

Indian Currents

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CASTE CRISIS

DALITS YEARN FOR EQUAL STATUS

The suppressed classes are no more willing to lie down and be subjected to humiliation and torture

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PUT DALITS ON EQUAL PEDESTAL



“All beings experience pain and misery during their lifetime,” says the first of the Four Noble Truths of Lord Buddha. What he said is about the normal life of every human being. But the pain and misery inflicted on the Dalits in this country are atrociously man-made; they are the callous creation of fellow human beings; they are the consequences of the crude social hierarchy to keep certain castes subjugated for ever so that some others can reap the benefits of it. But times have changed. The suppressed classes are no more willing to lie down and be subjected to humiliation and torture. The conversion of a few thousand Dalits to Buddhism in Delhi recently is an open declaration that they cannot be taken for granted anymore. It is an expression of their resoluteness not to put up with unspeakable cruelty perpetrated on them.

The caste system is not intrinsic to Hinduism, though in course of time it has become part and parcel of the religion. Experts opine that it was borne out of the overbearing nature of Aryans to keep their identity intact. Its vice-like grip became stronger and stronger to the extent that caste got embedded by birth, with no way to come out of it. This also became a tool to deny certain sections their human rights and fundamental rights. Caste-related outrageous practices got religious sanction with Manusmriti prescribing gruesome punishments to Dalits who even dare to place themselves on the same seat with a man of high caste. This is just one of several retributions prescribed to Dalits. The attacks on them in various parts of the country are the result of fundamentalism eating into the soul of Hinduism.

It seems the recent conversion of Dalits to Buddhism has opened the eyes of right-wing Hindu leaders. They have realized that things are going out of hand. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's plea to strive for a casteless society is a clear indication that ground is slipping beneath their feet; there is a realization among Hindu leaders that it may not be possible to keep intact the vicious-grip of caste hierarchy; they also fear that more desertions could happen if attacks on Dalits are not reined in. Moreover, Bhagwat's assertion that certain orthodox practices are inimical to the society and untouchability should be removed seems to be a confession that the brutal attacks on Dalits and the rise in honour killings are an affront to civilized society. But the moot point is 'who will bell the cat?' Who will stop those who indulge in caste-related violence in their tracks.

A government which proclaims 'sabka saath' cannot wash its hands off the present situation as attacks on Dalits have sky-rocketed during its period. The attackers have been emboldened as the accused in brutalizing Dalits have not got the punishment they deserve. Dalits get further disillusioned and their anger boils over as they are subjected to 'street justice' with the law-enforcing authorities looking the other way. Pious talks and hollow assurances are not enough to douse the embers of anger burning in the hearts of Dalits. They look forward to a level-playing field on the ground. They need to be equally treated. They need action on the ground.

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 Mathew'.

Dr. Suresh Mathew
Editor

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POWER QUOTES



There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle

- **Albert Einstein**

• • •



Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts

- **Winston S. Churchill**

• • •



Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that

- **Martin Luther King Jr.**

• • •



Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success

- **Dale Carnegie**

• • •



To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

• • •



It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not

- **Andre Gide**

• • •



It is better to remain silent at the risk of being thought a fool, than to talk and remove all doubt of it

- **Maurice Switzer**

• • •



Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present

- **Bill Keane**

Conversion Nagpur to Delhi

BY A.J. PHILIP

Conversion has always been a bugbear for the Hindutva forces. They fear nothing more than this phenomenon. They had the first shock of their lives when Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, underwent Deeksha, the Buddhist term for conversion, exactly 66 years ago on October 14, 1956. Nobody, including Mahatma Gandhi, understood religion, especially Hinduism, better than him.

Ambedkar's book *Riddles in Hinduism* is a pointer to the vast understanding he had about the religion he forsook on that day. He was not alone when he gave up the so-called religion he was born. As many as 3.75 lakh underwent the Deeksha ceremony along with him. It was the single largest conversion ceremony anywhere in the world.

Such a large conversion never happened in Christendom. Nor can Islam claim to have received so many faithful on a single day. Dr Ambedkar did not do it on the spur of the moment. He had announced his decision that he was born a "Hindu" but would not die a "Hindu". In the run-up to the mass conversion at Nagpur, he weighed the pros and cons of



converting to another religion. He studied Christianity and Islam.

He had the foresight to know that if he converted to either of the semitic religions, there would be violent repercussions and his community, poor and deprived as they are, would not be able to face them. He also felt attracted to Buddhism with its inherent

practical ways of enlightenment.

After all, it was a religion that had an Indian origin. Although Gautam Buddha was born at Lumbini in Nepal, he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, now in Bihar. It is a different thing that the most sacred temple for the Buddhists is not under the control of Buddhists.

Until then, Buddhism was a dying religion in India. Its adherents were few and far between. When the British thought of building a house for the Viceroy in New Delhi, rechristened Rashtrapati Bhavan, they modelled it after a Buddhist Vihara for they knew that India was essentially Buddhist.

How did Buddhism lose its appeal? It was Aadi Shankara who threw out the Buddhists from their pedestal in the eighth century. What's more, an



injunction was introduced later whereby anyone who crossed the seas would lose his or her religious identity. Those who persecuted the Buddhists, like the Christians who persecuted the Puritans in the 16th century, knew that Buddhism was thriving outside of India in countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc.

The ban on crossing the seas was not to let Indians come into contact with the Buddhists and know that the religion was thriving elsewhere. Whatever be the case, Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism gave a fillip to Buddhism in India. It was galling to the Hindutva forces. But they could not do much about it when they claim that Lord Buddha was an avatar of Vishnu.

In fact, Dr Ambedkar wanted all his followers to take an oath that had 22 clauses whereby they renounced all their connections with the Hindu pantheon of Gods. They affirmed their faith in the Buddhist path for salvation, which is the ultimate aim of man, whatever be his or her faith, though it is defined differently by different religions.

Those who know the history of Travancore, the princely state in southern India, which proclaimed Independence, only to fall in line later to become an integral part of India that is Bharat, know how the threat by the Ezhavas to convert en masse forced the State to end the discrimination against the single largest community that resulted in the Temple Entry proclamation. The threat worked in Travancore.

In 1981, a few hundred Dalits at Meenakshipuram in Thirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu converted to Islam as they could no longer suffer the indignities inflicted on them for centuries by an intermediate caste. It caused a sensation in the country. All kinds of charges were made that they were influenced by petrodollar. Inquiries revealed that each of them had

When the British thought of building a house for the Viceroy in New Delhi, rechristened Rashtrapati Bhavan, they modelled it after a Buddhist Vihara for they knew that India was essentially Buddhist



contributed some money to meet the expenses of the conversion ceremony.

Of course, there were cooked up stories to show that money was at the root of the conversion. One person claimed that he was given Rs 500. The fact of the matter is that while some of them returned to the Hindu-fold, the vast majority who converted stayed in their new religious home.

The BJP felt so threatened that it initiated the Babri Masjid movement under the leadership of L.K. Advani that eventually paved the way for Narendra Modi to become Prime Minister in 2014. If anybody should be thankful for the Meenakshipuram conversion, it is the BJP.

Under a pernicious rule, anybody who converts to a religion other than Hinduism would lose his caste status. Not only that, he would also lose all the benefits like reservation. For instance, if A who is a sweeper earning Rs 1000 a month becomes a Muslim or Christian, his children will lose the benefits of reservation.

They will have to compete with Brahmins who have enjoyed a high social, cultural and educational status for a clerical post in the government. Conversion does not improve the economic status of a person. The argument advanced was that Islam and Christianity are egalitarian religions which do not accept casteism. Only Hinduism accepted the caste system.

Buddhism and Sikhism are also egalitarian religions which do not follow any caste system. In the nineties, Prime Minister V.P. Singh, who implemented the Mandal Commission report, grant-



ing reservation to the Other Backward Classes like the Yadavs and Kurmis, accepted the demand that the Scheduled Castes among the Buddhists and the Sikhs should also be given reservation.

Yet, the Scheduled Castes among the Christians and the Muslims were denied the benefits of reservation. When the SCs among Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists get reservation, it is a gross denial of justice to deny reservation to the SCs among Christians and Muslims. It is also against the foundational principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Nearly two decades ago, considerable hype was created about a mass conversion to Buddhism in Delhi. The organiser of the move was Udit Raj. Though lakhs of people were expected to convert making it larger than the one Nagpur witnessed during Dr Ambedkar's lifetime, only a few thousands turned up. Interestingly, the BJP had no problem in giving its party ticket to Udit Raj in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. He contested from the North West Lok Sabha constituency and won by a comfortable majority.

A popular BJP MP was late B.L. Sharma (Prem) who used to represent the East Delhi constituency. He was in the vanguard of the BJP's campaign against conversion. Yet, he found it necessary to convert to Sikhism. What's more, Arun Shourie, a minister in the Vajpayee government who threatened Christians against conversion in his books expressed his desire in public to convert to Buddhism. I am not sure whether he did so.

Ten days ago, on October 5, a few thousands of people converted to Buddhism. Among them was Rajendra Pal Gautam, a minister in the Arvind Kejriwal government. The BJP demanded his resignation. Nobody knows on what basis they made this

demand. The Constitution grants every citizen the right to convert to any religion of his/her choice, notwithstanding the right to religion laws passed in states like MP, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, etc. which are against the Constitution.

By the way, there is no such law in force in Delhi. When the BJP attacked him, neither the Aam Aadmi Party nor Kejriwal was there to defend him. This was quite contrary to what the party did when raids were conducted on the premises of deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia. The AAP has been going out of the way to defend Satyendra Jain, who is yet to be divested of his ministerial status though he has been in Tihar Jail for quite some time.

No such courtesy was extended to Gautam, who had to resign. The gentleman that he is, Gautam has been claiming that he resigned of his own volition and not under compulsion from Kejriwal, who has been promising the people of Gujarat that if his party was chosen in the state, he would ensure that the Gujaratis would be able to visit Ayodhya at state cost.

Poor Kejriwal does not know that Gujaratis are one of the richest communities in India and they can go anywhere in the world at their own cost. I would have been happy if he had promised to take them to Thumba near Thiruvananthapuram where the Catholic Church gave its property, including a church building, to let India's first rocket launching centre to start functioning there.

Alternatively, Kejriwal can take them to the Kochi Shipyard where INS Vikrant was indigenously built. The land for it was donated, again, by the Catholic Church. In contrast, an airport at Aranmula was prevented from coming up because it would disturb the presiding deity of the Parthasarathy Temple at Aranmula on the bank of the Pampa.

When will the likes of Kejriwal realise that what

Under a pernicious rule, anybody who converts to a religion other than Hinduism would lose his caste status. Not only that, he would also lose all the benefits like reservation

India needs are temples of science and technology and not temples and temple corridors where Modi spends his valuable time pouring ghee into fire, little realising that the ghee would have done wonders to the bodies of emaciated children if they were allowed to consume the same.

Gautam's initiative in Delhi had an immediate political fallout. The government has appointed a three-member committee headed by former Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan, who belongs to the Dalit community, to look into the problems of "new persons who have historically belonged to Scheduled Castes, but have converted to religions other than Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism". The other members are Mr Ravinder Kumar Jain, IAS (Retd) and Prof (Dr) Sushma Yadav.

That the committee has been given two years to submit its report has raised eyebrows among the people at large. The Supreme Court has been hearing petitions about the need to extend the benefits of reservations to all Scheduled Castes, irrespective



of their religious faiths, including their faith in atheism. The case has reached a decisive stage.

There is every possibility that the apex court would correct the historically wrong decision to deprive the Dalits among the Christians and the Muslims. The government can delay the decision by telling the court that a committee has been asked to study the issue. In other words, it is a dilatory tactics. In any case, why should the committee take such a long time as it is a matter that can be decided in a matter of a few weeks.

Three days after Gautam's conversion, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said that "everything that causes discrimination should go out lock, stock and barrel." He was referring to varna and jati (caste). It is easy to say so but difficult to practice. For instance, in 2024, the RSS would complete 100 years.

The RSS and its offshoots have been against reservation but they do not have the guts to oppose it openly. So, whenever Parliament discussed the issue and extended reservation every ten years, the BJP was forced to support it

In India, the majority in the Hindu community consists of Dalits and intermediate castes. Has any non-upper caste person ever become the Sarsanghchalak (the supreme leader) of the RSS? Why is it that the leadership of the organisation has been, by and large, with the Brahmins? I have heard RSS leaders praising the caste system, which they say was what insulated Hinduism from Christian and Islamic influences, especially in states like Uttar Pradesh.

The RSS and its offshoots have been against reservation but they do not have the guts to oppose it openly. So, whenever Parliament discussed the issue and extended reservation every ten years, the BJP was forced to support it. Now its government has been subverting reservation in ingenious ways like not filling vacant posts and introducing what is known as lateral system of induction.

Bhagwat knows that if caste is "officially" banned, nobody from the lower castes would be able to compete with the upper castes like Brahmins. The Jews, for instance, have a disproportionate share of Nobel Prizes. You can call this phenomenon by any name. Why is it that Brahmins who constitute a small percentage of the Indian population have a disproportionate share of high posts in the country?

Abolishing the caste system and, along with it, reservation will ultimately benefit the upper castes who, in any case, control the levers of power. That is what Mohan Bhagwat Ji wants to attain. All else is just politics? The K.G. Balakrishnan Committee is just a pawn on the RSS chessboard. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Caste Practice Should Go

Caste is an aberration that crept into our society; it is a phenomenon that came into existence because of the social and historical circumstances

BY **T.M. JOSEPH**

The practice of caste system should go from India. *The Sunday Times* dated October 2, 2022, said, “Man shoots sister 5 years after inter-caste marriage.” The girl was shot dead because she married a person belonging to another caste. Caste-killings are a reality in India; every now and then we hear of them. Many believe that caste is of divine origin, but in reality it has nothing to do with anything divine. Caste practice came into existence between 1000 and 600 B.C. The Aryan invaders wanted to keep their identity and they found that the only way to keep it was through caste system. Now the question of Aryan identity does not even arise and hence caste has lost all its meaning and relevance and it should go from India lock, stock and barrel.

Now let us see how it all originated in India. Long before the Aryans came to India, there existed in the Indus Valley an advanced civilization comparable to that of Mesopotamia, Sumer and Egypt. This is evident from the excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Their cities had straight streets, good drains and sewers. The houses were built of fired brick. They used an alphabet that has not yet been deciphered. They knew the use of bronze. They worshipped images. In around 1500 B.C. their civilization came to an end with the advancement of the invading Aryans.

The conquest and subjugation of the original inhabitants went on for a long time. As time passed the flow of the Aryans into the sub-continent dwindle

Caste practice came into existence between 1000 and 600 B.C. The Aryan invaders wanted to keep their identity and they found that the only way to keep it was through caste system



d and as a result the number of the subjugated became more than that of the conquering Aryans. Besides, the conquered had an advanced civilization. This naturally resulted in the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan traditions. The non-Aryan tradition powerfully influenced the Aryan tradition. Puja or image worship is typically non-Aryan whereas sacrifice is characteristically Aryan in origin. Emphasis on asceticism, world-negating attitude, yoga technique of meditation, phallic worship, animal worship, etc. came from the non-Aryan tradition.

The fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan traditions went on for a long time. And this process gave birth to some of the worst evils in society and one of them is caste. The word “caste” is a Portuguese one meaning cast or mould. “Caste” is the word that the Portuguese used to designate the strange social practice that they found among the Hindus. “Jati” meaning “race” is the Indian word used for it. Another word commonly used is “varna” meaning colour. The colour of the invaders was different from that of the original inhabitants.

As time passed, the society became more complex with the fusion of the conquerors and the conquered

and the duty of offering sacrifice and puja became the privilege and prerogative of the Brahmins. Originally the word “brahma” meant prayers, hymns and poems said in honour of the Vedic gods and Brahmin signified the person who said them. In Vedic times anybody could be a Brahmin. The poets among the Aryans composed the songs and officiated at the sacrificial rituals.

The rulers and the fighters came to be known as the Kshatriyas. Those who tilled the land, kept cattle and did business came to be known as the Vaishyas. All those who did not come under the purview of any of the above mentioned three classes came to be known as the Sudras. Their duty was to help the other three classes in performing their duties. The categorization of the people into four classes or groups is nothing but a categorization of their work.



Some believe that caste is part of their religion, but in reality, as we have seen above, it has nothing to do with religion. The practice of caste system is practically found in all the religions in India

It is a division of labour. During the Vedic period there was both upward and downward social mobility; anybody could become a Brahmin.

The invading stock had various functions to perform: sacrificial rituals to please the gods, warfare and administration for safety and security, rearing cattle and agriculture for livelihood, and all these functions need helping hands and hence the Sudras or the servant class. In no way these classes can be understood as castes as we mean today. The four-fold division of labour was not anything new; this had already existed in Central Asia, the original home of the Aryans. Moses, the law-giver of the Jews, had divided the people into different classes. Similarly, Numa Pompilius had done the same with the Romans. So, the four-fold division of the people according to the work they did was not anything new.

The Aryan conquest and expansion continued for a very long time and gradually engulfed the whole of

India. As the Aryan expansion continued, the number of the non-Aryans greatly outnumbered the Aryans and the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan traditions and culture became more complete. Maintaining the Aryan identity itself became an insurmountable problem as inter-marriages had become a necessity or a compulsion because of the dwindling number of the Aryans. To maintain the Aryan identity, the concept of caste was introduced; the existing class distinction or division of labour became caste distinction. Wittingly or unwittingly, the master stroke was dealt by declaring that class was by birth and no one could marry outside his or her class. Thus came into existence the caste system in India. Before this aberration came into existence, a Sudra could become a Brahmin.

To build up a strong and prosperous India, we should do away with caste system. The hallmark of the Indian Constitution is freedom, equality, fraternity, truth, justice and peace, but the practice of caste stands in the way of the actual realization of these basic fundamental principles of human life. If we have to take our rightful position in the comity of nations, if we have to build up a prosperous, powerful, cohesive, peace-loving and non-violent society, we have to do away with this meaningless and abominable practice of caste.

Some believe that caste is part of their religion, but in reality, as we have seen above, it has nothing to do with religion. The practice of caste system is practically found in all the religions in India. It is found in Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc. Caste is an aberration that crept into our society; it is a social phenomenon that came into existence because of the social and historical circumstances. Since it eats into the very vitality of our economic, political, social and human development, it is high that we did away with it. ©

Panel to look into SC status for Dalit Christians, Muslims

A Catholic Church official has welcomed the government's decision to appoint a commission to examine if Dalits who converted to Christianity or Islam could be accorded Scheduled Caste (SC) status.

The Central Government in a notification issued on October 6 announced the setting up of a three-member inquiry commission headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, to look into granting SC status, its implications and submit a report within two years.

However, Dalit Christian leaders dismissed this as a tactic to delay their recognition as Scheduled Caste.

The SC status will ensure them a share in the 15 percent reserved quota in Parliament and state legislatures, government jobs and education, at present extended only to Dalits belonging to Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist religions.

"It is a welcome move. We have to take it positively as it will give us an opportunity to highlight the issues plaguing our brothers and sisters," Bishop Moses D Prakasam, a member of Bishops' Conference's Office of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, told UCA News.

Bishop Prakasam welcomed the appointment of Justice Balakrishnan who is a Dalit.

But R L Francis, president of the Poor Christian Liberation Movement (PCLM), felt the government seemed to delay the ongoing hearings of a batch of petitions in the Supreme Court seeking the removal of the religion criteria for inclusion as SCs.

He said the commission was announced after the country's top court told the government to submit its stand on extending constitutional benefits to Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin.

"The government was supposed to file its reply on the issue in the Supreme Court on October 11. So there is no doubt that this is an attempt to keep the reservation issue hanging until the upcoming parliamentary polls in 2024," he said.

Dalit leaders say there was no need for a third commission as the Ranganath Misra Commission in 2004 and Rajinder Sachar Commission in 2005 had recommended quotas and other benefits while



observing that conversion to Christianity and Islam had not improved the socio-economic conditions of Dalit people.

Yet, Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin are denied the SC status on grounds that their religion does not follow the caste system.

Political parties including the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party fear adverse reactions from existing SC communities whose quotas will have to be cut down to accommodate those from Christian and Muslim communities.

"The government is certain to face a backlash in the elections if it grants our wish. So it made a clever political move and appointed the commission. By the time it submits its report, the election will be over," Francis added.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said the commission will examine the changes a Dalit person undergoes after converting to Christianity or Islam and the wider implications of including them in the SC category.

Dalits, who are former untouchables within the centuries-old Hindu caste hierarchy, have converted to Christianity and Islam over the past several decades, though in reality, the religions offer limited protection from age-old societal prejudices.

Government data shows that 201 million of India's 1.2 billion people belong to this socially deprived category. Some 60 percent of India's 25 million Christians trace their origins to Dalit and tribal communities. ©

(Courtesy: UCA News)

Fake Claims on Minorities

An attempt to paint a rosy picture of the status of minorities is under way. But the reality is that they are under attack by the hardcore right-wing activists

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

The news of five Muslim intellectuals meeting Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS Sarsanghchalak, in August appeared in the media in the last week of September. Since then, there have been several attempts on the part of the Sangh Parivar public relations managers to create a perception that the Muslims are safe in a Hindu Rashtra and the insecurity, threat, discrimination and demonization experienced by the members of the Muslim community are only the creations of certain vested interests who are bent upon discrediting India.

The RSS chief during his Dussehra speech mentioned the need for reaching out to the minority communities. But no concrete proposal has come from the RSS, the ideological fountainhead of the BJP, to remove or substantially reduce the threat and insecurity feeling of the minorities under the present regime.

An attempt to paint a rosy picture of the status of minorities, especially of the Muslim community, was made by Mr. Ram Madhav in his write up in The Indian Express on October 8 under the title, "The Spector Peddlers". He wrote that India has an Adivasi woman as its President and Muslims, Christians



and other minorities hold high positions in government, judiciary and bureaucracy and are Members of Parliament and state Legislative Assemblies. Christian majority states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya have Christian chief ministers, some in alliance with the BJP. He also mentioned

the steps taken by the BJP government to improve the life situation of the poor and more discriminated sections within the Muslim community -- the Pasmanda or Arzal -- and making "triple talk" illegal.

His main contention is that there is a vested interest in creating the narrative of 'minorities in danger' and besmirching the image of BJP and RSS. He appealed to the newly emerging Muslim leadership to reject "this cacophony" and seize an opportunity that is being offered. According to him, "even the reprehensible incidents of mob lynching were few and not limited to any one community. If there were Muslim victims, there were Hindu victims too. India's law and order establishment takes swift action against all culprits."

Another argument devised by Ram Madhav is that the global audience is constantly fed such misinformation largely by groups inimical to India's democ-



According to a research study published by IndiaSpend.com on 28th June 2017, 84% of deaths in cow-related violence since 2010 are Muslims. In 30% of the attacks, the police registered cases against the victims

racy and interests. “What lends credibility to such lies is the insidious lending of support by the left-liberal cable in the west”, he wrote. He concluded his write up with a positive note that “Indian society has always firmly kept the ethos of “unity in diversity”. It didn’t allow India to be converted into another version of Pakistan”.

One who reads this article can easily understand that it is written for the consumption of those who are not aware of the tectonic socio-political changes that have taken place in India since the BJP came to power at the centre in 2014. The purpose of Ram Madhav’s article appears to create a perception to cover up the reality being brought to light by some independent agencies that study objectively the socio-political developments taking place in India.

There are enough studies to prove that the atrocities and violence on the minorities, especially on Muslims, increased enormously since 2014. Planned and concerted attempts have been made by some groups with the overt and covert support of the BJP governments to discriminate, discredit and demonize Muslims. They include cow-related mob lynching, love jihad, branding the members of Tablighi Jamaat as super spreaders of Covid and filing false cases against them, confiscation of the property of the Muslims who take part in any protest and the latest addition of bulldozing the houses and establishments of Muslims, based on mere accusation without any enquiry or fact-finding. This is euphemistically known as ‘bulldozer justice’.

One of the contentions of Ram Madhav is that the incidents of mob lynching were few and not limited

to one community alone. This statement is far from the truth. According to a research study published by IndiaSpend.com on 28th June 2017, 84% of deaths in cow-related violence since 2010 are Muslims. In 30% of the attacks, the police registered cases against the victims. The data also showed that half of the attacks were based on rumours.

The data compiled by Article-14.com show that there were 85 instances of cow-related violence against Muslims from 2015 to 2019 and most of the victims of these incidents died. Aakar Patel in his book, ‘Price of the Modi Years’ has given a short narration of these 85 violent incidents. The reality is that after 2014, the anti-cow slaughter laws were made stringent by the BJP-ruled states, and the laws have been weaponized by certain interest groups to brutalize Muslims. It is shocking to know that then Union Minister Jayant Sinha garlanded 8 people convicted in the Ramgarh lynching case in Jharkhand at a meeting organized to felicitate the convicts.

“Love jihad” is another strategy devised by the Sangh Parivar groups to attack Muslims and demonize them. Use of draconian laws like National Security Act (NSA) against the Muslims by the BJP governments was documented by some studies. As per a report published in The Indian Express on 11 September 2020, in Uttar Pradesh, more than half of NSA arrests in 2020 were for cow slaughter cases.

Aakar Patel has pointed out that 11 states had filed 20 FIRS against more than 2500 Tablighi Jamaat members, but no one was convicted. “The courts fiercely criticized the actions of the government. Judges called the cases ‘malicious’, ‘a virtual persecution’, ‘abuse of process’ and ‘abuse of power’”. It seems that Ram Madhav has conveniently forgotten these facts corroborated by Indian courts.

Against the backdrop of the anti-CAA protests, the role played by the BJP leaders and the union government in North-east Delhi communal riots was under suspicion. Many had suspected whether it was spontaneous or planned. The recently released report on 2020 Northeast Delhi violence by a ‘citizens committee’, chaired by former judge of the Supreme Court Madan B Lokur, has flagged “State failures”, including those of the Delhi Police, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Delhi government. According to the report, the





Delhi Police failed to take punitive measures against hate speeches made by political leaders and others in the run-up to February 23 or on the day itself. Ram Madhav may go through the report to find out how impartial the police and the union government were.

It is difficult to find a day on which the media doesn't report news on hate speech or atrocities on the Muslims by the state and the non-state actors. At a Virat Hindu Sabha organized by a unit of Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Delhi, BJP MP Parvesh Verma called for 'smpoorna bahishkar' or total boycott of "these people ". He did not mention the name of the community to be boycotted. But it was loud and clear to the crowd that cheered him. "Wherever you see them, if you want to fix their head, if you want to set them straight, then the only cure is total boycott. Raise your hand if you agree," the BJP MP said, and gestured towards the crowd. All of them raised their hands. The silence of the top leaders of the BJP and the RSS enables the next public outburst of hate.

The media reported that during the Navratri celebrations by the plain-clothes policemen in Kheda district of Gujarat, there was public flogging of Muslims accused of alleged stone-pelting. It is a blatant violation of the rule of law. As per a report published in Wire on 10th October, Gujarat's Minister of State for Home, Harsh Sanghvi, praised the cops in question. Since a video showing at least four men being held against an electricity pole and flogged amidst cheers by the village locals went viral, multiple reports have identified that police officials involved in the incident as being from the Local Crime Branch (LCB). Retired Delhi High Court judge,

Justice Jaspal Singh, expressed "shock" at how "citizens being attacked and flogged brutally by not only fellow citizens, but also by men in uniform whose duty is to maintain law and order."

It was reported in the media that during the meeting with the RSS chief the Muslim intellectuals had told Mohan Bhagwat about the false propaganda being carried out by some organizations regarding population growth among the Muslims in India. As per the Family Health Survey 5 released by the Union Health Ministry, the fertility rate among Muslims has dropped to 2.3 in 2019-20 from a high of 4.4 in 1992-93. Fertility rate is the average number of children born to a woman in her lifetime. In fact, NFHS data have shown that there is a 0.3-point gap between the fertility rate of Hindus and Muslims i.e., a difference of less than one child. In other words, the decline in fertility rates over the last 20 years has been sharper in the case of Muslims than of the Hindus.

Despite explaining this reality to Mohan Bhagwat by the Muslim intellectuals, the latter raised the issue of population growth during his Vijaydashami speech. Religion-based population balance is an important subject that can no longer be ignored, so that a holistic population policy should be brought and should be equally applicable to all, he said.

The fear and insecurity experienced by the Muslim community in India is not the result of false propaganda by vested interests as claimed by the supporters and public relations managers of the Sangh Parivar. There is more than enough data to prove the atrocities committed on the minorities, especially on Muslims, by the state and non-state actors. If the dialogue between the two communities is to be genuine and effective, the Sangh Parivar organizations and the BJP governments have to change their attitude towards the minorities and stop spreading prejudices and hate messages. "But given the harvest of hate and the dividends of silence, that won't happen in a hurry", as The Indian Express wrote in its editorial on October 11, 2022. ©

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A Reality, not a Spectre

Caught between flagrant hostility of the right-wing and sham concern of the secular front, Muslims are becoming India's outcasts

BY **MATHEW JOHN**

In an op-ed piece in *The Indian Express* last week titled "The Spectre Peddlers", the RSS ideologue, Ram Madhav, has lashed out at the constant misinformation and lies being spread by "Pakistan-sponsored and Khalistan-inspired groups" to the global audience about minorities in this country facing persecution, discrimination and deadly mob violence, about a partisan judiciary and law and order machinery. He blames the Opposition for seeking to lend credibility to this false narrative. His jaundiced eye sees the occasional cases of lynching as victimizing both Hindus and Muslims. He makes the outrageous and misleading claim that "the criminal justice system, the law-and-order machinery is controlled by the governments of the Indian states." His assessment is that all is fine for the minorities in India.

I have a different tale to tell. My story is about inhumanity, contempt, bigotry and unspeakable cruelty. It is about the deliberate, organized and



hate-filled othering of the Muslim that is now a plague. After the general elections in 2019, a leading political psychologist had observed that the electoral results indicated that Savarkar's Hindutva worldview had taken root in the psyche of a large section of people and the Gujarat model of hate had spread all over the

country. In the three years since then, it has only got worse.

For starters, allow me to give you a snapshot of a day in the life of a Muslim in present-day India. A few days ago, the world witnessed our version of medieval street justice. In Undhela village of Gujarat, 10 Muslim young men who had been arrested for allegedly disrupting a garba function by stone-throwing were, by turns, pinned to an electric pole and flogged with lathis by police in plainclothes in front of an applauding crowd, before being bundled into a police van for the legal process to begin. One was reminded of crimi-



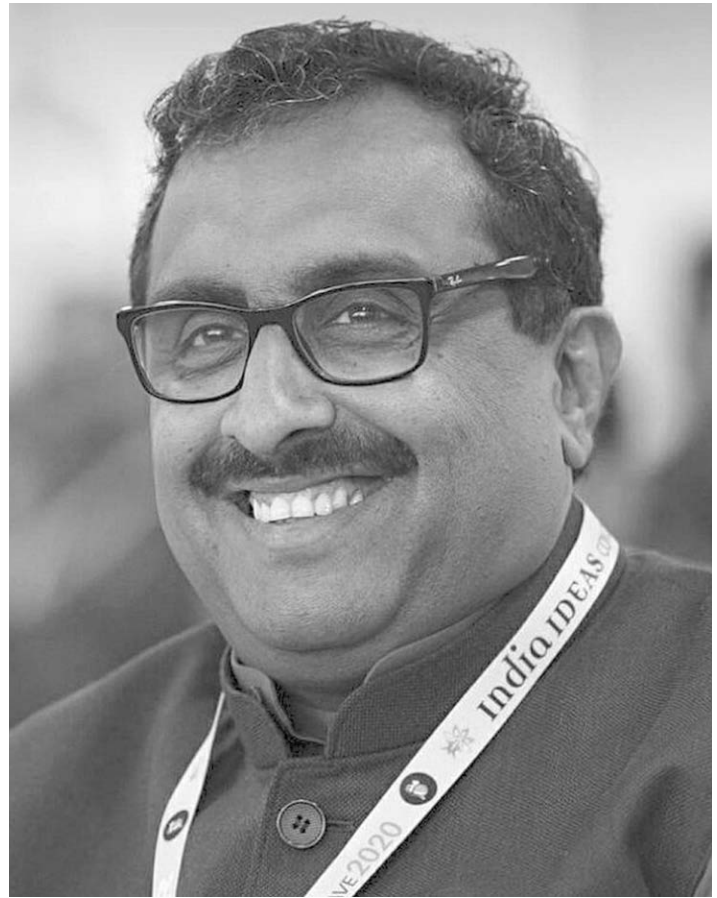
For a Muslim the most frightening aspect is not the naked communalizing of the demolition drive by the BJP, but the muted response of the AAP and the Congress to such venomous social divisiveness

nals and Christians being thrown to the lions at the Colosseum even as the spectators roared in delight.

Around the same time, several Muslim youths were arrested in Indore, allegedly for entering venues where Garba was being performed as part of the festivities to celebrate Navratri. Traditionally, the Garba function embraced everybody, and if one goes by what one of the organizers of Garba told a leading TV channel, this dance event honoring females and celebrating fertility was open to everybody, irrespective of religious affiliation. But this time around, Muslims are being identified and assaulted by Bajrang Dal vigilantes and then handed over to the police. Madhya Pradesh's Culture Minister fanned the flames with her preposterous observation that Garba pandals are "becoming the medium of love-jihad."

In Gumla district of Jharkhand, a 22-year-old Muslim was hacked to death by a mob with axes, sticks and rods. A Dussehra crowd in Bidar district of Karnataka barged into the Mahmud Gawan Madrasa, which is a heritage site, and in a defiant act of desecration, performed puja within its precincts.

In what has now become a routine happening, the Gujarat government has been on a devastating demolition drive for almost a week on Bet Dwarka island of Gujarat. Bulldozers accompanied by 1000 security personnel have been razing to the ground allegedly illegal structures that include residential, commercial and religious spaces. Summoning the Manichean imagery of good versus evil, the ruling BJP has released a video identifying the encroachers as *kattarpanthis* and *deshvirodhi*, adding that "the land of Lord Krishna has been rid of anti-national organizations and extremists." No marks for guessing who the extremists are and whose structures have been demolished. For a Muslim the most frightening



Ram Madhav

aspect is not the naked communalizing of the demolition drive by the BJP, but the muted response of the AAP and the Congress to such venomous social divisiveness. Caught between the flagrant hostility of the right-wing and the sham concern of the secular front, Muslims are India's outcasts.

We are now a society bereft of a social conscience or *insaaniyat*. The impunity with which extrajudicial punishments are being meted out to Muslims should worry a nation that has become, to use our leading social commentator's expression, a 'thoki raj', where vigilantes, law enforcement and the political executive have combined to target the Muslim community. The cosmopolitan spirit which once affirmed our common humanity even as we celebrated our differences has wilted in the face of a chilling majoritarianism that has swept across the land in the last few years. We are in thrall of hyper-nationalism, a deep distrust of the liberal values of tolerance and inclusion and a pathological hostility toward Muslims.

What is the way out for a community which is up against the wall? Certainly not the fawning obeisance of Muslim intellectuals before the superior and intimidating might of Hindutva

The proverbial icing on the cake for the Hindutva brigade in this festive season was the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's Vijayadashami speech at an RSS rally in Nagpur, where he expressed his apprehensions about the "population imbalance" which he attributed mainly to conversion by force, allurements and infiltration from across the border. He asserted the RSS worldview quite bluntly: "Without opposing anybody, Sangh organizes all who subscribe to this thought (of Hindu sanghatan or Hindu nation) i.e., organizes the Hindu society for protecting the Hindu dharma, sanskriti, samaj and all-round development of the Hindu Rashtra." It was a clear, unambiguous enunciation of the Hindutva doctrine of Hindu homogeneity through exclusion.

In reiterating the core philosophy of the RSS, the Sarsanghchalak was also cocking a snook at the five "eminent Muslim intellectuals" who came away from the meeting with him a few weeks ago, sanguinely believing that he was swayed by their arguments that it was impossible for India's Muslim population to outgrow and dominate Hindus. Confronted by the media about Mohan Bhagwat's latest statement on the "population imbalance", one of the five wise Muslim men responded that Bhagwat's remarks on



population policy were 'balanced' as he did not point fingers at any particular community. Who then did Bhagwat have in mind for the population imbalance due to conversion and infiltration? The sheer disingenuousness is stunning!

In this traumatic time for Muslims, a leading Muslim public intellectual, in regular columns in the *India Express*, has been effusive about the RSS chief's initiative in bringing about perestroika in Hindutva thinking. As proof of the RSS chief's eclectic intentions, he alludes to Bhagwat's recent visit to a mosque and interaction with Madrasa students. He, however, omits to mention that the RSS chief had broached the subject of teaching of the Gita and learning Hindi for uniting the country, which was his covert way of propagating the one nation, one language, one culture doctrine of Hindutva. The credulous admirer even endorses Bhagwat's ahistorical suggestion that the Hindu-Muslim divide was sown by the British although Hindu-Muslim riots and dissensions date back to centuries before the British set foot in India.

What is the way out for a community which is up against the wall? Certainly not the fawning obeisance of Muslim intellectuals before the superior and intimidating might of Hindutva. In the context of the Palestinian problem, Edward Said had observed that only a peaceful, mass political movement has a chance of succeeding in the fight against oppression. One couldn't agree more! ©



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATHEW JOHN is a former civil servant. Views are personal

Bharat Jodo Yatra

Challenges of Uniting India

The 'Idea of India' is under threat. This makes the Yatra undertaken by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, with the avowed objective of enhancing peace and harmony in the country, all the more significant

BY **RAM PUNIYANI**

The Bharat Jodo Yatra launched by Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, is getting tremendous response. It is as if the people were waiting for such an event to reaffirm their trust and faith in the composite Indian nationalism. This has been undermined during the last few decades in general and the last few years in particular. While the national media and major TV channels are ignoring it, the social media is partly compensating for that by putting across lovely and beautiful clips and pictures of people of all age groups longing to associate with the same.

The big response to the Yatra is mainly due to the undermining of what has been the "Idea of India" of our freedom fighters; it is due to the blatant bypassing of the values of Indian Constitution which underline: Equality on one hand and state's obligation to



reduce the economic gaps between the rich and the poor on the other. The Constitution also outlines the role of state in promoting scientific temper, which has been given a go-bye during last some time.

India became a secular nation with the emphasis on caste-gender equality. The kingdoms where the kings ruled with the 'divine authority' were replaced by colonial period in India. During the plunder by colonial rulers there were other changes also which led to social changes. Introduction of transport, communication, modern education and modern administration provided the ground for changes in caste and gender equations and promoting the unity among different religious communities. Those who were the bearers of feudal mindset kept themselves aloof from this process of 'nation making'. They helped British in their policy of



The Bharat Jodo Yatra probably is the best thing which has happened in India during the last several decades. This will surely strengthen the nation and cleanse the Congress party

'divide and rule', leading to the tragic partition and the biggest ever mass migration in the sub-continent.

India did embark on the path of nation-making through anti-colonial struggle. After Independence, there was enhancement of the industrialization, education, irrigation, health facilities and social welfare among others. The sectarian nationalists, Muslim and Hindu communalists mostly harped on identity issues. In due course Hindu communalists started dominating and their infiltration in different walks of life and different facets of state apparatus became apparent. Their taking over of media through sympathetic corporate world was accompanied by setting up of "social media cell". This weakened the process of the gains of freedom movement. The major thing which was undermined was the Hindu-Muslim unity; and the slow march towards social justice has been further hampered. Communalization of society retarded the march towards gender equality.

At the political level, the party which led the freedom movement was gradually infiltrated by opportunist communal elements for whom politics is just for grabbing power for their own selves. Many regional satraps also came up with ambitions for regional power with local agenda. The left parties which should have been the upholders of the rights of the marginalized, themselves started getting marginalized.

So today we see a situation where not only the divisive politics of the BJP has tried to co-opt a section of marginalized but also its parent organization RSS, through its various arms, has worked consistently among the Dalits and Adivasis to co-opt them into Hindu nationalist fold. It has also done social engineering through which at grass root level the micro identities have been strengthened. At the

same time mega Hindu identity has been propped up through the issues like Ram Temple, Love Jihad, Cow-Beef, fear of Muslims becoming a majority among others.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra probably is the best thing which has happened in India during the last several decades. This will surely strengthen the nation and cleanse the Congress party. It is also an occasion of churning for social groups, which are committed to the rights of the weak and the marginalized, the groups committed to democratic values, the groups committed to religious minorities. This Yatra gives them a platform to work for their goals of humane democratic society with rights and dignity for all sections of society.

Another welcome part of the Yatra is the pro-active response of these social groups and many political parties to affirm the values of pluralism, diversity and democracy. There are also many jarring parts of the Yatra. The route which it has mapped so far seems to have lesser representation of Muslim majority areas. While we stand to criticize the fundamentalist elements of Muslim leadership, we need to connect to average Muslims (and Christians) who have been the major victims of the sectarian politics. Ridiculing Rahul Gandhi for marching with the little girl with Hijab was deliberately played up by



the communal forces for sure. Yatra needs to stand up to associate with the religious minorities, emulating the Father of the Nation.

No short cuts are possible at this stage. The nation has been seriously undermined by the rise of identity politics. The diluting of caste differentials, through affirmative action has also been retarded. This Yatra is a major landmark and should be the beginning of the process where 'Iswar Allah Tero naam' and abolition of caste need to be integrated in the message of the Yatra. It needs to go through Muslim majority areas and the areas of ex-untouchables with equal frequency.

The message of Bharat Jodo (*Nafarat Chodo*) has been well received for sure. The need is to give the signal for reduction of economic disparity, and a boost to social and gender equality. This is the beginning of revival of what majority of Indians identified with during freedom movement. There is also a need to have backup action for consolidation of the positive energy being generated by the Yatra. This is where the major challenge will be.

Lakhs of RSS shakhas are the backbone which give the ground for identity politics and glorification of



past where the caste, class and gender hierarchies dominated the society. The need is to activate the quiescent Rashtra Seva Dal type organizations which keep promoting the values of peace and harmony which majority of Indians cherish even today. These values of love and peace are very much there, but they have been dwarfed by those forces, which were never a part of freedom movement and never part of the movements, which made us Indian Nation. ©

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RAM PUNIYANI is an activist and a prolific writer. He was awarded 'National Communal Harmony Award' in 2007.

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Lessons on Health Crisis

In every illness one finds an interplay of sadness, distress, depression, self-compassion and optimism. My health crisis helped me to understand myself

BY **M.L. SATYAN**

In our daily life we ask a 'mechanical question: *How are you?* And we give a 'mechanical answer': *'Fine', 'I am keeping fine', 'I am doing well'* etc. Is our answer true? It may be true for 5 percent of people. But for a vast majority, this answer is "partially true" and "not true". In reality, we are not fine and yet we try to say that we are fine. We laugh outside but cry inside. We are sad inside but try to show to others that we are happy. This is one of the many contradictions with which we live today.



In the past, we had knowledge about very few types of illness and relevant medical treatment. These days, new types of illnesses are spreading fast all over the world. We are really unprepared and unable to face the illnesses. Take the example of Covid-19 and other variants. They came suddenly and killed millions of people. There have been many other negative consequences in every country. The medical world was not sufficiently prepared to face this sudden disaster, in spite of advanced medical technologies.

I am writing this article from the hospital bed, after my fifth abdomen surgery at St. John's Medical College Hospital, Bengaluru. From November 2021 I have been under treatment for "rectal cancer" and underwent two surgeries. I wish to share my learning on the health crisis purely based on my experience. I have faced six major health crises in my life.

Crisis-1: In 1987 I was affected by a rare sickness called "Systemic Lupus Erythematosus" (SLE). In short it is known as "blood cellular defect". I underwent Ayurvedic treatment for 3 months. Since there was no progress, I was given Allopathic treatment. I was in a "semi-conscious" condition for seven days during that period. Finally,

the treatment at Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore saved my life.

Crisis-2: In January 2003 I had a gunshot injury at my abdomen while I was working in Ranchi. The first abdomen surgery was conducted there. 50 percent of my intestine (ascending colon) was removed.

Crisis-3: In August 2004 I went through a surgery in Chennai for my large abdomen hernia.

Crisis-4: In December 2010 I underwent a surgery in Chennai for the removal of Gallbladder.

Crisis-5: On March 15, 2022 a surgery was done in Bengaluru to treat my rectal cancer.

Crisis-6: On September 27, 2022 I underwent a surgery in Bengaluru for the reversal of my small intestine and removal of the temporary stoma bag.

During these six stages, I came across so many patients with different types of problems. The only one slogan that came to my mind repeatedly has been "health is wealth". In the modern world, people deviate from the traditional life and live as they like by paying very little attention to their personal



In reality, we are not fine and yet we try to say that we are fine. We laugh outside but cry inside. We are sad inside but try to show to others that we are happy. This is one of the many contradictions with which we live today

health. Rare illnesses affect people so fast and the medical sector is also growing with the same speed to tackle such illnesses.

Modern medical technologies have become unaffordable for the common people. Mobilising funds for a treatment becomes a herculean task. This creates psychological problems in the sick people and their families. A priest friend in Bengaluru had to shell out three lakh rupees for his dental implantation creating a lot of tension in him. The fund crunch caused psychological fear for my elder brother in Coimbatore and he postponed his medical treatment.

I started my medical treatment last October with my meagre savings. Providentially 'voluntary contributions' reached me from some of my family members and friends and I have been able to sail through. Every illness and medical treatment causes "mental tension" for the middle and lower middle



class people. Hence, a vast majority of them get into a "debt trap" mainly to meet their medical expenses. The government health schemes do not reach even 50 percent of the people. This is the bitter truth in our country.

Of course, when an illness affects us, it tears our body and mind. We are forced to undergo physical and mental agony. No one is spared from this. The sick people become desperate to a great extent. One female patient, in front of my bed, told the doctor on the day of her discharge from the hospital: "Doctor, I do not want to die. I want to live". We can imagine the extent of her depression, anxiety and desperation. Only when a person goes through a severe illness, the value of life is realised.

Lessons:

- When health is lost, wealth is lost.

A vast majority of them get into a "debt trap" mainly to meet their medical expenses. The government health schemes do not reach even 50 percent of the people. This is the bitter truth in our country

- Health is a precious component of life. So, care for personal health is the need of the hour.
- Discipline in personal life including the intake of traditional and healthy food.
- Trust/Faith in the divine power.
- Getting a new lease of life means that our mission in this world is incomplete.

I have experienced this in my life. Every time I am saved from an illness, God has entrusted me with a new mission and the energy to carry on the mission.

In every illness we can find an interplay of sadness, distress, depression, self-compassion, optimism and resilience. My health crisis helped me to understand myself -- hopeless feelings, loneliness, inadequacies, ability to cope with sickness, financial crunch and relationships. As a sick person, I always looked for the future stage of recovery with a lot of anxiety.

In this context, I was reminding myself of what Cardinal Newman said, "I do not want to see the distant scene. One step is enough for me." So, I tried to take one step a day. Indeed, my health crises have rather strengthened my faith in divine power and the importance of prayer. Numerous people have been praying for me and their prayerful support has put my health on the road to recovery and progress.

The essence of Bhagavad Gita says:

"Whatever has happened, has happened well.

Whatever is happening, is happening well.

Whatever will happen, will happen well."

In short, everything happens as per God's plan and for our good. We need to surrender ourselves and say a simple "yes" like Mother Mary – "Behold the handmaid of God, be it done to me according to your Will." ©

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ML SATYAN is an NGO Consultant and a freelance Journalist.

Promoting Promiscuity?

All of us have the great duty to respect and protect innocent life in the womb from the moment of conception to natural death. No one is entitled to kill it

BY **BISHOP GERALD JOHN MATHIAS**

The Supreme Court of India on 29 September 2022 declared in its judgement that unmarried women are also entitled to seek abortion of pregnancy in the term of 20-24 weeks, arising out of a consensual relationship. "All women are entitled to safe and legal abortion. Distinction between married and unmarried women is unconstitutional," said the Supreme Court Bench comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, Surya Kant and A.S. Bopanna.

It may be useful to recall here that the Parliament had amended the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971, a year ago on 24 September 2021. This Amendment had extended legalization of abortion up to 24 weeks under some special circumstances (while originally it was up to 20 weeks). Among the special circumstances which make a woman entitled to terminate her pregnancy (abortion) is when marital status changes during pregnancy (e.g., divorce, widowhood).

The Supreme Court judges, however, thought that restricting the benefit of this law only to married people is too restrictive interpretation of the rule. According to their judgement "the artificial distinction between married and single woman is not constitutionally sustainable. The benefits in law extend equally to both single and married women".



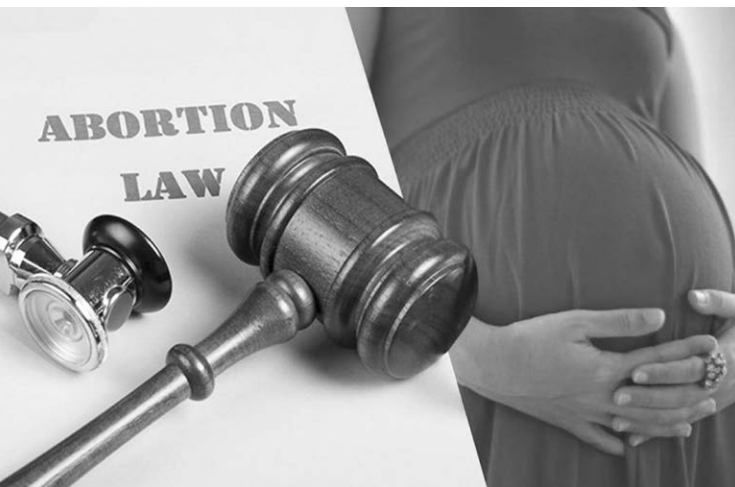
Background

The case in point was a Manipuri unmarried woman, aged 25, who approached the Delhi High Court seeking termination of her pregnancy of 23 weeks and 5 days stating that her partner of consensual relationship had refused to marry her and she did not want to give birth to the child. The Delhi High Court refused relief to her stating that an unmarried woman whose pregnancy arose out of a consensual relationship, was not covered by any of the Clauses under the M T P Rules, 2003.

She then approached the Supreme Court which, on 21 July, 2022 passed an interim order allowing her to abort her pregnancy. "The rights of reproductive autonomy give an unmarried woman similar right as a married woman. Therefore, including only married and excluding unmarried women will be violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. The rights of reproductive autonomy, dignity, and privacy and Article 21 give an unmarried woman the right of choice on whether or not to bear a child, on a similar footing of a married woman".

Legal, but not Moral

We must note here that any direct abortion, at any stage of pregnancy, is immoral. What is legal is not necessarily moral. Many things may be legally permissible in a Civil Society but that does not mean



The rights of reproductive autonomy give an unmarried woman similar right as a married woman. Therefore, including only married and excluding unmarried women will be violation of Article 14 of the Constitution

that they are also by that fact morally acceptable. As human beings we have obligation not only to follow the State laws but also God's law. And if civil law goes against natural law or divine law, the moral obligation is to follow the natural law or divine law.

The supreme Court Judgement upholds the rights of a woman, her reproductive rights, autonomy, dignity and privacy but the fundamental right to life of the innocent, weak, voiceless, and defenceless child in the womb is totally ignored and blatantly violated.

The judgement goes against the sacredness and inviolability of human life, which is a precious gift from God.

The supreme Court Judgement upholds the rights of a woman, her reproductive rights, autonomy, dignity and privacy but the fundamental right to life of the innocent, weak, voiceless, and defenceless child in the womb is totally ignored and blatantly violated

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its Declaration on Procured Abortion (1974) states that the human person has certain rights which are known as "human rights" and the first right of the human person is right to life. This is fundamental, the condition of all the others. Hence it must be protected above all others. (No.11)

It further teaches: "From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It will never be made human if it were not human already" (No.12). Furthermore, "The child itself, when grown up, will never have the right to choose suicide; no more may his parents choose death for the child while it is not of an age to decide for itself. Life is too fundamental a value to be weighed against even very serious disadvantages". (No.14)



Vatican II Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* teaches with very clear and unequivocal terms that human life must be respected and protected: "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes." (G.S.51)

The Church has always, from the first century itself, affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. In the *Didache* it is clearly said: "You shall not kill by abortion the fruit of the womb and you shall not murder the infant already born." This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to moral law (cf. CCC 2271)

St. John Paul II, the great defender of life, describes the pitiable plight of the innocent, weak and defenceless child in the womb: "The one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life. No one more absolutely *innocent* could be imagined. In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor! He or she is *weak*, defenceless, even to the point of lacking that minimal form of defence consisting in the poignant power of a new-born baby's cries and tears. The unborn child is *totally entrusted* to the protection and care of the woman carrying him or her in the womb. And yet sometimes it is precisely the

mother herself who makes the decision and asks for the child to be eliminated, and who then goes about having it done.” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 58)

St. John Paul II strongly condemned abortion as a grave moral disorder: “Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, in communion with Bishops..... *I declare that direct abortion, that is abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based on the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium*” (E.V.62)

A Promiscuous Society?

The Supreme Court verdict and certain observations of the learned judges such as, “law must be interpreted keeping in mind changing social mores; as societal norms and mores change, law must also adapt. Changing social mores must be borne in mind while interpreting provisions. Societal realities indicate the need to recognise legally non-traditional family structures” etc., can be misleading. In all likelihood such comments would encourage more live-in relationships, consensual and casual sex, pre-mari-



tal and extra-marital sex. It would call in question the age-old institution of marriage and family which are essential and fundamental to a stable society. It would further promote sexual promiscuity and a permissive mentality in the society because people know that if any unwanted pregnancy occurs it can be terminated at any time even as late as 24 weeks.

The verdict said: “All women are entitled to safe and legal abortions”. Does our Constitution grant anyone the right or licence to kill? Abortion is direct killing of an innocent person in the womb. How can anyone be entitled to kill an innocent person in the womb? As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative act of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from the beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.” (CCC 2258)

What is a safe abortion? Safe for whom? Only for the woman (mother)? What about the safety and security of the innocent, voiceless and defenceless child in the womb? Who will protect it if not the mother in the first place, and then the Judiciary, Legislature and Doctors?

All of us have the great duty and responsibility to respect and protect innocent life in the womb from the moment of conception to natural death. No one is entitled to kill it. Let me repeat here once again the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “God alone is the Lord of life from the beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.” (CCC 2258). ©

**What is a safe abortion?
Safe for whom? Only for the
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womb?**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BP GERALD JOHN MATHIAS is the Bishop of Lucknow

Stan Swamy died in jail after his rights violated: Tharoor

The human rights of Jesuit Father Stan Swamy, who died in judicial custody, were violated even though he fought for the rights of poor indigenous people, a senior opposition leader said.

Shashi Tharoor, a Member of Parliament who is in the electoral race to become the next chief of the Congress party, was speaking at the Father Stan Swamy Memorial Lecture on, 'Are Human Rights Universal?' in Mumbai on October 8.

A former UN diplomat and former Central Minister, Tharoor said that "the late activist priest's death in judicial custody had brought the world's attention to his work and commitment."

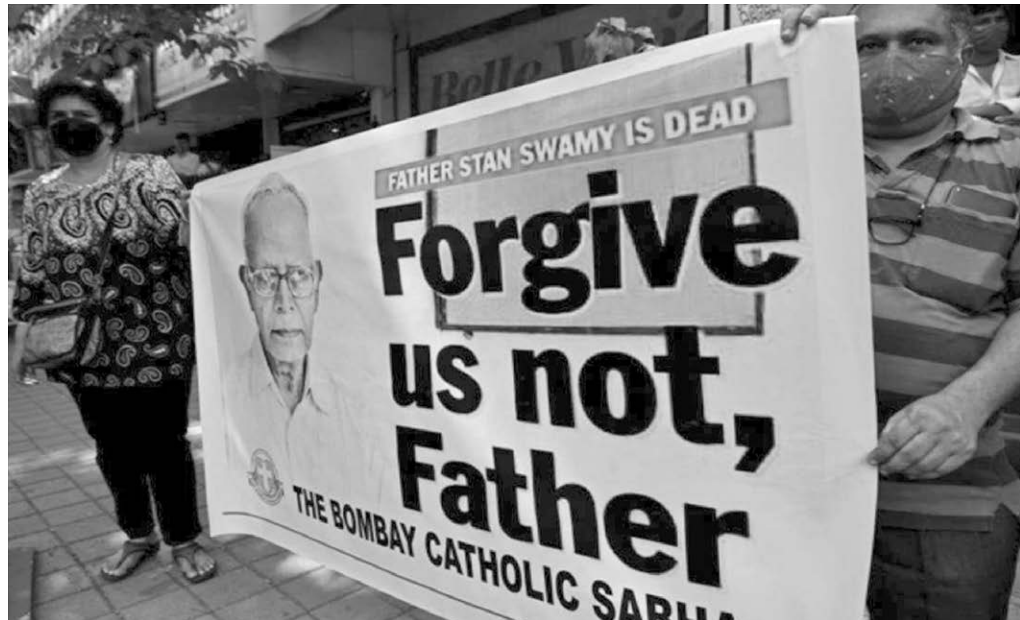
The 84-year-old Jesuit priest died as an undertrial while undergoing treatment in a Catholic-managed private hospital in Mumbai on July 5, 2021. He was accused of involvement in the mob violence during the bicentenary celebrations of the Bhima-Koregaon battle victory near Pune in Maharashtra on January 1, 2018.

Father Swamy was jailed on October 9, 2020, a day after he was arrested at his home in Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand.

He was charged with sedition for allegedly collaborating with the outlawed Maoist rebels to overthrow the pro-Hindu Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government at the Centre.

The priest who suffered from Covid-19 and other age-related ailments was admitted to the hospital rather late following an order of the Bombay High Court after his pleas to the special court seeking bail for medical treatment were rejected.

Recalling the tragic death of Father Swamy as an undertrial without being convicted, Tharoor said the "system was responsible for his death though he had made extraordinary contributions."



He pointed out the "unworthy endeavors on the part of his critics to dehumanize him" while admitting that he himself was ignorant of the Jesuit priest's real contributions.

Father Frazer Mascarenhas, a Jesuit designated as Father Swamy's next of kin by the Bombay High Court, also spoke on the occasion.

"It was unbelievable that Father Swamy would have advocated violence. He was treated badly in jail. We are appealing to the court for two reasons – one is to exonerate him and second to investigate the cause of his death," he said.

Father Mascarenhas, a former principal of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, said Father Swamy had a very good grip on social sciences and he used it for uplifting the poor indigenous people in Jharkhand.

"Father Swamy was fully committed to human rights, and it was unfortunate that the entire case against him was a violation of human rights," he said.

Advocate Mathew Antony, the founder of the Indasa Foundation and one of the organizers of the lecture, told UCA News that Father Swamy's life should inspire all to fight for the rights of the lesser privileged. ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Fake Job Racket Thriving

Tempted by overseas employment advertisements, especially those posted on the social media and from unknown agents offering attractive salary packages? Beware, it could be a fake job

BY AARTI

The pivotal role played by the Ministry of External Affairs in the rescue of several Indian citizens, mostly young “techies” who were in the custody of cyber-criminal syndicates in remote parts of Myanmar is laudable. It was after someone shared a video about their predicament, on 21 September this year, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister requested the Prime Minister for his intervention towards their rescue and safe repatriation. Some 32 people were freed last month, and 13 others reached Chennai on October 5.

The victims had fallen prey to job offers made by scamsters over the social media and private recruitment agencies. Most of them who reached Dubai in mid-July and put up at a hotel for 15 days were asked to take a typing test online. Thereafter, all were issued ID cards, flown to Bangkok, later to a city bordering Myanmar in trucks and finally by boat. The company where they were put to work had almost 1,000 people and all were Chinese -- employees and bosses. They had to communicate their needs through Telegram messenger or Google translator.

According to the victims, they had to identify at least five people. While some of them were forced to lure people (from business tycoons to general public) into investing in fake cryptocurrencies or banking sites, others had to scam women by creating fake profiles on matrimonial sites.

Those who resisted from indulging in online fraud had to face rigorous punishments ranging from physical assaults, starvation, walk 20 rounds like a frog, work extended hours and even face electric shocks.

In short, as they were trafficked and sold several times to different syndicates, there was no option for them to quit and return home unless one paid their bosses approximately Rs 5 lakh.

In 2021, many citizens in Singapore reportedly lost over 10 million to “pig-butcher scams”.

It is an emerging hybrid of romance and investment scam where victims are groomed for weeks to months before losing their fortune in bogus investment schemes or illegal gambling sites.

Those who resisted from indulging in online fraud had to face rigorous punishments ranging from physical assaults, starvation, walk 20 rounds like a frog, work extended hours and even face electric shocks



Also, many victims of the scam, mainly in the US and Canada, have lost huge amounts after being lured into depositing money on fake platforms.

Most victims initially may find the proposal suspicious, but they would be motivated to start out with a small amount of money. The scammer would let them withdraw the profits a few times to gain their trust and drive their ego. The scammer would urge the victim to invest larger amounts of money but when the victims find they won't be able to withdraw the profits it would be too late as both the scammer and the platform would disappear.

The Central Bureau of Investigation recently launched Operation Chakra in coordination with foreign agencies. Many call centres have been busted and cybercriminals were arrested. But it could just be a tip of the iceberg.

Work primarily provides meaning and purpose besides fulfilment of one's basic needs. Studies have shown that the work we do can have a huge impact on our mental health and unemployment negatively affects our emotional health. Conversely, the work that we don't do can have an even greater and more deleterious effect on our mental health.

Research reveals that unemployment and under-employment can cause depression. Losing a job and being unemployed for a long period of time is both a psychological trauma as well a financial trauma, and the two are closely intertwined.

Although unemployment is a normal part of life for millions of people across the globe, the cause for concern is that the coronavirus pandemic has compounded the situation.

With employment opportunities fluctuating in a post-pandemic world, several individuals seem to be experiencing a financial crisis after losing their jobs. Even as the writing on the wall is clear that we don't live in a world of permanent, life-long jobs and being unemployed is not a crime or a moral failing, many people, however, feel ashamed of being unemployed. They do not want anyone to know that they are unemployed.

A neighbour who has lost his job sees it as a personal failure. He wakes up early morning and



13 trapped in Myanmar brought to india

With growing dependency on digital advertisements and virtual interviews, suffice to say that at an individual level, anyone opting for jobs without proper verification, it is a different story altogether

leaves his home only to spend time in parks or libraries and returns in the evening to avoid embarrassing comments from other neighbours.

True, job hunting poses several challenges. It needs to be understood that bad things happen to good people during difficult times. But social contacts can go a long way in facilitating people getting jobs. The more social contacts that you have, the easier it is to get a job. A 2006 study in the United States found that 44 percent of people were able to get a job through a social contact.

At a macro level there is an imperative need to crack down on bogus recruitment agencies and bring them to book.

With growing dependency on digital advertisements and virtual interviews, suffice to say that at an individual level, anyone opting for jobs without proper verification, it is a different story altogether. More so because cyber criminals are at work to exploit the unsuspecting common man. ©

'A Fight for Justice and Survival'

It is undemocratic to implement major projects like Vizhinjam Port without proper scientific study and assessment of the possible impact

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Church is leading an unprecedented protest against a controversial port project run by one of the world's richest men, which is playing havoc with the lives of thousands of fisher people in the Archdiocese of Trivandrum in Kerala.

The serene and historic fishing harbor of Vizhinjam along the Arabian Sea coast is being converted into a massive commercial port costing more than \$1 billion. The port is now leased to the powerful Adani Corp., led by Gautam Adani who last month replaced Jeff Bezos as the world's second-richest man. Over 50 people have died in fishing accidents due to disturbance of the sea since the construction began. "We will continue the protest until our just demands are met," Father Eugene Pereira, vicar general of the archdiocese and convener of the fisher people's protest, told *The Register*.

The seven core demands of the fisher people – addressing equitable compensation, rehabilitation for devastation caused by the project and protection of the coastal areas among others – have been displayed on a giant billboard at the protest venue.

"The government has yet to give us a written assurance to address our demands," said Father Pereira, who has led several delegations of striking fisher people to key government officials.

More than 90% of the Trivandrum Archdiocese's quarter-million Catholics hail from a fishing background, based on a legacy of hamlets strewn along the Arabian Sea coast that were evangelized by St. Francis Xavier in the 16th century.

"We are not against development. But this is not a development project, but a destructive one. The houses and livelihood of our people are being destroyed along with the coasts"

"We are not against development. But this is not a development project, but a destructive one. The houses and livelihood of our people are being destroyed along with the coasts," Archbishop Thomas Neto of Trivandrum said.

"We have nothing to lose. Ours is a protest for livelihood and survival. We are not prepared to bow before this destructive project. We are prepared to pay any price and continue the protests until our just demands are met," said Archbishop Neto.

While this declaration drew thunderous applause from the crowd, elderly women could be seen in tears and in prayer with folded hands as Archbishop Neto made the passionate speech.

At the same time, hundreds of police had a tough time keeping "pro-port" protesters who tried to break into the massive church protests at bay. The clout of the Adani Corp. over the media was also evident, after more than a dozen TV channels crowded a news conference on the eve of the September 18 protest at the Trivandrum archbishop's house. However, the news coverage that was actually aired afterward remained minimal.

"We have no option but to raise voices for our suffering people," Archbishop Neto told *The Register*, when asked if the local Church is worried about repressive action from the government.

"I congratulate the Church for this noble act of speaking up for the fisher people and environment destruction with the unscientific port construction," said Prashant Bhushan, the Supreme Court lawyer.

"It has led to the destruction of the coast and lives of the [fisher] people. The sea has eroded the coast, destroyed houses and vanished beaches,"





said Bhushan, a prominent activist lawyer who has repeatedly visited Vizhinjam over the last eight years, documenting the devastation caused by the construction of the port.

“The (2-mile)-long wall built in the sea is leading to this destruction, and it is obvious that the port is causing the problem,” Bhushan said.

The entire Church in Kerala has rallied behind the protests, led by the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. “This is a fight for justice and survival. It is undemocratic to implement major projects like Vizhinjam Port without proper scientific study and assessment of the possible impact,” said Cardinal George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Catholic Church and president of the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council, while inaugurating the flag march.

A visit to St. Antony’s Valiathura deanery parish on the seashore, home to 2,300 Catholic families, provided a picture of the devastation caused by the Vizhinjam Port being constructed 10 miles to the south.

Since port construction began, rough surges from the sea have broken the key transportation lifeline of Valiathura – a nearly-300-meter-long concrete sea bridge in front of the church – that enabled small ships to unload cargo and fishermen to bring their catch to market, thereby depriving hundreds of their livelihoods.

More pathetic was the sight of rows of broken and devastated houses, besides hundreds of houses completely swallowed by the sea along the Valiathura coast.

Jessy Antony, a fisherman’s wife, lives with her family in a crammed cubicle in one of the four huge warehouses (unused since the bridge was broken) that are sheltering nearly 100 displaced Catholic families near the church.

“Our house had never suffered any damage until the work on the port began. But we have not received any compensation nor any support from

government,” Antony told *The Register*.

“Our troubles started six years ago, when our house was swallowed by the sea. Since then, we have been living in this [dilapidated] school. Look at our surroundings,” Jacinta Christopher, the widow of a fisherman who died in the “shabby camp,” said.

“In my 60 years of life, our house was never damaged, though we lived on the coast. Now, the government is trying to push us out from this [school] camp, as it is an embarrassment for the port project,” said Christopher, who shares a single classroom with four families.

“Our people have been suffering from the devastating effect of the port construction,” Father Sabbas Ignatius, the parish priest, said.

“The government has a list of more than 200 Catholic families who have lost their houses and have been displaced from our parish. Many more are living in broken and damaged houses, as they have nowhere to go,” said Father Ignatius, the former social-service director of Trivandrum Archdiocese.

“My house on the coast was swallowed by the sea in 2017. More than 20 houses in my parish have gone under the sea, which has encroached a kilometer since the port construction began,” recounted Patrick Michael, the president of the lay forum of the archdiocese, who lives in nearby Valithope parish.

“Even going to fish in the sea now is dangerous, due to sudden surges after the port construction,” said Michael, who used to accompany his fisherman father to the sea in his younger days.

C.R. Neelankandan, a leading environmental and social activist in Kerala who was on the podium during one of the protests, told *the Register*: “This port construction is destroying the lives of the fisher people, the environment and pristine beaches.”

“If the port is allowed to be completed, thousands of fisherfolk will be thrown out of their profession,” said Neelakandan, convener of the Kerala chapter of the National Alliance of People’s Movements. ©

Teesta's Ordeal in Jail

Despite torture, the activist underscores importance of her NGO pressing ahead with its work, refusing to be cowed down



Teesta Setalvad, the rights defender who was held in custody for 57 days in an Ahmedabad prison on the charge of falsifying evidence on the 2002 Gujarat riots, has spoken out in detail about how she was roughed up during her arrest, her trauma in jail and unexpected rays of hope that helped her cope with the situation.

The following are the highlights from an interview Setalvad gave to journalist Karan Thapar for *The Wire* news portal:

- Setalvad says the Gujarat anti-terrorism squad personnel who arrested her from her Mumbai residence barged into her bedroom and struck her. She suffered a bruise.
- She explains why it was prudent and important that she insisted on filing a complaint with Maharashtra police before she was taken to Gujarat.
- She narrates the division of cleaning labour in prison.
- She recounts how she used to break down all of a sudden in prison but how books from the library helped her – and the priceless value of roses. Another source of relief was the sight of birds and

monkeys on the jail premises. Arjun the black cat also counted.

- She refers to the heavy toll on the mental health of the inmates and its symptoms. “You fight for no reason at all, you scream, you shout.”
- She speaks about how the initial atmosphere of suspicion – and the wonder at her receiving 2,700 letters and postcards – among the inmates eventually gave way to engagement, bonding and discussion.
- She also underscores the importance of her NGO pressing ahead with its legitimate work outside, refusing to be cowed down.

Setalvad and former Gujarat DGP R.B. Sreekumar were arrested in June. The FIR against them as well as already jailed former police officer Sanjiv Bhatt was drawn up after the Supreme Court dismissed a plea by Zakia Jafri, the widow of slain Congress MP Ehsan Jafri, against the findings of a special investigation team that gave a clean chit to Narendra Modi, Gujarat Chief Minister in 2002 and now Prime Minister.

In the interview, Setalvad told Thapar over video: “They (the Gujarat anti-terrorism squad personnel) pushed aside the Maharashtra police security and they actually surveyed the entire area and they stormed into my house, then the bedroom and they started just pushing me around and saying that you have to come with us. I was not served a notice. They had no warrant to enter my premises and there was no FIR shown to me.”

“One male and one female officer struck me.... I had a large bruise.... I was just telling them that I will not move until I have seen an FIR or a warrant, and why have they come illegally trespassing.... Four males and two females.... They pushed aside my colleagues, my husband, my son, everybody and they just wanted to pull me out and take me away like an abduction,” added Setalvad, who heads Citizens for Justice and Peace, an NGO.

“A man in a white shirt, whom I have named in my complaint to the magistrate, and a woman in a yellow T-shirt... I had a huge bruise (she said indicating that it was her left arm). Without a *panchnama* (seizure memo with the attestation of witnesses) they seized my phones, and the phone of my colleague. This was all illegal and unlawful,” she said.

Setalvad added that she suffered the bruise from an “iron-like grip” when she refused to go with them without first being taken to the local police.

“If I had not found the courage to insist on it (to be taken to Santa Cruz police station to file a complaint against the Gujarat police’s actions) -- many people do not (do so) because they are scared of the police -- I think that contemporary evidence of how they had treated me would not have been there for the courts.”

In the interview, Setalvad said she was lodged in Barrack Six of the Ahmedabad women’s prison, which she shared with 24 to 25 undertrials and their seven children.

They were given two meals a day of “thick rotis you had to tear two inches off from the sides,” dal, rice and a spicy and oily vegetable dish. Setalvad was later able to obtain a tiffin service, which she shared with five inmates.

While the inmates took care of the general cleaning of the barracks, convicts cleaned toilets and bathrooms, weeded the lawns and cooked food. “They work from 7 in the morning to 7 at night for just around Rs 3,000 (a month), which they need to send home,” she said. Others had the option to

volunteer at an in-house sanitary napkin unit that paid Rs 75 to Rs 90 a day.

“It is really the constraining lack of freedom and the loss of dignity that hits you when you are inside (the jail),” said Setalvad who found solace in watching peacocks, eagles and monkeys from her window. To get away from the barracks where a TV played Hindi films all day at a high volume, she successfully pleaded and convinced the prison authorities to keep the reading room open for around two hours a day.

“Inexplicably, I would suddenly break down. And I would pick up a book or letter that would give me strength,” she said.

She also found cheer in the roses the prison librarian gave her twice a week, and watching a black cat named Arjun walking about at night. She read four to six books a week, including Geetanjali Shree’s *Tomb of Sand*, Orhan Pamuk’s books and a work on Argentine political prisoners. *The Framing of India’s Constitution* also figured on her reading list.

“For the first few days, I was fearful and weary. There was a certain curiosity-cum-suspicion from jail authorities and even undertrials as to what kind of case this is.... You decide to be a very ordinary undertrial and you have conversations and start bonding,” said Setalvad.

“I had the good fortune of receiving 2,700 letters and postcards which I would read and re-read. And my fellow inmates would say ‘where are all these from, why are you getting so many letters’, and I would pick one or two of them and read it out to them and explain who has written them and that would be a lovely discussion for an hour or two.”

She explained that she felt, “anger, outrage, despair sometimes, fear”, and that mental health was a major problem in the prison, the symptoms of which were inmates getting “bitter, angry, you fight for no reason at all, you scream, you shout”.

“What really kept me going was the fact that I was able to get information of my organisation’s continuing work outside. If you can just tell a very hostile State that our work will carry on; our work is legit and constitutional; and our work requires an understanding that we are only fighting for constitutional values, nothing less and nothing more, that gave me a lot of strength,” said Setalvad who spoke about CJP’s legal aid in Assam, the Hate Watch project and a prison reforms initiative they plan to launch now. ©



Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

bobsbanter@gmail.com

Avoiding the ET, IT and Police..!



Alexa had been listening, to every word said, and it was recorded! Our lives are open today.

An article in the Economic Times a few years ago caught my attention. It said, "Data in 2025 – Huge, but not fully secure". The article went on to say, "Within the next 10 years, worldwide, data about you, me and others is going to swell to about 163 zettabytes." It is equivalent to 40 trillion DVDs, which would reach to the moon and back over 100 million times.

Can you imagine there is so much of who you are that is available so freely to people all around? Doors to hide behind are going, going, gone.

You don't need Pegasus to find out what you are up to. It's there for anybody who wants it.

And if you have the ED, IT or police at your door, the usage has begun.

What do we do? That's the question every MLA, and MP is asking now, and maybe as businessmen and corporate leaders or ordinary folk, you also should be asking.

That day when I spoke, they'd all come to hear the solution I could give, and I'm not sure they went away too happy, because the only answer to a light being shone into the darkness of ones life is, I told them, "for that light not to find anything wrong!"

Yes, by default, honesty will be the only policy which one will have to live by, and a life of integrity and truthfulness will have the ED, IT and police coming out of your home saying, "This man or woman is clean! There's nothing we can find!"

That is the only way..! ©

They were quite a few who came to hear me speak last week; corporate heads, industrialists and businessmen, and rightly so, because my topic was 'How to Avoid the ET, IT and Police!'

It's a subject that's going to be of interest to thousands in our country as politicians galore are finding themselves behind bars, as the title of MP or MLA doesn't give them protection anymore.

There are no closed doors to hide behind!

What does that mean for you and me? It means that whatever you do, say, or write is now known to the whole world. And more than that, it means that no more can you lead a double life, one for public view and the other behind a closed door!

How did this come about?

Technology has made this happen! And technology knows everything about you. Have you realized that the ads you get on Facebook and Google reveal what sites you have been visiting? The other day Alexa suddenly added to the conversation my wife and I were having. For a moment my wife thought there was another woman in the house!

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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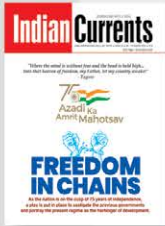
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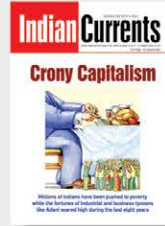
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