

Indian Currents

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**INDIA IS NOT ADANI!
ADANI IS NOT INDIA !!**

adani

H HINDENBURG
RESEARCH



CORPORATE CORRUPTION

The Hindenburg report unravels and arrests
the meteoric rise of Adani's business empire



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THE GREAT FALL



It was in September last that India ‘celebrated’ the big news: “Gautam Adani became the world’s third richest person on the Forbes billionaire tracker.” As people with frenzied ‘nationalist pride’ took pleasure in the meteoric rise of a fellow countryman, the shocker came that he has slipped out of the list of the world’s top 10 richest people, and the fall from the top continues day after day; he is reported to be placed at the 21st slot as we go to the Press.

Yet another report says that Mukesh Ambani has replaced him as Asia’s wealthiest person. Adani’s net worth was reported to be around \$124 billion before his nemesis started with the startling report by the US-based Hindenburg research group. This has plummeted to around \$ 84 billion as reports last came in.

One of the main exposures of the report, which triggered Adani’s downfall, is that his business group committed serious ‘malfeasancess’ like the use of offshore investment funds and tainted brokers to boost its share prices and the earnings of the group companies. According to the report, ‘the Indian group had engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades,’ exposing uninterrupted level of corruption. Yet another serious exposure is that Adani has substantial debt which has put the entire group on a ‘precarious financial footing’.

The group’s gross debt in the financial year ending March 31, 2022 rose to 2.2 trillion rupees. In another revelation, the Hong Kong brokerage Credit Lyonnais Securities Asia (CLSA) says that public sector banks hold about 30 percent of the Adani Group’s debt. This should send alarm bells ringing as any threat to the financial base of public sector banks would hit crores of their account holders, putting their hard-earned money at risk.

As is the wont with those in conflict with law, the Adani group too has taken recourse to ‘nationalism’ and ‘national pride’ to wriggle out of the present predicament. It has termed the report ‘a malicious combination of selective misinformation and stale, baseless and discredited allegations.’ Adani considers Hindenburg report as an “attack on India”. It is apparently an attempt to hide behind ‘fake nationalism’; it is nothing but escapism.

The government and the investigating agencies should give no credence to such claims, instead they should try to get to the bottom of the truth so that public trust is not compromised. The global investors will be keenly watching the government’s official response to the Adani episode. What is at stake is the credibility of the nation.

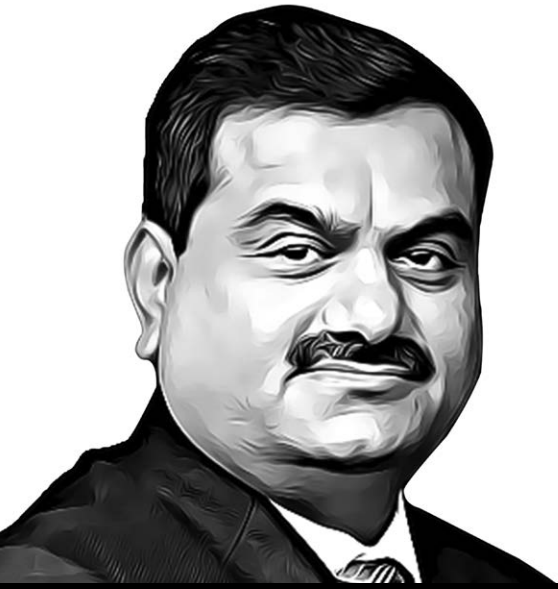
The claims of Adani group will be tested in the coming days, but the fact remains that he has fallen from the pedestal erected in the last few years. His growth has hardly any parallel in the history of independent India. His net worth saw a phenomenal rise in the last one decade or so, especially after the present regime came to power at the Centre. It is an indicator how crony capitalism thrives under a favourable regime. The critics of the recent Oxfam report should take a relook at what it said: “One per cent of population owns as much as 40 per cent of the wealth created in India.”

As always, we would be happy to hear your reviews, comments, and suggestions.
Happy Reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suresh'.

Dr. Suresh Mathew
Editor

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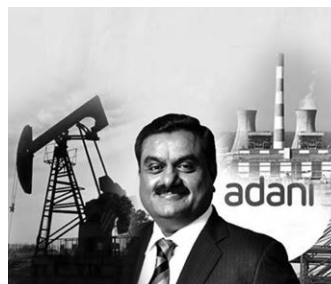


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POWER QUOTES



Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present.

- **Bill Keane**

• • •



You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

- **Abraham Lincoln**

• • •



No matter how busy you are, you must take time to make the other person feel important.

- **Mary Kay Ash**

• • •



Time and tide wait for no man.

- **Geoffrey Chaucer**

• • •



Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.

- **Carl Sandburg**

• • •



All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.

- **William Shakespeare**

• • •



Tough times never last, but tough people do.

- **Robert H. Schuller**

• • •

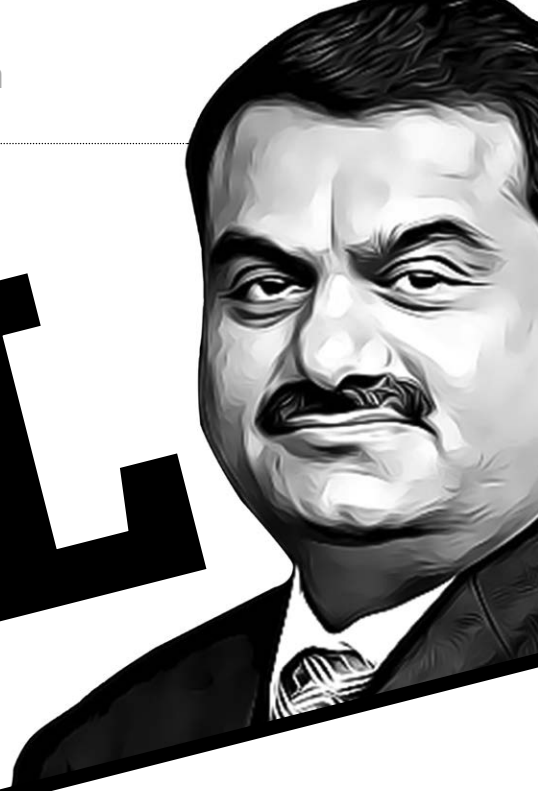


It is strange that the years teach us patience; that the shorter our time, the greater our capacity for waiting.

- **Elizabeth Taylor**

• • •

FREE FALL FOR ADANI



The story of Gautam Adani shows how a corporate house amasses humongous wealth in a short span of time, but faces downfall in no time. The Hindenburg report, which exposed the Adani group, should be an eye-opener for the authorities to act

BY **JASWANT KAUR**



A month ago, a newspaper did an exclusive story on how a college dropout became the third richest man in the world. While narrating his story, Gautam Adani regrets not completing his college education. “I was just 16 years old when I chose to give up my education and move to Mumbai,” he says. “A question I often get is if I have any regrets that I did not go to college. Reflecting on my life and the different turns it took, I – now – do believe that I would have benefited if I had finished college. While my early experiences made me wise, I now realise that formal education rapidly expands one’s knowledge.”

The story presents Adani as a first-generation entrepreneur, who began his journey by learning the trick of assorting diamonds. Going on, he recalls his first deal with a Japanese buyer when he earned a commission of Rs.10,000. By the time he turned 29, he had set up the largest global trading house. “I had

turned 29 and had a full appreciation of the value of two dimensions that would define everything we did – scale and speed,” he said.

The story is certainly inspiring for young budding entrepreneurs. Many might have imagined themselves rocking the world, the Adani way.

In less than a month, another story backed by two years’ research is published. The story speaks about the strategies that were followed by Adani to become the largest trading house or the world’s third richest person. The moment one reads this story, one would have understood what Adani meant by scale and speed!

In another couple of days, we come to know that Adani has been derailed from the list of the world’s top 10 richest people. Does it not sound unimaginable, more particularly when many would have been speculating that he might even grab the top-most position?

The derailing spree does not stop here. Adani Enterprises takes back its follow-on public offer (FPO) despite the fact that it was fully subscribed! The press release issued by the company reveals, “given the unprecedented situation and the current market volatility, the company aims to protect the interest of its investing community by returning the FPO proceeds and withdrawing the completed transaction.”

The statement further mentioned that its “board felt that going ahead with the issue will not be morally correct!” However, the devil was in the details. Only 11 percent of the retail investors picked up the shares earmarked for them. Nearly 50 percent of the shares earmarked for the employees had no takers. In other words, it was a flop show, compelling Adani to call it off.

Now what made him lose his place in the list or how did the market become volatile in a matter of a few days? All this is interestingly revealed in the research report. The report is published by Hindenburg, a US-based research organisation specialising in forensic accounting, after extensive interviews with people who worked with Adani group and after going through thousands of documents and site visits in almost half a dozen countries. It has evidenced how Adani has “amassed a net worth of \$120 billion, adding over \$100 billion in the past three years largely through stock price appreciation in the group’s seven key listed companies, which have spiked an average of 819 percent in that period.”

It also reveals that several offshore shell companies were formed with no employees, addresses, phone numbers or meaningful online presence. Allegedly, these companies have been formed on the directions of Vinod Adani (Gautam Adani’s elder brother) or Adani’s close associates for rotating transactions, hold-



Hindenburg Research founder Nathan Anderson



Courtesy: Satissh Acharya

ing shares in the listed companies of Adani groups etc. The report also shows how the group tried to hide the nature of shell entities by forming various websites, showing only the pictures of the stock with no employees and even using similar “non-sensical services like consumption abroad and commercial presence”. In fact, these shell companies were used for stock manipulation and money laundering through Adani’s private companies onto the balance-sheets of the listed entities, basically to paint a picture of financially sound and healthy companies.

In India, every listed company is under an obligation to disclose the shareholdings of the promoters. At least 25 percent of the shareholdings must be held by the general public. These disclosures are mandatory to curb insider trading and for protecting the interest of the general public. The report says that four of the Adani’s listed companies are on the verge of delisting due to higher concentration of their shareholding with the promoters.

The report shows that many of the offshore entities (read shell companies) hold a major chunk of non-promoter holdings of Adani group’s stock with beneficial ownership, concealing the actual identity under the names of nominee directors. Now who is this hidden beneficiary? Quoting a few conversations, the report says that “it is obvious that Adani controls these shares”. Simply put, in the name of public money, these shares are actually held by these shell/offshore companies for protecting Adani’s interest. The report reveals the names of several

such entities holding shares worth billions of dollars.

Not only this, the report says that the government agencies were investigating four major money laundering cases with an estimated value of \$17 billion in 2004-05. The money was allegedly siphoned off by Adani's family members by creating fake documents, forged papers for import/export to "generate fake or illegitimate turnover to siphon money from the listed companies."

Well, the Adani group issued a 413-page statement refuting the claims of Hindenburg research. The statement says, "this is not merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India, the independence, integrity and quality of Indian institutions, and the growth story and ambition of India". However, this statement did not help Adani to save its stock prices from a free fall. In fact, Adani lost \$22 billion from his personal net worth during the last few days.

The entire episode raises a few questions on the functioning of our institutions which form the backbone of our financial markets, be it the Reserve Bank of India or the Securities Exchange Board of India. The story is not restricted to the Adani group alone. In fact, State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation, which enjoy a lot of faith in the general public, also hold shares in the Adani group and have suffered losses.

While the Hindenburg report restricts itself to the Adani group, this could just be a beginning of reve-



lations. After all, it is not uncommon to hear about shell companies. There might be many more groups or conglomerates following similar methods for exploiting public money. Those who enjoy clout have been exploiting the loopholes in legal provisions to their advantage. Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi are such examples.

Unfortunately, nothing much seems to have changed even after such high-profile frauds. The Hindenburg report should act as an eye-opener. Two weeks have passed since the report was made public. We have not heard a word from our regulators, at least till the time of writing this piece. Unofficial reports have been making rounds that SEBI has stepped up the scrutiny of the conglomerate's transactions.

However, it requires deeper introspection, a closer look at the systemic loopholes and plugging them by suitable legal amendments in the interest of the general public. The regulators must act swiftly to control further damage. The story does remind us about the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s or the global financial crisis of 2007-08.

At a time when India is presiding over G20, it is important to reiterate and reassure the global players and investors that our regulatory framework is nothing but the best and no one can take us for granted. ©

Adani has "amassed a net worth of \$120 billion, adding over \$100 billion in the past three years largely through stock price appreciation in the group's seven key listed companies, which have spiked an average of 819 percent in that period"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ADANI BUBBLE

A RESEARCHED PRICK

BY A.J. PHILIP

In December 2022, when the agitation of the fish workers at Vizhinjam in Kerala was at its peak, I wrote an open letter to Gautam Adani, head of the Adani Group, to include the cost of rehabilitation of those who lost their houses and were living in a miserable condition, in the project cost and win their confidence.

Let me quote from the letter published in this magazine, "If the rehabilitation of the fish workers would cost, say, Rs 50 crore or Rs 100 crore, please include it in the project cost. Nobody would object. If each displaced farmer gets a plot of land where he can build a permanent house, not far from the sea, he would be more than happy to withdraw the agitation".

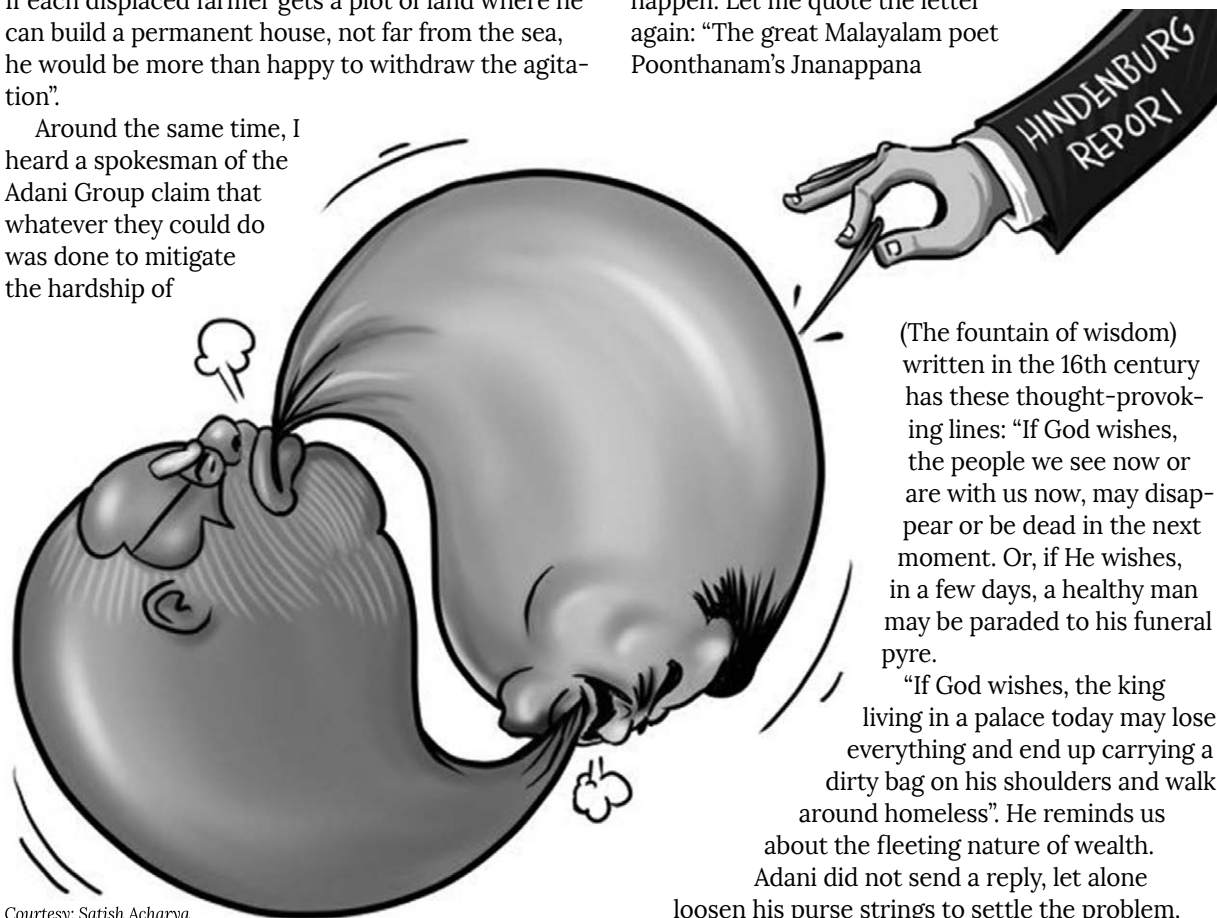
Around the same time, I heard a spokesman of the Adani Group claim that whatever they could do was done to mitigate the hardship of



the people affected and nothing more could be done. He specifically mentioned the number of laptops distributed under the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

When I heard him, I remembered the video of a mother standing before an open toilet to let her daughter have some privacy as she eased herself. Could the laptop have given her privacy? I concluded my letter requesting him to be generous to the poor fish workers of Vizhinjam.

Before that, I also warned him of what could happen. Let me quote the letter again: "The great Malayalam poet Poonthanam's Jnanappana



(The fountain of wisdom) written in the 16th century has these thought-provoking lines: "If God wishes, the people we see now or are with us now, may disappear or be dead in the next moment. Or, if He wishes, in a few days, a healthy man may be paraded to his funeral pyre.

"If God wishes, the king living in a palace today may lose everything and end up carrying a dirty bag on his shoulders and walk around homeless". He reminds us about the fleeting nature of wealth. Adani did not send a reply, let alone loosen his purse strings to settle the problem.

Courtesy: Satish Acharya

Instead, with the help of the police, he allowed the agitation to be suppressed.

Not even two months have passed since I wrote that letter. At that time, Gautam Adani was the richest man in India, nay Asia. He was the third richest person in the world. He used to create wealth at the rate of Rs 1,612 crore per day to outpace Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

During the last few days, Adani has lost billions of rupees. At the rate at which the value of the shares of Adani Enterprises and other Adani companies has been plummeting, one really wonders whether it is the beginning of the end of the Adani business saga. After all, it was a small boy David who felled the giant Goliath.

What pricked the bubble of Adani is a report published by Hindenburg Research, a small company in the US. When the report was released, the mainstream media in India did not think it merited detailed coverage. Adani, who believed that money could cover up his “sins”, produced multiple-page advertisements in major Indian newspapers to suggest that everything was hunky-dory with his companies.

Any sensible and sensitive person would have called off the Rs 20,000-crore Follow on Public Offer (FPO), given the doubts created in the public mind by the Hindenburg Research (HR). The strategy now in vogue in the political and business fields is to coun-

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ter truth with greater and greater falsehood.

The voluminous rejoinder the Adani Group produced to counter the HR report was like the 5,000-page chargesheet filed against Siddiqui Kappan, which reminded me of Shakespeare’s famous line, “sound and fury signify nothing”. Adani was confident that with the support of the business empire he has created and with the help of those in power, he would be able to brazen out. That is why he persisted with the FPO.

The public relations team was at its best when it claimed that the FPO was oversubscribed. Yes, institutional investors did not disappoint him. But



retail investors for whom half the FPO shares were earmarked did not show any interest. Only 11 percent of the earmarked shares were lifted by them. Nearly 50 percent of the shares earmarked for the employees also remained unsold. They knew the company better!

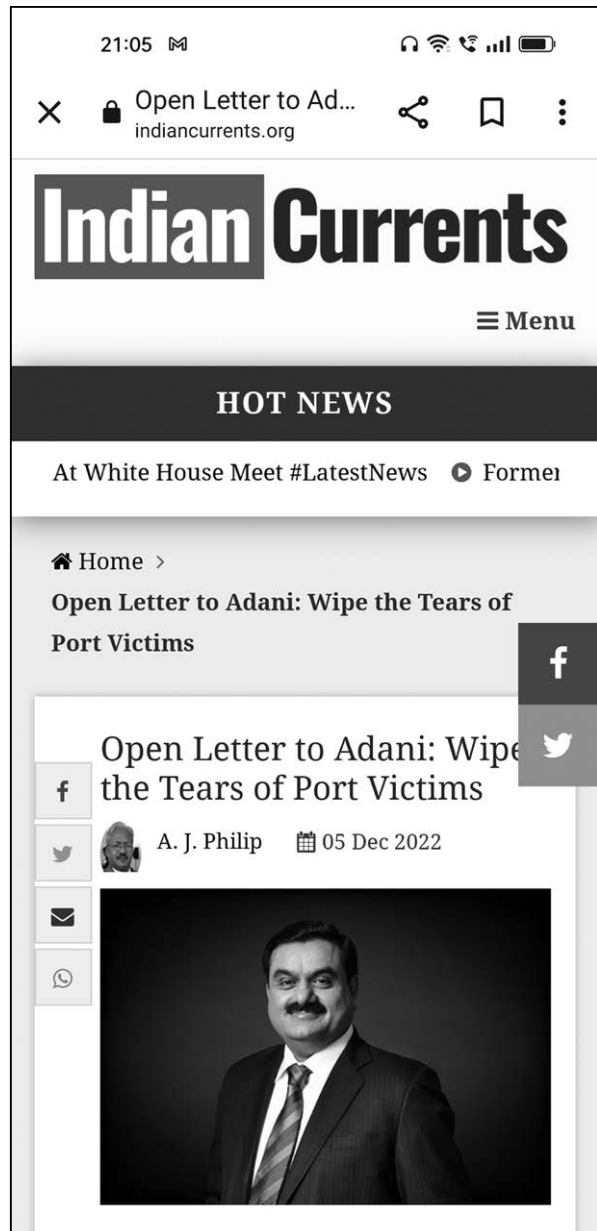
In other words, it was a flop show. And that is why the company was forced to declare that it would return the money of all those who invested in the FPO. It is a major setback to the whole Adani Group.

What the Hindenburg Research said was that Adani built his empire using all devious means. Let me explain it in simple terms. Suppose I buy an acre of land for Rs 1 lakh. After that, I spread the news that there are gold deposits in the land. Nobody can check the land as tight security is arranged. Then I decide to sell 60 cents of the land at Rs 1 lakh each. I get Rs 60 lakh which is 60 times my investment, while 40 cents of land still remain with me. I use Rs 60 lakh to rope in more investors and my asset doubles, triples and quadruples.

Adani became famous in 2014 when he made available his fully-fuelled helicopter at the service of Narendra Modi. Every day, the chopper would take off from Ahmedabad carrying Modi and his tiffin to one of the states where he would campaign that day. He would return home the same day.

It was in Adani's aircraft that Modi came to Delhi to be sworn in as the Prime Minister of India. Adani accompanied Modi whenever he went on a foreign trip. Everybody who mattered in the country knew his close connections with the Prime Minister, which came to his help as he expanded his business

When the world's largest consignment of drugs passed through his port in Gujarat, nobody blamed the owners of the port. It was also revealed that a similar consignment had already been cleared. Nobody knows who funded the import of such a large quantity of drugs. The point is that they remain at large



network both within and without the country. Soon, he got mega projects like seaports and airports.

When the world's largest consignment of drugs passed through his port in Gujarat, nobody blamed the owners of the port. It was also revealed that a similar consignment had already been cleared. Nobody knows who funded the import of such a large quantity of drugs. The point is that they remain at large.

Was Adani a great entrepreneur? Take the case of Steve Jobs, who founded Apple Incorporated.



speculation and made another Rs 1000. In fact, almost all the Indian industrialists are not entrepreneurs but traders who cannot succeed except by bluffing the government.

What Hindenburg Research accused Adani of doing is what an American company Enron did. The American investigative and legal system acted

He developed a prototype of a computer and set up a company to manufacture it. Later, he added new products like iPhone, iPad, iPod to make his company the world's most valuable. Similarly, Jeff Bezos found a new way of selling books. He also introduced a device called Kindle.

Soon, Bezos became an industrialist and acquired the skills to operate at a global level. Ford was America's greatest-ever industrialist. He developed a car and began selling it to become the world's greatest industrialist. In the case of Adani, nothing of the sort happened.

He did not even complete his college education and went to Mumbai. There, he became a trader, who would buy something for Rs 100 and sell it for Rs 400 to earn Rs 300. He realised that he was successful when he made his first Rs 1 lakh. Thereafter, there was nothing to stop him. He was essentially a trader, who stepped into the manufacturing sector. By then, he had learnt how to manipulate the share market.

Why single out Adani? I have read BM Birla's biography where it is mentioned that when he turned 18, he was given a gift of Rs 1000 by his father GD Birla. He did not spend the money on clothes or other items. Instead, he used it for

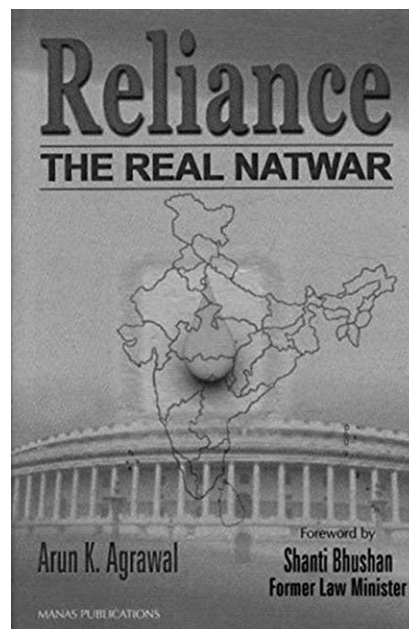
swiftly without caring for the company and the persons involved. Before its bankruptcy in late 2001, it employed around 21,000 people and was one of the world's leading electricity, natural gas, pulp and paper and communication companies with a claimed revenue of \$111 billion in 2000. Fortune named Enron "America's most innovative company" for six consecutive years.

It achieved infamy at the end of 2001 when it was revealed that its reported financial condition was sustained mostly by institutionalised, systematic and

creatively planned accounting fraud. Enron has since become a popular symbol of willful corporate fraud and corruption. Kenneth Lay, its former chairman, died of a heart attack while he was on trial and Jeffrey Skilling, its chief operating officer, was given 24 years of imprisonment. It also led to the collapse of World.com, a bigger firm than Enron.

The American government followed the principle, emanating from the Malayalam saying, that those who eat salt should drink water. In other words, the more severe the crime, the more severe the punishment.

Recently, India lost a great





Courtesy: Sorit

lawyer in the death of Shanti Bhushan, who was also a Union Minister. He wrote the Foreword for the book titled 'Reliance, The Real Natwar' by Arun K. Agrawal (Manas). Let me quote a few lines from the author's Preface:

"The plain truth of the matter is that Reliance has become the largest company in India and its owner the richest man in the country the old-fashioned way: Financial engineering involving the conversion of debt into equity, the propping up of its own shares to public institutions, issuing shares of new companies at premium to the public and then merging the companies, allotting shares to the promoters to increase their stake, avoiding taxes, managing a company-friendly tax regime and, of course, the oil bonanza handed over to it by the government.

"Inevitably, in just 30 years, its turnover has grown from approximately Rs.100 crore to over Rs 1 lakh crore". This book was published in 2008 but

No Indian businessman sinks his own money in any project. It is all public money that is sunk. But once the profits start flowing, the owners do not part with it

his own money in any project. It is all public money that is sunk. But once the profits start flowing, the owners do not part with it.

Today, Reliance makes most of its money from petroleum. It is believed that all the wealth under the earth belongs to the people of India. Then, how did Reliance get the oil wells? It was the late Captain Satish Sharma who, as the Petroleum Minister, handed over the oil fields to receive pecuniary benefits, as found out by the CBI.

Most corporates in India believe in the theory, as propounded by Lord Byron in a poem, that everybody has a price. The poet concludes his poem in these words, "The most by ready cash – but all have prices, from crowns to kicks, according to their vices".

Small wonder that a wisecrack said that if Gautam Adani knew that Hindenburg Research could hit him so hard, he would have offered a price and bought it like NDTV he bought, certainly not for the profit it made but to end a nuisance. Even now it is not too late for him to remember the seven deadly sins identified by Mahatma Gandhi – wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, science without humanity, religion without sacrifice and politics without principles. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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what it says about Reliance reads like a summary of the Hindenburg Research report about the Adani Group.

One cartoon that became viral on social media showed Adani approaching the State Bank of India for a loan to purchase the bank. When the Vizhinjam port in Kerala was successfully bid by Adani, many would have thought that he would pump in his own money. The fact of the matter is that no Indian businessman sinks

Corporate Corruption

The Hindenburg report on Adani's business empire is an eye-opener. It is a pointer to the waywardness of corporate houses

BY **M.L. SATYAN**

The whole world knows that Gautam Adani's growth during the past nine years has been unimaginable. His sudden growth has been a "mystery". Now this mystery has been unfolded by Hindenburg Research. In Tamil there is a saying: "Pala naal thirudan, oru naal agapaduvaan" which means "a thief who steals regularly for a long time will be caught one day".

The report has fired back at Adani Group, saying that the Indian conglomerate has been "systematically looting the nation" despite claiming to act in the country's best interests. "The Adani Group has attempted to conflate its meteoric rise and the wealth of its chairman, Gautam Adani, with the success of India itself," Hindenburg said. The report further says, "To be clear, we believe India is a vibrant democracy and an emerging superpower with an exciting future. We also believe India's future is being held back by the Adani Group, which has draped itself in the Indian flag while systematically looting the nation. The Indian group had engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades."

Hindenburg said its report was based on two years of investigation. Since the release of the report, the Adani Group has rejected Hindenburg's claims.



The US-based financial research firm has rebutted the 413-page Adani's response to its report. It sticks to its stand that the Adani Group has given vague answers to 68 of the 88 questions that it raised.

Due to the report by the New York firm, Adani Group lost more than USD 50 billion

in market value in just two trading sessions and it continues to lose over USD 20 billion, or about one-fifth of his total fortune. Between January 24 and January 31 there has been a steep decline in Adani Group Shares. The change in Adani Total Gas is minus 46%; Adani Enterprises is minus 14%; Adani Transmission is minus 36%; Adani Green Energy is minus 36%; Adani Ports & SEZ is minus 19%; Adani Power is minus 19%; Ambuja Cements is minus 20%; Adani Wilmar is minus 19%; ACC is minus 15%; and NDTV is minus 13%.

"Obviously, this is panic-selling," JM Financials equity research chief Ashish Chaturmohta told AFP, adding that traders were creating new short-sell positions to protect earlier bullish bets on Adani stocks. Hindenburg Research said in its report that Adani Group had used undisclosed related-party transactions and earnings manipulation to "maintain the appearance of financial health and solvency" of its listed business units.

Adani Group dismissed the report as baseless and that it was the victim of a "maliciously mischievous" reputational attack by Hindenburg. Legal chief Jatin Jalundhwala said Adani was exploring taking legal action against the New York-based research advisory in the US and Indian courts.

Hindenburg responded that Adani had ducked the



Courtesy: Satish Acharya

The Indian group had engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades

issues its research had raised and instead resorted to “bluster and threats”. “If Adani is serious, it should also file suit in the US,” the firm said in a statement. “We have a long list of documents we would demand in a legal discovery process.”

The report said a pattern of “government leniency towards the group” stretching back decades had left investors, journalists, citizens and politicians unwilling to challenge the group’s conduct “for fear of reprisal”.

“The signal is that because the Adani brothers are very close to the powers that be today, therefore nobody would challenge them,” said Economist Arun Kumar. “Those who earlier criticised Adani, those

profit-yielding public companies. It is said that Adani was somewhere between 600 and 700 in the list of world’s rich people in 2000. It is only during the past nine years he has suddenly grown and reached the third position and the main credit goes to Modi-Shah. Now he is pushed to the seventh position due to Hindenburg. It is to be noted that the Indian government on at least three occasions revised laws apparently to help his coal businesses, saving him at least \$1 billion. Critics such as Adani Watch, an Australian-based non-profit, said Hindenburg allegations, if proved true, “are just another example of what happens when crony capitalism and regime favouritism create a perceived culture of impunity.”

Adani’s net worth has grown rapidly, from \$9 billion in 2020 to \$127 billion in December 2022, during a broader boom in Indian capital markets

who tried to do some investigation, Adani group launched legal cases against them, so they have scared off a lot of people,” he added.

Adani had a humble beginning. Born to a textile merchant in the western state of Gujarat, Adani spent his early career as a small-time plastics trader who travelled by scooter. His big break came after India began liberalizing its economy in the early 1990s, and he was tasked with developing a deep-water port at Mundra, which now hosts the largest commercial port in the country. From there, his company expanded swiftly into infrastructure, logistics and energy, with coal-related businesses fuelling his rise.

Adani’s net worth has grown rapidly, from \$9 billion in 2020 to \$127 billion in December 2022, during a broader boom in Indian capital markets. Coal remains at the heart of his empire, and he is the largest private developer of coal power plants and mines in the world, according to Global Energy Monitor. More than 60 percent of his holding company’s revenue was derived from coal-related business, *The Washington Post* reported in December 2022.

It is an open secret that Modi-Shah duo has been “extraordinarily generous” to Adani in giving him the



The allegations bring into doubt the integrity of Indian capital markets, said Andy Mukherjee, an Indian economics commentator who writes for Bloomberg Opinion. The case has also raised questions about the amounts that India’s public-sector banks have lent to Adani. Public-sector banks hold about 30 percent of the Adani Group’s debt, according to Hong Kong brokerage Credit Lyonnais Securities Asia (CLSA).

Adani considers Hindenburg report as an “attack on India”. We should raise certain questions: Does India mean only Adani? Why should Adani suddenly hide under the carpet of patriotism? Is this not an escapism? When will the corporate corruption end in India? Let us arise, awake, think and act. ©

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Dreaming Utopia

When the country's economic situation is down in the dumps, and the poor become poorer, the top leadership is talking of targets which have no relevance to the ground reality

BY **MATHEW JOHN**

The man who is a pessimist before 48 knows too much; if he is an optimist after it, he knows too little – Mark Twain

I'm a pessimist because of intelligence and an optimist because of will – Antonio Gramsci

In our world of splenetic sensibilities and incurable ideological inflexibility, my most recent essay on the Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY) and its doughty challenge to an authoritarian regime has expectedly elicited a hostile response. As happens to any hack, I have copped reactions that have ranged from the dismissive (*“hope this is his last foray into writing on politics which he knows nothing about”*) to the downright venomous (*“the writer could be behind bars as happened in some countries recently. Being a minority doesn't give an unfettered right of majority bashing!”* – Apart from hoping for my arrest for hate speech, my worthy senior equates criticism of



this regime to majority bashing!) Then there was the terse putdown: (*“Congress chamcha!”*) and the irrefutable reminders of my repeated failures in political soothsaying (*“You've never got things right, so shut up!”*).

In contrast, quite a few kindly folk have commended me, sadly not for my way with words or inventive thinking but for exuding hope for the future, which they see as a refreshing departure from my characteristic pessimism. They have clearly magnified my tentative hopefulness about the BJY and its prospects.

The brute reality is that, amidst a deepening gloom, I see in the BJY a sliver of hope in what is an unequal David versus Goliath showdown, but so equally desperate for good cheer are these kindred souls that they too are clutching at straws against the saffron whirlwind. And why not?

These well-wishers have reminded me that life

and the future should be faced with hope rather than be mired in fear or pessimism. Besides, constantly peering over my shoulder is my sociology professor mentor, urging me to push back against cynicism because only then good things can happen. Hence, I have decided to take a stab at positive thinking with this disquisition on the perfect world – Utopia.

Endorsing my choice is the wag who declaimed that “anybody who is not a utopian is a schmuck!” I'm not so sure that a dotard, visualizing a better world, will break the darkness, but then there's no harm in dreaming. So here goes!

Etymologically, “Utopia” – first manifest as the title of a fictional work by Sir Thomas More – is forged from the Greek terms



“ou-topos” meaning ‘nowhere’ and ‘eu-topos’ which translates as ‘a good place’. Sir More coined the term to define the perfect, ideal society free of poverty, suffering or conflict, with communal ownership, complete religious toleration and no lawyers because of the simplicity of the laws. Over time, the term “Utopia” has not only engendered critiques on what such a putatively perfect world be like to live in but has also invoked a range of interpretations on what it signifies. But more on that some other time.

Significantly, the original architect of “Utopia”, Thomas More was also a politician, elected to the English Parliament at the age of 26, later Lord High Chancellor to King Henry VIII, who was ultimately convicted of treason and executed for his principled stand of opposing the Protestant Reformation and for refusing to acknowledge the authoritarian Henry as the Supreme Head of the Church of England. The statesman was willing to sacrifice his life for his principles, so unlike our present-day political class who would sell their souls for self-preservation or power.

The politician today also builds utopias but of a different kind from the pure fiction conceived by Thomas More. While every one of us at some time dreams of the perfect world, our personal Utopia, the political creature goes one better and routinely draws up paradigms of a utopia that is just round the corner, though we never get there. The utopias that our current breed of politicians construct are best defined as ‘castles in the air’ which they fabricate to beguile their constituents. These cock and bull utopias are advertised in election speeches, in party manifestos, on the floor of Parliament and from the ramparts of the Red Fort. And a gullible populace is beguiled!

The consummate purveyor of the most expansive utopian promises to his people is indubitably our very own Vishwaguru. He has conceived of the perfect blueprint for a resurgent India based predominantly on bluster. In 2018, he thunderously announced to the Indian diaspora in the US that the 21st Century is India’s. He has already taken fulsome credit for making the country Open Defecation Free (So what if bare bottoms still dot the landscape in countless endemically water-scarce, sanitation-challenged areas?), and providing electric connections in every home in the country (So what if this boast is far from true?). And a gullible population laps it up.



One cannot help admiring the audacity of our Vishwaguru in making promises that are fantastic. What’s even more stunning, an adoring populace seems satisfied that the Vishwaguru has the best intentions for his people and it’s no big deal if his promises do not materialize; what is of the essence is that he cares.

As proof of his altruism, there is the unblushing self-promotion of the PM CARES FUND that is funded by private individuals and organizations to provide relief in any kind of emergency or calamity, the funds of which he controls and for which largesse he garners all the credit. In periodic flights of fancy, the Vishwaguru has promised to put Rs 15 lakhs into every bank account, to double farmers’ income, to provide houses to all by 2022, to bring back black money, to provide crores of jobs, to root out corruption and nepotism. So, what if they are largely figments of the Vishwaguru’s munificent imagination!

Reality and truth have a nasty way of knocking you down when you are desperately looking for positives. The latest Oxfam report “Survival of the Richest: the India Story” released this January has dampened our hopes of a better tomorrow. A regime that claims to be working for the poor has actively fostered an environment where the number of billionaires has increased from 102 in 2020 to 168 in 2022, even as our country today has the world’s highest number of poor at 228.9 million. The top one percent own nearly 40.6 percent of the total wealth in India, actively abetted by a government

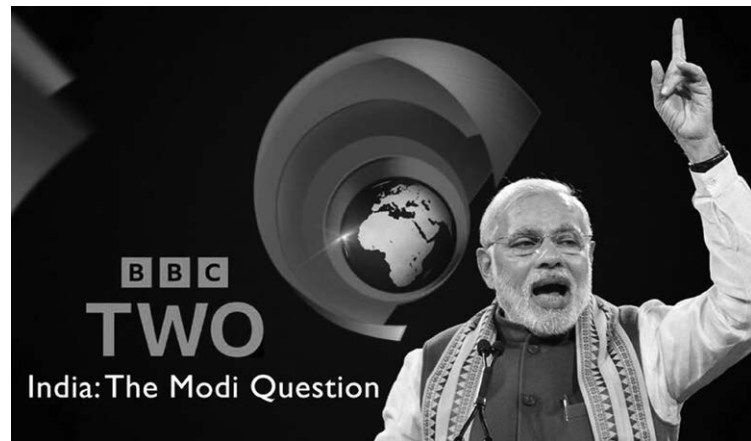
that reduced the corporate tax slabs in 2019 from 30 percent to 22 and 15 percent. In a country that has drifted far from its moral moorings, this government is flagrantly punishing the poor by hiking the GST and excise duties on fuel, and taxing everything, even what the poor man buys for his survival. This is no country for the poor!

But I digress. Having resolved to stay positive, the least I can do is to end on a positive note. Inspired by Victor Hugo's counsel, "If you don't build castles in the air, you won't build anything on the ground", I've drawn up a blueprint for transforming my beloved country into a utopia. Out of an inexhaustible list, here are my most desired, craved-for castles in the air:

- Poverty is eradicated; India has a \$8 trillion GDP.
- Fraternity and peace reign.
- Religion is banned from the public square.
- Men respect women.
- The institutions of governance recover their democratic spirit.
- India and Pakistan become blood brothers once again.
- China returns our territory, and there is peaceful co-existence.
- Finally, from a purely personal standpoint, my dear spouse and best friend lives up to the assessment made in her school report card: "Obedient and soft-spoken."

The depressing paradox of visualizing such a perfect world is that it is mere bootless speculation. But hang on. More's Utopia set the greatest store on justice and the rule of law as fundamental to an ideal society. Although in the last few years injustice has reigned like never before in our benighted land, aided by the break down of institutions and the complicit silence of the educated, there has now emerged, out of nowhere, a ripple of hope for justice on account of happenings over the last couple of weeks which most certainly have disheartened the Vishwaguru and his cabal.

I refer to the BBC documentary on the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, which a guilt-ridden government tried to block to no avail, and the Hindenburg expose of the biggest financial and stock market scam ever, which makes the shenanigans of Harshad Mehta, Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya and others look like school-boy pranks. Significantly, both these scoops are "foreign conspiracies", which raise legitimate questions about the impartiality of our institutions, the



integrity of the law-enforcement agencies, the calibre of our investigative journalism and the shrinking of our democracy.

On the issue of democracy, one is beholden to the patriarch, L.K. Advani, for delivering a sharp rap on the knuckles of Vice-President Dhankar and the non-entity, Kiren Rijiju for their uneducated comments on the Basic Structure doctrine of the Constitution.

Suddenly, this all-powerful regime seems vulnerable, evident from its conciliatory tone of late. In contrast to the usual majoritarian braggadocio and brute power politics, the PM asked the party cadres to reach out to the minorities, offered a Chadar to the Ajmer Sharif dargah, warned against making "unnecessary remarks" on films, and got the President to wax eloquent about our Constitution and secular ethos in her Republic Day address to the nation. These spurious acts of goodwill betray an uncharacteristic edginess that has possibly been accentuated by intimations of the Adani Groups' crimes, which are only beginning to unravel.

The Adani's humongous corporate fraud threatens to lay bare the systemic corruption, cronyism and subversion of normal commercial rules engineered by this government. Cynics believe that this scandal will get blown away like the infamous Pegasus snooping and Rafale deal because of the sheer might of the criminals involved. But a little voice tells me that in a country that for too long has been on the side of the oppressor, the worm has turned, and retributive justice is at hand! "Even the darkest night will end, and the sun will rise" (Les Misérables)! ©

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Budget Hits Minorities Hard

Allocation of funds for several schemes meant for the welfare of the Minorities has been drastically slashed; the cut amounts to over 90 % in some cases

BY **MANOJ VARGHESE**

The budgetary allocation for Minorities has been slashed from Rs 5,020.50 crore last year to Rs 3,097.60 crore for the upcoming year. It is a dip of over 38 per cent from the last financial year. Owing to several stern measures, and cut in welfare schemes, the revised estimate for the last fiscal was Rs 2,612.66 crore, which indicates an underutilisation of over 47.96 per cent.

Almost 50% cut has been incurred in the special schemes for minorities which includes research, studies, publicity, monitoring and evaluation of development schemes. The Madrasas have been allocated only Rs 10 crore for the financial year 2023-24. The same is 93% less than the Budget allocation of 2022-23, which was Rs 160 crore. Only time will reveal if it was intentional or a compulsion?

Former Cabinet Minister Subramanian Swamy makes a revealing statement by asking, 'Is this a budget?' He further tweeted: "It is a grocery store shopkeeper's bill – A decent budget should disclose what are the objectives. If it is GDP growth rate then disclose the level of investment and rate of return; the priorities, the economic strategy, and resource mobilization."

The total allocation of the Budget for education empowerment for minorities which was Rs 2,515 crore last year is reduced to Rs 1,689 crore this year. In the recent past, the Government has been working hard to 'improvise' upon the welfare schemes for the minorities. The Finance Ministry has discontinued the pre-matric scholarship for minority students for classes I-VIII and restricted it to classes IX and X only, on the pretext of Right to Education (RTE) that provides free education to all till Class VIII.

The budget proposes to have major fund cuts in several scholarships and skill development schemes for students from minority communities. This year only Rs 44 crore has been allotted for such development schemes, against the Budget of Rs 365 crore last year. The funds for the pre-metric scholarship for minorities for the financial year 2023-24 has been brought down by over Rs 900 crore. The scholarship



funds in the last Budget were Rs1,425 crore, which is reduced to Rs 433 crore. However, as a respite, the funds for post-metric scholarship, have been increased from Rs 515 crore to Rs 1,065 crore.

Schemes under the Ministry of Minority Affairs that provides support for students clearing UPSC, SSC, and State public service commission exams has been completely ignored. The Budget for the same was 8 crore last year. Similarly, the free coaching and allied schemes for minorities too saw a Budget cut of around 60%, being earmarked as 30 crore against 79 crore last year.

Skill development training like Nai Manzil, USTAD got a Budget of mere Rs10 lakh, the same was Rs 235 crore and Rs 7 crore last year. The Budget for research schemes for minorities too has been slashed to Rs 20 crore from Rs 41 crore last year. The total funds for various skill development and livelihood schemes were Rs 491 crore in 2022-23 and the same is Rs 64.40 crore this year.

Amidst all those cuts, an amount of Rs 540 crore has been proposed as grants to implement a newly created scheme called Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan, focused on the skilling, entrepreneurship and leadership training requirements of the minority and artisan communities across the country.

The Budget allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV), erstwhile Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) launched in 2008 and restructured in June 2013 is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), with a budget of Rs1,650 crore last year has been reduced to Rs 600 crore this year. The Scheme aims at developing socio-economic infrastructure and basic amenities in the identified Minority Concentration Areas for improving the quality of life of the people in these areas and reduce imbalances as compared to the national average.

Heading towards the Amrit kaal, at the cost of Minorities! ©

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Economic Graph Appalling

Even during the pandemic times, billionaires in India saw their wealth step up by Rs 3,608 crores per day, while the poor became poorer day-by-day

BY **DR M. D. THOMAS**

Oxfam International, the Rights Group, presented its Annual Inequality Report at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on 17 January 2023. The theme of the Forum was 'Cooperation in a fragmented world'.

The India Supplement of the report reads, 'India's richest 1% owns more than 40 % of the total wealth and the bottom 50 % of the population has just 3 %'. On the other hand, 64 % of the GST came from the bottom 50 % of the population and only 3 % from the top 10 %.

The report, titled 'Survival of the Richest', suggested that if the billionaires of India are charged once 2 % of their entire wealth, it would collect some Rs 40,423 crores, which could take care of the malnourished of the country for the coming three years.

The report further recommended taxing the 10 richest billionaires of India a one-time 5 % of their wealth, which amounts to Rs 1.37 lakh crores. This amount can bring more than enough money to get the children who left the school due to want of money back to school.

Furthermore, a one-off tax on unrealized gains from 2017-2021 on just one billionaire, Gautam Adani, could have raised Rs 1.79 lakh crore. This amount



would be sufficient for employing more than five million primary school teachers for a year.

Highlighting the inequality between genders, the report said that female workers earn only 63 paise for every one rupee a male worker earns. Besides, women and

girls make up nearly 60 % of the hungry population of the world and they eat least and last.

Besides, people of the scheduled castes earn roughly 55 % of what the advantaged social groups earn and the rural workers earn only half of the urban earnings. Obviously, inequality at this level is even starker and unrealistic.

The qualitative and quantitative report presented by Oxfam is grounded in reliable sources, like Forbes, Credit Suisse, NSS, Union Budget documents, parliamentary questions, and the like. Those sources give an authentic picture of the reality, manifestly so.

Even during the pandemic times, billionaires in India have seen their wealth step up by Rs 3608 crores per day, i.e., an increase of 121 %. The number of billionaires in India increased from 102 to 166 in 2022, as well. The combined wealth of 100 richest is Rs 54.12 lakh crores, which is equal to the Union budget of India for roughly 18 months.

The poor of the country pay relatively higher

The report, titled 'Survival of the Richest', suggested that if the billionaires of India are charged once 2 % of their entire wealth, it would collect some Rs 40,423 crores, which could take care of the malnourished of the country for the coming three years



taxes and spend more on essential things services. All the same, the marginalized of the country continue to suffer, because 'survival of the richest' is the norm that rules the world, unfortunately so.

The current decade seems to be best for billionaires, who outdo even their wildest dreams. On the other hand, we are witnessing the biggest increase in inequality and poverty on the global level since World War II.

When is it going to be ensured that workers in formal and informal sectors are paid basic minimum wages, which can sustain a living with dignity? When are the multi-millionaires and billionaires of the world coming forward to lift two billion people out of poverty by paying a tax of 5 %?

It is high time the multi-millionaires and billionaires realized that they have no right to enjoy all the money they have amassed, even by right means. The poor of the country has a right to a major share of the riches of the moneyed, because much of the earning is done at the cost of the poor

Progressive measures, like wealth tax and inheritance tax, have to be implemented. Taxing the super-rich has to be a compulsory measure, all over. Such measures are inevitable for strengthening democracy as well as reducing inequality.

Furthermore, taking a closer look at the abject poverty and inequality of our country, some 20 % of the people in India are homeless and they live on pavements, roadsides, railway platforms, staircases, temples, streets, in pipes, under flyovers, and other open spaces.

The slum-dwellers of the world amount to some 15 %, that is to say, over one billion people, which is more than the population of Australia. The percentage goes up to some 20 %, as far as India is concerned. In either case, the enlarged size of the



slums is a proof of the brokenness of the human society, especially in India.

Over and above, millions and millions of people in India are taken to begging, genuine or fake. Fake people among beggars refer to the lawlessness of the country as well as inefficiency of the administration, which has to be sternly treated. Genuine cases require being rehabilitated, as well.

In line with the theme of the World Economic Forum, the economic scenario of the country, along with that of the world, is a clear proof of terrible social fragmentation. This tragic state of affairs has to be responded to by the spirit of cooperation, good will and commitment from all responsible quarters.

It is high time the multi-millionaires and billionaires realized that they have no right to enjoy all the money they have amassed, even by right means. The poor of the country has a right to a major share of the riches of the moneyed, because much of the earning is done at the cost of the poor.

When is the Prime Minister of India, also Prime Ministers and Presidents of the countries concerned for that matter, going to tell the billionaires to home the homeless of India and beyond? When is India going to be a dignified country with all citizens having a house each of their own? This calls for the super-rich taking up humanitarian projects as well as regularly paying their taxes.

Ethics, along with a sense of humanity, demands that good governance be in place, in the entire world in general and in India in particular, in view of equitable levying of taxes, just distribution of resources and rightful means of dignified survival for one and all. The appalling economic graph requires being addressed at the grass root level. ©

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A Message of Inclusion, Pluralism

The participants at the 9th National Peace Convention held at Porbandar, the birth place of Gandhiji, renewed their commitment to the way of the Mahatma - non-violence, peace and unity

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

It is a happy coincidence that the day on which Bharat Jodo Yatra led by the Congress under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi concluded at Srinagar with a clarification call for creating an India of love and harmony, 285 people from 12 states of India renewed their commitment to the way of Mahatma Gandhi -- the way of non-violence, peace and pluralism -- at his birthplace Porbandar at the starting of the 9th National Peace Convention.

Prior to the starting of the convention all participants visited the ancestral house of Mahatma Gandhi where Bapu was born, and prayed for peace while paying homages to the Father of the Nation.

As in the previous years, Gandhiji overshadowed the speeches and deliberations of 9th National Peace Convention. There was no speaker who did not refer to Mahatma Gandhi when they shared their views on peace-building. Ten speeches were fully focused on Mahatma Gandhi and his contribution to peace building. Inclusion, pluralism and non-violence were the prominent themes reverberated during the three



days' deliberations. One of the most attractive sessions was of five students who spoke about different aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to peace.

Besides talks by individuals from different fields, the process of the Peace Convention consisted of value-based songs, dances and group discussion. One-hour Interfaith songs presented by Madusudan Babul and team on 30th January not only educated the participants but also enthralled them.

The participants of the Peace Convention consisted of professionals from various fields, Rotarians, educationists, social activists, principals, teachers and students from 12 states of India. About 40% of the participants were students and teachers. They listened to, reflected and discussed the following themes/topics during the convention.

- Interfaith dialogue and peace building
- Mahatma Gandhi, the harbinger of active citizenship
- Relevance of Gandhian economy today
- Gandhi, science and education
- Role of non-violence in promoting peace according to Mahatma Gandhi
- Unity in diversity, essential for world peace, according to Mahatma Gandhi
- Gandhian concept of Antyodaya and peace-building in the context of today
- Women and peace building from Gandhian perspective
- Mahatma Gandhi, a role model for youth in peace-building
- Gandhi as a leader for peace
- Media assassination of Mahatma Gandhi
- Peace through service
- Peace and Ethics
- Inclusion of the differently-abled for a peaceful society





Main Insights

- Global peace is not possible without interfaith harmony and interfaith harmony is not possible without respecting all religions. Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi taught us by their life and teaching the millennial heritage of India, unity in diversity and *Ekakam sat vipra bahudha vadanti* (“There is only one truth (or true being) and learned persons call it by many names”).
- According to Gandhiji, active citizenship means not only following laws and rules, but also questioning unjust laws, treating rights and duties as two sides to the same coin, to be connected with each other and mother earth, to be responsible in the use of resources, to empower women and to own the country by being responsible to the inclusive development of all citizens.
- It is a natural law that everybody sacrifices something so that others get something; all of us are interdependent. Peace requires being aware of inter-dependence and living accordingly.
- Arms race cannot bring peace, it will only impoverish people of a country by diverting the scarce resources from meeting the basic needs of people, especially those who are at the bottom of the economic pyramid.
- Follow the advice of Gandhiji, think about the last and the least when we take decisions in life and how our decisions are going to affect them.
- Focus on the practice of ethics and values promoted by religions, and not on rituals, in order to prevent religion being hijacked and abused by political and religious leaders.
- Any war is a sin against humanity and using religion for war is doubly sinful and criminal.
- The aggressiveness and hatred that have

increased in Indian society, especially during the last one decade, are diametrically opposed to Gandhian principles and way of life.

- Do justice not only to human beings, but also to other creatures, including animals and birds.
- For Gandhiji, truth is God and he was bold enough to make experiments in almost all aspects of life in search of truth.
- Service to the needy involves humility, sharing from what one has and not from the abundance and respecting the dignity of all human beings.
- Communicate, connect, and collaborate for sustainable peace through caring for the earth and sharing one’s resources with others, especially the needy.
- Peace is not the absence of conflicts, but the ability to cope with conflicts. Let collaboration defeat competition in order to create a peaceful world.
- Non-violence is the strongest weapon to fight the mightiest and it is intimately related to secularism or pluralism. Live and let live is the basis of non-violence.
- We, the human beings, have no right to violate the God-given law of diversity and impose uniformity.
- For the all-around development of the country gender equality by empowering women is essential. By excluding women from community decision-making, we are losing fifty percent of the intellectual and moral wealth of the nation.
- Gandhiji became a leader of peace by fighting against evil without hating the doer of the evil, giving equal importance to means and the ends and above all by adopting non-violent means to fight against the mighty British empire.
- All over the world journalists are being killed, freedom of expression is curtailed and democracy is being destroyed. In the context of India, Mahatma Gandhi is being killed and his thoughts are being mutilated by the mainstream media and social media. Respond to this situation by boycotting all types of Media that spread wrong information and hate messages and division. Promote, subscribe and support the media that stands for truth, integrity and unity in diversity.

Action Plan

In the light of various talks, deliberations and discussions in different groups like Rotarians, teachers and principals, students and social workers, the participants have made the following action plans. These



are the commitments that they have made to themselves.

1. One-day peace conferences will be organized in collaboration with different organizations at Porbandar, Bangalore, Varanasi, Nandurbar in Maharashtra, Trichur in Kerala, Mumbai, Nasik, Dule in Maharashtra, Rourkela, and Veraval in Gujarat.
2. Peace rally will be organized on October 2 and peace awards will be instituted by Rotary Clubs, schools and other civil society organizations.
3. In order to inculcate in students respect for other faiths, they will be taken for exposure visits to different religious places like temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras etc.
4. In view of educating students about the Gandhian way, schools will organize quiz competitions on Mahatma Gandhi to which students from neighbouring educational institutions will be invited.
5. In order to educate students, the Gandhian way of forgiveness, movies with the theme of forgiveness will be shown to the students; slogan writing competitions will be organized and students will be encouraged to read the autobiography and other writings of Mahatma Gandhi.
6. Peace education in schools will be promoted through discussion on case studies where students will have to make a choice between violent means and non-violent means, conducting meditation and encouraging students to make love offering to support the poor and the needy.
7. In order to inculcate in students the core Indian Constitutional values, teachers will be organ-

izing inter-religious programmes, encouraging students to speak on the core constitutional values during the school assembly, and giving appreciation cards to students who practice the constitutional values.

8. Students have taken a resolution that social media platforms will be used to send messages of love, peace and harmony. They will neither send nor forward hate messages, and social media will be used for encouraging inter-religious collaboration. Short videos on great leaders will be made and circulated. Authenticity of messages on social media will be checked by referring to authentic sources, instead of believing them blindly.
9. Inter-religious prayer will be organized in schools and other institutions on important festivals of different religions.
10. Students will conduct peace assemblies, organize peace campaigns, listen to peace songs and promote the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.
11. Professionals like doctors, teachers and engineers will be motivated to support the poor and the needy by providing their services at a very concessional rate or free of charge.
12. NGO members among the participants will do advocacy for policy changes by the government in favour of the poor, for reducing allocation on purchase of arms and ammunitions, for stopping privatization of essential services needed for the common people.

For the 285 delegates travelling from 12 States to Porbandar, the convention was a *tapasya* for the sake of peace. It was a symbolic expression of their conviction that the way shown by Bapu is most relevant today when the world and India are being divided on account of prejudice, hatred and violence. After taking inspiration and strength from Bapu and drawing many insights and creative ideas from listening to many enlightened persons and preparing action plans, participants have gone back to their respective places with great desire to become peace-builders and ambassadors of peace. They have committed themselves to implement the action plan they have prepared. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Central Government against transfer of petitions on anti-conversion laws

The Central government has objected to petitions challenging the anti-conversion laws enacted by states being moved to the Supreme Court for a uniform hearing.

Attorney General R. Venkataramani told a bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Jan. 30 that the government has “serious objections” to transferring the 21 petitions pending in the high courts of six states.

“These are state legislation. The state high courts must hear these matters,” Venkataramani argued.

Eleven Indian states have enacted anti-conversion laws aimed at curbing change of religion by individuals or groups through allurement, force, coercion or any other fraudulent means.

Christian and Muslim leaders say these laws target their people and violate the religious freedom guaranteed in the Indian constitution.

Critics say these laws violate the freedom guaranteed in the constitution to profess, preach and propagate any religion of choice to all its citizens.

Petitioners argued that these laws have a “chilling effect” on the right to profess and propagate one’s religion, enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Petitions challenging the constitutional validity of these laws are pending in the states of Himachal

Eleven Indian states have enacted anti-conversion laws aimed at curbing change of religion by individuals or groups through allurement, force, coercion or any other fraudulent means

Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Karnataka

The petitioners in the Supreme Court wanted laws in five states – Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh – to be declared unconstitutional for disregarding the personal liberty of an individual to adopt another faith. One of the petitioners, a Muslim organization named Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, wanted all the state cases against the laws to be transferred to the Supreme Court.

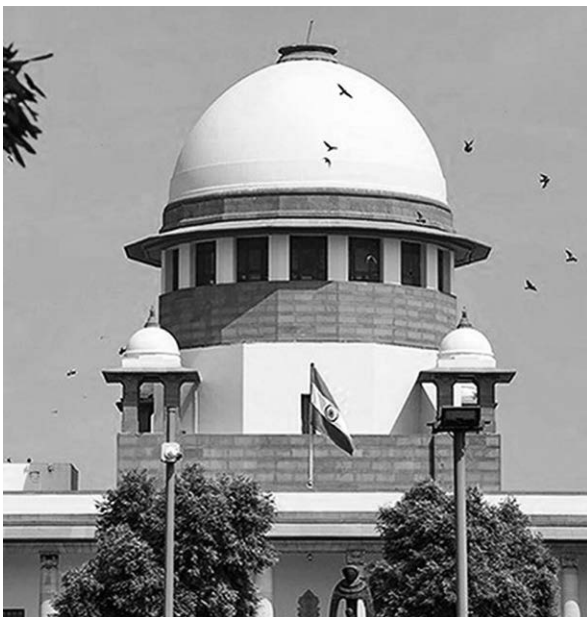
Citizens for Justice and Peace, a rights organization too had sought the transfer of all such cases pending in high courts. The National Federation of Women has filed a separate petition seeking to know the ill effects of anti-conversion laws on women.

The Supreme Court is also hearing appeals filed by the Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh governments against stay orders on certain provisions in their anti-conversion laws by high courts of the respective states. The Supreme Court bench said that all the petitions and arguments relating to the issue will be listed for hearing on Feb. 3.

Most anti-conversion laws require a person proposing to convert or a priest ministering conversion to seek prior permission from the local district magistrate.

The laws also place on the accused the burden of proving that they have not violated the provisions of the law. Besides Christian missionary works in the field of education and health care could be easily construed as allurement, force or fraudulent means to convert the poor. ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)



Shocking Security Breach

The incident of a policeman firing at an Odisha Minister should be a wake-up call to take a close look at the work-related uneasiness among the police force

BY **AARTI**

It is shocking that Odisha's richest senior Biju Janata Dal leader-cum-Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das was fatally shot at from point-blank range by an on-duty policeman at Brajrajnagar in Jharsuguda District. The incident that occurred on 29 January in broad day light clearly exposes the horrifying breach of VVIP security procedure.

Mr Naba, elected thrice to Odisha Assembly, owned business in mining transport sector. Known for his organisational skills in political circles, he was on the way to address a public meeting when the incident took place. Soon after the Minister got down from his vehicle after opening the front side passenger door, the 54-year-old assistant sub inspector Gopal Krushna Das who was deployed for traffic clearance came close, opened fire at him from his service pistol from a very close range. Despite being airlifted to Bhubaneswar immediately and treatment initiated, the injuries arising out of the single bullet that damaged the 60-year-old minister's heart as well his left lung which resulted in massive internal bleeding and he couldn't be revived.

The alleged killer cop, Gopal, a decorated police officer having won 18 medals besides cash awards eight times in his career has since been dismissed from service. While the ongoing investigation by

the Crime Branch is expected to unravel the motive behind the killing, according to some reports, as claimed by Gopal's wife, the policeman is stated to be suffering from mental illness. The psychiatrist who treated Gopal has also reportedly indicated that he was afflicted by bipolar disorder, a mental health condition that causes extreme mood swings.

Undoubtedly, police duties are considered to be the toughest but it is challenging to know what goes on in the mind of a policeman when he resorts to sudden firing. Last November, in Jharkhand's Palamu, a policeman was arrested and his service revolver seized for unprovoked firing at two civilians, who miraculously escaped with minor injuries. He was believed to be in an inebriated condition when he fired the two shots. There have been several instances where the men in khaki have shot at their seniors for not permitting to go on leave or such other reasons.

Not long ago a national online survey of 10,000 police officers and staff was undertaken to understand the mental health issues within the police force in the United Kingdom. It found that many of them suffered from invisible psychological injuries and it highlighted various mental issues such as anxiety, depression, etc., as a major concern. It was found that officers and staff were twice likely to need time off for a mental health injury than for a physical injury. Notably, the respondents who experienced psychological injury were less satisfied with the support that they



Police duties are considered to be the toughest but it is challenging to know what goes on in the mind of a policeman when he resorts to sudden firing

were offered than were those with physical injuries. Following the survey, £3 million was made available over three years to help the police address identified gaps in provision and support those who suffer psychological harm as a result of their policing role.

A study done in Lucknow on the psychological well-being of traffic police personnel found that the conditions in which they work was not only stressful but also uncomfortable with long working hours, often in standing positions. Nearly 48 percent of the respondents said they worked for 10 to 12 hours a day and 25 percent for more than 12 hours a day.

So, not getting enough sleep can lead to many negative outcomes adversely affecting work and life. It can increase stress levels, decrease one's decision-making ability besides leading to a negative attitude, both at work and home. Hence there is need for work-life-balance. At an organisa-

tional level, there is an imperative need to be absolutely vigilant and put in place fool proof systems in respect of VVIP security.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the recently held 57th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police suggested for making the police force more sensitive and train them in emerging technologies and data exchange across agencies. He also underscored the need for repealing obsolete criminal laws and building standards for police organisations across states besides further leveraging technological solutions like biometrics and the need to further strengthen traditional policing mechanisms like foot patrols. Hopefully, translating them into meaningful actions and side-by-side ushering in the much-needed police reforms can go a long way in mutually benefiting the police as well as the citizens. ©



Bishop Salvadore Celebrates Episcopal Jubilee

BY FRANCIS SUNIL ROSARIO

The Diocese of Baruiipur organised a prayerful felicitation programme on January 23 to celebrate the silver Jubilee of the episcopal consecration of Rt. Rev. Salvadore Lobo, Bishop Emeritus of Baruiipur.

“Though unworthy to shepherd the diocese, that was erected in 1977, it was the strength of God and the Spirit that led me to take up many challenges. I did what God desired during my tenure; I served the diocese,” Bishop Lobo said at the programme. He gave all the credit to the Vicar-Generals and the clergy of Baruiipur who did all that God wanted to continue as a team, in the spirit of collaboration and solidarity for the common cause. “My V-Gs (Fr. Moloy Mondol, late Fr. Anil Mitra, S.J., Fr. Shyamol Bose, Fr. Jonas Singha) and the priests of the diocese of various commissions and parishes did everything, I only signed,” he said in a lighter vein.

The most senior clergy of the diocese, Rev. Fr. Pradeep Roy, was also felicitated on his Golden Jubilee of priestly ordination. He worked as the Director of the Family Commission.

Besides, 21 senior clergy were also felicitated during the

programme. Each one of them in their own capacity contributed towards the growth of the diocese during these challenging decades.

Bishop Shyamol Bose thanked God for the gift of many priests from within the diocese and those who came from other states as true missionaries to dedicate their lives to extend God's kingdom in the region of South 24 Parganas. Archbishop Thomas D'Souza, in his address, appreciated Bishop Lobo's contribution to the diocese. He recalled that there was a time when there were two similar names -- His Excellency Salvadore Pinnachio, former Nuncio to India, and Bishop Salvadore Lobo -- in the Indian church hierarchy. The meaning of Salvadore is “Jesus the Redeemer saves”.

Bishop Salvadore during his tenure passed

through some rough and tough time and faced many challenging situations in his pastoral commitment. He has the gift of turning any crisis situation into opportunities for growth and development. The diocese today is grateful to him and to God for sending a Shepherd according to the heart of Lord Jesus Christ. ©



Fatima nuns accompany transgender community in Bangalore

BY THOMAS SCARIA



The first time Sisters Saly Joseph and Roselin Jose met a transgender woman, they were waiting at a bus stand in a southern Indian city. “Sister, can you come and pray for my mother?” the woman, Ranjitha, asked them.

Joseph recalled being hesitant at first, but when Ranjitha insisted, saying her mother was a Catholic and sick, they decided to accompany her.

That 2020 encounter paved the way for a special ministry among transgender people for the members of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima of Pune.

“It has been very challenging to get into their world and win their confidence, but today, we have around 200 of them undergoing our training programs,” Joseph told Global Sisters Report.

In India’s 2011 census, more than 4,85,000 people of the country’s population of 1.21 billion identified as transgender. The survey was the first time India counted the number of people who identify as a third gender.

Jose and Joseph say their goal is to support transgender people in their struggle for identity and justice. As part of their ministry, they conduct vocational skills training to shift transgender people from sex work and begging to alternate jobs. Some sell vegetables or manage kiosks and tea stalls after attending the training programs. Some are being trained in driving, tailoring and handicrafts.

One of them is Sheela, who sells flowers in front of St. Mary’s Church in Bengaluru’s Shivaji Nagar, a

pilgrim center. Another person, Devi, who used to sell sex for a living, now sells vegetables. She and Sheela pray in St. Mary’s shrine every day.

Renuka Pujar, who works part time in a steel firm, is working toward a bachelor’s degree in law.

“I want to become a lawyer and fight for our rights,” she told GSR.

Joseph and Jose never imagined they would start the special ministry when they accompanied Ranjitha to her home. Her mother, who wore a rosary, was in bed in the small one-room house in Frazer Town, a suburb of Bengaluru city. The house looked clean with walls painted yellow. A picture of Mary and Jesus hung on the wall over the woman’s bed with sandalwood sticks burning in front.

“We prayed for her mother while Ranjitha stood with folded hands in deep veneration,” Joseph said.

Although members of the trans community live together in their own exclusive communities, Ranjitha stayed at her house to look after her ailing mother, whom she had brought from her village after her father died.

Seeing the nuns were curious, Ranjitha invited them to meet other members of the trans community. The nuns found them living on the periphery of society and facing social stigma and rejection despite government efforts to recognize their identity and assure them protection.

Around that time, the Dream India Network invited women religious in Bengaluru to help the Salesian organization reach out to the transgender community. The network is an association of nongovernmental organizations working for people on the margins in India. It wanted to reach out to the trans community with food kits as the COVID-19 pandemic hit India. Among the participants in that outreach were Joseph and Jose, who shared their experience of their encounter with the community.

Salesian Father Edward Thomas, founder of Dream India Network, invited the Fatima nuns to reach out to transgender people in response to Pope Francis’ call to “accompany them” in their difficulties.

“The transgender people accept the nuns, who can easily win their confidence and trust,” said

Father Thomas, who commended the Fatima sisters for their service.

“More congregations can be involved in this unique ministry,” he told GSR. Sister Joseph said their superiors approved their work with the network. Their first task was to identify and invite trans people to a meeting called by the Dream India Network. More than 100 transgender people attended the network’s first meeting in January 2021, most of whom had come through the initiative of the Fatima nuns.

Sister Joseph said they got into “this challenging task without knowing anything about those people. But now we are convinced it was a divine call for us to serve them.”

Sister Jose said they travel almost every day to visit the trans community. When GSR offered to accompany the nuns in their ministry, they discouraged the plan.

“They do not easily open up to a stranger,” the 57-year-old nun said. Instead, the nuns invited some to the convent to meet GSR. Jose said many transgender people invite the nuns to pray for them in their homes. Most houses keep pictures of Jesus, Mother Mary, Infant Jesus and St. Anthony of Padua along with Hindu deities.

“People look at us with curiosity and suspicion and sometimes pass sarcastic comments, but we don’t care. The third-gender people know who we are, and they protect us from the public,” Sister Joseph, 55, said.

Sister Joseph regrets that the Church has yet to understand the transgender people, despite the Pope’s call.

“If we cannot welcome them to our churches, at least let us reach out to them,” she said.

Father Thomas said Bengaluru city alone has more than 10,000 transgender people among its 13 million people. Most of them earn a living through sex work, begging or religious activities, which includes performing prayers for pregnant women and newborns.

As the nuns served tea and biscuits, Ranjitha narrated her story.

“My original name was David, and I was baptized in a church, although my father was a Hindu,” she said. “I was like any other child: mischievous, playful and obedient to my parents.”

However, at the start of puberty, he faced an identity crisis and ran away from home to Mumbai,

more than 600 miles northwest of Bengaluru. As he roamed the streets, he met members of the trans community. The group “formed me into a transgender [woman] by providing a reassignment therapy,” she said, including hormone therapy and gender-confirmation surgery.

She returned home after three years, but “neither my parents nor neighbors could accept me and forced me to leave the village.”

Ranjitha said she now identifies as a transgender woman, and “I am proud of what I am.” She has a government identity card and enjoys social acceptance thanks to the Fatima nuns.

The identity card became possible for transgender people after the Indian Supreme Court in 2014 gave them legal status and protection. They can now work in government jobs while identifying as a third gender. Ranjitha said her greatest social acceptance came during the 2021 Maundy Thursday celebration, when a parish in Bengaluru washed her feet at the intervention of the Fatima nuns.

“My eyes filled with tears as the priest washed my feet,” she said, getting emotional. “I could not control my emotions in the church.”

The Fatima nuns’ mission has won praise from people such as Claretian Father George Kannanthanam, a social worker in Bengaluru, who wants more congregations to get involved in the mission.

“It is sad that even the Catholic Church ostracizes them as it lacks clarity about their place in the church,” said the priest, who organized a Christmas carol service for the transgender community last Christmas.

“When we go to them, they accept us, but when they come to us, do we really accept them?” he asked.

“Why are only the Fatima sisters working among transgender people? Why don’t other congregations come forward?” he asked.

Meanwhile, the Indian Christian Women’s Movement, an ecumenical forum, decided in early October to admit transgender women as members, which Sister Joseph said is a good sign.

She said the pope’s call for giving space for the LGBT community has to be taken up as a challenge to change people’s mindset.

“Instead of judging them, let us give them space,” she said. ©

(Courtesy: Mattersindia. This article first appeared in globalsistersreport.org on January 26, 2023)

Cardinal Alencherry gets bail in land sale case

Cardinal George Alencherry, head of the Syro-Malabar Church, has secured bail in a two-year-old court case in which he stands accused of illegally selling some plots of land of a southern Indian archdiocese, prompting renewed calls for him to resign.

The 77-year-old cardinal was granted bail on Jan. 27 when he appeared before a magistrate court close to his residence in Kochi in Kerala state, which is the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church – the second largest eastern church in communion with the Holy See.

The case against the cardinal was registered following a complaint accusing the senior prelate – who was elevated to the rank of cardinal in February 2012 – of illegally selling some lands of Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese, as its archbishop.

A Church official said it was a case fabricated by vested interests.

His court appearance prompted the Archdiocese Movement for Transparency (AMT), a body of priests and laity in the archdiocese, to renew demands for the cardinal's resignation. Cardinal Alencherry had lost his moral right to continue in office after appearing in court as an accused, it said.

Father Antony Vadakkekara, spokesman of the Syro-Malabar Church, however, dismissed the demand for the cardinal to quit.

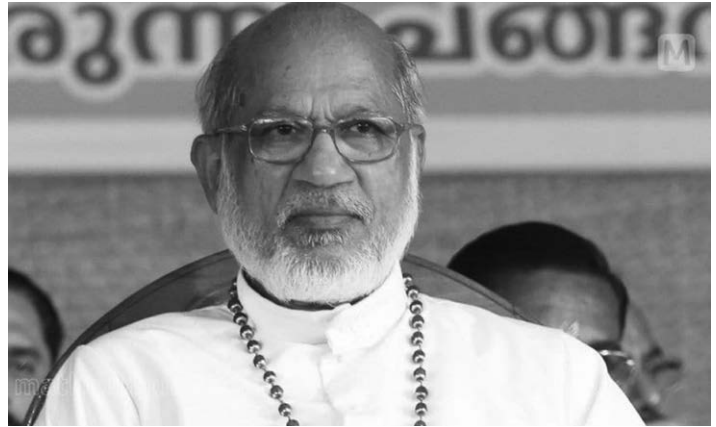
"It is a case fabricated by vested interests," the priest told UCA News on Jan. 30.

"As a law-abiding citizen of the country, the cardinal complied with the court order for his personal appearance. That does not mean that he should resign," Father Vadakkekara said.

He said the bail order did not impose any condition or restriction on the cardinal, as the courts normally do, the Vincentian priest explained.

"Even those accusing him are not saying that he had gained any financial benefits in the deal other than certain failures in overseeing the deal," the priest added. He said those who target the cardinal "were also demanding for a law to bring Church properties under the monitoring of government. It raises question marks about their concerns."

Riju Kanjookaran, the AMT spokesman, said courts consider it a serious case. The high court in Kerala



state and India's Supreme Court had dismissed the cardinal's petition seeking an exemption from having to appear in court to face trial.

"Fourteen criminal cases have been registered against Cardinal Alencherry" and therefore, "he should resign from office and face the cases," Riju Kanjookaran, told UCA News on Jan. 29.

The group has been demanding the cardinal's resignation since his name first figured in the controversial land deal in 2008.

It accuses the cardinal of selling several plots of lands undervalued, without proper consultation with diocesan bodies, and without transparency. The deals have incurred an estimated loss of about US\$10 million for the archdiocese, AMT leaders claim.

Kanjookaran previously appealed to the Vatican and the Synod of Bishops, the top decision-making body of the Syro-Malabar Church, to initiate action against Cardinal Alencherry.

The cardinal, however, has denied the allegations but reportedly admitted before the Church's synod that there were administrative lapses and a lack of oversight on his part.

After sustained public campaigns, the Vatican took away his administrative powers as archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, and now the archdiocese is run by an apostolic administrator.

Cardinal Alencherry, however, still holds his title as the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church with a population of more than half a million in India and abroad. ☉

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Catholics demand strict action in Bible burning incident

Catholic bishops in Kerala have deplored the burning of the Bible allegedly by a Muslim man who also uploaded video footage of it on social media. Kerala state police arrested the accused after the communally sensitive video footage went viral.

“It is a deliberate attempt to create communal discord and he should be punished,” Father Jacob G. Palakkappilly, the spokesperson of the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council told UCA News on Feb.1.

Father Palakkappilly appreciated the quick action by the police but demanded that the man be tried for attempting to disrupt peace.

“This is a very heinous act,” the priest said while pointing out that the same man had removed the statues of infant Jesus and others from a crib in a government hospital last Christmas.

The man identified as Mohammed Mustafa, a resident of Kerala’s Kasargod district, is seen in video footage burning a Malayalam language copy of the Bible. He is also heard saying that his act is in retaliation to the burning of a copy of the Quran in Sweden last month. A far-right Danish politician Rasmus Paludan reportedly committed the act outside the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

Enraged Muslims in many parts of the world

staged protests against the act but those in India desisted from reacting in a similar manner.

The accused Mustafa is said to be mentally unstable but many now believe he may be creating a false impression to escape the law. Father Palakkappilly appealed to every law-abiding citizen to condemn such acts and ensure peace and harmony in society.

The Kerala bishops’ Commission for Social Harmony and Vigilance too condemned the burning of the holy Bible and urged the government to take stringent action against the accused.

Father Michael Pulickal, CMI, who is secretary of the commission, in a statement on Jan. 31 called it a “very painful thing for Christians in India and across the world.”

The priest also questioned the silence of political, intellectual and other religious leaders over such actions and appealed to everyone to isolate such people who continue to threaten and disturb peace in society. Father Pulickal appealed to the Kerala government to ensure stringent punishment for the culprit to send the message to people that “our society does not have any space for such communally divisive actions.” ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Raid on the premises of evangelical pastors

Tax authorities conducted raids on premises linked to two evangelical pastors in Punjab suspected to be involved in tax evasion and unaccounted foreign funds.

Nearly 50 officials from the Income Tax Department reportedly came to the premises of Pastor Bajinder Singh of the Church of Glory and Wisdom and Pastor Harpreet Deol of the Open Door Church on Jan. 31 and seized currency notes, and documents related to banks and property deals.

Local media reported that the pastors were running house churches and healing ministries – Singh in Tajpur village in Jalandhar district and Deol in Khojewala village in Kapurthala district – and have been receiving huge funding from foreign countries.

Both the pastors operate from sprawling campuses and have several branches of their minis-



Pastor Harpreet Deol of the Open Door Church was one of the premises raided by Indian tax authorities in Punjab on January 31

tries with huge numbers of followers across India and abroad, the Indian Express reported.

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

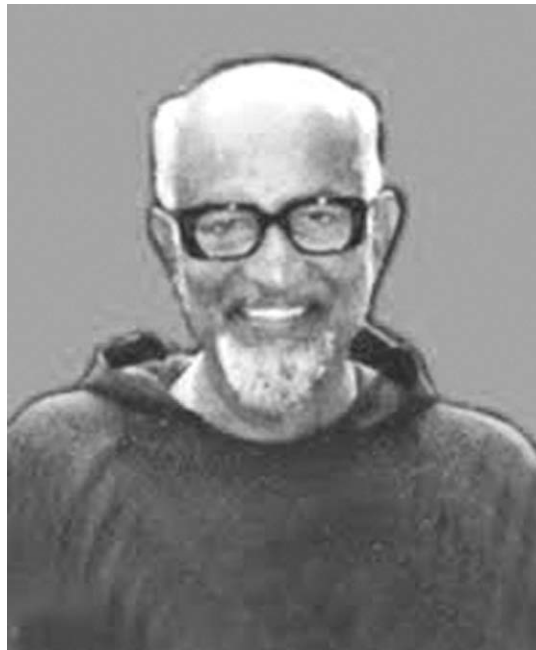
Servant of God: Fr Alfred Roche OFM Cap A Visionary with Foresight

BY PATRICK CRASTA

We do believe that the past, the present, and the future are interconnected. Yes, both experience and science bear witness to it. But where we lay the emphasis is the most important. There are people who unduly brood over the past and not only waste their time and energy but also get into depression. Wisdom consists in this: Knowing that there is a close relationship between the past and the present, focus on the present with an optimistic vision.

The Servant of God, Fr. Alfred Roche, had this grace. Swami Dayanand, Jyothiniketan Ashram, Kareli, UP, bears witness to this: “Fr. Alfred was a visionary, a foresighted person. He looked at the future and planned for the future generation; the future of the parish. His first sight fell on the youth and the children. He decided to give importance to the education of the children. He gave all possible support and encouragement to parents to educate them. This was in 1960. Within a couple of decades, one could observe the change in the parish youth.... Today there are so many graduates, post-graduates in our parish.”

Swami Dayanand is referring to the progress that has come about in the Holy Family Parish, Brahmavar, Diocese of Udupi, due to the foresight of Fr. Alfred Roche. But his vision was wider than that. He toiled for the growth and progress of every child and youth, irrespective of caste and creed. Let us listen to late Mr M. Shivaram Shetty, Retd. Head Master, Matpadi, Brahmavar: “Fr. Alfred scrupulously made it compulsory for the poor children to attend the school. Due to caste and colour, there was sick-



ening restlessness among us. In such a situation, Fr. Roche marched forward to help everyone without any discrimination. This daring attitude of Fr. Alfred was indeed a proof of his godliness.... His simplicity of life and commitment to his duty bore witness to his Saintly Life.”

In this context Sr. Hilaria, Sacred Heart Convent, Brahmavar (presently Snehalaya, Soluru) would like to add further details: “Fr. Alfred would visit school every day, meet the children and see to their needs.... He was very keen in seeing that the children made progress

in their studies. After receiving the progress cards, he would meet them class-wise and take necessary action. He would see to it that poor but intelligent children would go forward in studies... In this way some finished their graduation and more, but he would never reveal who the sponsor was.”

Mr. Xavier Sebastian Lopes from Lower Kasarkod, Honnavar, is happy to bring to our notice one more important quality of Fr. Roche’s foresighted ministry: “When Fr. Alfred Roche came to our Lower Kasarkod church, I was a youth.... As he took up the apostolate in our parish, dedicated to St. Joseph, he won over the children and the youth because of his loving approach. Quite a few boys and girls, having discontinued their studies, were going for coolie work (i.e., drying fish) Fr. Roche met them and gently guided them to resume their studies. On account of the loving approach of Fr. Roche, many children and youth continued their studies and some of them have become priests and sisters, and many of them, having done higher studies, have got high posts in our society.” ©

Tiny Tips to Meaningful Life

BY P.A. JOSEPH

For an active life there can be so many tips. Some of the tips look very tiny but by living these, life becomes great and meaningful.

We live in a growing technological age, and its materials and impact are growing rapidly. It is extremely difficult to catch up with the scenario. We see technology has overtaken the whole work with its varying dimensions and operational tactics. The change is so fast that some times we are not aware what have been disappearing and what have dawned in its place.

Machine and machinery presence have changed the scenario. What is done manually with a lot of time is taken over by machine. Fast expansion of digital system has made living very fast. With mobile in my hand I can have access to many areas. Banking, transfer of money, booking tickets, health examining, weather forecasting, planning of yearly programmes, all these are done fast and easily. During the last two years of covid pandemic, when the educational institutions were not functioning, on line classes solved the problem.

Similarly, many business offices and administrative departments began to function on line. We see that the digital technology is the greatest boon of the day. It appears, “no U-turn” is possible. That means those who are not caught up in the milieu and race will cease to function, or become zombie-like existence.

Humans by culture (may not be by nature) are ritualistic in multiple areas, like social life, family, life celebrations, religion, politics, etc. There had/has been patterns of behavior system, proto calls, customs, etc. but these are dying out to a great extent. As for example, we see SMS/WhatsApp have taken the place of personal visit, get together, etc. This reduces personal contacts and the related values. Here humans become less human. Family relations, friendship contacts, etc. diminish and tension swells. In general, stress and suspense between the old generation and the new ones appear.

In this context it may be good that I practice resilience. While in the sea, if I try to defeat one by one wave, I will surely end up in the far-flung sea; Hence, it would be wiser for me not to involve in tensed



situations and come away! Similarly, emotions are like waves, we cannot altogether defeat them; we have only partial control over them. It is true of any emotion.

Further, when we cannot overcome certain reactions, we can get adjusted to the same. We cannot control our parents/seniors. But we can learn to get adjusted with their ways, not because they are correct but because we grow wiser. In the case of Alzheimer patients, the caretaker needs training and not the patient. Sometimes, we try to stick to old practices, to routines. This is an escapism. In routine there is no initiative, no creativity, it is only parroting and xeroxing. I will do well to feed my brain with up-to-date information which will keep the brain vibrant and active. The relevant “social market” has much to offer me. Enough to keep me busy! The objective of a virtuous person is to reach a state of tranquility: the absence of negative forces such as anxiety, fear, shame, vanity, anger, despair, and revenge, and the cultivation of positive values and feelings such as happiness, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, compassion, self-control, willingness to change, love, serenity, and gratitude. ☉



Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

bobsbanter@gmail.com

Hindenburg and Misguided Nationalism..!

As the might of superior American artillery rains down on a heroic, yet poor, poverty-stricken billionaire, our battered countryman stands valiantly crying out to the world and fellow countrymen, not to buckle down under the unfair onslaught but rally their numbers and fight back against herculean colonists, bullying him into submission!

Not this, a scene from a Sharukh Khan blockbuster, but one, the very rich man tried to paint to thirteen billion much poorer people as he was allegedly disclosed, exposed and unveiled as a cheat and imposter!

cricket field, and see a concocted image of a lone batsman fighting it out against spiteful bowlers from the Rest of the World. The commentator, a patriot, cries out, "Our national hero stands with a cracked bat against the Hindenburg Team, and boldly defends each ball the strongarm bowlers throw."

"Howzat!" shouts the Hindenburg bowler as wickets go flying.

"It's not fair!" cries the commentator and the country agrees with him, "The batsman in his Saville Row suit is not used to fast bowling!"

"They should bowl underarm, that's what he's



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How easy to blow the 'nationalism bugle' when shown in a poor light by foreign agencies.

And in my vivid imagination, somewhere up in the sky, I hear light banter, between an old man wearing just a khadi robe and another with a rose stuck on his immaculate jacket, "Some of them are feeling a strange nationalism now!"

"Yes panditji, one they did not see when you and I spent months in prison fighting for our country's freedom. They did not feel when we marched those long marches to the salt pans of our country. They did not taste, in the cruel racial discrimination we faced when a cigar smoking Englishman treated us worse than his dogs!"

And in my imagination I hear, the dignified man with the rose replying, "Ah dear sir, they suddenly see it now, as world reports revealing they have moved many paces back in their hunger status, and corruption data showing them in a poor light have been declared as acts of war!"

Their voices fade as I come back to earth, to a

used to!" cries his bearded manager as the Hindenburg team look puzzled.

"They should have learnt to play cricket before playing outside the country," says the khadi robed man to the other, all in my imagination.

"Otherwise, they will always be found OUT!" whispers the man with the rose.

"Though getting OUT is a call for a nationalistic uproar!" says the old man sadly.

"It's sad our people have not learnt that dishonesty brings dishonor to the country!" They both say together, "And every call OUT by the umpire should be taken seriously, not branded as victimization!"

"Which is nothing short of misguided nationalism..!" both freedom fighters agree together. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROBERT CLEMENTS is a Newspaper Columnist, with an estimated readership of 6 million. He also conducts a short-term Writer's Course. Contact him on bobsbanter@gmail.com for more details

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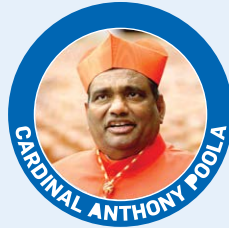
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