force and the absolute exception,"[52] this is a "people"-turned-mob that can both call forth the law as well as suspend its jurisdiction—in other

words, the "one who keeps or grants himself the right to suspend rights or law."[53] It is citizenship, performing its own amendability as well as transcendentality—the exact locus of "calculative reason" that parades as India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019. Structurally, this is where the liberal ruse is enfolded into the fortunes of fascism.

At this point, following Derrida's "reasoning," I want to provocatively posit that the only "reasonable" resistance to an unconditional sovereignty of the "people"-as-*Volk* is in reimagining the nation (as well as its institutions) as a call to unconditional hospitality—and one "that exposes itself without limit to the coming of the other, beyond rights and laws, beyond a hospitality conditioned by the right of asylum, by the right to immigration, by citizenship, and even by the right to universal hospitality, which still remains . . . under the authority of a political or cosmopolitical law." [54] The next section attempts to discern a method for such resistance.

2. Carpe Noctem!

Moving onward from the double bind of liberal citizenship, what might the Horizon-3 (H3)[55] manifesto for a "global higher education in 2050" look like? Is our liberal alarmism enough to exorcise the internal contradictions of neoliberal capital, or is the disinterested charge of a secular critique always already folded into an enlightened feudalism of the university professional? Frankly, can the task of democratic citizenship—in other words, the Freirean vocation of critical pedagogy[56]—be adequate to the historical inversion of it?

I would venture as far as to suggest two inchoate possibilities. The first requires the university to become the site of its own critique, rather than of a desperate defensiveness (self-peddling as saviorism). It is time to pry open the history of vulgar exclusions that the "publicness" of public higher education has forged, despite token fantasies of access and affirmative action. Isolationist anxieties about *academic freedom* have only privatized reason and museumized diversity first as example, then as statistic. In the process, social, economic, and cultural mobility have been tiered into a fantasy of evolution benchmarked by "competence" across educational levels—the primary, the secondary, the postsecondary, the tertiary, and the advanced. The public university could perhaps begin by reconnecting with primary education, through what I imagine as the second possibility—the *night school*.

I am reminded here of Jacques Rancière's *The Nights of Labor* as a counter-Freirean testament. Might we, at the university, expose the differential economy of rights to intellectual labor by reclaiming the nights of imaginative labor? The night school is historically the immigrant's workshop, and her only means for imagining a "social" outside of the historical situation. It is her only chance at undoing epistemic endeavors through *savoir faire*—a training in contingency that

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is irreducibly other than the vocational or the technical or the cognitive. It shuns ascetic scholasticism and instead makes *use* of tactical pedagogical behaviors. It defeats institutionality and is therefore the most intimate enemy of the corporative-managerial university. In-*corporated* into the latter, its task must be to shame the university into confronting the lies it lives/loves. Needless to say, the familiar enchantments of NGO philanthropy will have no place here. The night school, situated on the outsides of a day's work or worklessness but inside the university's imagination, might be worth waking up to.

There has been a singular experiment along these lines in India, by Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati, just when Europe's universities were being enlisted for Nazi war efforts.[57]

Adulting Midnight's Children: Nation, Service, Community

Ours is no manifesto for "lifelong learning," but a learning in (not *of*) the lifeworld! To try to situate this experiment in policy jargon is to realize its radical ungraspability within the province of self-help chauvinism.

Ironically, the final *NEP 2020* uses the vocabulary of "lifelong learning" to demonstrate its commitment to the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"[58]—and urges a "sharing of infrastructure for school, higher, adult, and vocational education, and for other community and volunteer activities" in order to ensure "efficient use of both physical and human resources."[59] To that extent, it envisions the setting up of Adult Education Centres (AECs) "within other public institutions such as HEIs [Higher Education Institutions]" and recommends the participation of "qualified community members including from HEIs as part of each HEI's mission to engage with their local communities" while rendering "critical service to the nation."[60]

While this avowed ethic of philanthropic volunteerism might be made to sound deceptively similar to our own H3 proposals above, it does not take more than an attentive reading of policy to discern the contrary intentions underlying such futures. In the hunger for local engagement through a "community service" model is acknowledged the colossal failures of the social-justice agenda within Indian public university systems, and thus the fetish of the "liberal" is enjoined to a practical "do-good" moralism of sorts. The rhetorical mining of the "lifelong"—as a necessary apprentice of the liberal conscience-building project—capitalizes on the minimal fact of survival as incrementally tending toward profit and therefore fit for renewed self-investment in the cause of social production.

In the process, the welfarist promise of the state toward providing a social wage and bearing the reproductive costs of labor power are given over to individual enterprise on the one hand and experimental charity on the other. Alongside this, the glorification of such volunteerist effort as "service to the nation" reminds one of Martin Heidegger's enlistment of *Wissensdienst* (knowledge-service) as the

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"historical spiritual mission" of the Nazi university.[61] What is also achieved here is a strategic political exorcism of the germ of the "anti-national" student-subject from campus life. The mutual coincidence of citizenship training and community building in the university's social outreach programs performs an obfuscation of the latter's relationship with historical justice. It is here that the official outcomes of the *NEP* fundamentally differ from our H3-vectoral possibilities. The former makes us believe that the question of justice is merely about the logistics of infrastructure—and the collection of individual wills working on them—rather than about imagining the *outside* to self-reproducing structures.

Dreaming up the Digital

It is no wonder that the *NEP*'s cloaking of the liberal as a civic-social contract is tailor-made to address the very "crisis" of the Indian public university that the policy takes great pains to expose: an unwieldy behemoth with limited access and social accountability, divorced from the priorities of national character-development. The answer to such malaise makes recourse to an astounding numerical sleight. Since we are repeatedly told that the primary handicap to quality delivery of higher educational services lies in its "severe fragmentation," the roadmap for the imminent future suggests a massive curtailment in the number of institutions while at the same time a bolstering of enrollments.[62] On the face of it, the calculus seems bizarre—insofar as the draft *NEP* clearly portends that the current spread of 52,000 HEIs be quartered to a maximum of 12,300 even as the gross enrollment ratio in higher education must be doubled from the present 26.3 to 50 percent.[63] However, a slightly deeper look reveals that a mass online transitioning of public education systems had already been afoot, long before the scourge of the pandemic had hastened a move in that direction. The ceremonial eulogies dedicated to a newfound love for the *liberal* were spent in service of a large-scale digitization of the public university. Citizenship, in the policy instantiation of it, is about nurturing socially distanced lifelong learners who may adequately embody civilizational anxieties against every shadow of the *other* as contending human capital.

What emerges from this preceding discussion is that the Indian government's flirtations with a "liberal education" model is far from being aimed *against* the maniacal workings of neoliberal capital, though they carry a consciousness of the latter's failed promises. Yet, the liberal consensus also is implicated within the logic of globalized finance capitalism. To manufacture a low-waged workforce for the informal market—by the sheer force of an exemplary moral entrepreneurialism—and deem it the highest national "duty" of the citizen (toward the sovereign state) is an accurate bailout scheme for a recessionary economy. It is the apotheosis of what has been understood severally as "financialization"—the point at which the state

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and the market become cognitively inseparable and indistinguishable. Demonstrably, an order of civil-society liberal vigilantism has always been conjured as a necessary corollary of the fortunes of advanced globalization and the World Bank-IMF's humanitarian conquests of the Third World.

The story of the "origins" of the idea of "lifelong learning" in the Euro-American context might be instructive here for us to understand how the anatomy of a "crisis" has historically structured the advent of neoliberal reforms *with a liberal face* within the field of education.

Human qua Capital

Just ahead of a protracted "energy crisis" in the United States, a report of the UNESCO International Commission on the Development of Education—more popularly remembered as the Faure Report (1972)—proposed a thorough overhaul of the education sector. With a declared purpose of deepening "democratic opportunities," it sought to address the bulk of nontraditional learner populations through a policy contouring of education beyond formal institutional means.[64] The effort was dubbed "lifelong education," and it treaded a course already charted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Industrial capitalism in the United States was facing an especially deep crisis in legitimacy at the time, with Keynesian reforms and protracted worker movements having lowered the average rate of profit for employers.[65] Stagflation prompted a planned dismantling of the manufacturing sector and a corresponding investment boom in the technology-dependent energy sector with significantly lower labor requirements. The classic figure of the assembly-line worker—the agent of value production within capitalism—was now to be systematically displaced onto a new range of informal service industries with the lowest wage liability.

With the growing dispensability of productive labor and its successive evacuation from traditional systems of production, the need to constantly upgrade skills in order to prevent depreciation of auctionable labor power in a radically transformed market escalated. The low-paid wage worker had to keep investing in the quality of her labor power (or her productivity), and transform herself into what has now seamlessly assumed the aspect of "human capital." Lifelong education, in the excuse of democratizing structural "rights" to education, was actually about reaping greater relative surplus value from cheaply available and renewable labor. Predictably enough, the next spurt of euphoric enthusiasm around the "transformative" potential of lifelong learning had to wait until the early 1990s—when debt-strapped developing economies (with massive "demographic dividends" but abysmally low Gross Enrolment Ratios [GER]) were opened up to transnational capital flows and a consequent labor-reskilling exercise.

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Discipline and Multiply: The Birth of a "Skills University"

The debate on higher education in the *NEP 2020* is cleaved with self-contradiction, insofar as it is driven by statistical insecurities of low enrollment rates as well as a careful avoidance of the "human resource" discourse in its persistent scramble for numbers. The balancing act demanded of a conditional peppering of economic exigencies in overused liberal tripe is given away at times—and, most tellingly so, in the policy's exhumation of a compulsory "multidisciplinarity" as pedagogic redress.[66] In arguing for a drastic reduction in the number of colleges, the *NEP* urges a merger of all single-stream institutions in the model of what it calls a Multidisciplinary Education and Research University (MERU). It is mandated that all professional, technical, and vocational institutions for higher learning must include disciplinary training in the humanities and social sciences—and it is this patchwork of curricular ingredients that shall cook up the broth of a "liberal broad-based multidisciplinary education," tailored to the tastes of a fabled "fourth industrial revolution."[67]

Back in 2015, it was this same bubble of "choice" afforded by a multidisciplinary curriculum that became the grounds for imposing a "one-size-fits-all" uniform syllabus across all institutions of undergraduate instruction in the country.[68] Given that the structural illusion of "cafeteria-model diversification" was used to standardize course content at a national level, the emancipatory promises of a multidisciplinary proselytization were far from achieved. What it made possible, however, was a set of legislative regulations published in the following year that allowed institutions with inadequate faculty strength or a paucity of physical infrastructure to subscribe to online modules for teaching "elective papers."[69] Because all institutions were practically subscribing to a single undergraduate syllabus—with minimal possibility for revision—a digital cross-streaming of course "choices" across different universities was now imminently possible. But, then, what is the point of running surplus brick-and-mortar institutions when a bureaucratic regimentation of multidisciplinary studies might make it possible for colleges to disappear into what the *NEP* calls "college complexes"?

Aside from this economic restructuring of the higher education sector made possible by the charge of multidisciplinarity, it is worth asking: why is the new education policy silent on the wavering fortunes of critical interdisciplinary departments like "women's studies" or "studies in social exclusion and inclusive policy," which have been periodically threatened with closure since 2017? Since the abolition of the Five-Year Plan by this same government, close to two hundred such departments of interdisciplinary social scientific research across the country have been annually hounded with dire consequences and total defunding—often resulting in a strategic hollowing out of both faculty and students from these institutional sites.[70] The *NEP 2020* does not once name any such interdisciplinary pursuit

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among its labored encomiums to multidisciplinary education. One might venture an easy guess here about how the *NEP* betrays a serious epistemological chasm between the practice of *critical* interdisciplinarity as opposed to *cognitive* multidisciplinarity.

In the eyes of the policy, the adventure of multidisciplinary learning is about enabling a student of philosophy to opt for a semester's worth of zoology or accountancy.[71] In this process, there are specified outcomes of low-level cognitive competence in multiple subject-fields that will be ensured through standardized examination routines. Epistemologically, the thrill of multidisciplinarity does not consist in questioning the *silos* that intellectual traditions of inquiry have millennially erected and methodologically insulated themselves within. On the contrary, it resembles a guided tour through distinctly self-separated fields of academic specialism without necessarily probing the rights of entry into and expertise in either. What results from such intellectual connoisseurship is some degree of certified credentialism, and not a criticality of understanding guaranteed by the practice of radical interdisciplinarity. Contrary to the vexations of identity that give birth to an interdiscipline like "Dalit studies"—and one that resolutely and aggressively challenges the calm disinterestedness of the secular-liberal social sciences—a "multidisciplinary" combination of studying literature one semester and sociology in another does not breed a consciousness of caste apartheid in India. The latter only refigures the university's mission as aligned to the cause of mass-producing a sentinel of cheap, semiskilled informal labor for the global marketplace of cognitive capital. Responding to the urgent demands of a postproductionist economy where no employment comes with the security of tenure or the guarantee of a social wage, a multidisciplinary education is in effect an apology for the inexorability of "multitasking."

3. Coda: A Dawn beyond Defeat?

Let me end with some provocations by way of an anecdote. In continuing from my manifesto for an H3 vision for the Indian public university, let me return to what I maintained as the unbridgeable distance between the infrastructural parasitism of a campus night school and the official policy algorithms for adult literacy programs prescribed as liberal guilt-expiation therapy. How does one begin to address this distance, and with what examples from the contemporary? How might we open up the gates of the public university to a community of permanent "outsiders"? How might the university of immigrants be *thought*? The force of secular critique and its monastic codes of intellectual apprenticeship are—as I maintained earlier—inadequate to the purpose, and therefore we must look for its birth sites and citations elsewhere.

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FIGURE 2. Posters from Shaheen Bagh. Courtesy of Shivam Vij, contributing editor at the *Print*.

Right before the pandemic, when thousands of Muslim women left their households and occupied public thoroughfares at Shaheen Bagh or Jaffrabad for months on end—protesting against the Indian government's attempts at naming them as "illegal migrants"—the children trailed their mothers into the winter chill.[72] And for long hours every day, these children were found painting posters or writing placards or reading picture books in a makeshift school tented up around the site of the sit-in. Most often, there were university students and researchers traveling long distances from their campus housing and devoting their after-class hours to looking after these schools or greeting their daily train of guests with revolutionary cheer.[73] Even as I am finishing this article in early 2021, the borders of Delhi are cordoned off by the families of thousands of Indian farmers who have traveled on tractors from their hometowns in order to refuse the government's pawning of their agricultural produce across these borders to corporate capital through a series of unilaterally passed legislations.[74] Community schools have also been established along these borders, where the children of unlettered farmhands as well as organized farm owners share reading sessions and learning material. Many of the university students who had coordinated these open-air schools and tarpaulin-shade libraries around the evolving geography of a new social are now behind prison bars on trumped-up charges of "terror conspiracy."[75] But that is the exact measure of how terrified the state (and judicial) machinery is of any possible alliance between a university and the publics it historically excludes.

These schools that sang their daily prayers in slogans of love and belonging invented a new order of sociality. It is one where the barely literate and the rarely schooled can reclaim the institution beyond its neatly curated "publicness." It is here that the work of rebuilding the public institution must necessarily begin—surrounded by the commotion of highways and state borders, and sampled in the imaginative labors of immigrants and illiterates. But when these movements

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are smithereened by pandemics or police batons, might we re-create their chorus *within* the university? Will the makeshift school from Shaheen Bagh be revived and reappropriated by the nights at the university? Will the tools of our workshop gather dust, or stitch up the dreams of those that will have never stepped "inside" *otherwise*?

This is a legacy our times have bequeathed to us; how we take these lessons learned along the roadside back to the manicured environs of the liberal university is where the future of publicly funded education lies.

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Notes

1. For a more situated understanding of what has been severally termed as India's "digital divide," see Bhaskaran, "Great Lockdown"; Kundu, "Indian Education Can't Go Online"; McKenzie, "India Opens the Door"; Mohanty, "100 Varsities to Go Online"; Nagarajan, "Online Illusion."
2. See Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission: Public Notice, D.O.No.1—9/2020 (CPP-II), May 20, 2021; University Grants Commission, *Blended Mode*. The latter was published as an appendix to the former—which mandates that higher educational institutions in India may henceforth conduct teaching-learning activities for a minimum of 40 percent and a maximum of 70 percent of their course curricula in the online mode, permanently.
3. See Biswas, "Citizenship Amendment Act"; MS, "How University Administrations"; Marik, "How India Is Silencing Its Students."
4. For a punctilious history of classical knowledge practices and their ranging negotiations with subsequent systems of monastic or secular education in Europe, see Durkheim, *Evolution of Educational Thought*; see also Larsen and Rubenson, *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity*.
5. Kant, *Groundwork*; Kant, *Critique*.
6. See Habermas, "Idea of the University"; Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*; Readings, *University in Ruins*; Rothblatt, *Modern University*; Newman, "Saving Higher Education's Soul"; Beteille, *Universities at the Crossroads*.
7. See Ministry of Human Resource Development, *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020*, 37, sec. 11.9 (hereafter cited as *NEP 2020*).
8. I use the concept in the sense that David Graeber employs it in *Debt*, 43–71.
9. This is an allusion to the theme of the workshop at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), March 4–6, 2020, where a previous, shorter version of this article was first presented. The discussions that followed at the workshop and beyond—as well as

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comments received from Christopher Newfield, Wendy Brown, Andrew Ross, David Theo Goldberg, Mike Strayer, Kostas Gavroglu, Nasrin Olla, Thea Sircar, and Somak Mukherjee—have enormously contributed to the thought arc of the article as it currently stands.

10. For an accurate account of the planned attacks in Muslim neighborhoods in northeast Delhi, see Sagar, "Hindu Supremacist Mobs."
11. On India in lockdown, see Shroff, "We Are Deserted"; *Hindustan Times*, "Photos: Lockdown On." See also Manral, "Probe into Delhi Riots"; Pasha, "Jamia"; Bhandari, "Delhi Police Chargesheet."
12. Referring to the encounters between a colonial-teleological imagination of time and histories of the empire, Uday Singh Mehta first speaks of a "waiting room of history" that the colonized native must be consigned to—one which required an "enormous temporizing in the face of the 'backward' and the unfamiliar" ("Progress, Civilization, and Consent," 97, 77).
13. See United Nations Development Program, *Forging a Global South*; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Forging a Path beyond Borders*; World Bank, *World Development Report 2002*.
14. Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 2010. For a punctilious critique of the provisions in the bill—which was later reintroduced in the Indian parliament in 2013—see Chandra, "Private Nation, Public Funds."
15. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, president of India (2002–7), aired these predictions in the generic vein of a nationalist fantasy in Kalam and Rajan, *India 2020*.
16. *Wire*, "Purported CCTV Footage."
17. Anuj Kumar, "Stun Grenades."
18. All these developments—and the role of the Modi government and Hindu supremacist organizations in systematically stoking unrest on university campuses—have been severally reported in the mainstream news media, often with intentions of manipulating public narratives against students and teachers. For specific facts on each of these cases, see Yamunan, "IIT-Madras Derecognises Student Group"; *Economic Times*, "Rohith Vemula"; *Wire*, "My Birth Is My Fatal Accident"; *Hindu Business Line*, "Police Crack Down"; Pandey, "JNU Student"; Sethi, "Reading Foucault in Mahendragarh"; Hebbar, "Haryana Professors Reprimanded"; *India Today*, "After National Flag."
19. Bhattacharya, "What Makes the Public University Anti-national?"
20. Bhattacharya and Ramdev, "Autonomy in Higher Education."
21. A brief recounting of the history of higher educational reform in India—as part of both colonial and postcolonial policy making—might be instructive here. Though it is usually contended (in both scholarly and policy discourse) that the setting up of the first Indian universities in 1857 was impelled by the ideological dividends of colonial "mimicry" through English-language education, a deep reading of historical archives would evince that the local Hindu upper-caste elites were not at all opposed to the material benefits of an Anglicist intellectual legacy. Instead, it became for these elites a means for impoverishing the vernacular schools—operating across Indian provinces and enabling significant social mobility for the lower and even "untouchable" castes—and therefore strategically reserving state bursaries earmarked for public instruction in the cause of an imported educational system. The inaugural universities in the three major presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras were soon followed up by sporadic endowments by a class of feudal landlords

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and upper-caste associations to institute colleges for their own community brethren. While the university system in colonial India officially opened teaching departments only as late as 1904, the caste character within these economies of intellectual access was hardly ever challenged. Independent India's policy planning for higher education began with the *Radhakrishnan Commission Report* of 1948–49, which sought to correct its internal contradictions through proposals for establishing "rural universities" and locally relevant knowledges. It was on the recommendation of this commission that a University Grants Commission (UGC) was formally incorporated, with the dual aim of regulating quality standards and autonomously disbursing public funds. The Kothari Commission of 1964–66 argued for a greater distribution of public resources and expansion of state infrastructures for education, while laying the groundwork for the first postindependence *National Policy on Education* in 1968. The Indian economy's subsequent move toward trade and financial liberalization (in the wake of contracting domestic markets and International Monetary Fund loans to keep up investment expenditure) through the 1980s and early 1990s coincided with the second *National Policy on Education*—first passed in 1986, then revised in 1992 to give greater leeway to private philanthropic patronage within the sector. This burst open the floodgates for a series of state legislations and potential bargains with multilateral capital throughout the next two decades—including the Private Universities Bill (1995), the *Ambani-Birla Report* (2000), the Doha agreement with the World Trade Organisation (2001), the Model Universities Act (2004), the *National Knowledge Commission Reports* (2006–9) and the Foreign Education Providers Bill (2010/2013). Since the anointing of a majoritarian Hindu-supremacist government in 2014, the only incessant interlude added to an otherwise prescripted reforms theater in higher education was the ideological crusade against its dramatis personae—the intellectual communities now painted as "enemies" of the nation. What got drowned out in the din (and calculatedly so!) was the structural legitimation of an existing disinvestment plan for the state—through systematic stoppages and irregularization of UGC fellowships (2015), institutional ranking frameworks co-opted into a claims-based hierarchy of public funding (2015–16), threatened discontinuation of interdisciplinary social science departments (2017), proposed abolition of UGC and the removal of regulatory barriers to higher educational financing (2018), graded autonomy for financial deregulation of top institutions (2018), and so on.

22. Thapar, "They Peddle Myths."
23. See *Business Standard*, "9-Member Panel"; see also Sharma, "4 Years On."
24. *Hindu*, "Who Is an Urban Naxal."
25. Pt. II, chapter 11 ("Towards a More Liberal Education") of the original *Draft National Education Policy 2019* notes:

    > The purpose and importance of a liberal arts education today—i.e. an education across the *kalas*—is to enable students to explore the numerous remarkable relationships that exist among the sciences and the humanities, mathematics and art, medicine and physics, etc.—and more generally, to explore the surprising unity of all fields of human endeavour. A comprehensive liberal arts education develops all capacities of human beings—intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional and moral—in an integrated manner. Such education, which develops the fundamental capacities of individuals on all aspects of being human, is by its very nature liberal education, and is aimed at developing good and complete human beings. (224)

26. See sec. 11.8 of the final *NEP 2020*, 37. This was revised from the Kasturirangan Committee report by the MHRD. More than thirty hours after a press conference where the government

announced the policy as officially released, the sixty-six-page actual document was stealthily uploaded to its website on the night of July 30, 2020.

27. An accurate and meticulous analysis of India's turn to liberalization policies as well as its aftermath may be found in Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, *Market That Failed*.
28. See Upadhya, *Reengineering India*; Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase, *Globalisation and the Middle Classes*.
29. See Ambani and Birla, "Report."
30. See Manuel, "It's Not Wise"; *Sanhati*, "Fight against Committing Higher Education"; Prasad, "Why Higher Education."
31. See P. Kumar, "FYUP to CBCS"; Kausar, "FYUP, Semester, CBCS."
32. National Knowledge Commission, *Report to the Nation 2006–2009*, 3.
33. For a history of public sentiment and legislative-judicial dillydallying on the Mandal Commission's recommendations, see Balagopal, "Anti-Mandal Mania"; *India Today*, "Supreme Court"; *Economic and Political Weekly*, "Editorial: Caste"; Babu M. T., "Curious Case."
34. The postproductionist phase in India's growth story is not merely built on three decades of jobless expansion of its formal sectors of employment, as has been recounted in this section. It is a historically documented fact that India's contraction of formal employment capacity has been accompanied by a wholesale proliferation of an informalized labor force—most often evidenced in the form of circular seasonal migrations of landless or petty land-holding peasants into urban sectors of contractual daily-wage employment. The scale of this informal labor market, accounting for its strategic parasitism within vast sectors of the organized economy, has been severally pegged at 90 to 94 percent of India's employment landscape. However, the National Sample Survey (NSS) data on employment-unemployment patterns—published in mid-2019 as the *Periodic Labour Force Survey: Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2017–18*—confirmed these "postproductionist" fears through a set of startling revelations that even considered the conditions of informal job-creation alongside self-employment and unpaid family labor. When compared with the previous survey data from 2011–12, not only did this report clinch the long-standing debate on how rates of employment growth in postliberalization India have staggered way below population growth rates, but for the first time since independence the NSSO statistics registered a decline in the absolute number of available workers within the Indian economy. The labor force participation rate—in other words, the proportion of working-age populations seeking a job or actively inducted in the labor market—fell by 5.8 percent, translatable in absolute numbers as a net job loss of more than six million. Even against this dwindling index of employable populations, the percentage of "usual status unemployment" on an annual basis—taking into consideration both principal as well as subsidiary work contracts—stood at a forty-five-year high of 6.1 percent, with alarming variations across social classes, gender identities, and geographical sectors. This trajectory of India's movement from a stagnant to a recessive employment economy, as borne out against the 68th Round of NSS-EUS data, has been adequately commented upon by Kannan and Raveendran, "From Jobless to Job-loss Growth"; Himanshu, "Seriousness of the Problem"; Nath and Basole, "Did Employment Rise or Fall." For an analysis of preceding rates of job creation relative to population growth in India, see Raveendran and Kannan, "Growth sans Employment"; Abraham, "Stagnant Employment Growth." Prabhat Patnaik, in "The Dramatic Increase in the Unemployment Rate," notes that the rampant practice

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of work sharing within the informal economy might frighteningly aggravate the NSS's estimates for Current Weekly Status (CWS) unemployment—which regards only one hour of gainful work per week as evidence of employment—and therefore the real situation might warrant a far higher rate of income unemployment.

35. Compare Department of Higher Education, *All India Survey on Higher Education 2019–20*, sec. 2.3, with National Statistical Office, *Periodic Labour Force Survey: Quarterly Bulletin April–June 2020*, sec. 2.5.
36. See Kannan and Raveendran, "From Jobless to Job-Loss Growth."
37. As soon as the NSSO's Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) data for 2017–18 was compiled and the deleterious impact of the government's policy moves on overall job creation became apparent, the report was suppressed and the survey discontinued on the recommendations of a task force. For more detail, see *DNA*, "Survey Discontinued"; Daniyal, "Daily Fix"; Mitra, "Why the NSSO Employment Surveys."
38. For an accurate analysis of these ill-thought government measures, see Arun Kumar, "Economic Consequences of Demonetisation"; Arun Kumar, "Structurally Flawed GST."
39. See Humboldt, "Internal and External Organisation," 253–65.
40. Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.
41. See S. Shankar, "India's Citizenship Law"; Dutt, "How Citizenship Act"; Naqvi, "Citizenship Amendment Bill"; S. Kumar, "India's NRC"; Dalmia, "India Is Laying"; De and Ranganathan, "We Are Witnessing"; *Indian Express*, "CAA+NRC."
42. See Masih, "India's Internet Shutdown in Kashmir"; *Al Jazeera*, "200 Days of Kashmir Siege."
43. In the latest ongoing addition to this controversy, the Academic Council of Delhi University abetted the removal of feminist and Dalit texts from its English honors curriculum, through the emergency powers of a committee nominated by the vice chancellor. See A. Shankar, "Dalit Authors." See also Ibrar, "Syllabus Row at DU."
44. A quick survey of fees charged at private liberal arts universities like Ashoka University (https://www.ashoka.edu.in/page/ug-admissions-40#/section-303), Shiv Nadar University (https://www.snuadmissions.com/admission_info_2021.php#fees) and O. P. Jindal Global University (https://jgu.edu.in/fee-structure/)—among several others—will prove the point.
45. For example, see S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*; S. Wolin, *Fugitive Democracy*.
46. Brown, *In the Ruins*, 123–60; Graeber, "Introduction," 3–44.
47. See Brown, *In the Ruins*, 72.
48. It was since the second *National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986* that Indian policy archives have explicitly consecrated educational reform to the cause of economic growth data. It is not fortuitous that immediately before the draft framework of *NPE 1986* was tabled in Parliament, the then–Ministry of Education was renamed as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Moreover, part I of the *NPE* document justified its own raison d'être as the "highway" to "a stage in [the country's] economic and technical development when a major effort must be made to derive the maximum benefit from the assets already created" (Ministry of Human Resource Development, *National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986*, 2).
49. Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Draft National Policy on Education (NPE) 2016*, 52.
50. Commenting on Carl Schmitt's disdain for the rationalistic tendencies of constitutional liberalism and his resulting ideas of sovereignty, Richard Wolin notes:

> The paramount role played by the "philosophy of life"—above all, by the concept of cultural criticism proper to *Lebensphilosophie*—on [Schmitt's] political thought has escaped

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the attention of most critics. . . . In point of fact, determinate influences of "philosophy of life"—a movement that would feed directly into the *Existenzphilosophie* craze of the 1920s (Heidegger, Jaspers, and others)—are readily discernible in Schmitt's pre-Weimar writings. Thus in one of his first published works, *Law and Judgment* (1912), Schmitt is concerned with demonstrating the impossibility of understanding the legal order in exclusively rationalist terms, that is, as a self-sufficient, complete system of legal norms after the fashion of legal positivism. . . . He goes on to coin a phrase for this "extralegal" dimension that proves an inescapable aspect of all legal decision making proper: the moment of "concrete indifference," the dimension of adjudication that transcends the previously established legal norm. In essence, the moment of "concrete indifference" represents for Schmitt a type of vital substrate, an element of "pure life," that stands forever opposed to the formalism of law as such. Thus at the very heart of bourgeois society—its legal system—one finds an element of existential particularity that defies the coherence of rationalist syllogizing or formal reason. ("Carl Schmitt," 430–31)

51. Herbert Marcuse elaborates on the totalization characteristic of the *Volk*:
    Totality is programmatically mystified. It can "never be grasped by hands, nor seen with outer eyes. Composure and depth of spirit are necessary in order to behold it with the inner eye." In political theory this totality is represented by the folk (*Volk*), as an essentially "natural-organic" unity and totality that is prior to all social differentiation into classes, interest groups, etc. With this thesis universalism rejoins naturalism. (*Negations*, 4)
52. Derrida, "To Arrive," 154.
53. Derrida, "To Arrive," 154.
54. Derrida, "To Arrive," 149.
55. Informed by the mandate of the workshop at UCSB, I am referring here to the "three horizons" framework popularized by Bill Sharpe. Within this methodological schema for transformative scholarly inquiry, as this special section's organizers put it in their proposal, the First Horizon (H1) represents "the current state of things in higher education," the Third Horizon (H3) "a vision of a transformed and sustainable system," and the Second Horizon (H2) attempts to chart out a "set of processes that creates the future system from the present."
56. Paulo Freire poignantly maintains, "People will be truly critical if they live the plenitude of the praxis, that is, if their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naïve knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 131).
57. For a detailed discussion on the Tagorean experiment in Shantiniketan-Sriniketan, see Bhattacharya, "What 'Use.'"
58. See UN General Assembly, Resolution 70/1, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1 (September 25, 2015), https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.
59. *NEP 2020*, sec. 21.6, 52.
60. *NEP 2020*, 52.
61. Heidegger, "Self-Assertion."
62. *NEP 2020*, sec. 10.1, 34.
63. Section 2.3 of the *All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2018–19*, when read against chap. 10 ("Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation") of the *Draft National Education Policy 2019*, betrays this sinister arithmetic.

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64. In a footnote to its findings on "the path to democracy," the report tellingly notes:
> In order to be truly democratic, education should have the kind of structure which would enable individuals not only to prepare themselves to play a part in society, but also to have access to education after having been able to test their aptitudes in social life. . . . Now, it is the principle of lifelong education which aims at helping people to resume study at any age in terms of later, better defined goals, in accordance with aptitudes better measured through experience in life. (Faure, *Learning to Be*, 74)

65. For fuller context, see Caffentzis, "Work/Energy Crisis," 23–93.
66. *NEP 2020* presents a stubborn vision for the next two decades in Indian higher education thus:
> By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions and shall aim to have larger student enrolments preferably in the thousands, for optimal use of infrastructure and resources, and for the creation of vibrant multidisciplinary communities. Since this process will take time, all HEIs will firstly plan to become multidisciplinary by 2030, and then gradually increase student strength to the desired levels. (*NEP 2020*, sec. 10.7, 35)

67. *NEP 2020*, sec. 11.4, 37.
68. See Jain, "Everything You Need to Know."
69. University Grants Commission, "UGC," clauses 4.4(a)–(b).
70. For a historical account of the policy build-up toward this and its implications, see Bhattacharya, "Between Disciplines and Interdisciplines," 183–208.
71. *NEP 2020* elaborates the broad structural changes promised by a "more holistic and multidisciplinary education" thus: "Imaginative and flexible curricular structures will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study, and would offer multiple entry and exit points, thus removing currently prevalent rigid boundaries and creating new possibilities for life-long learning" (*NEP 2020*, sec. 11.5, 37).
72. See Hameed, "Brave Women"; see also Dwivedi, "Fight for Children's Future"; Chhabra, "Weeks after Violence."
73. For footage from the site, see Toogo, "Makeshift School"; Tomar and Toogo, "Why Has a Library"; Nandan, "Shaheen Bagh's Safe Classroom."
74. For footage from the ongoing protest along Delhi's borders, see BBC News, "India Farmers Protests."
75. For a chronicle of how the Delhi police's investigations into the February massacre have been scripted by the ruling party's narrative and have led to indefinite detention of peaceful student-dissenters under a draconian anti-terror law called the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), see *Wire*, "Delhi Riots"; see also Trivedi, "Pandemic and the Anti-CAA Movement"; Anwar, "Delhi Riots."

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