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GANPATRAO KADAM MARG, LOWER PAREL  
MUMBAI 400 013  
PHONE: (022) 4063 8282

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DIRECTOR  
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C 212, AKURLI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE  
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PHONES: (022) 2887 3038/41  
[epwrf@epwrf.in](mailto:epwrf@epwrf.in)

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**Micro-cure for Corruption**

I am writing this in response to the article, “Remedy Worse Than the Disease” (EPW, 25 November 2017) by Jayaprakash Narayan.

Narayan classifies corruption under two broad categories, that is, collusive corruption and extortion bribery. The first is systemic in the sense that it is institutionalised in the governance itself. The second has to do with the citizens and local bureaucracy, and it is culturally embedded. Collusive corruption corrodes the entire governance structure, whereas extortion bribery destroys the ethical dimensions of the state in the delivery of basic services and public goods. Seen from an institutional perspective, the first type operates at macro levels (branches) and the second takes place at the micro (root) levels. The micro-level practices in day-to-day administration have percolated and permeated into macro-level institutions, making the entire governance system unaccountable and non-transparent.

The author notes that in collusive corruption “both the bribe giver and corrupt public servant benefit at the cost of exchequer and society ... [Acts of coercive bribery for service delivery] alienate ordinary citizens from our governance process and drive them to greater poverty and despair.” Both the types of corruption practices indicate the crisis of ethics in governance, including the lack of political morality in governing elites and of citizenship consciousness among bribe givers and bribe takers.

I find some problems with the conclusions made by the author. It is quite surprising to note that there was no mention of the role of decentralised governance in containing corrupt practices. Panchayats, despite all their shortcomings, offer great scope to decentralise public goods and services. Kerala is one such example, as rightly mentioned by the author himself. The pragmatic steps suggested by the author offer solutions to curb corruption at the macro level in governing institutions. Right now, what is necessary is the rekindling of values in the local administration through

behavioural, transformative politics, and enlightened citizenship.

**Nayakara Veerasha**  
BENGALURU

**Pertinent Issue, Flawed Methods**

Farmer vulnerability in developing nations is an important agenda item for science and policy. A recent paper by Tamma A Carleton titled “Crop-damaging Temperatures Increase Suicide Rates in India” (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 24 January 2017) cautions policymakers to invest in adaptation to the impacts of climate change. If not, Carleton suggests, global warming will be accompanied by increasing impacts of the harshest kind: suicides. She concludes that each 1°C increase in summer temperature causes approximately 70 farmer suicides. While we applaud her effort to highlight farmers’ struggles to a global audience, her assumptions, methods, and conclusions are untenable. We caution policymakers against basing their decisions on this problematic research.

Contrary to Carleton’s claims, suicide is an extensively studied phenomenon. We are surprised at how casually the author dismisses insights gained from qualitative studies when saying they “are anecdotal or qualitative, and none attempt to identify and synthesize quantitative relationships between climate, crops, and suicides.” It is more astonishing that while the paper privileges quantitative methods as somehow superior, it also supports its findings with the classic sociological work by Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1951), which, on the contrary, uses qualitative analytics to show that suicide is a factor of erosion of rootedness in society and individualisation within the broader socio-economic system, and not, as the paper declares, caused by temperature. Durkheim argues: “the physical environment does not stimulate [suicide] directly; above all it has no effect on the progression of suicide. The latter depends on social conditions.” He would indeed have focused on values, social ties, cropping patterns, experiences, and obligations

described by farmers. The variables in the study, although measurable and available, describe only a part of the causal picture. It is the underlying pre-existing social conditions of vulnerability that enable climate (or any other) stress to push farmers over the edge.

Adaptations should treat the multiple causes of vulnerability. By incorrectly drawing attention to weather, this paper occludes vulnerabilities and their causes, such as exploitation, exclusion, indebtedness, marginalisation, and inadequate access to safety nets. We emphasise that causality is on the ground, in the society and environments where farmers live and work. It is not merely in the sky, in rising temperature or unpredictable precipitation. Disregarding scholarship that demonstrates the role of socio-structural relations in farmers' ultimate damage to their lives, the paper nonchalantly moves causality from society to climate. Of course, climate will correlate with suicides since climate stress is a force that pushes the vulnerable over the edge. But, it occludes the multiple treatable socio-structural factors that placed them on that vulnerable edge in the first place. Correlation thus does not show causality. Here, it hides causality; hiding multiple other factors that push farmers to take their lives.

Vulnerabilities are on the ground and can be reduced. The paper sends a dangerous message by placing cause in the sky, when cause and responsibility remain within the society. Viewing climate as key, cause limits the possible solution sets. We make a plea for interdisciplinary scientific engagement, so that tantalising, though erroneous, results such as those presented in the paper are corrected before being broadcast.

Vijay Ramprasad, St Paul,

MINNESOTA, US

Jesse Ribot, Champaign,

ILLINOIS, US

Ashwini Chhatre

HYDERABAD

## Draconian Ordinance by J&K

The Peoples Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) condemns the promulgation of the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Public Property (Prevention of

Damage) (Amendment) Ordinance by N N Vohra, the Governor of J&K on 26 October 2017. This ordinance criminalises anyone calling for a protest or demonstration, which leads to the damage of public property, with an imprisonment of two to five years and a fine as high as the market value of the property damaged. The speed with which the state police have acted to give effect to this ordinance is worrisome as already a first information report has been registered on 23 November 2017 against "unknown persons" for damaging public property (tree guards) in Parimpora, Srinagar.

This new ordinance has to be seen against the backdrop of the continuous militarisation and oppression of people in the valley by the Indian armed forces. Kashmir has been witnessing an internal armed conflict since its accession to India and the brutality of the same has been heightened with the killing of Burhan Wani in 2016. The onslaught on people with lethal weapons, including pellet guns, which maim people for life, has been the strategy employed by the state to curb opposition to their occupation. It is to be noted that people in conflict zones already have limited power in their hands to hold the state liable for their wrongs, and peaceful demonstrations remain one of the ways to show solidarity and angst against the government's measures and policies.

The doublespeak of the government is appalling, as on the one hand, it has withdrawn charges pressed against over 4,900 youths for stone pelting that took place from 2008 to 2014. On the other, it comes up with this ordinance through the backdoor, which systematically suppresses alternative perspectives and punishes people for expressing their democratic right to dissent.

The new ordinance under the garb of protecting properties within the state

narrows down the space available for resistance as there already exist provisions that penalise mischief done to public property under the state's criminal code, that is, the Ranbir Penal Code (Sections 283, 425, 431, etc). Further, it expands the definition of property and includes within its ambit even private holdings (both movable and immovable) along with public property, and punishes not only the act of protest or demonstration and protest with fire or explosive substance, but also anyone who abets the same via its Sections 4A and 4B.

Moreover, Section 4C provides the court to presume the accused as guilty and goes against the basic tenet of criminal jurisprudence, which is "innocent until proven guilty." Section 5 makes grant of bail to the accused/convict dependent on the public prosecutor's sanction, when the criminal court follows "bail as a right, jail as an exception" rule.

This ordinance will allow the state administration to pick up innocent men and charge them falsely for causing mischief, and it will further become a potential ground to commit torture upon men and women.

With existing oppressive laws like the Public Safety Act and the National Security Act, this ordinance will further provide grounds for abuse of law and will add to the woes of people while crushing their aspirations and civil and human rights.

The PUDR notes with concern the pattern in the issuance of this ordinance by the state, which facilitates the government to do away with the legislative process and push in its agenda without any deliberation and debate in the assembly.

The PUDR demands the immediate withdrawal of this draconian ordinance.

Cijo Joy, Anushka Singh

Secretaries, PUDR

DELHI

## EPW Engage

The following article has been published in the past week in the EPW Engage section ([www.epw.in/engage](http://www.epw.in/engage)).

(1) Transgender Bill: We Refuse to Be Subjects of Experiment for Those Who Do Not Understand Us  
—*Sayantan Datta*

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