

the valley of Kashmir will resonate with the sound of poetry, literary dialogue, debate and discussions . . . Its organizers advertised it as an "apolitical" event but did not say how either the rulers or the subjects of a brutal military occupation that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, bereaved thousands of women and children, and maimed a hundred thousand people in its torture chambers can be "apolitical." I wonder—will the literary guests come on tourist visas? Will there be separate ones for Srinagar and Delhi? Will they need security clearance? Will a Kashmiri who speaks out go directly from the festival to an interrogation center, or will she be allowed to go home and change and collect her things? (I'm just being crude here, I know it's more subtle than that.)

The festive din of this spurious freedom helps to muffle the sound of footsteps in airport corridors as the deported are frogmarched onto departing planes, to mute the click of handcuffs locking around strong, warm wrists and the cold metallic clang of prison doors.

Our lungs are gradually being depleted of oxygen. Perhaps it's time to use whatever breath remains in our bodies to say: Open the bloody gates.

## SECTION TWO

## CHAPTER 4

### KASHMIR'S FRUITS OF DISCORD

A week before he was elected in 2008, President Obama said that solving the dispute over Kashmir's struggle for self-determination—which has led to three wars between India and Pakistan since 1947—would be among his “critical tasks.”<sup>1</sup> His remarks were greeted with consternation in India, and he has said almost nothing about Kashmir since then.

But on Monday, November 8, 2010, during his visit here, he pleased his hosts immensely by saying the United States would not intervene in Kashmir and announcing his support for India's seat on the UN Security Council.<sup>2</sup> While he spoke eloquently about threats of terrorism, he kept quiet about human rights abuses in Kashmir.

Whether Obama decides to change his position on Kashmir again depends on several factors: how the war in Afghanistan is going, how much help the United States needs from Pakistan, and whether the government of India goes aircraft shopping this winter. (An order for ten Boeing C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, worth \$5.8 billion, among other huge business deals in the pipeline, may ensure the president's silence.) But neither Obama's silence nor his

intervention is likely to make the people in Kashmir drop the stones in their hands.

I was in Kashmir ten days ago, in that beautiful valley on the Pakistani border, home to three great civilizations—Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist. It's a valley of myth and history. Some believe that Jesus died there, others that Moses went there to find the Lost Tribe. Millions worship at the Hazratbal shrine, where a few days a year a hair of the Prophet Muhammad is displayed to believers.

Now Kashmir, caught between the influence of militant Islam from Pakistan and Afghanistan, America's interests in the region, and Indian nationalism (which is becoming increasingly aggressive and "Hinduized"), is considered a nuclear flash point. It is controlled by more than 500,000 soldiers and has become the most highly militarized zone in the world.

The atmosphere on the highway between Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, and my destination, the little apple town of Shopian in the South, was tense. Groups of soldiers were deployed along the highway, in the orchards, in the fields, on the rooftops, and outside shops in the little market squares. Despite months of curfew, the "stone pelters" calling for *azadi* (freedom), inspired by the Palestinian intifada, were out again. Some stretches of the highway were covered with so many of these stones that you needed an SUV to drive over them.

Fortunately the friends I was with knew alternative routes down the back lanes and village roads. The "long cut" gave me the time to listen to their stories of this year's uprising. The youngest, still a boy, told us that when three of his friends were arrested for

throwing stones, the police pulled out their fingernails—every nail, on both hands.

For three years in a row now, Kashmiris have been in the streets protesting what they see as India's violent occupation. But the militant uprising against the Indian government that began with the support of Pakistan twenty years ago is in retreat. The Indian army estimates that there are fewer than five hundred militants operating in the Kashmir Valley today. The war has left seventy thousand dead and tens of thousands debilitated by torture. Many, many thousands have "disappeared." More than 200,000 Kashmiri Hindus have fled the valley. Though the number of militants has come down, the number of Indian soldiers deployed remains undiminished.

But India's military domination ought not to be confused with a political victory. Ordinary people armed with nothing but their fury have risen up against the Indian security forces. A whole generation of young people who have grown up in a grid of checkpoints, bunkers, army camps, and interrogation centers, whose childhood was spent witnessing "catch and kill" operations, whose imaginations are imbued with spies, informers, "unidentified gunmen," intelligence operatives, and rigged elections, has lost its patience as well as its fear. With an almost mad courage, Kashmir's young have faced down armed soldiers and taken back their streets.

Since April, when the army killed three civilians and then passed them off as "terrorists," masked stone throwers, most of them students, have brought life in Kashmir to a grinding halt.

The Indian government has retaliated with bullets, curfew, and censorship. Just in the last few months, 111 people have been killed, most of them teenagers; more than 3,000 have been wounded and 1,000 arrested.

But still they come out, the young, and throw stones. They don't seem to have leaders or belong to a political party. They resent themselves. And suddenly the second-largest standing army in the world doesn't quite know what to do. The Indian government doesn't know with whom to negotiate. And many Indians are slowly realizing they have been lied to for decades. The once solid consensus on Kashmir suddenly seems a little fragile.

I was in a bit of trouble the morning we drove to Shopian. A few days earlier, at a public meeting in Delhi, I said that Kashmir was disputed territory and, contrary to the Indian government's claims, it couldn't be called an "integral" part of India. Outraged politicians and news anchors demanded that I be arrested for sedition. The government, terrified of being seen as "soft," issued threatening statements, and the situation escalated. Day after day, on prime-time news, I was being called a traitor, a white-collar terrorist, and several other names reserved for insubordinate women. But sitting in that car on the road to Shopian, listening to my friends, I could not bring myself to regret what I had said in Delhi.

We were on our way to visit a man called Shakeel Ahmed Ahangar. The previous day he had come all the way to Srinagar, where I had been staying, to press me, with an urgency that was hard to ignore, to visit Shopian.

I first met Shakeel in June 2009, only a few weeks after the bodies of Nilofar, his twenty-two-year-old wife, and Asiya, his seventeen-year-old sister, were found lying a thousand yards apart in a shallow stream in a high-security zone—a floodlit area between army and state police camps. The first postmortem report confirmed rape and murder. But then the system kicked in. New autopsy reports overturned the initial findings, and after the ugly business of exhuming the bodies, rape was ruled out. It was declared that in both cases the cause of death was drowning.<sup>3</sup> Protests shut Shopian down for forty-seven days, and the valley was convulsed with anger for months. Eventually it looked as though the Indian government had managed to defuse the crisis. But the anger over the killings has magnified the intensity of this year's uprising.

Shakeel wanted us to visit him in Shopian because he was being threatened by the police for speaking out, and he hoped our visit would demonstrate that people even outside of Kashmir were looking out for him, that he was not alone.

It was apple season in Kashmir, and as we approached Shopian we could see families in their orchards, busily packing apples into wooden crates in the slanting afternoon light. I worried that a couple of the little red-cheeked children who looked so much like apples themselves might be crated by mistake. The news of our visit had preceded us, and a small knot of people were waiting on the road.

Shakeel's house is on the edge of the graveyard where his wife and sister are buried. It was dark by the time we arrived, and there

was a power failure. We sat in a semicircle around a lantern and listened to him tell the story we all knew so well. Other people entered the room. Other terrible stories poured out, ones that are not in human rights reports, stories about what happens to women who live in remote villages where there are more soldiers than civilians. Shakeel's young son tumbled around in the darkness, moving from lap to lap. "Soon he'll be old enough to understand what happened to his mother," Shakeel said more than once.

Just when we rose to leave, a messenger arrived to say that Shakeel's father-in-law—Nilofar's father—was expecting us at his home. We sent our regrets; it was late and if we stayed longer it would be unsafe for us to drive back.

Minutes after we said goodbye and crammed ourselves into the car, a friend's phone rang. It was a journalist colleague of his with news for me: "The police are typing up the warrant. She's going to be arrested tonight." We drove in silence for a while, past truck after truck being loaded with apples. "It's unlikely," my friend said finally. "It's just psy-ops."

But then, as we picked up speed on the highway, we were overtaken by a car full of men waving us down. Two men on a motorcycle asked our driver to pull over. I steeled myself for what was coming. A man appeared at the car window. He had slanting emerald eyes and a salt-and-pepper beard that went halfway down his chest. He introduced himself as Abdul Hai, father of the murdered Nilofar.

"How could I let you go without your apples?" he said. The bikers started loading two crates of apples into the back of our car.

Then Abdul Hai reached into a pocket of his worn brown cloak and brought out an egg. He placed it in my palm and folded my fingers over it. And then he placed another in my other hand. The eggs were still warm. "God bless and keep you," he said, and walked away into the dark. What greater reward could a writer want?

I wasn't arrested that night. Instead, in what is becoming a common political strategy, officials outsourced their displeasure to the mob. A few days after I returned home, the women's wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (the right-wing Hindu nationalist opposition) staged a demonstration outside my house, calling for my arrest. Television vans arrived in advance to broadcast the event live. The murderous Bajrang Dal, a militant Hindu group that in 2002 spearheaded attacks against Muslims in Gujarat in which more than a thousand people were killed, have announced that they are going to "teach me a lesson" with all the means at their disposal, including by filing criminal charges against me in different courts across the country.<sup>4</sup>

Indian nationalists and the government seem to believe that they can fortify their idea of a resurgent India with a combination of bullying and Boeing airplanes. But they don't understand the subversive strength of warm boiled eggs.

## CHAPTER 5

### A PERFECT DAY FOR DEMOCRACY

**W**asn't it? Yesterday I mean. Spring announced itself in Delhi. The sun was out, and the Law took its Course. Just before breakfast, Afzal Guru, prime accused in the 2001 Parliament Attack, was secretly hanged, and his body was interred in Tihar Jail.<sup>1</sup> Was he buried next to Maqbool Butt? (The other Kashmiri who was hanged in Tihar in 1984. Kashmiris will mark that anniversary tomorrow.) Afzal's wife and son were not informed. "The Authorities intimidated the family through Speed Post and Registered Post," the home secretary told the press; "the Director General of J&K Police has been told to check whether they got it or not."<sup>2</sup> No big deal, they're only the family of a Kashmiri terrorist.

In a moment of rare unity the Nation, or at least its major political parties, the Congress, the BJP, and the CPM, came together as one (barring a few squabbles about "delay" and "timing") to celebrate the triumph of the Rule of Law. The Conscience of the Nation, which broadcasts live from TV studios these days, unleashed its collective intellect on us—the usual cocktail of papal passion and

a delicate grip on facts. Even though the man was dead and gone, like cowards that hunt in packs, they seemed to need each other to keep their courage up. Perhaps because deep inside themselves they know that they all colluded to do something terribly wrong.

What are the facts?

On December 13, 2001, five armed men drove through the gates of the Parliament House in a white Ambassador fitted out with an improvised explosive device (IED). When they were challenged they jumped out of the car and opened fire. They killed eight security personnel and a gardener. In the gun battle that followed all five attackers were killed. In one of the many versions of confessions Afzal Guru made in police custody he identified the men as Mohammed, Rana, Raja, Hamza, and Haider. That's all we know about them even today. L. K. Advani, the then home minister, said they "looked like Pakistanis." (He should know what Pakistanis look like, right? Being a Sindhi himself.) Based *only* on Afzal's confession (which the Supreme Court subsequently set aside, citing "lapses" and "violations of procedural safeguards"), the government of India recalled its ambassador from Pakistan and mobilized half a million soldiers to the Pakistan border. There was talk of nuclear war. Foreign embassies issued travel advisories and evacuated their staff from Delhi. The standoff lasted for months and cost India thousands of crores.

On December 14, 2001, the Delhi Police Special Cell claimed it had cracked the case. On December 15 it arrested the "mastermind," Professor S. A. R. Geelani, in Delhi and Showkat Guru and Afzal Guru in a fruit market in Srinagar.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently

they arrested Afsan Guru, Showkat's wife. The media enthusiastically disseminated the Special Cell's version. These were some of the headlines: "DU Lecturer Was Terror Plan Hub," "Varsity Don Guided Fidayeen," "Don Lectured on Terror in Free Time." Zee TV broadcast a "docudrama" called *December 13th*, a re-creation that claimed to be the "Truth Based on the Police Charge Sheet." (If the police version is the truth, then why have courts?) Then Prime Minister Vajpayee and L. K. Advani publicly appreciated the film. The Supreme Court refused to stay the screening, saying that the media would not influence judges. The film was broadcast only a few days before the fast-track court sentenced Afzal, Showkat, and Geelani to death. Subsequently the High Court acquitted the "mastermind," Geelani, and Afsan Guru. The Supreme Court upheld the acquittal. But in its August 5, 2005, judgment it gave Mohammed Afzal three life sentences and a double death sentence.

Contrary to the lies that have been put about by some senior journalists who would have known better, Afzal Guru was not one of "the terrorists who stormed Parliament House on December 13th 2001," nor was he among those who "opened fire on security personnel, apparently killing three of the six who died." (That was the BJP Rajya Sabha MP, Chandan Mitra, in the *Pioneer*, October 7, 2006.) Even the police charge sheet does not accuse him of that. The Supreme Court judgment says the evidence is circumstantial: "As is the case with most conspiracies, there is and could be no direct evidence amounting to criminal conspiracy." But then it goes on to say: "The incident, which resulted in

heavy casualties had shaken the entire nation, and the collective conscience of society will only be satisfied if capital punishment is awarded to the offender."<sup>4</sup>

Who crafted our collective conscience on the Parliament Attack case? Could it have been the facts we gleaned in the papers? The films we saw on TV?

There are those who will argue that the very fact that the courts acquitted S. A. R. Geelani and convicted Afzal proves that the trial was free and fair. Was it?

The trial in the fast-track court began in May 2002. The world was still convulsed by post-9/11 frenzy. The US government was gloating prematurely over its "victory" in Afghanistan. The Gujarat pogrom was ongoing. And in the Parliament Attack case, the Law was indeed taking its own course. At the most crucial stage of a criminal case, when evidence is presented, when witnesses are cross-examined, when the foundations of the argument are laid—in the High Court and Supreme Court you can only argue points of law, you cannot introduce new evidence—Afzal Guru, locked in a high-security solitary cell, had no lawyer. The court-appointed junior lawyer did not visit his client even once in jail; he did not summon any witnesses in Afzal's defense and did not cross-examine the prosecution witnesses. The judge expressed his inability to do anything about the situation.

Even still, from the word go, the case fell apart. A few examples out of many:

How did the police get to Afzal? They said that S. A. R. Geelani led them to him. But the court records show that the message

to arrest Afzal went out before they picked up Geelani. The High Court called this a "material contradiction" but left it at that.

The two most incriminating pieces of evidence against Afzal were a cell phone and a laptop confiscated at the time of arrest. The Arrest Memos were signed by Bismillah, Geelani's brother, in Delhi. The Seizure Memos were signed by two men of the J&K Police, one of them an old tormentor from Afzal's past as a surrendered "militant." The computer and cell phone were not sealed, as evidence is required to be. During the trial it emerged that the hard disk of the laptop had been accessed after the arrest. It contained only the fake Home Ministry passes and the fake identity cards that the "terrorists" used to access Parliament. And a Zee TV video clip of Parliament House. So according to the police, Afzal had deleted all the information except the most incriminating bits, and he was speeding off to hand it over to Ghazi Baba, whom the charge sheet described as the chief of operations.

A witness for the prosecution, Kamal Kishore, identified Afzal and told the court he had sold him the crucial SIM card that connected all the accused in the case to each other on December 4, 2001. But the prosecution's own call records showed that the SIM was actually operational from November 6, 2001.

It goes on and on, this pile-up of lies and fabricated evidence. The courts note them, but for their pains the police get no more than a gentle rap on their knuckles. Nothing more.

Then there's the backstory. Like most surrendered militants, Afzal was easy meat in Kashmir—a victim of torture, blackmail, extortion. In the larger scheme of things he was a nobody. Anyone

who was really interested in solving the mystery of the Parliament Attack would have followed the dense trail of evidence that was on offer. No one did, thereby ensuring that the real authors of conspiracy will remain unidentified and uninvestigated.

Now that Afzal Guru has been hanged, I hope our collective conscience has been satisfied. Or is our cup of blood still only half full?

## CHAPTER 6

### CONSEQUENCES OF HANGING AFZAL GURU

**W**hat are the political consequences of the secret and sudden hanging of Mohammad Afzal Guru, prime accused in the 2001 Parliament Attack, going to be? Does anybody know?

The memo, in callous bureaucratese, with every name insultingly misspelled, sent by the superintendent of Central Jail Number 3, Tihar, New Delhi, to "Mrs Tabassum w/o Sh Afzal Guru," reads:

The mercy petition of Sh Mohd Afzal Guru s/o Habibillah has been rejected by Hon'ble President of India. Hence the execution of Mohd Afzal Guru s/o Habibillah has been fixed for 09/02/2013 at 8 AM in Central Jail No-3.

This is for your information and for further necessary action.

The memo arrived after the execution had already taken place, denying Tabassum one last legal chance—the right to challenge the rejection of the mercy petition.<sup>1</sup> Both Afzal *and* his family, separately, had that right. Both were thwarted. Even though it

is mandatory in law, the memo to Tabassum provided no reason for the president's rejection of the mercy petition. If no reason is given, on what basis do you appeal? All the other prisoners on death row in India have been given that last chance.

Since Tabassum was not allowed to meet with her husband before he was hanged, since her son was not allowed to get a few last words of advice from his father, since she was not given his body to bury, and since there can be no funeral, what "further necessary action" does the Jail Manual prescribe? Anger? Wild, irreparable grief? Unquestioning acceptance? Complete integration?

After the hanging, there were unseemly celebrations on the streets. The bereaved wives of the people who were killed in the Attack were displayed on TV, with chairman of the All-India Anti-Terrorist Front M. S. Bitta and his ferocious mustaches playing the CEO of their sad little company. Will anybody tell them that the men who shot their husbands were killed at the same time, in the same place, right there and then? And that those who planned the Attack will never be brought to justice because we still don't know who they are?

Meanwhile Kashmir is under curfew, once again. Its people have been locked down like cattle in a pen, once again. They have defied the curfew, once again. Three people have already been killed in three days, and fifteen more grievously injured.<sup>2</sup> Newspapers have been shut down, but anybody who trawls the Internet will see that this time the rage of young Kashmiris is not defiant and exuberant as it was during the mass uprisings in the summers of 2008, 2009, and 2010—even though 180 people lost their lives

on those occasions. This time the anger is cold and corrosive. Unforgiving. Is there any reason why it shouldn't be?

For more than twenty years Kashmiris have endured a military occupation. The tens of thousands who lost their lives were killed in prisons, in torture centers, and in "encounters," genuine as well as fake. What sets the execution of Afzal Guru apart is that it has given the young, who have never had any firsthand experience of democracy, a ringside seat to watch the full majesty of Indian democracy at work. They have watched the wheels turning, they have seen all its hoary institutions, the government, police, courts, political parties, and yes, the media, collude to hang a man, a Kashmiri, whom they do not believe to have received a fair trial, and whose guilt was by no means established beyond reasonable doubt. (He went virtually unrepresented in the lower court during the most crucial stage of the trial. Not only did the state-appointed counsel never visit his client in prison, he actually admitted incriminating evidence against him. The Supreme Court deliberated on that matter and decided it was okay.)<sup>3</sup> They have watched the government pull him out of the death row queue and execute him out of turn. What direction, what form will their new cold, corrosive anger take? Will it lead them to the blessed liberation they so yearn for and have sacrificed a whole generation for, or will it lead to yet another cycle of cataclysmic violence, of being beaten down and then having "normalcy" imposed on them under soldiers' boots?

All of us who live in the region know that 2014 is going to be a watershed year. There will be elections in Pakistan, in India, and

in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. We know that when the United States withdraws its troops from Afghanistan, the chaos from an already seriously destabilized Pakistan will spill into Kashmir, as it has done before. By executing Afzal Guru in the way that it did, the government of India has taken a decision to fuel that process of destabilization, to actually invite it in. (As it did before, by rigging the 1987 elections in Kashmir.) After three consecutive years of mass protests in the valley ended in 2010, the government invested a great deal in restoring its version of "normalcy" (happy tourists, voting Kashmiris). The question is, why was it willing to reverse all its own efforts? Leaving aside issues of the legality, the morality, and the venality of executing Afzal Guru in the way that it did, and looking at it just politically, tactically, it is a dangerous and irresponsible thing to have done. But it was done. Clearly, and knowingly. *Why?*

I used the word *irresponsible* advisedly. Look what happened the last time around.

In 2001, within a week of the Parliament Attack (and a few days after Afzal Guru's arrest), the government recalled its ambassador from Pakistan and dispatched half a million troops to the border. On what basis was that done? The only thing the public was told is that while Afzal Guru was in the custody of the Delhi Police Special Cell, he had admitted to being a member of the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). The Supreme Court set aside that "confession" extracted in police custody as inadmissible in law.<sup>4</sup> Does a document that is inadmissible in law become admissible in war?

In its final judgment on the case, apart from the now famous statements about "satisfying collective conscience" and having no direct evidence, the Supreme Court also said there was "no evidence that Mohammed Afzal belonged to any terrorist group or organization."<sup>5</sup> So what justified that military aggression, that loss of soldiers' lives, that massive hemorrhaging of public money, and the real risk of nuclear war? (Remember how foreign embassies issued travel advisories and evacuated their staff?) Was there some intelligence that preceded the Parliament Attack and the arrest of Afzal Guru that we had not been told about? If so, how could the Attack have been allowed to happen? And if the intelligence was accurate enough to justify such dangerous military posturing, don't people in India, Pakistan, and Kashmir have the right to know what it was? Why was that evidence not produced in court to establish Afzal Guru's guilt?

In the endless debates around the Parliament Attack case, on this, perhaps the most crucial issue of all, there has been dead silence from all quarters—leftists, rightists, Hinduva-ists, secularists, nationalists, seditionists, cynics, critics. Why?

Maybe the JeM *did* mastermind the Attack. Praveen Swami, perhaps the Indian media's best-known expert on "terrorism," who seems to have enviable sources in the Indian police and intelligence agencies, has recently cited the 2003 testimony of former ISI Chief Lieutenant General Javed Ashraf Qazi and the 2004 book by Muhammad Amir Rana, a Pakistani scholar, holding the JeM responsible for the Parliament Attack.<sup>6</sup> (This belief in the veracity of the testimony of the chief of an organization whose

mandate it is to destabilize India is touching.) It still doesn't explain what evidence there was in 2001, when the army mobilization took place.

For the sake of argument, let's accept that the JeM carried out the Attack. Maybe the ISI was involved too. We needn't pretend that the government of Pakistan is innocent of carrying out covert activity over Kashmir. (Just as the government of India does in Balochistan and parts of Pakistan. Remember the Indian army trained the Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan in the 1970s. It trained six different Srilankan Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE, in the 1980s.)

It's a filthy scenario all around.

What would a war with Pakistan have achieved then, and what will it achieve now? (Apart from a massive loss of life. And fattening the bank accounts of some arms dealers.) Indian hawks routinely suggest the only way to "root out the problem" is "hot pursuit" and the "taking out" of "terrorist camps" in Pakistan. Really? It would be interesting to research how many of the aggressive strategic experts and defense analysts on our TV screens have an interest in the defense and weapons industry. They don't even need war. They just need a warlike climate in which military spending remains on an upward graph. This idea of hot pursuit is even stupider and more pathetic than it sounds. What would they bomb? A few individuals? Their barracks and food supplies? Or their ideology? Look how the US government's "hot pursuit" has ended in Afghanistan. And look how a "security grid" of half a million soldiers has not been able to subdue the

unarmed civilian population of Kashmir. And India is going to cross international borders to bomb a country—with nuclear arms—that is rapidly devolving into chaos? India's professional warmongers derive a great deal of satisfaction from sneering at what they see as the disintegration of Pakistan. Anyone with a rudimentary working knowledge of history and geography would know that the breakdown of Pakistan (into a gangland of crazed, nihilistic religious zealots) is absolutely no reason for anyone to rejoice.

The US presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Pakistan's official role as America's junior partner in the War on Terror, makes that region a much-reported place. The rest of the world is at least aware of the dangers unfolding there. Less understood, and harder to read, is the perilous wind that's picking up speed in the world's favorite new superpower. The Indian economy is in considerable trouble. The aggressive, acquisitive ambition that economic liberalization unleashed in the newly created middle class is quickly turning into an equally aggressive frustration. The aircraft they were sitting in has begun to stall just after takeoff. Exhilaration is turning to panic.

The General Election is due in 2014. Even without an exit poll, I can tell you what the results will be. Though it may not be obvious to the naked eye, once again we will have a Congress-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition. (Two parties, each with a mass murder of thousands of people belonging to minority communities under their belts.) The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) will give support from outside, even though it hasn't been asked to. Oh,

and it will be a Strong State. (On the hanging front, the gloves are already off. Could the next in line be Balwant Singh Rajoana, on death row for the assassination of Punjab's chief minister Beant Singh? His execution could revive Khalistani sentiment in the Punjab and put the Akali Dal and the BJP on the mat. Perfect old-style Congress politics.)<sup>7</sup>

But that old-style politics is in some difficulty. In the last few turbulent months, it is not just the image of major political parties but politics itself, the idea of politics as we know it, that has taken a battering. Again and again, whether it's about corruption, rising prices, or rape and the rising violence against women, the new, emerging middle class is at the barricades. They can be water-cannoned or lathi-charged, but they cannot be shot and imprisoned in their thousands, in the way the poor can, in the way Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, Kashmiris, Nagas, and Manipuris can—and have been. The old political parties know that if there is not to be a complete meltdown, this aggression has to be headed off, redirected. They know that they must work together to bring politics back to what it *used* to be. What better way than a communal conflagration? (How else can the secular play at being secular and the communal be communal?) Maybe even a little war, so that we can play Hawks and Doves all over again.

What better solution than to aim a kick at that tried and trusted old political football—Kashmir? The hanging of Afzal Guru, its brazenness and timing, is deliberate.<sup>8</sup> It has brought politics and anger back onto Kashmir's streets.

India hopes to manage it with the usual combination of brute

force and poisonous Machiavellian manipulation designed to pit people against one another. The war in Kashmir is presented to the world as a battle between an inclusive secular democracy and radical Islamists. What then should we make of the fact that Mufti Bashiruddin, the so-called Grand Mufti of Kashmir (which, by the way, is a completely phantom post)—who has made the most abominable hate speeches and has issued fatwah after fatwah, intended to present Kashmir as a demonic, monolithic Wahabi society—is actually a government-anointed cleric? Kids on Facebook will be arrested, but never he.<sup>9</sup> What should we make of the fact that the Indian government looks away while money from Saudi Arabia (that most steadfast partner of the United States) is pouring into Kashmir's madrassas? How different is this from what the CIA did in Afghanistan all those years ago? That whole sorry business created Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban. It has decimated Afghanistan and Pakistan. What sort of incubus will this unleash?

The old political football is not going to be all that easy to control. And it's radioactive. A few days ago Pakistan tested a short-range battlefield nuclear missile to protect itself against threats from "evolving scenarios." Two weeks ago the Kashmir police published "survival tips" for nuclear war. Apart from advising people to build toilet-equipped bombproof basements large enough to house their entire families for two weeks, it said: "During a nuclear attack, motorists should dive out of their cars toward the blast to save themselves from being crushed by their soon-to-be tumbling vehicles." And it warned everyone to "expect some

initial disorientation as the blast wave may blow down and carry away many prominent and familiar features."<sup>10</sup>

Prominent and familiar features may have already blown down. Perhaps we should all jump out of our soon-to-be-tumbling vehicles.

#### AFTERWORD

### SPEECH TO THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Yesterday morning the police cleared Zuccotti Park, but today the people are back. The police should know that this protest is not a battle for territory. We're not fighting for the right to occupy a park here or there. We are fighting for Justice. Justice, not just for the people of the United States, but for everybody. What you have achieved since September 17, when the Occupy Movement began in the United States, is to introduce a new imagination, a new political language, into the heart of Empire. You have reintroduced the right to dream into a system that tried to turn everybody into zombies mesmerized into equating mindless consumerism with happiness and fulfillment. As a writer, let me tell you, this is an immense achievement. I cannot thank you enough.

We were talking about justice. Today, as we speak, the army of the United States is waging a war of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. US drones are killing civilians in Pakistan and beyond. Tens of thousands of US troops and death squads are moving into Africa. If spending trillions of dollars of your money to administer

occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan is not enough, a war against Iran is being talked up. Ever since the Great Depression, the manufacture of weapons and the export of war have been key ways in which the United States has stimulated its economy. Just recently, under President Obama, the United States made a sixty-billion-dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup> It hopes to sell thousands of bunker busters to the United Arab Emirates. It has sold five billion dollars' worth of military aircraft to my country, India—my country, which has more poor people than all the poorest countries of Africa put together.<sup>2</sup> All these wars, from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Vietnam, Korea, Latin America, have claimed millions of lives—all of them fought to secure "the American way of life."

Today we know that "the American way of life"—the model that the rest of the world is meant to aspire toward—has resulted in four hundred people owning the wealth of half of the population of the United States. It has meant thousands of people being turned out of their homes and jobs while the US government bailed out banks and corporations—American International Group (AIG) alone was given 182 billion dollars.

The Indian government worships US economic policy. As a result of twenty years of the Free Market economy, today one hundred of India's richest people own assets worth one-fourth of the country's GDP while more than 80 percent of the people live on less than fifty cents a day.<sup>3</sup> Two hundred fifty thousand farmers driven into a spiral of death have committed suicide.<sup>4</sup> We call this progress and now think of ourselves as a superpower. Like you, we are well qualified, we have nuclear bombs and obscene inequality.

The good news is that people have had enough and are not going to take it anymore. The Occupy Movement has joined thousands of other resistance movements all over the world in which the poorest of people are standing up and stopping the richest corporations in their tracks. Few of us dreamed that we would see you, the people of the United States, on our side, trying to do this in the heart of Empire. I don't know how to communicate the enormity of what this means.

They (the 1%) say that we don't have demands . . . they don't know, perhaps, that our anger alone would be enough to destroy them. But here are some things—a few "pre-revolutionary" thoughts I had—for us to think about together.

We want to put a lid on this system that manufactures inequality.

We want to put a cap on the unfettered accumulation of wealth and property by individuals as well as corporations.

As cap-ists and lid-ites, we demand:

One: An end to cross-ownership in businesses. For example: weapons manufacturers cannot own TV stations, mining corporations cannot run newspapers, business houses cannot fund universities, drug companies cannot control public health funds.

Two: Natural resources and essential infrastructure—water supply, electricity, health, and education—cannot be privatized.

Three: Everybody must have the right to shelter, education, and health care.

Four: The children of the rich cannot inherit their parents' wealth.

This struggle has reawakened our imagination. Somewhere along the way, Capitalism reduced the idea of justice to mean just "human rights," and the idea of dreaming of equality became blasphemous. We are not fighting to tinker with reforming a system that needs to be replaced.

As a cap-ist and a lid-ite, I salute your struggle.

Salaam and Zindabad.

## NOTES

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### PREFACE: THE PRESIDENT TOOK THE SALUTE

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### CHAPTER 1: CAPITALISM: A GHOST STORY

1. "Mukesh Ambani Tops for the Third Year as India's Richest," *Forbes Asia*, news release, September 30, 2010. The article notes, "The combined net worth of India's 100 richest people is \$300 billion, up from \$276 billion last year. This year, there are 69 billionaires on the India Rich List, 17 more than last year." India's 2009 GDP was \$1.2 trillion.
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3. Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samel Moore (Torfaen, UK: Merlin, 1998), 17.