



AND WE CLAPPED?

News, Views, and Perspectives on Governance in Post-Pandemic India

YOU ARE BEING WATCHED

“Under observation, we act less free, which means we effectively are less free,” Edward Snowden.

Surveillance is often presented as vital, done for our protection. We are told it helps identify criminals, threats, contain disease, etc. For instance, public health surveillance is crucial to identifying outbreaks, understanding how diseases spread, deciding where health resources are needed, and more. There is no denying that surveillance helps do that. The real concern regarding surveillance is privacy, along with who is collecting the information, who is watching, what is being watched, and what happens to the data once it has been collected. This question is pertinent in India.

The recently concluded student protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, should worry us all. The police deployed heavy surveillance, including live video feeds and AI-assisted facial recognition. There were also instances of police using the notorious Meta glasses to covertly record protesters.

The police defended its actions, saying it was a ‘law-and-order measure.’ But let’s be clear, this was about power with clear consequences. Facial recognition becomes identification. Identification becomes profiling.

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Uncounted, Unpaid, Unheard

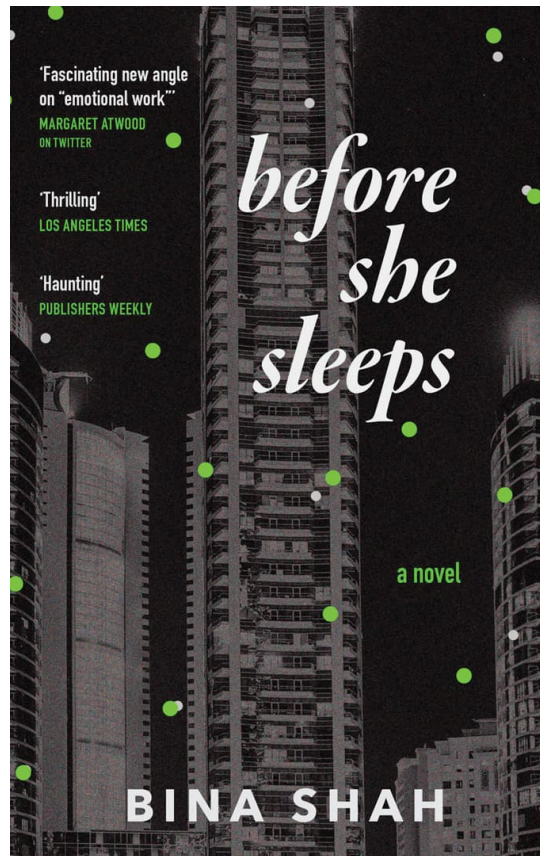
In July this year, [the Rajasthan High Court](#) had to tell the public university something that should have been obvious during the second wave of Covid-19: in a medical emergency, a family cannot be punished for seeking treatment wherever they can find it.

The case was filed by the daughter of Jagdish Prasad Srivastava, a retired professor of Rajasthan University. During the second wave, Srivastava was being treated in Delhi, including at AIIMS and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. He died on November 18, 2021, after prolonged illness. His family later submitted a medical reimbursement claim of around Rs. 8.9 lakh. The university rejected it, saying that the treatment was taken at a non-recognised hospital outside Rajasthan. Nearly five years after his death, the court directed the university to reimburse the expenses with 6 per cent annual interest. Justice Rekha Borana notes that the pandemic was an extraordinary situation in which immediate medical care had to take precedence. Treatment at the nearest available hospital, even outside the stated jurisdiction, could not become a ground for denying reimbursement.

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This Issue's Reads:

Before She Sleeps, Authored by Bina Shah



Before She Sleeps imagines a militarised state that treats women's bodies, labour and sexuality as resources to be controlled. Through compulsory marriages, reproductive regulation and constant monitoring, women are denied the freedom to make decisions about their own lives. Surveillance extends beyond the state's institutions into homes, relationships and social expectations. The government frames this control as necessary for security and stability, concealing its patriarchal and authoritarian character. Women living outside this order build underground networks of care, intimacy and refusal. Bina Shah's novel powerfully critiques how surveillance and the language of protection can be used to legitimise state control.

Why This Work Needs Your Support

PC-PIC continues this work because the answer to the question of who India is being governed for cannot emerge from television studios. It must emerge from public testimony. Over the last four years, these collective processes have helped organise and document public hearings among forest peoples, Adivasi communities, fishworkers, hawkers, ragpickers, sanitation workers, informal labourers, displaced communities, and urban working classes across India. These testimonies are not charity archives. They are political memory.

This work needs support because official history often erases the voices of those who suffer the most. Independent people's documentation, public hearings, field investigations, legal follow-up, political education and citizen outreach require resources. Supporting this work means supporting the right of ordinary people to speak, remember, question and organise.

And if India deserves citizens, not obedient beneficiaries, then this work must be sustained.



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