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The Quarantine of the South: Multiple Sufferings of Minorities in India

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected a lot of people across the globe. It has exposed fault lines of inequality and communalism in India. Political conditions, which were already unstable in the country prior to the pandemic, deteriorated with the upcoming public policies and blame games. The pandemic anxiety has been manifested in bigotry and prejudice against Muslims and Transgender communities who have been blamed for the spread of the virus. The covid-19 crisis has disclosed multiple sufferings, not just from the virus, but from a crisis of hatred, from a crisis of hunger, from an intensified crisis of communalism, casteism and transphobia (Roy 2020). In such a historical moment, the aim of this roundtable is to discuss how people on the margins of history have been affected by the pandemic and the ongoing islamophobia and transphobia inscribed in the blame narratives. The whole crises can be inserted in a broader narrative of necropolitics: when politics have the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die (Mbembe 2019). The present discussion, designed with a combined qualitative and quantitative approach, starts with the assumption that the pandemic might cause diverse kinds of sufferings, mitigated not only by the virus itself, but by unequal access to the healthy system, food, social distancing, and by blame narratives. Through letters, memoirs, public interviews and official documents, that is, public testimonies, it aims to problematize the multiple sufferings of those who are on the margins of history. Intersecting gender, class, caste and religion, it is possible to understand the dimensions of violences against muslims and transgenders. As individual experiences and their private pain (Butalia 2000) are still being (un)told or under construction, it is difficult to come up with some results of this complex new phenomenon called Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the results are constantly under construction. However, it can be inferred that those in the quarantine of the South are suffering most. The pandemic makes highly (in)visible the injustice, the discrimination, and the social exclusion. Their suffering is plural.

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