

THE STORY OF LABOUR - INDENTURED TO NEED BASED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS; RE-READING OF AMITAV GHOSH'S LABOUR CONSCIOUSNESS WITH CONTEMPORARY INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

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Abstract

The labour is most exploitative form of social and economic arrangement. Since the time of slaves to the story of the sooty chimney workers in the factories, to the infamous plantation labourers in the imperial gardens and tea plantations in Burma; the labour enlists the stories of human debasement and cultural onslaught. There is history, gender, race and colour behind the determination of exploitative labour. The body of a labour and his soul are drained out of him to complete the sketches of imperial designs and social structures. In contemporary times, the capitalistic system and by its extension the modern capitalistic states continued to pile-up misery on this producing class of society. While as socialists failed to produce a practical model to elevate labour from its position, the story of labour leaves behind the same trajectory of loss and deprivation. This study aims to trace the stories of labour from Ibsen's trilogy to the present time 'need based institutional labour'. The intersection of theories and literary perspectives to understand the story of labour and relate it to the present context of exploitation is likely to open academic research in the contemporary institutional arrangements of labour. The study aims to fill the gap in the reading of Amitav Ghosh's labour consciousness in a contemporary context of negotiating the labour engagements.

Key Words: Indentured Labour, Need based labour, Academic need-based arrangement, Local fund employee, Pervasive Lives, Happiness.

Methodology: The study is based on the close textual reading of Amitav Ghosh's Ibsen's trilogy. The thematic treatment of labour in a multi layered context in order to read and understand the story of labour is the prime motive of this study. The historical and sociological treatment of labour is analysed in the context of contemporary institutional arrangements to comprehend the strategic slow exploitation of labour in present day democracies like India. The three major sectors like health, education and power are qualitatively analysed on the basis of specific case

studies to provide the glimpse into the exploitation of human resources in the name of managing the need or labour requirement of the institutions. In contemporary neoliberal scenario, the focus is on the cost effectiveness of labour and the value of labour is reduced or quantified to the maximum profit of the employer. The intersection of literary theories from classical Marxism to post-colonial understanding of race and culture and to Kallbergs reading of 'precarious lives' provides the theoretical perspective and lens to see and analyse labour as a strategy of exploitation and debasement of human worth.

Research Gap: The study shall be bridging a research gap in the study of Amitav Ghosh's treatment of labour. Although Ghosh's understanding of labour has been thoroughly studied in the context of historical and post-colonial perspectives but there is gap in reading of Ghosh's labour treatment in the context of institutional arrangements that are in place in modern democracies like India. For specific reference the special focus on three key sectors in Kashmir is emphasized for the purpose of empirical evaluation of labour. The discussion is based on the working conditions of service employees with focus on parameters like the anomaly in the salaries, uncertainty of the services, cunning contracts before joining and insufficient wages as well as discriminatory treatment within institutions. Such employees working as casual labour or on contractual arrangements or hired from the developmental fund of the institution are made to surrender their privileges and any future entitlements. They are made invisible and kept under straining circumstances with no access to the risks and insurances in case of eventualities.

The Story of Labour

In 1983, Arlie Russel Hochschild published a book that became a sociological classic. He called it by the title 'The Managing Heart'. In this book, the author coined the word 'emotional labour' to refer to the labour where the work is not merely defined by the physical tasks but by dissimulation of emotions to attract the customers by satisfying their moods and sense of humor. The author is referring to the antics of modern-day salesman/worker who irrespective of his emotional state and expression of interest has to regulate a behavior and posture that appeals the customer. These employees/ workers are taught to regulate and manage their behaviour in the interests of their clients. This surface acting is a defining trait that determines the relationship between the employer and employee like the slave and the owner during the days of slave trade. It refers to a great chunk of humanity who are supposed to conceal their emotions for the sake of commerce. This surface acting concealing deep acting within is similar to the acting of the host who in the poem Once Upon a Time by Gabriel Okara is set to receive an unwanted guest performing a fake smile and pseudo greetings. The poet talks about 'A fixed portrait smile' to allude to the surface mood of the host who is quite crafty in changing his faces like dresses and wears multiple faces in plural situations (G. I. Okara 2018). (Once Upon a Time)

The story of labour carries the similar undertones of surface acting and holding back of the real human value and mental state. Labour continues to be exploited, irrespective of the nature of states and the fact about who holds the power. The body of a labour continues to be devalued by the employer/ owner. His emotional being continues to be reduced by his employer/ boss who objectifies him as a product or commodifies him like a mercenary object. This vilification of labour customizes him to a condition of moral debasement. As Marks says, 'concern with the material conditions of life and economic structure of society – on this raises a legal and

political super structure.’ That political super structure has always found a method to deal and manage labour in accordance with his own terms and conditions. The super structure has always adopted a regressive method to drain the best from the labour. The labour and the worker are in inverse relationship and the type of work and skill of the worker does not define him in the mode of production (Vincent B. Leitch 2018).

The Story of Labour in Ibs Trilogy

Ibs Trilogy comprises of three novels entitled, *The Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*. In these novels, there are stories of labour and workers. The stories are woven in a powerful narrative. The characters represent labour as abused and exploitative. The labour is presented in many forms like the endangered labour, the maritime labour, the agrarian labour, the plantation labour and the global capitalistic labour. The labour is linked to the cost and the class. Ibs, the ship is the society of humans representing various sections of cosmopolitan colonial trade. The ship is owned by Mr. Burnham – the rich British merchant and the messenger of the free trade. The labour is a part of that free trade that defines the British economy during colonial times. The major portion of the labour comes from India and Africa. India was a pool of Indentured labour. The labour is caste and class oriented and the workers are debased from any honor of self, respect to the work, dignity of their position and appreciation of their skills. There are Grimitiyas, The Lascars, The Colliers, the endangered plantation workers, the agrarian peasants, the men in opium factory, the Bhisties, the Drummers, the Sepoyies; the whole galaxy of humans moving without purpose, serving the master who doesn't own them, spoiling their bodies, leaving behind their place of birth and cultural roots. These men are cut off alienated. In the words of classical Marxists their labour brings them alienation. They are deprived of leisure and made to work what classical marxists would call for surplus. They are not the workers with hearts and emotions but labour signifying value and commodification. They are represented by their iconic characters in the Trilogy.

Deeti's is one among them, representing an emotional worker who has to do a lot of surfaces acting to conceal her identity. Although, she belongs to class of farmers, she has the challenge of social acceptance owing to the unusual colour of her eyes. She is artistic but her art does not change her fate as she is tired up (actually got rid of) with Hukum Singh. An impotent man who is fallen to the mercy of opium. The woman is abused in the family both emotionally as well as physically by the brother of Hukum Singh who drugs her and seduces her. In the whole game, her husband and mother-in-law is a *fait accompli*. She lives bravely with the ill begotten daughter and refuses advances of Chandan Singh. The circumstances take a turn with her and her husband dies and as a part of the abundant infamous custom (satti) she has to die with her husband and then she had some miraculous escape which is no less hilarious as a frontier adventurism. Helped by Kaluaia she escapes from the burning pyre to run into a hostile society where she has a twin challenge of gender and social acceptance. She joins the ship Ibs as a Grimitya (She had the childhood vision about the ship while she was bathing in Gangotari). Grimitya's were the people from the east to whom Mr. Doughtay despairingly called Lucker Baugs (Ghosh 2008: 49). Deeti's fears and premonitions revisit her once she decides to join the ship as a Grimitya. They were so called because in exchange of money their names were entered on Girmityas – agreements written on pieces of paper. The silver that was paid for them

went to their families and they were taken away never to be seen again: they vanished as if into nether world (Ghosh 2008: 72).

Ghosh does not merely depict labour as exploitation of work but a body and psyche too. To him colonial labour was a kind of deportation where both body and soul got deported into a world of no return – a sepulcher of oblivion. They had leave and never think of homecoming. When Kaluaia asks Ram Saran Ji about the deportation of Girmityas whom he thinks ‘were living dead’. Ram Saran ji replies ----- a boat will take them to Patna then to Calcutta said the Gaurdd and from there they’ll the place called Marrach.

Inquisitive as Deeti used to be from a childhood day, she joins the conversation and asks Where is Mareech? Is it near Delli, the God retaughts scornfully It is an island in the sea---like Lanka but further away. The mention of Lanka is evocative and suggestive of Ravana. Deeti remonstrates the plight of Girmityas labour, she wonders:

She tried to imagine what it would be like to be in their place, to know you are an out caste, to know you would never again enter in your father’s house; that you never throw your arms around your mother; never eat your meal with your sister and brothers, never feel the cleansing of Ganga. And to know for the rest of your days you would eke out a living on, some wild, demon plagued island? (Ghosh 2008: 72).

How different is it from the infamous slave trade during apartheid Africa. How different is the Girmitya from a slave: both share the fate of deportation. Both are born to be accursed. It was a slave- because he was thought to be born as a slave; a kind of a sub-human creature, who, because of his birth and ascendancy was to be sold as labour never to see again his culture, roots and origins. He was defined by the value of his labour to his master. How much difference was there between a Girmitya and a slave, yet historically and in political post-colonial discourse the slavery and slave narratives have received a dominance over other hidden or lesser explored narratives about deportation and body pain as well as human deprivation. In any context, both the slave and Girmitya were a part of that expandable society, made so, by the elite political culture who defined them as objects in their machinery of growth and progress. Both slaves, Girmitya and Indentured labourer worked; yet none, was dignified by his work; the more they worked, the more debased they were: sharing, the fate with a bourgeois worker in a capitalistic structure about whom the classical Marxist view is:

‘the law of political economy expresses the estrangement of the worker with his object thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume: the more value he creates, the more unworthy he becomes; the better form his product the more deformed becomes the worker: the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier the labour becomes the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious the labour becomes the duller becomes the worker and more he becomes nature’s bondsman (Wages of Labor n.d.).

However, Mr. Burnham has a reservation with the term slave (probably because of the discourse that equates slaves to a debased society of humans). Mr. Burnham is a typical colonialist/imperialist who believes in the fact that colonial contact with so called lesser civilization is in the larger benefit of these lesser advanced nations. He is quick to correct Mr. Reid while they plan to transport colliers; they must not link colliers with slaves as the word slave sounds obnoxious to his ears as he imagines himself standing on the statue of liberty to pronounce a new age that releases humans from bondage; from celestial dog gods.

‘Freedom sir said Zachary wondering if he has misread. His doubts were quickly put at rest. Freedom, yes, exactly said Mr. Burnham, isn’t what the mastery of the white man means for the lesser races? As see it Reid, the Africa trade was the greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Consider, Reid, the situation of so-called slaves in Carolinas, is he not freer than his brethren in Africa groaning under their rule of some dark tyrant. In a latter passage he demonstrates – Mr. Burnham winced. Why no ‘Reid not slaves – collies. Have you not heard it said that when God closes one door he opens another? When the doors of freedom were closed to Africans the God offered them to a tribe that was more needful of it – the Asiatic (Ghosh 2008: 79).

When it comes to logistics and transportation of collies there has to be no fundamental difference between the collies and the slaves. Exactly ‘said Mr. Burnham. A hold that was designed to carry slaves will serve as to carry collies and convicts.

Collies and convicts, how much ironic is the collocation, one punished for his labour and second penalized for a crime as if labour and crime share the same taxonomy. Kaluaa, here is a key representation in Ibis as a cult collie with a capacity like in horse powers. He has a massive physique and unusual virility. Ghosh describes him ‘as a man of unusual heights and powerful built. In any fare or mela, he could always be spotted towering above the crowd even the jugglers on slits were not usually as tall as he. But it was his color rather than size that he had earned his nick name Kalyua – ‘blackie’- for his skin had shining, polished tint of an oiled wet stone. It was said of Kalyua that he had shown an insatiable carving of meat which his family has satisfied by feeding him carrion; being leather makers it was their trade to collect remains of cows and oxen – it was on the meat of these salvages and carcasses Kalwas giant frame was said to have been nourished’ (Ghosh 2008: 74). In a later passage, he is described as a prototype dgin (Ghosh 2008: 55) and his body is dehumanized when he is asked to mate with horses by three young landlords who has taken him to figure in a competition and could not concede to his defeat.

Kaluaa is a typical collie. A collie is defined by a body- as a man of manual strength. The more he optimizes on work the lesser is his change in fortune. Collies, Girmityas, Indentured labours are characterized by the space and the nature of their jobs which nobility and middle class always keeps at length from their class. Without any right to leisure and scope for self-Improvement, the collie has to carry on with his work like a cog in the wheel of a larger machinery. In the whole scheme of things, he has no belongings and no claims. Kaluaa is the giant worker liker the boxer in Animal Farm whose motto is I’ll work harder. When he resurfaces in the Trilogy in the third novel called the Flood of Fire, he emerges like Homers Achillies carrying himself as a gun loader and a ladder carrier during the hot battle. He shields his brother-in-law Keseri Singh and at a very crucial juncture of the battle he stands out as an exemplary of robust energy and loyalty. Yet being a collie, he’ll receive no citations and recognition. instead of that he is demonized for the color of his skin and stature of his body. As a worker, he puts labour into it but his labour doesn’t define him. In a system of hierarchies, racial ancestry, cultural hegemony and liberal narrative he is but a collie; under privileged and prone to hostility. The value of a collie is employed aptly in a passage in the essay, ‘Shooting of an Elephant’ by George Orwell: the Burmees population had more value than a dead dog

and the death of a collie seems to be worth more in this case than the life of an elephant, which is worth a 100-pound sterling (Orwell 2022).

Another form of labour in Ibs trilogy is the maritime skillful labour of Sarangs and Lascars. Sarangs and Lascars were exceptionally talented boatmen who were greatly productive in ensuring the mobility of English ships. Sarang Ali is the cult figure representing Lascars. He is representative of the labour that represents the invisible maritime seaman ship that propelled the English colonialism and trade. In Sarang Ali, we witness multi-cultural cosmopolitanism of Indian ocean characterizing the then trade. He is described as a short, wiry, with leathery skin and weather-beaten face (Ghosh 2008: 72). He has the greatest skill of seaman ship and his loyalty is unformidable. He is like captain Ahab of Moby Dick in his obsession with Mr. Reid to whom he calls as Malum Zikri. Lascars, despite providing unparallel services with special skills and knowledge of tides, waves and sea couldn't receive a fair treatment. Despite being of tremendous value, the work did was under paid and underestimated and they couldn't push their conditions to a better life. Sring Ali's story is a typical case study of a life of a Laskar on a British/Empirical Ship like his community he is insulted, denied the rest and leisure to think and improve. The climax comes when the first mate (Burra Mulum) saw Siran Ali sleeping. The sight of the sleeping Lascar seemed to light some kind of a fiddler's bitch---at mid-day' (Ghosh 2015). The Burra Mulum was about to kick him but the steward Pinto dropped him with a tray. Deprived of the kick, the Burra Mulum went after slurs and obscenities calling Serang Ali over shroud spin louse (Ghosh 2008: 227). Siring was stuffed with paan and to clear his mouth he spit on the deck. This infuriated Burra Mulum who made Serang to bend and kneel and clean up the mess. Burra Mulum didn't stop here and went to call Serang by an obnoxious slang – soor-ka-bacha (Ghosh 2008: 227). The insult to Sarang Ali was a collective disrespect to his community and many hands reached out to grab Burra Maulum but the composite Sarang Ali stepped in and asked his men to hold on to the horses. Serang Ali enjoyed extra-ordinary respect and authority among Laskars yet he went down on his knees to clean the shit. The stories of neighbor in the Ibis represent objectified and commodified version of labour. The worker is shown as a helpless figure without any qualities of head and heart. In the social stratification ladder the labour is granted the lowest run as Ghosh writes – 'the compartments on Ibis were reminiscent of the social hierarchy based on the relationship between colonizer and colonized (Ghosh 2008: 319).

And in this compartmental reconstruction the Girmityas were driven like cloak of cattle and inflicted to the ingenuity of slanders and a foul language (Ghosh 2008: 366). This resulted debasement and deprivation continue to give psychological and cultural shocks to the labour: Mishaps that happen due to the lack of trust and faith. Girmityas are the people who have all fears of being transported (Ghosh 2008: 367).

Ghosh observes:

The psychological shock with labours was so massive that some of them would commit suicide. On a note of conclusion, labour for Ghosh is not only the pain of deprivation and commodification, of exploitation of work and conditions to a healthy life but also of bodily pain of transportation, the pain of mental deportation, uprootedness and physical displacement. Labour in Amitav Ghosh is not merely defined by class and caste but also by culinary and accommodation. The exuberant and extraordinary menu of the rich merchants and British

officials, the luxurious and exorbitant rooms with a provision for fresh air and promenade contrasts with the dingy, dirty space and dry lentils and millets of sepoy and lascars. The richness of food and expensive spending determines your money power. In Poor Economies, the authors argue that the change in the economic fortunes brings a change in the choice of food and when they offer a choice to certain family in Indonesia, they spent a greater part of budget on the purchase of expensive foods. However, the choice changes in Maracco where a man called Skarno buys a television set in family challenged by the shortage of food. This is because, he is out of work for most part of the year and has to kill the time and the boredom (Bannerjee and Duflo 2011); a situation similar to someone working on a need-based arrangement or a temporary job position. Indian labours and the sepoy regiment were not entitled to wet or grog (save on exceptional days). They were not entitled to certain ranks and titles (Ghosh 2015). They were given arms and ammunition; not even supplied the new guns but old match locks. Even there was discrimination in the salaries and the body of the Indian sepoy didn't fetch the same price of his British counterpart. Yet, the sepoys could not raise their voice against this discrimination of labour and when two of the young recruits expressed their dissent, they were shot down and the shooting was monitored by Keseri Singh (Ghosh 2015). There is a class of labour provided by boat people. They offered a great work force. The rich Parsi merchant Mr. Behram Modi picks up one the boat woman known as Chei Mei. Their marriage brings a son known as Ah Fatt to the world. Behram despite his rich position has the challenge to raise this boy into what envisions as a gentleman. He tries to give him education and upbringing in classical Chinese and English, but his efforts go in the drain because such a labour class was not entitled to sit in civil service examination (Ghosh 2011). His mother knew well that there was a massive gap between the children of her community and any other and education cannot foster a change in their labour.

The labour in Amitav Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy doesn't bring only the anomaly in the salaries and earnings or value of services or commodities produced; it also brought alongside its estrangement and lack of belonging. All the types of labour formidable contributions to the colonial empire but made no value for itself. Despite, the bravado in the battlefield, the sepoys didn't have the clue of what and why they were fighting for? Keseri Singh after putting up heroics in the field is hit by dilemma of belonging and estrangement:

He admits to himself that he and his foreign masters were nothing more 'than hired muscles' and at the peak of realization he questions the very question of fighting wars that were not his own (Ghosh 2015).

The Stories of Labour in Neo Liberal Democracy (India).

These are not the mere individual case studies. They are the genuine stories of the labour. The labour here is extracted by the state or department of the state, prioritizing cheapness over value and stability. The Stories represent three different departments located in the valley of Kashmir and embedded in these narratives are the untold tales and misery of exhausted bodies who get slowly drained down by the paucity of any substantial sustainable labour policy. Such is the exploitation of labour that the violence to the human body is not counted. It slowly consumes the labour and deprives him of any right to resistance. The violence to labour qualifies all the essentials of slow Violence as described by Nixon as a type of violence that is attritional and

of delayed consequences (Nixon 2011). The deaths here won't be accounted because they are not the result of direct violent action but 'death by indirection or by indirect method.'

Case Study 1

Ahmad worked in the valley's biggest hospital SMSHS located in the heart of Srinagar City. He holds a B Pharma degree and for the certain reasons could not join a firm outside the valley. Trapped by his compulsions and lack of any local industry, he ends up finding a job on the Hospital Development Fund as an Anesthesia Assistant at a paltry amount of Rs 4500 per month. The hope of getting his job regularized in a distinct future sustains him through the toughest of the times. The meagerness of the value of his labour doesn't dither his resolve to throw behind his service the spirit of great public servant. He emerges on the list of faculties as outstanding technician and is deployed twice to the only maternity hospital to assist in managing a few complicated surgeries. He throws everything behind his service until his body is consumed by the over exposure of infectious doses. Being the son of a lower middle class with land assets, he had a strong muscular power and physique. Yet, the strenuous work and lack of leisure melted him down slowly and one day he passed away. Once the mourning's were done, the family of bereaved went for some compensation. The department handed his bank copy bearing an amount of Rs 7500 as the salary for his last days of service. They also handed his father, the charity of Rs.1000 (voluntarily raised by local fund employees) which the family denied. Here rests his story.

Case Study 2

Jameel is the son of another middle-class family. His father was an employee in a corporate and the family lived a comfortable life. The family disposed of their ancestral land and bought a house in Srinagar City to help Jameel in education. Jameel was doing B tech in electrical engineering when his father was fired out from the job as the corporate got bankrupt ruining the prospectus of Jameel. The family fell to the bad days and Jameel had to give up his education. A B tech dropout, he searched for all types of odd jobs. The change of circumstances induced his father to pills and injection and Jameel moved from pillar to post to help the family out of this financial quagmire. He was the father of a daughter and his wife was expecting a new baby. The expenses were amounting and they sold the house in the city and moved back the village but couldn't buy any land. His uncle managed a temporary job in the Power and Electric Department. One day, a windy storm hit the valley and rattled of the rooftops, uprooted the trees and cut the electricity. One of the lines was highly significant because the line supplied power to the development Commissioner's office had to be restored once the storm was done. The foreman called the poor employees to do the job in order to win accolade from the Junior Engineer who in turn was impatient to post the news of restoration of electricity in the official commissioner's group to get a thumbnail. Jameel went into the hell of the night. He climbed an electric pole, slipped and fell down, his head crashed against a stone and it was all curtains. When the family was back to some semblance, they made the representation to the department. The department simply disowned him as their employees in absence of any credential service records.

Case Study 3

Shoaib has a post doctorate degree in Botany with more than thirty research papers in reputed international journals. He father works in orchards and his cleans up things at home. They put

all the eggs in one basket to educate their son. They have four daughters and the transformation of the son into a leading academician is the collective dream that they all cherish. Shoaib can't leave his family as his parents need him around. With such a promising future, he waits for some opportunity to catch. It comes late and when his research makes no significant fate for him. The family falls into a financial crunch and Shoaib throws everything to it to help out the family. He looks for all types of jobs and ends up as a contractual lecturer. The government changes the nomenclature and the next year he is a lecturer on academic arrangement and then the following year they added another prefix and he became The Need Based Academic Arrangement. The year 2025, he would be guest faculty and not even qualified for academic arrangement. During all these years, he is not paid during winters and summer vacations. He gets twenty-eight thousand monthly for roughly eight months. The position of guest lecturer further reduces his working days. The rest of the year, he would be fighting for his fortune. The father of two daughters, the son of ailing parents and the brother of two unmarried sisters at a stage of life where he can't make a startup, Shoaib passed the maximum age limit for any type of employment. He holds his head between his elbows to press his brain under the pain of depravity; he is one of the hundreds of scholars who are the sinking stars of the society and an actual nightmare for a democracy that has a constitutional base in welfare socialism.

These are stunning case studies. The real stories of fictitious characters. These are the stories of precarious workers living precarious lives (Kalleberg 2018). They do the odd jobs without any future guarantee. They are those workers in the system whose work, skills and qualification doesn't fetch them any substantial promise. A sword perpetually hangs upon their heads and they fear the fear of getting fired out. They are those emotional workers who regulate their emotions to prevent their families from neurosis. They are the footloose labours not better than the colonial bonded labour; bonded as a result of shift from agriculture to industry. They became wage 'hunters and gatherers'. As Breeman observes, the contemporary democracies have features of neoliberal bondage. Post industrial democracies have made the jobs precarious and the permanent jobs are sinking. The employment among the youth is increasing and the type of employment as contractual or need based or local fund lacks the satisfaction of financial stability and any kind of entitlement or owning by the public institutions. The researchers see the direct result of impact of liberalisation of market and welfare system on precarious work leading to precarious lives. Precarious work is the result of, 'short falls in social policy and inherent contradiction between state and institutions in implementing welfare measures' (Goswami 2023).

Precarious work leads to precarious lives (Kalleberg 2018) and the precariousity brings desperation. The individual case studies are slaps on the claims of decent jobs and dignified work as proclaimed by welfare democracies. The employees have no say in the matters. Even, the employees holding permanent positions are whipped to silence by not being allowed to express dissent regarding government policies. The employees have fallen into debt trap of loan as the provision of provident fund and post-retirement pension are scrapped. The slogan of equal work and equal wages is rebuffed by the real-life stories of employment. The terms and conditions not only violate the dignity of labour but the dignity of self-respect irrespective of skills and higher qualifications. The Indian Employment Report 2024 on Youth, Employment Education and Skills prepared by institute of Human Development in

collaboration with ILO highlight the state of poor and declining condition of employment in India (Institute for Human Development 2024).

The precious work and precious livelihood exacerbated by the condition of insecurity of jobs and waist bending inflation and mounting taxes is the toughest challenge for India to surmount to gain the target of what it calls Vikshit Bharat @2047. Stimulated by labour unfriendly policies, a nationwide Bharat Band (the general strike) was called on 9th of July 2025, to protest against the labour law reform seen by Labour and Trade Unions as anti-worker. It was a protest against privatization, job insecurity and marginalization of labour. According to reports, more than 250 million workers across different sectors participated in the Bandh (Singharia 2025); (Pradhan 2025). The Bandh could be seen as a clarion call for the government to take cognizance of mounting labour crisis and anxiety among workers.

The future in the making doesn't seem so much promising. The labour continues to exploited and the neo liberal market is making him/ her a new bonded slave, bonded by terms and conditions of the contract drawn to satisfy market and commodify labour. He continues to produce until he is exhausted and his body gives up. This is the story of labour from Ibis - the ship; to India- the welfare democracy. In Animal Farm, the animals are promised green savannahs to live the post-retirement life. The most laborious of the animal is the Boxer whose motto is, ' I will work harder.' (Animal Farm). Once he is exhausted beyond hope, the ruling elites (the pigs) secretly cart him off and sold him the butcher. The rest of the animal don't know the fate of Boxer or even if, they know it, they can't help it. The Story of Boxer echoes the story of labour. In a tone of exasperation, Willy Loaman, flushes out an expression at the company's new boss: ' You can't eat the Orange and throw the peel away- a man is not a piece of fruit (Miller 2000). Labour lives and dies in anonymity. The product doesn't help him because it does not belong to him. The deaths of labours in Ibis Trilogy during colonial trade as well as the deaths in the case study 1 and 2 are simply not owned because the man who dies is a marginal labour killed not by lethal violence but killed by deprivation- a kind of death by indirection.

In a recent judgement by the double bench of Hon'ble high court of Jammu and Kashmir, the court upheld the petition of contractual lecturers and instructed the government to regularize the services of those contractual employees who have completed continuous service of seven years on or before the commencement of the Act of 2010 subjected to the condition of eligibility.

This should be looked as a major judicial intervention into the matter of justice, security and compensation of such employees who are vulnerable to job insecurities. Irrespective of the nature of the states and type of governments, the public welfare, safety and financial stability must be of utmost concern to any government. A country like India has to work on a balance between neoliberal pursuits and public welfare measures. It could not afford the sense of insecurity and uncertainty to a highly educated and productive class. At least the life of employees, labours should be insured and death while performing duties or societal services need to be acknowledged and compensated by the institutions. The task of welfare socialist democracies (like India) is to add value to the human life (even if it could not add value to labour) for in an Orwellian sense 'all animals are equal' though Orwell knew it well 'some are more equal than others' (Orwell 2010).

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