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Episode 7: Dibyesh Anand
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Kyra: Thank you for tuning in to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast, brought to you by a student-staff partnership at the University of Westminster. This is a platform for students and educators to exchange knowledge and encourage discussion about the current challenges facing higher education. I'm your host, Kira, and, for this episode, I'll be in conversation with Dibyesh Anand. Dibyesh is Head of the Department of Politics & International Relations at Westminster and a respected scholar for his research on topics including politics and international relations on Tibetans under Chinese rule, Islamophobia in India, the politics of security and representation, the emergence of China and India as major non-Western powers, and the contested nature of nation state formations in Asia. In this interview, I have the opportunity to discuss Dibyesh's most recent work, as well as how we might begin to decolonise the discipline of International Relations.

Kyra: Hi Dibyesh, thank you so much for being here. I've been really looking forward to having you on the podcast. How is the start of your week going?

Dibyesh: Thank you for having me here. It's fine. It's busy because we are shortlisting for different lectureship posts in Criminology and Psychology. We've started with that. So, we are looking to recruit new colleagues, and, I mean, where it's relevant for the kind of discussion you're going to have is our intentions are very clear that we want to diversify our staff body, you know, because one of the demands made by students is that they don't see themselves amongst academics. There's a big disconnect between students and academics. We can talk of diversity but there's a disconnect. We're trying to change that, but I can't tell you how difficult it is.

Kyra: I can imagine.

Dibyesh: Because, even though, for instance, we are saying, "Look, we are interested in diversifying – you must…whoever applies should have some commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion." Some colleagues have, and some applicants don't seem to bother, because, for them, EDI is something that's…not what they do, which tells us about the privileges that they might inhabit, you know, that's how it is.

Kyra: So, I like to start off the podcast with the guest telling us a little bit about themselves. So, first things first, where are you from?

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Dibyesh: My full name is Dibyesh Anand, so which I'm Professor Dibyesh Anand. My origin would be India and Nepal. So, my mother was part-Indian and part-Nepalese. She could never decide because she came from the borderline which was neither India nor – which was both, basically. For her, it was the borderline, but, in reality, she would have been Nepalese. My father came from, again, borderline, but from the Indian side. So, India and Nepal. I grew up in what's Eastern India, different provinces of Eastern India. I had my early education there. Then I came to the UK in 1997 for my Master's. I got a full scholarship, so I came to the UK, although I had no interest in coming to the UK, frankly, right – not right, but, you know, I didn't have… I came for my Master's but I really enjoyed it – the education was amazing. I carried on with my PhD, from the University of Bristol, and then got a job at Bath University so I moved there, and then, from there, I moved to Westminster. So, my background would be Indian, broadly speaking – I say "broadly" [maybe because Nepal also as well as] Indian – and I'm here for the last…how many years…24 years.

Kyra: Wow. And what is your role here at Westminster?

Dibyesh: So, officially, because that's what my role is, I am Head of the School of Social Sciences. The University has 12 schools, and one of the largest schools, if not *the* largest school, is the School of Social Sciences, and I'm the Head of the School of Social Sciences for the last three years. In addition, I'm Professor of International Relations. These are my official roles, right? The way I see it is, apart from these roles, I mean, I am also co-chair of the University's Black & Minority Ethnic Staff Network – we no longer call it "Staff" but Colleague Network – and I'm also co-chair of the University's EDI, Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee. The way I see myself is not in terms of only these roles. I see myself as a public intellectual, a lifelong learner, someone who is…fits in as much within activism as much as in academia – that's how I see myself.

Kyra: Amazing. And what would you say has been the highlight of your career, as both a respected academic and scholar and obviously in all these other roles that you clearly play as well?

Dibyesh: Now, in terms of institutionally, institutionally, my highlight would be where people would – how others would see me, right, that they would see me as…eh…one of the only non-white – I'm using the word "non-white" rather than BME or Indian or whatever, so non-white, one of the rare non-white Heads of Schools/Departments in the country. That's would be a highlight.

A highlight could be, potentially, in my case, also becoming a Professor before…I had set my goal at the age of 40, so before the age of 40, for Professor of International Relations, so a highlight.

Within the University, I think my highlight could be seen as the fact that I was elected as a Governor by academics. So, I'm one of the Governors of the University, the only elected

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one, last year, and, you know, as the Governor, I'd be seen in terms [being not only a] Head of School but also in the University committees like EDI.

But, for me, the highlight would be the kind of recognition I get from my work, particularly around Tibet and China, where my work on Tibet is in terms of being seen as someone who is emphasising on the colonial nature of Chinese rule, rather than anything else. So, for me, internationally, I'd be one of the prominent intellectual voices that argues that we should not see China as simply another military occupier or as someone who owns Tibet, but China as a colonial power.

Kyra: And you last body of work explored the securitisation as a feature of the modern Chinese colonisation of [Xinjiang] and Tibet, and anyone active on social media will be aware of the monstrosities that are currently going on in China, and also how they are very much being kind of ignored and swept under the carpet. But this is a country that has been the focus of your research for over 10 years, so, to begin with, what kind of drove you to explore this particular area of research and have that specifically kind of post-colonial approach?

Dibyesh: I started in 1997, when I came to the UK for my Master's, I had very little idea about Tibet and China. I had done History in India, and some other universities, but not really known much about China, the colonial power, because, growing up in a post-colonial country, we know of post-colonial countries like India and China as being the victims of colonisation, rather than practice. That's how I came. But when I came to the UK, I saw a lot of interest here – not in academia, but amongst the public, and including Hollywood, in Tibet. There was an exoticisation of Tibet, the Tibetans being, you know, these nice people who are brutalised by the Chinese Communist Party kind of thing. So, I was interested for these years on, why so much interest in Tibet here in the West, but not in India, where I realised and found out that Tibetans live, exiled Tibetans live in India, most of them, and the Dalai Lama, or the leader of Tibetan people, lives in India, but I didn't know much about it. So, for me, it started with almost a frustration and an anger with myself, with my lack of knowledge – that's how I started. So, I started - my PhD was on Western imagination of Tibet, Western exoticisation of Tibet. Then, I looked at work of history, work of post-coloniality, work of literature, all of that, and politics. I understood and argued that – and that's broadly my PhD, and that's the subject of my first book, 'Geopolitical Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination'. I argued that, while Western imagination exoticisation of Tibet helped Tibetans to gain some recognition for their struggle, in the end, the main beneficiary was China because, by portraying Tibetans as this otherworldly, exotic, religious people, it took away the struggle of Tibetans for right to self-determination, political self-determination, and made Tibetans into some kind of panda-bear kind of exotic people who are not almost […]. So, that's one part.

The second part was that Tibetans are forced to be non-violent, forced to be apolitical as much as possible, and why did China benefit from it? Because it was the British and the

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Europeans who introduced modern ideas of sovereignty and independence. So, they said China has sovereignty over Tibet. Now, why did they say China has sovereignty? That's something I've worked on in the past. One of the articles in Journal of Asian Studies argued how the British wanted to…like any typical imperial power, they didn't want to offend China, but they wanted to deal with Tibet, right, so what they did was they converted historic relations between China and Tibet which was based on patron-priest relations. So, Tibetans were the priests and Chinese Emperors were the patrons. Not any modern relationship. The British saw that and converted that into sovereignty autonomy, not sovereignty and autonomy. Why did they do it? Because, by that, they could say to China, "We are not dealing with you but we will deal with Tibet on our own." So, basically, the British role in the region was quite detrimental to taking away, again, Tibetan independence, and who benefited from that? China. China was one of the first countries in the region, to modernise before Tibetans did therefore China said, no, we are not [?], we are sovereign, and as soon as PRC was formed, People's Republic of China, they asserted that they will liberate Tibet, and you ask "Liberate from whom?" If Tibet was always part of China, which is the Chinese claim, then you can't liberate your own people from yourself. The Chinese Communist Party have been very good at playing that double game and what they've been saying is "We are going to liberate Tibetans and make them into a Communist utopia – they won't occupy Tibet." They tried to compromise with Dalai Lama for seven, well, eight years – it didn't work out. The Dalai Lama came into exile. So, all of that was part and parcel of my research, right? It started with an interest in Western imagination, and it started looking at the nature of the Chinese state, and in the last 10 years, its taken two years of research, but the last 12 years, the more I look at China. I recognise and then argue that China cannot be seen as anything other than a formal colonial power – not former, but formal colonial power. So, China is an occupying force. So, the article you mention, I look at the ways in which both Uyghur Muslims and Tibetan Muslims are securitised as dangerous separatists and terrorists and extremists, and the land of Tibetans and Uyghur – so, what's called Xinjiang is Turkestan, and Tibet is occupied by China on the grounds that these people you can't trust, the land belongs to us people, and if they don't want it, that's too bad. So, people are securitised where land is occupied.

Kyra: So, why do you feel like there's this kind of lack in Western postcolonial scholarship on this topic?

Dibyesh: Post-colonial theory, post-colonial studies, of which I would also be a student, emerged largely in terms of a frustration with Western liberalism which portrayed empire as partly not so good but partly good, and there was this whole idea that in the end those who ruled the non-West (the East and wherever) they were not bad people. Yes, some of them were bad – they killed, you know, they murdered, they raped, they pillaged, whatever, but they were not bad, but they were really interested in that part. So, Edward Said's work and others, were largely about West to non-West, Frantz Fanon, Silvia Wynter all of them, they have worked on West/non-West relations. The post-colonial studies, we look at '80s, '90s, 2000s, it's largely about the impact the West had on the non-West and the impact the non-

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West had on – the West/non-West relations. And when non-West is studied, non-Western places and people, they're studied largely in terms of being victims or collaborators of Western [ideas], but there's hardly anything on non-Western elite being themselves not collaborators but practitioners of empire. So, my frustration of postcolonial theory, [I'm part of it] but was that, if we are driven by ideas of… empowering ideas of challenging coloniality, why is it that coloniality is something only Western and something that white people can do? And I would argue, and have argued in one of my articles, that it's really patronising that we assume the Chinese, Indians, Turks, and Iranians, and, you know, Nigerians can't be originally colonialists themselves, [then given up], but that's what they are doing. So, rather than – so, for instance, if you take an example of empire in China or imperialism in China, all the works about China are victims of empire, are victim of empires – China as a victim of imperialism. Now, part of it is dominance of left scholarship, of which I'm also a part, by the way, left scholarship that sees the West as a problem, even though we are Westerners, like I'm also a Westerner, but we see the West as the source of empire, West as capitalists, imperialists, but we are often driven by this vision where we refuse to see, let's say, in this case, China – now, [I also work on] India, right – as also colonial, until we can somehow show that China is only colonial because it is somehow influenced by the West. The fact of the matter is, China was colonial in Uyghur and Tibet before it became capitalist. Today, China is communist-capitalist, both, right, communist system, and capitalist in the economy, but the fact of the matter is China was colonial even in the 1950s, 1960s, when it was communist. So, this notion that somehow imperialism is only capitalism is a very highly reductionist understanding of empire, and this is where my rage against the limitations of post-colonial theory comes because what it does is, by focusing on West/non-West, and let's say…I don't know [about your background], but me…so, somehow, [ultimately], it should be about me having a victimised identity and being here in the West, right, [somehow a relation] between me [and the]…as an Indian versus… But ignoring the fact that I, as a CIS male, someone with a background in India, inhabit all kinds of privileges which many white people here cannot. Postcolonial theory, in a way, by emphasising West/non-West ignores the injustices that go on in the non-West.

Kyra: I wanted to also discuss a point that you make quite early on in the paper, actually. You said that: "To study Uyghurs and Tibetans living under Chinese control as ethnic or national minorities, as many scholars do, is to accept the terms of debate set by the Chinese state." This is something that I find myself having a lot of conversations about in project meetings. It's this idea that we need to be extremely cautious of the way we kind of perceive and discuss the groups that we study and analyse, otherwise we fall into this kind of trap of reinforcing coloniality, and, you know, like you say, the same could go for whether we observe China as a victim of colonialism or as a colonial force. So, my question is: do you feel like representation or discursive acts of colonialism are just as important as the kind of physical and conventional acts of colonialism?

Dibyesh: A very important question – we're on the same page here. My entire work has largely been about the politics of representation. So, I've looked at the way representations

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shape identities and realities, right? Now, so in my earlier work, it was representation of Tibet and China in the West, then it became representation of Tibetans and Uyghurs in China, and now I'm also working on representation of Muslims in India and Islamophobia and the ways in which that leads to securitisation of Muslim identity and use of violence. Broadly, there are three terms that are related to my research, and my research in the last 20 to 25 years, it would be around representation, identity, and violence. It's by representing certain identities as good and others as bad that the good ones then commit violence and turn to bad – and stereotypes are connected. So, in this case also, there's some work on China and Tibet, which say that, yeah, Xinjiang is Turkestan and Tibet is an internal colony of China, that it's internal colonialism. But, again, internal colonialism is only internal if you accept, broadly, China is a legitimate power. But from the Tibetan perspective or Uyghur perspective, or most of them, it's an external colonialism that's occupying them. So, we have to bear in mind whose ideas do we value? Imagine a situation where – and it's a crude example but a relatively easy example – domestic violence in a heterosexual context, right, and domestic violence, let's say, the husband and wife, the husband is the violent one and the wife is the victim, right. Now, one could say, oh well, we shouldn't interfere in their affairs – we know that it's a kind of argument and we should not [interfere], but we know we are past that. Now, should we listen to the victim or should we listen to the victimiser? Should we value their perspective equally, where the male says "She asked for it – she is [rude], she doesn't cook, she doesn't feed me on time, therefore I have the right, as a male, because…" whatever, my God said so, or my culture says so, this is how I've been brought up. Now, one could say both have different views. Should we value both views equally, or should we prioritise the views of those who are victimised? My politics would be that we value the words of those who are victimised. That's simple, in individual contexts. If that's the case, and in case of empires, why not value the views of those who are victimised more than the values of those who victimise? When you look at that, we have to value that basically Uyghurs and Tibetans see this as largely China as a colonial power and […]. The challenge we find in the West of course is the causes of Tibetans and [Uyghurs] are sometimes hijacked by the far-right here, who they're anti-communist so they want to use it against China, which is not healthy, but I'd – but the way I would – and I would identify, broadly, as…identify as left, but, for me, the rage is not against that far-right for using or misusing Tibetan or [Uyghurs] cause against China. My rage is against the left. Why are we silent about it? Just because right-wing appropriates certain causes, does it mean we need to distance from it? Ultimately, it's a failure of [the progressive] and the left in the West and in other parts of the world to recognise the injustice and speak in solidarity with those who are victimised by, in this case, the Chinese [colonialists], [the way] we speak in solidarity for [people who were] victimised by the British state or the American state. Why have this double-standard where those victimised by us are somehow [bad], you know, [we have to] speak against it, but those victimised by China or India, we should not speak against it? I don't understand that hypocrisy.

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Kyra: Yeah. And I feel like this also ties into kind of this concept of like paternalistic control, which I found really interesting. Could you maybe speak more about the significance of that to the securitisation of everyday life in those regions?

Dibyesh: And I realised you asked me about representation and [it distracted] my answer […], yes, representation and all of this. So, you have to understand, all empires are about violence, but violence is one of the many ways in which one governs the other. The key way in which you govern is through mind, control of mind, and control of common-sense. So, if you look at, let's say, European empires in Africa, Asia, they ruled through the idea that Europeans have a civilising mission, they're superior, and better equipped because they're better human beings, around race, ethnicity, whatever, and empire and they can govern, and the others are either savages who need to be controlled or savages who can be converted into civilised beings through education over a long period of time, which is paternalism. That has been the long story of empire. But when you look at how China governs Uyghurs and Tibetans, China — we start with a language of liberation, but who gives the right to the Chinese Communist Party to liberate Tibetans? This whole idea that we are here to liberate you, even if you don't go on to liberation, is imperial language. Now, what China does, and what China did, and what empires do, including India in Kashmir in this context, what China [said], okay, Tibetans are nice, happy, backward, feudal people. China is a modernising state, so we need to – and the same with the Uyghurs, Uyghurs are backward, extremists, excessively religious – so what we need of course is China as a modernising force that will educate Uyghurs and Tibetans to be modern. We will educate them to be more efficient, educate them to be better workers, then educate them to be more moderate, not extremist, according to them. So, education is connected to paternalism. Education is not meant to empower, it's meant to domesticate. It's meant to exoticise certain aspects of culture and crush other aspects of culture which are more…well, which don't fit into the narrative. And, in all of that, for China, China is a country of 56 nationalities, what they call ethnicity nationality. One is Han, the majority, 92%, and the rest are minority. If you look at Chinese Government programmes, and I've got all the textbooks, well, on the shelves here, not that – it's a podcast, but I've got them on the shelves – you'll find minorities are always colourful, and happy people. Minorities never cry. Minorities are never doing anything equal to the Han. So, it's always the Han who have the upper hand, something similar to the idea of development that often white Westerners take to Africa, which is that we are there to help them. We sing and dance, we eat with them, you know, but we are there to help them. Now, what if they don't want to be helped? Too bad – we'll still help! That paternalism, therefore, is at the heart of justifying the whole endeavour of empire. You have to understand that most people in China don't see the state as negative with the Uyghurs and Tibetans. In fact, they think that, and they believe that, the Chinese state is favouring Tibetans and Uyghurs, on various levels, and helping them. So, this whole idea of help is coming through paternalism, and that idea of, extending to representation of Tibetans as excessively religious, or Uyghurs also, excessively religious, and cultural and exotic and all of that, and also eroticisation, sexualisation, and I've look at all kinds of

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strategies of representation of the Other that then justifies the self as a progressive, modernising self, and that's what's happening in the case of China.

Kyra: So, in your opinion, and I guess in the grand scheme of things, what does a post-colonial way of being kind of fully entail? This question can be answered more generally, if you wish.

Dibyesh: A post-colonial way of being would be one that's a constant…based on constant self-reflection, self-reflection theory as part of postcolonial theory. It's not an end-product, it's a process. Post-coloniality, for me, it is a process. Post-coloniality is a process of constantly questioning oneself and questioning the others. It is about acknowledging the close link between knowledge and power. It's also about acknowledging the connection between coloniality, asymmetrical way of governance, coloniality, and dehumanisation, the ways in which we react to representations which are sometimes positive but often negative – other people get dehumanised. For me, post-coloniality is about recognising the role of representation, recognising the role of discourse, recognising the role of dehumanisation, recognising that power and knowledge, in asymmetrical forms, take place in all parts of the world. It is about constant questioning of those who hold power and solidarity with those who are occupied and marginalised and dehumanised, while acknowledging that these powers and, you know, dehumanising, are also intersectional. It's not therefore that Tibetans are always victimised. They are victimised by the Chinese state, but within Tibet also, there's other forms of victimisation around gender sexuality lines, and the same with the Uyghurs.

Kyra: So, what would you, I guess, like to see more of in this kind of area of research, maybe tie into…more kind of having an intersectional approach?

Dibyesh: Yes, exactly. So, having more a more intersectional approach. So, for instance, in my own module, which I teach Post-Colonial Politics and International Relations, right, people assume that it's about post-colonial politics, therefore race maybe, and empire. Yes, it is, but it's also gender and sexuality. For me, it's very important that, when you look at post-coloniality, coloniality, empire, you also look at, you know, other forms of identity politics, and intersectionality at the heart of it, while acknowledging that intersectionality should not become an excuse to take away the peculiarities of oppression. For instance, I identify as a queer person, in political terms, right? So, if I say that…you know, when we talk of Black Lives Matter, we should also talk of Queer Lives Matter, right? We should also talk of, let's say, in this case, women's lives matter, but we should not use one against the other. So, we should not say, oh, BLM is not legitimate because it doesn't always talk of LGBTQ, or somehow that the queer movement is illegitimate because it doesn't talk about Black people. Because what we find, with constant questioning of only those who are struggling, in terms of gender, sexualised, or racialized ethnic lines, is that the centre of power in our context are straight, white males. In a Chinese context: the straight, Han male. In the Indian context: Brahminical straight male, right? So straight white male doesn't always work

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throughout the world, that's how it functions, but in this context, is the one that mediates between all forms of oppression, saying, okay, this time, let me choose you're a woman, let me choose you're queer, let me choose you are [?]. We don't want that. So, for me therefore post-coloniality is about intersectionality, but post-coloniality is also about recognising that, you know, in decolonial theory and postcolonial studies, you have this discussion around decolonisation is different from diversification. It's a whole debate about it. "We don't want diversity, we want decoloniality". For me, it's not either/or, because what if the movement for decolonisation in the West, in the UK, gets dominated by straight white women and straight white men? They can, right? They can be very questioning and they can challenge – good that they do it. And they say, well, we don't need brown and Black people because we are doing better decoloniality than brown and Black people. So, now, the other way round is also we just don't want diversity. Diversity can also be Priti Patel, Kemi Badenoch kind of phenomenon. You know, they have got, I would say, token brown and Black people, who fit into the agenda of the white establishment and conform to it. So, you see, someone like myself then becomes quite, while I try to consider queer academia and queer thinking and queer politics, it becomes a lonely process because, on the one hand, I have some disquiet with those who only talk of decolonisation and only talk of diversity. This is why, within our own University, and I've been part of that movement, we talk of decolonisation and diversification, both.

Kyra: I guess this ties into kind of my next topic that I wanted to talk about. You know, most modern disciplines have disciplinary practices and use literature and interpretations that are rooted in colonialism. So, I wanted to dedicate this time to discussing what it means to kind of decolonise International Relations, and I guess what can be done to make that a possible future. I'd love to hear your take on this. So, in what ways is the study of IR still very much kind of colonial?

Dibyesh: Thanks for this, IR is very closely connected – one of the first disciplines of IR was Journal of Race Development because that was the first journal of international, the journal of race development. At the heart of IR lies the idea of race, and race development. It's not how to develop the white race, by the way, just how to develop the undeveloped races, which you know is the non-white race. There's a hundred years of it, 110 years ago. But that journal then became re-named — there was a clear civilising mission in IR and that journal got renamed as National Interest for Foreign Affairs, over time, and there has been a conscious erasure within IR as a discipline of its own complicity with racism and empire. So, most schools of IR think that IR's origin is in terms of great wars between European states, practically, the US and Japan and the European states, First World War, Second World War, realism, liberalism. But if you ask "But where did *empire* fit in?" they say, no, that's not relevant – it's about these strong, powerful, independent states. But at the heart of the matter of IR lies how to civilise the rest of the world. So, for me, therefore, decolonising IR would involve acknowledging those groups of the roots of international relations and its roots in empire, and then looking at the ways in which that history of empire and imperialism and complicity got erased and written over, and why, and who benefited from

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it, and, third, what are the terms on which non-West becomes part of IR. Two ways: as a playground for the West – and the West includes Russia, Soviet Union, by the way, right – playground for it, so, you know, Cold War playground, or as those that conform to the West. Now, by today, you may say, but, you know, what about the rise of China in particular, and even India – they're not Western powers, [...] they're not empire? I would argue that China is even more Western than West, Western countries, because if you look at the ideas of Western IR that included sovereignty, statehood, non-interference, at the heart of the idea of International Relations lies the idea that the state is sovereign over its own affairs and no one should interfere. That is the Westphalia notion of sovereignty. Today, the US practises it, European states have modified it, but China and India, both, they're the practitioners that think they don't interfere in our internal affairs. So, they're already westernised. While they're not Western, they're westernised. I think we need to acknowledge that part. For me, therefore, decoloniality is not about acknowledging the decline of the West, rise of the non-Western powers, but recognising the constituted role that Western notion of sovereignty and statehood and nationalism, because also its a Western notion [nationalism], played through this universalisation, through colonialism and decolonisation, because decolonisation that took place in the world is not decolonial. Decolonisation is essentially becoming more of the same. So, China is like…France. India is like the UK. And that's what is happening. So, for me, therefore, decoloniality is about acknowledging the constant process through which sections of populations get represented as backward, they're domesticated, they're occupied, they're colonised, and therefore we need to acknowledge the ways in which not only the relation between the states but relations within the states perpetuate inequalities, unfreedoms – so lack of freedoms, "unfreedom", I'm not sure if that's a word or not – unfreedom and dehumanisation.

Kyra: So, linking to, I guess, pedagogy in general, you know, aside from kind of the general things that I think a lot of lecturers do, like diversifying their reading lists and changing the modules that they offer, how else should IR lecturers kind of begin to decolonise their pedagogy?

Dibyesh: For me, again, so we don't know what exactly would work, right, that's one, it's a constant questioning of oneself and truth. It's not about responding to students, it's about engaging with them. So, one way to look at it, reading list is crucial, but, for me, it's not only about getting more non-white names, but also looking at gender. Sexuality might be more difficult, if you understand, but gender because like we might see that in processes of teaching decolonisation will still end up being largely male-dominated in terms of the textbooks, right, and that has to be challenged. What I would understand is to use examples from different parts of the world, maybe ones that make myself uncomfortable, make you – let's say you are a student and I'm your lecturer, make ourselves uncomfortable. You bring examples maybe from Antarctica and I bring examples from Brazil. I don't know much about Brazil, you may not know about Antarctica, but let's do it, see how it functions. So, rather than using typical examples in Europe or certain non-European countries, try to expand. That helps.

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It's also about encouraging students, right, because students are an amazing resource, and getting students to bring examples from other parts of the world. Think of how certain ideas play in their part of the world, if they identify differently, or if – I always say their part of the world or a part of the world they are interested in. You might be interested in, as I said, Antarctica, right? That's fine. Think of the idea of, I don't know, sexuality in terms of Antarctica is difficult, but in Antarctica […]. So, it's largely an experimental way of learning and teaching. That helps. It's about being aware of what movement takes place in the outside world. It's also important.

[…], in my case, I engage a lot with developments in IR, and IR's main body in the world is the International Studies Association. ISA is the main body, and I'm on the committee of…some kind of EDI-related committee of ISA – I think EDI with some other name. And, you know, largely, it's North American dominated, as you can imagine, and "people of colour" is the term that's used, not something else. So I'm part of that, so I also engage with developments taking place in other parts of the world, and I try to bring knowledge I gain from there into here. So, broadly, what I would encourage academics to do is acknowledge our own positionality, our own limitations, learn from others, and realise that, as academics, our role is not to impart knowledge but is to co-produce knowledge with students and others.

Kyra: Yeah. No, I think that's a really good point that you make, and it's actually something that we discuss a lot about with the project – you know, it's about partnership and collaborating and learning and co-producing with each other. So, I'm happy that you've actually said that.

Dibyesh: I think, in my case, for instance, universities constantly talk of [co-production with students easily], right, but in my case, it's largely co-producing with other academics but outside the UK. In fact, I have more networks outside the UK than in the UK, for various reasons, because of my research. I have a certain research profile, so I have interactions. I know about developments in the first world, the fourth world, in terms of Canada… So, for me, it's important to keep that connection because then I can bring back to the students.

Kyra: Yeah, I agree. And I think this ties really well into my final question for you, which is: what is something you'd like to kind of see happen or see develop within higher education in the next 10 years?

Dibyesh: For me…so many things I would like, but if I had to pick up one, it is the idea of education as insurrectional – "insurrectional" means challenging, right? Now, I'm talking insurrection, and you can imagine, in a negative context, that can be seen as sedition, […] insurrection [...] knowledge that is largely conforming. So, you have government, we have a government that's very clear – it's not really a neoliberal government, it's a right-wing neoliberal government of a kind that wants to turn education into not something that's

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empowering but education that converts all students and academics into disciplined workers for the machine. Right? That's [how it is]. For me, in the next 10 years, it's not… We can idealise and decolonise [and] diversify [the] education system – that's going to be a process, never going to be an end-result, right, it's a process. For me, it is something where we acknowledge the role of education, and university higher education in particular, to fight against these [strengths] in society. I'm not talking about [transient] education, I'm talking about [transient] society. What I've found – and it's a disappointing thing – what I've found is universities in the UK are all very weak. The Government say something, the media will say something, that, "Oh, you know, see that pampered lot, academics don't teach much." What…right-wing media, and to an extent liberal media also, […] students versus academics, right? It's […]. […] value for education, and then you ask for value for education, but value for education for you would be something that's a very neoliberal term, and job skills, and then […] produce students who are employable, right? That's… To an extent, I understand, it's important to do it, but it's equally important, if not more important, to acknowledge, partner with students in terms of, in addition to skills that can make you more employable and all of that – that's important – and internationalise, is challenging the system, because if higher education doesn't challenge, who else will challenge? And, therefore, higher – I can tell you, I've been part of the University structure, high, you know, at high level at the University, interacting with other universities as we do, I'm quite disappointed, broadly. Our University is so much better than [many of the others]. I'm disappointed at almost…how to say…passive approach of universities, including academics, and many students, but academics [have more power because they have at least] security of job, […] looking for a job [in effect]. Academics in terms of being passive when the Government says something – they might, at most, tweet about it, maybe write a paper about it, but there's no mobilisation, I guess. For me, […] mobilise academics, students, [at] universities, not only punch whatever our weight is but punch above our weight because we need to do that. If we don't do it, we [are finished].

Kyra: Thank you, Dibyesh. I can't thank you enough, you know, for joining me on this episode of the podcast. You've shared some really insightful knowledge on China as a colonial force and I definitely recommend everyone go and read your article on this, and hopefully, you know, in the next 10 years, we can see this kind of shift in the neoliberal culture that characterises the University and we can see more mobilisation and academics challenging this.

Dibyesh: Thank you so much for it, and [if anyone wishes], follow me on Twitter or Facebook, Dibyesh Anand, […]. I write a lot, I'm in there. […]. Anyway, thank you so much, Kira, for this amazing work – best of luck to you.

Kyra: Thank you so much – see you soon.

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