

The Deoliwallahs



Speaker's Name: Dilip D'Souza

Date: 10th September 2016

Venue: C-308

About the speaker:

Mr. Dilip D'Souza studied EEE at BITS Pilani and then did a MS in CS at Brown University. After several years in software industry, he now writes for a living on political/social issues, travel, mathematics and sport. He has won several fellowships and awards for his writing and has published six books.

The Talk:

The speaker started the talk by describing the Indo-China War of 1962, which was a humiliating defeat for India. India thought it as a betrayal from China and how all this created an outrage among the Indians towards Chinese. And following the war, the amendment of "The Foreigners Law Act" in October, 1962 gave extensive powers to the Indian armed forces against anyone who had any ties with the country we were at war with. Just a little late after this, In November 1962, the armed forces uprooted around 3000 Chinese Indians from their homes and comfortable lives and took them to a confinement camp in Deoli, a town in The Sahara Desert, Rajasthan, which was previously used as a prisoners of war camp by the Britishers during World War II.

Then he went on to talk about the extreme inhuman conditions in which they were made to live in for a time span of up to 5 years. According to one of the person he interviewed, food was a big problem; they were made to eat meat of dog, sparrows and even snakes. Families were just moved from their native places and were put into confinement. And after their release after 5 years they were given no resources, the families had no money, they had no means of income, their prior establishments no longer existed. According to John Wong, another man he interviewed, they lived in their veranda for about 6 months as they were not able to get into their own home, but then gathered some money and managed to start a small restaurant but their standards of living were nowhere close to the way they were before his family's confinement. He also mentioned that 6 doctors were placed onto the train to Deoli, and quoted the saying from one of the doctors he interviewed, "This was nothing like the Nazis, as they put doctors on that train, which shows our humanity".

Then he went on to talk about how the camp is currently used by the CISF. On the website of the CISF, under the history section it is mentioned, "The camp was converted to a detention accommodating 3000 prisoners and was known as the Chinese camp." This information just depicts that it was used to contain prisoners and there was not even a single mention that those prisoners were innocent Indians. This post was later removed by CISF and currently very few people know about this.

The Japanese people in America also suffered the similar fate after the Pearl Harbour attacks which led America into World War II in 1941. American President Ronald Reagan later formally apologised to the Japanese Americans and ensured their safety in the States. On the other hand we have our government not even ready to acknowledge this. In the end he showed a video which had interviews of various detainees who migrated from India to the west after they were released. The video depicted how their and the lives of their families are still affected by this unfortunate incident that took place so many years ago. His is just an initiative to give them what they deserve. A lot more is still to be done.



By Akshath Kapil & Shreyas Srivastava