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“The Next Orwellian Nightmare”

Nazish Wani,
Jammu, India,
Nazishwani52@gmail.com

When I read George Orwell's 1984 for the first time, I was definitely taken aback, stunned, shocked and terrified. I thoroughly enjoyed the book, had genuine respect and appreciation for the author and I was really impressed with the creativity and genius of the writer. Orwell's passion for storytelling, his vision, his immense faith in his ideas to portray them so realistically is commendable and no words in any language can ever be enough to get him the kind of praise that he deserves for putting into words ideas which were abstract and unreal during his time. When I read the book it sure did stay with me for days but deep down, I knew it was fiction and my utmost trust in humanity and human strength to fight for freedom (since I belong to a land which struggled so hard and eventually snatched its freedom) forced me to believe that something like that can never happen. We could never let this happen to ourselves or to someone else for that matter. But then I saw something which completely changed my outlook and I realized that Orwell's thought didn't come from vacuum. It was in fact a dauntingly haunting reality. His 1984 is the exact portrayal of what has been happening in North Korea for ages now. The controlled thinking, our leader is our god and the absolute ignorance about the outside world is what the people of North Korea have been witnessing and still are, as a matter of fact. We have always heard jokes about Kim Jong Un and his rigid disciplinary regime but for the people of North Korea he is not a joke. For them it's their reality, a reality they all want to escape, they all seek ignorance from but they simply can't. Fortunately, some people were lucky enough to escape the living hell and made it to the other parts of the world and from their bloodcurdling stories, the World came to realize that what we knew about North Korea was just the tip of the iceberg. Every story brought to us a new horror. Yeoman Park, David John and Lee Hyeon Soe are some of the names, who have struggled and starved to make their ways out of the North Korea and eventually succeeded. "In Order to Live" and "The Girl with Seven Names: A North Korean Defector's Story" are their testaments in

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which they have penned their pain and suffering and have painted a vivacious picture of the dark and gloomy North Korea for the world to see and learn. From starvation to darkness to ignorance to injustice North Koreans seemed to be crushed by all that is worst.

There are incidents narrated in the books which leave you in absolute awe and horror, in an age where every life is precious is the motto, public executions in North Korea is standard. You can get executed for even raising the smallest objection, as small as " This system is so unfair."

Every year in North Korea, some people accept this injustice as their reality, some raise their voice and are brutally murdered and some simply risk their lives and decide to run away to China. But the misery doesn't end here, with great hopes, in search of light, freedom, food these refugees step out of the hell only to witness a much more miserable and discourteous life waiting for them which begins with Slavery. Desperate to breathe free they accept it as this is their only option.

"We thought if we go to China, we will have a life. We went in search of food, we crossed the mountain and the frozen river, and the first thing I saw in China, was my mother raped.

That night they said if you want to stay in China, you have to be sold I said I want something to eat, my mother asked me, what do you want to do now?

I said "I am hungry mom"

And that's how we decided to live in China

And that's how my mom was sold for \$60 and I for \$206 at the age of 13" said Yeon mi Park in an interview to BBC.

"When I was seven, I saw my first public execution but I still believed that everything was normal in my country. When I came to China, I realized that living in China is as dangerous as living in North Korean because we are seen as illegal immigrants and thus anything can be done to us" Said Hensel Lee in her Ted talk.

After these stories came out the whole world knew that the fragments of horror tales, we have been listening over the years are in-fact the reality of millions of people living in North Korea. But could we break those people free? A Strong No.

North Korea still is one of the most secretive societies on earth, they call it The Hermit Kingdom.

With people across the globe still struggling to understand the 36 years old lunatic, the Human Rights activists figuring out ways to ensure North Koreans get their basic human rights, the world seems to be all set to have another breathing Orwellian Nightmare-India.

The world's largest democracy is at the verge of turning into world's worst dictatorship. When I say verge, I don't mean that one night you are going to sleep in a democratic country and the next morning wake up in tyranny. No, it doesn't function like that, but the process of it has begun, slowly but surely. What has been happening in India or to India from the past 10 years now, is terrifying and alarming. The changes in everything, to each and every nook and corner of India with zero transparency stand as a proof to my claim, that the Democracy of the people, by the people and for the people is on its way of becoming a democracy of the persuasive, by the fascists and for the aristocrats. From representative to media to public everything everywhere is flawed and combined together they are making a smooth pathway for a long dictatorship to prevail and this is petrifying.

We are living in a society right now, where love for the Nation is judged on the basis of the love for the ruling party, sadly the narrative has been manipulated so drastically that if I dare to speak against the Government, I will be considered as an anti-nationalist and a list will be generated for me stating all the countries I should shift to. People who should be behind the bars are ruling us, people with actually criminal charges are in power and ironically are making up laws for the countrymen to follow. The analysis by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an organization that works in the area of electoral and political reforms, shows that in the past 15 years there has been a steady increase in the share of MPs with criminal cases. Election after election, the proportion of MPs with criminal cases keeps on increasing, and in 2019, nearly half of the elected MPs — 43.5% of 542 for which ADR analyzed data — had criminal cases against them. Almost one in every five candidates that contested the 2019 general elections was accused of committing a heinous crime. Nineteen percent of those who stood for elections faced charges, including rape, murder and kidnapping. And every year we are adding criminals to an association of criminals, making them stronger more powerful and giving them the right to run us.

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For any Nation to emerge as a strong democratic one an unbiased and unyielding media is a pre requisite, without a free and independent media democracy is unattainable. And the media of world's largest Democracy right now is facing World's worst credibility crisis. The considerable energy spent to suppress the media has finally paid well and Indian media today is vested in the hands of a selected few and simply refuses to question authority. In this age of post truth and fake news, journalists are forced either to toe the government's line or face consequences and it seems that in India the majority of news media has voluntarily suppressed their voices. With almost every news channel these days defending even the most incoherent and bizarre decisions of the Indian Government it is quite visible that the Government has tightened its grip on the media and is pressurizing it to toe its line. In the recent past there have been numerous incidents that were blatantly communalized by the media. The signs have been quite clear for a while now that Indian media is awash in jingoistic sentiments, has lost the power and will to speak truth and has started to function largely as government's mouthpieces with only a few exceptions. As Raj Kamal Jha the Indian Express Editor very accurately said " In this selfie Journalism if you don't have the facts, it doesn't matter, you just put a flag in the frame and hide behind it. It is not that good journalism is dying, it is getting bigger and better. Its just bad journalism makes lot more noise than it used to do five years ago"

From the past 10 years the media has been showing us what the Government wants us to see ,with absolutely no demarcation between right and wrong they have changed the whole narrative , the definitions of patriotism and nationalism and have successfully rooted the idea of anti-government is equivalent to anti- India into the minds of the masses . Our strongest pillar of democracy alas is destroyed and with each passing day it is losing its stature brick by brick.

Besides all this what has been happening to the people who dare to raise their voice is gut wrenching. With six journalists being murdered in 2018 the security situation for the veracious seems erroneous. Moreover, what the youth is facing in some part of the country including the nation's capital is a substantial evidence of the fact that Freedom of Speech in our country is slowly becoming donnish and nothing more than that. With so many divisions on so many bases, with the voices for justice being suppressed, with one man regarded as God, can you not see the glimpses of Tyranny? How long will a splintered legislative, a slackened executive and a sold media be

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able to safeguard a democracy where people have chosen to believe the unbelievable. The process has started full swing if not worse and if it has to be stopped it has to be stopped right now because we have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind and it needs to be dealt with now or else it's never. If not stopped, India unquestionably will be the next big, probably the biggest and worst of the Orwellian Nightmare.