

# THE NEHRU CENTRE NEWSLETTER



The Nehru Centre (INC), New Delhi is an independent think tank. set up in 2024, with the goal of producing accessible research findings in the fields of history, policy, law, and governance in India. We aim to bring this knowledge to a wider audience through articles, podcasts, events, and other forms of public communication. At its core, our work is about engaging with the issues of our time, fighting misinformation, and encouraging a deeper understanding of India's evolving political, social, and economic landscape.

## MESSAGE FROM TNC

Dear Readers,

We're excited to share with you the tenth issue of our newsletter! It's been an incredible journey, and we're so grateful for all the support and feedback we've received. As we navigate through a rapidly changing world, our pieces bring forward insightful perspectives on pressing issues that shape our society today.

A special thanks to our guest columnist for his contribution this month and to the TNC team members who have brought everything together to make this issue what it is.

As always, we hope these pieces inspire you to reflect, discuss, and critically engage with the world around you. Your feedback is always appreciated, and we look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming issues.

We look forward to your continued engagement!

Best,  
Midhat Samra  
Team Lead, Research & Media



Researching Truth. Reimagining Democracy

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# CALL FOR GUEST WRITERS

The Nehru Centre (TNC) is accepting submissions from guest writers on a rolling basis for our upcoming newsletters. Please read our editorial guidelines carefully before sending us your submission. We invite submissions in the following formats in up to 900 words:

1. Opinion pieces – Arguments backed by facts and figures (not rants)
2. Socio-political, Historical, Law & policy Analysis– National or international scope
3. News reports – Curated or original reporting based on primary field research

## How to Submit ?

1. Email your submissions (doc) to [thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com](mailto:thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com) with a short author bio & your social media handles.
2. Mention the title of your piece in the subject line and specify if it is time-sensitive.
3. For the write-ups, please use English (UK), Times New Roman, 12pt, and line spacing 1.15.
4. If selected, the editor will review your work and request edits, if necessary.
5. You will be informed about the expected publishing date once the newsletter goes live.
6. Your article will be shared on TNC's multiple social media platforms and you will be tagged (depending on social media accounts provided by you).
7. We retain the final say over headlines, publishing dates, and images used.

## AI & Plagiarism Policy

We value original thought and authentic writing. While AI tools can assist in proofreading, structuring, or shortening content, all AI usage must be disclosed to the editor. AI-generated content without human oversight will not be accepted.

## Terms & Conditions

1. Indicate if your article is exclusive to The Nehru Centre or has been published elsewhere. We prioritize original content and typically do not republish blog posts.
2. Copyright for material that is published exclusively is held jointly by The Nehru Centre, New Delhi and the authors.
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4. Once an article is published, it cannot be removed/ taken down except in legal, copyright, or safety-related cases.
5. With the exception of trans writers, we do not allow any writer to change their name or write under a pseudonym for The Nehru Centre to ensure complete transparency and to avoid any legal hassles going forward. However, writers wishing to publish personal narratives can choose to write anonymously for us (editorial records will still require full author details).

## FROM THE PAST

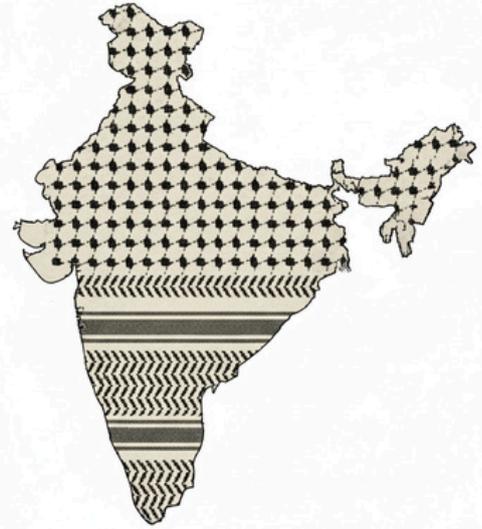
### JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON PALESTINE

**Press conference, 13 JUNE 1936**

My expression of sympathy with the Arab national movement and their struggle for freedom has brought me some protests from Jews in India. I venture therefore to state a little more fully what my attitude is to this problem of Palestine.

Few people, I imagine, can withhold their deep sympathy from the Jews for the long centuries of the most terrible oppression to which they have been subjected all over Europe. Fewer still can repress their indignation at the barbarities and racial suppression of the Jews which the Nazis have indulged in during the last few years, and which continue today. Even outside Germany, Jew-baiting has become a favourite pastime of various fascist groups.

This revival in an intense form of racial intolerance and race war is utterly repugnant to me and I have been deeply distressed at the sufferings of vast numbers of people of the Jewish race. Many of these unfortunate exiles, with no country or home to call their own, are known to me, and some I consider it an honour to call my friends. I approach this question therefore with every sympathy for the Jews. So far as I am concerned, the racial or the religious issue does not affect my opinion. "But my reading of war-time and post-war history shows that there was a gross betrayal of the Arabs by British imperialism. The many promises that were made to them by Colonel Lawrence and others, on behalf of the British Government, and which resulted in the Arabs helping the British and Allied Powers during the war, were consistently ignored after the war was over.



All the Arabs, in Syria, Iraq, Trans-jordan and Palestine, smarted under this betrayal, but the position of the Arabs in Palestine was undoubtedly the worst of all.

Having been promised freedom and independence repeatedly from 1915 onwards, suddenly they found themselves converted into a mandatory territory with a new burden added on— the promise of the creation of a national home for the Jews — a burden which almost made it impossible for them to realise independence.

The Jews have a right to look to Jerusalem and their Holy Land and to have free access to them. But the position after the Balfour declaration was very different. A new state within a state was sought to be created in Palestine, an ever-growing state with the backing of British imperialism behind it, and the hope was held out that this new Jewish state would, in the near future, become so powerful in numbers and in economic position that it would dominate the whole of Palestine.

Zionist policy aimed at this domination and worked for it, though, I believe, some sections of Jewish opinion were opposed to this aggressive attitude.

Inevitably, the Zionists opposed the Arabs and looked for protection and support to the British Government. Such case as the Zionists had might be called a moral one, their ancient associations with their Holy Land and their present reverence for it. One may sympathise with it. But what of the Arabs? For them also it was a holy land — both for the Muslim and the Christian Arabs.

For thirteen hundred years or more they had lived there and all their national and racial interests had taken strong roots there. Palestine was not an empty land fit for colonisation by outsiders. It was a well-populated and full land with little room for large numbers of colonists from abroad. Is it any wonder that the Arabs objected to this intrusion? And their objection grew as they realised that the aim of British imperialism was to make the Arab-Jew problem a permanent obstacle to their independence. We in India have sufficient experience of similar obstacles being placed in the way of our freedom by British imperialism.

It is quite possible that a number of Jews might have found a welcome in Palestine and settled down there. But when the Zionists came with the avowed object of pushing out the Arabs from all places of importance and of dominating the country, they could hardly be welcomed. And the fact that they have brought much money from outside and started industries and schools and universities cannot diminish the opposition of the Arabs, who see with dismay the prospect of their becoming permanently a subject race, dominated, politically and economically, by the Zionists and the British Government.

The problem of Palestine is thus essentially a nationalist one— a people struggling for independence against imperialist control and exploitation. It is not a racial or religious one. Perhaps some of our Muslim fellow countrymen extend their sympathy to the Arabs because of the religious bond.

But the Arabs are wiser and they lay stress only on nationalism and independence, and it is well to remember that all Arabs, Christian as well as Muslim, stand together in this struggle against British imperialism. Indeed, some of the most prominent leaders of the Arabs in this national struggle have been Christians.

If the Jews had been wise, they would have thrown in their lot with the Arab struggle for independence. Instead, they have chosen to side with British imperialism and to seek its protection against the people of the country.

The Arabs of Palestine will no doubt gain their independence, but this is likely to be a part of the larger unity of Arab peoples for which the countries of western Asia have so long hankered after, and this again will be part of the new order which will emerge out of present-day chaos. The Jews, if they are wise, will accept the teaching of history, and make friends with the Arabs and throw their weight on the side of the independence of Palestine, and not seek a position of advantage and dominance with the help of the imperialist power.

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- *The original text was selected and edited by Mridula Mukherjee for [National Herald](#).*

## COMMENTARY

### FROM NEHRU TO MAMDANI

By Amartya

In October 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru made his maiden visit to the United States. Seventy six years later, his images resurfaced in a procession in the heart of New York City. Zohran Mamdani, the 34-year-old Democratic Socialist mayor of New York, invoked Nehru alongside Eugene V. Debs, the American socialist and anti-imperialist, in his victory speech. If 2025 is to be remembered for anything, it will be for its political shocks, from the growing uncertainty surrounding American power to the renewed debates on colonialism and genocide.

These developments have deepened divides over nationalism, race, and identity, reinforcing the tensions between the West and the rest. Yet Mamdani's success, first in the Democratic primary and later in the mayoral race, carries a sense of hope. Six decades after his death, Nehru continues to find resonance within the language of global progressive politics.

An Al Jazeera documentary titled Bigger than Zohran traces Mamdani's rise as an unlikely frontrunner who defied both establishment donors and his own party leadership. His campaign, centered on affordability, inclusion, and secular messaging, struck a chord with voters across a deeply polarized landscape. His choice to echo Nehru's independence speech was no coincidence. It invoked a political tradition inspired by Nehruvian thought and action. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta observed in a recent Indian Express column, Nehru's own political journey began when he



became chairman of the Allahabad Municipal Board at the same age as Mamdani. That parallel is striking. It shows that even in an age of cynicism, a progressive and socialist politics, based on values, can reclaim space in civic life. From Nehru to Mamdani, the principles of collective welfare, democracy, and anti-colonial solidarity have endured despite the global shift toward majoritarian and authoritarian politics. Mamdani's ascent in Trump's New York is, in that sense, a rediscovery of Nehru's moral imagination.

One of the defining aspects of Mamdani's campaign was his confident embrace of identity. His transnational roots, being Uganda born, of Indian origin, a Muslim, and now an American citizen, reflect what the global movement of people and ideas can produce. Through his multi-faceted identity, he represents an integration that is not confined to economics but extends to culture and politics. Fluent in Hindi, Urdu, and Arabic, yet deeply rooted in the American experience, Mamdani embodies a cosmopolitan spirit that echoes Nehru's internationalism. Like Nehru, he combines acceptance of diversity with transnational solidarity against racism and white supremacy. He has remained unapologetically Muslim while speaking out against the genocide in Gaza. His willingness to challenge both political allies and party orthodoxy reinforces an older political faith: that leadership must be guided by conscience rather than convenience.

Throughout his campaign, Mamdani's identity never overshadowed his commitment to the collective. He built bridges across differences, reaching out to Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, workers earning minimum wage, and taxi drivers. His appeal rested on a vision of justice that transcended identity, echoing Nehru's belief that democracy thrives through moral courage and active citizenship. Though separated by time and context, Mamdani shared a conviction with Nehru that politics must remain rooted in ethics, empathy, and reason. In reviving these principles, Mamdani connected his movement in New York to a wider humanist tradition that Nehru helped define.

The reappearance of Nehru's image in this political moment suggests more than historical

nostalgia. It underscores his continuing relevance. As global politics turns toward authoritarian nationalism, the revival of Nehruvian ideals through voices like Mamdani's highlights the enduring value of inclusive and compassionate governance. Even in an age shaped by discrimination and division, the moral vision of one world continues to resonate. Mamdani's rise is therefore not just a local victory but a reaffirmation of a political philosophy that still inspires hope. Freedom, justice, and diversity, when guided by empathy, remain capable of shaping a more humane future.



## OPINION

### NEHRU VS NOW

**By Mansi Singh**

Every year on 14 November, India remembers Jawaharlal Nehru with flowers, Children's Day speeches and sentimental posts. Yet few pause to reflect on what he truly stood for: a free and rational mind. For Nehru, independence was incomplete if Indians remained bound by superstition, unreason and fear. He dreamt of a nation where citizens would think critically, question courageously and act compassionately. His idea of freedom was intellectual as much as political, a freedom from ignorance and blind faith.

Nehru called this spirit the scientific temper. In *The Discovery of India*, he described it as "the way along which man should travel... It is the scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of evidence, the reliance on the observed fact and not pre-conceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind, all this is necessary, not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the solution of its many problems."

Nehru wanted to cultivate a way of thinking that was disciplined, curious, self-critical and honest. He wanted science to shape not only India's industries and universities but also its conscience. He saw in it a moral force that could transform an ancient civilisation into a modern democracy.

Homi Bhabha, who helped lay the foundations of India's atomic program, wrote of Nehru: "Although not a practising scientist, Jawaharlal Nehru's personality revealed throughout the essential attributes of the real man of science,

his unquenched thirst for truth, his questing mind that admitted no man-made barriers, his essential humility, his constant willingness to learn and to teach." That humility and that readiness to listen and to reason defined Nehru's leadership as much as his intellect did.



Dr S. Radhakrishnan, his close friend and later President of India, saw in him not only a rationalist but also a humanist. He wrote, "He had a love of liberty not merely for his own people but for all people of the world. He therefore expressed sympathy and support for all liberation movements in Africa, Asia and South America. He believed in the liberty of all without distinction of class, creed or country. Nehru was a great believer in world peace and the concept of one world community. No one has shown greater faith and allegiance to the Charter of the UN than Nehru." Those words capture the essence of a leader who saw science, democracy and peace as deeply connected, each grounded in respect for truth and human dignity.

In a newly independent nation that was deeply religious, poor and wounded, still searching for identity, Nehru spoke of reason and experiment, of laboratories, research and planning commissions. He visited the United States and the Soviet Union not to imitate them but to understand how knowledge had transformed their societies.

He built the foundations for atomic research, space exploration and industrial modernisation because he believed that science was not a luxury but liberation.

However the scientific temper that Nehru cherished has been quietly fading. We live in an age where misinformation spreads faster than facts, rumours replace reason and even scientific institutions feel compelled to bow before political and religious pressure. Claims that ancient sages invented aeroplanes, that mythological heroes performed plastic surgery, or that drinking cow urine can heal ailments might seem harmless or humorous, but they reveal a deeper malaise.

Seventy-five years on, it is painful to see how his vision has dimmed. The man who tried to awaken India's rational spirit is now vilified almost daily. He is blamed for everything from border conflicts to bureaucratic inefficiency, from poverty to partition. The complexity of history is reduced to convenient caricature. In political speeches and social media debates, Nehru is not remembered as a moderniser or a humanist but as a scapegoat. We have turned the architect of India's modern consciousness into a symbol of derision. It is a cruel irony that in a time of technological triumphs, with rockets landing on the moon and artificial intelligence reshaping our world, the culture of rational discussion that Nehru championed seems weaker than ever.

The once dominant 'Idea of India', shaped by the national movement and embedded in the moral consciousness of its people, now faces its gravest test. This threat does not arise from a traditional or backward populace, but from those in positions of authority who seek to distort that very legacy. Nehru's remarkable

endeavour to lift the country from what Tagore described as the "mud and filth" left behind by colonial rule is being undone, as Indians are once again being dragged into the same ignorance, prejudice, disempowerment, lack of freedom and, most tragically, communal hatred.

As we mark his birthday, the real tribute is to remember what he stood for: an open mind, a questioning spirit and a faith in humanity. To remember Nehru is to stand up for the India that thinks, questions and believes in the dignity of every voice. His idea of India was not built on power or pride, but on dialogue, curiosity and compassion. And perhaps that is what we must hold on to now. A nation may lose battles, rebuild cities and recover wealth, but if it loses its capacity to reason, it loses its soul.



## GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

### CAN AI SOLVE REAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS?

By Praseon Kumar\*

As appeared in the "Indian Express" Ahmedabad edition on 12th June 2025, "Artificial Intelligence (AI)" is to track school dropouts in Gujarat government schools. It comes from increased trending dropouts in Gujarat school secondary classes. While it's easy to acknowledge the necessity of addressing dropouts, the question is whether AI can be effective? Is it a game changer given that since 1990, government schools have worked on many ideas like making learning joyful, adding activities in the classroom lessons, developing classroom plans keeping children in the center but none led to decline in dropout from the school as it was expected. The past experience gives inputs to evaluate the possible success of such initiatives. One of the questions that comes first is whether students drop out because of lack of proper training mechanism.

My idea comes from my own experience in the field of education and based on literary review on the topic. Lack of information on why a child dropout from the school looms large. One common reason for dropout blames parents for ignoring their children's schooling. What I found working intensely with some government schools in Surat and Jharkhand pointed to material deprivation as one of the reasons. For instance, breakfast or carrying food and water to school that comes naturally to my children means a lot for most in the government schools. Making it one of the pressing needs that stops a child regularly from going to school. This is not the only one, there are hips of such pressing needs for which many children supplement their parents' work to sustain family income and share the responsibility. Therefore, blaming parents alone for ignorance in sending

their children is a distorted picture on the issue.

It leaves us to wonder whether technology or adequate toilets and clean drinking water in schools could lower dropout rates. In the same breath, several studies have shown how toilets impact girl students' continuity in school.

With the Midday meal scheme on the ground, the government only has to create a mechanism to oil it and make it more effective. The scheme was initiated in 2001 to provide nutritious meals to children. However, addressing student dropouts through better meals, toilets and water is not all. Along with this, to sustain reduction in the dropouts, in the long and short term, the government has to tackle the problem of income depletion and growing unemployment.



With substantial resources at its disposal, it is the government that can address the relative deprivation faced by families of most students in government schools compared to those in private schools. Poverty and hunger are directly linked to unemployment and inadequate wages, and no policy can succeed without tackling these core issues. Health and nutrition are intertwined with the cycle of poverty and joblessness.

Once a child's basic needs are met, their motivation to learn is heavily dependent on the classroom environment. It consists of teachers and peers treating a child within the classroom. If it is not supportive, students' motivation to learn wanes. All said, despite the classroom's significance, there is scant information on what is happening inside the classroom. The government should leverage technology or conventional means to get information on classroom practices.

On the hinderside, what is plentiful available is standardised assessment scores, which provide only a general sense of student performance on controlled tests and fail to track individual or school-specific outcomes. Although students are evaluated multiple times a year by various organizations, the results are not delivered in a format that helps teachers identify how to support individual students. And it is also true whether most of these big studies can never find out what is helping a child perform better.

Additionally, schools increasingly suffer from over-regulation and disruptions to traditional hierarchies. Clarity on the accountability for student underperformance is needed, especially if ineffective academic practices lead to higher dropout rates. Previously, a clear chain of accountability existed: principals had responsibility within schools, school inspectors oversaw them, and the District Education Officer (DEO) coordinated at the district level. But now, the accountability structure has become fragmented, with numerous external organizations conducting training alongside government efforts.

Moreover, can we realistically expect AI to be a silver bullet for reducing dropout rates? While improved data tracking might provide better insights, it is a leap to think it will solve the is-

-sue. We must address the problem's complexity, not view it in isolation.

As we consider improvements, we should draw lessons from Finland's education system. Their approach emphasizes addressing inequalities and wealth distribution, allowing them to achieve some of the best school performances globally. Remarkably, they administer only one test throughout schooling, reserved for university admissions. This focus on equity and support is something we can learn from.



*\*AUTHOR BIO: Prasoon Kumar is the founder of [welearnings.in](http://welearnings.in) and is currently engaged with foundations that are dedicated to transforming schools to enhance the learning environment for students. He has amassed 25 years of experience in the field of school education, serving in various capacities.*

## BOOK REVIEW

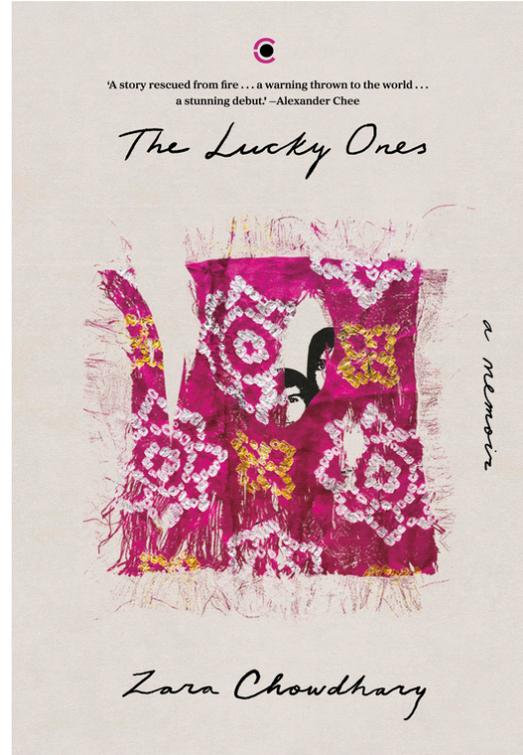
### THE LUCKY ONES BY ZARA CHOWDHARY

By Midhat Samra

Written by Zara Chowdhary, *The Lucky Ones* is a memoir which is set against the backdrop of 2002 Gujarat. Zara happens to belong to one of the few muslim families who made out of the pogrom physically unaffected, yet emotionally scarred by survivor's guilt. The book makes one witness sixteen years old Zara's life in Gujarat through her words. She gives us an account of how everything changed drastically after the gruesome train fire that claimed the lives of around 60 karsevaks took place. And just like that, thousands of muslim lives were lost.

She gives a chilling account of how Bilkis Bano, a pregnant woman, was gang raped while her 2 year old child was beheaded in front of her eyes along with other family members. But Bilkis survived. To fight. For herself, for her family and for hundreds like her who had lost everything during the pogrom. Bano's story became the moral spine of Zara's narrative. A reminder that survival itself is resistance.

On one hand, Zara describes her life in a locked up home with her grandmother, father, mother and sister (later with her aunt and cousin as well) in a small flat situated in a Muslim ghetto. On the other, she narrates stories of what was happening in the city, houses turned to ashes, hundreds of girls raped and people killed on streets. For her, three months passed by living under constant fear of being the next person to end up being dead. Because not just the living muslims, but the graves of dead muslims were also bulldozed. It is the time when the city witnessed hate on such a large scale. When the state's leadership actively participated in the persecution of minorities.



A time when ordinary citizens became participants in extraordinary violence.

Even after the siege is over, Zara narrates how the feeling of fear overtook her parents and her while taking her to the exam center every single time. And how nothing had changed for people on the other side. How the lives of her non-muslim friends remained unaffected. Her words made me realise the present reality. Being a Muslim in India, it is printed very well on my mind that if something like this happens, mine would be the first community put to danger. No matter if the families follow an Islamic way of life or not, a Muslim name is enough to get persecuted in present day India.

The book reminds us to reflect on where the world's largest democracy is heading. And whether, in our silence, we too become the unlucky ones?

## POETRY OF RESISTANCE: FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ

Translated by Mustansir Dalvi

chand roz aur mirī jaan faqat chand hī roz  
zulm kī chhāñv meñ dam lene pe majbūr haiñ  
ham

aur kuchh der sitam sah leñ taḌap leñ ro leñ  
apne ajdād kī mīrās hai māzūr haiñ ham

jism par qaid hai jazbāt pe zanjīreñ haiñ  
fikr mahbūs hai guftār pe tāzīreñ haiñ

apnī himmat hai ki ham phir bhī jiye jaate haiñ  
zindagī kyā kisī muflis kī qabā hai jis meñ

har ghaḌī dard ke paivand lage jaate haiñ  
lekin ab zulm kī mī.ād ke din thoḌe haiñ

ik zarā sabr ki fariyād ke din thoḌe haiñ  
arsa-e-dahr kī jhulsī huī vīrānī meñ

ham ko rahnā hai pe yūñhī to nahīñ rahnā hai  
ajnaabī hāthoñ kā be-nām girāñ-bār sitam

aaj sahnā hai hamesha to nahīñ sahnā hai  
ye tīre husn se lipTī huī ālām kī gard

apnī do roza javānī kī shikastoñ kā shumār  
chāndnī rātoñ kā bekār dahaktā huā dard

dīl kī be-sūd taḌap jism kī māyūs pukār  
chand roz aur mirī jaan faqat chand hī roz

A few more days, my love, only a few days more.  
It is our lot to live under the shadow of tyranny

To suffer this outrage, to bear this pain, to weep  
awhile. This legacy of our past is our cross to  
bear

Our bodies are confined, our emotions in  
shackles. Worry is a prisoner, Speech is  
proscribed.

But there's a courage within us that keeps us  
going. It's as if our very life is an indigent's rent  
garment.

That needs to be patched with pain, time after  
time. But now these cruel times have almost run  
their course.

This impatient longing is almost over. In this  
burnt desolation that is the world and its time.

We have to go on, but not this way. The  
unbearable torment of unseen hands.

Has to be endured for now, but not forever. This  
dust of sorrow that veils your beauty.

This bounty of defeats on our fleeting youth.  
This worthless throbbing under moonlit nights.

The futility of heartburn, the body's unheard  
lament. A few more days, my love, only a few  
days more.

### GET IN TOUCH



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The Nehru Centre India

thenehrucentre

thenehru\_centre

thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com