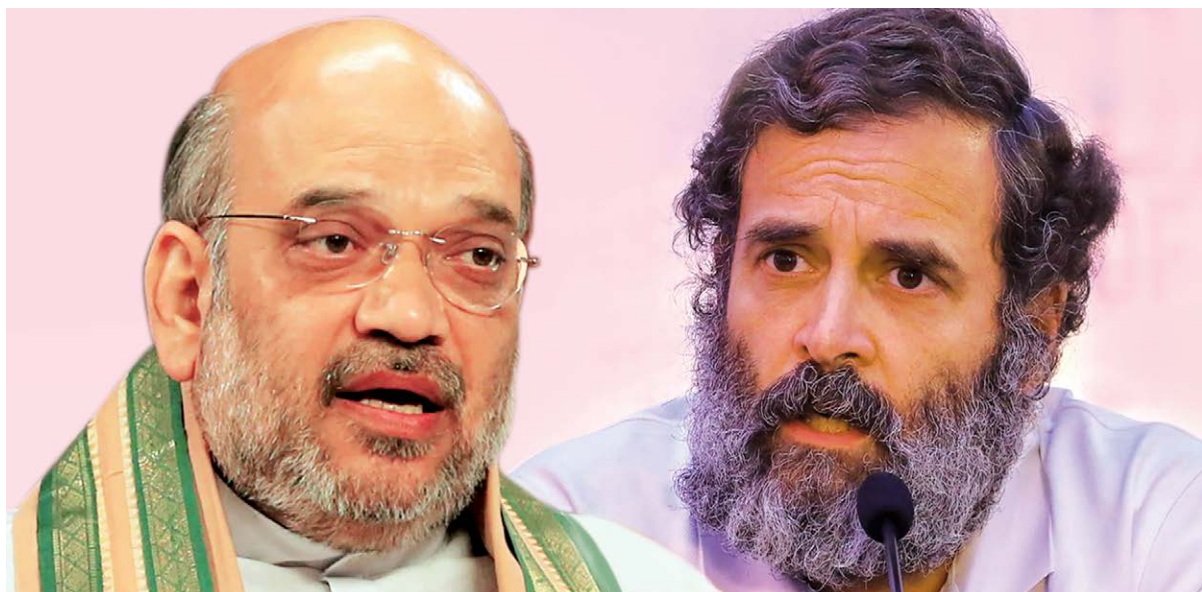


Indian Currents

www.indiancurrents.org • Vol. XXXV • Issue 3 • 16 - 22 January 2023 • ₹15

Total Pages - 36 Including Cover

SHAH'S PUJA VS RAHUL'S TAPASYA



While the Union Home Minister Amit Shah announces that the Ram Temple would be inaugurated on 1 January 2024, Rahul Gandhi announces that the Bharat Jodo Yatra is a 'Tapasya' intended to fight hate, fear, disharmony and division of the society on caste and religious lines.

Enlightened Leadership

By Jacob Peenikaparambil

The world today looks desperately for enlightened leaders in the midst of mushrooming popular leaders who speak the language of hatred, revenge and exclusion. The urgent need of humanity today is building enlightened leaders with vision, character and competence, and schools play a pivotal role in building leaders. The book, 'Enlightened Leadership' will be a great help to the teachers and principals in the task of training leaders.

Leaders are needed not only in politics, but in all fields, and all individuals are expected to play leadership role in their family and profession. Realizing the urgent need for building leaders, Fr. Jacob Peenikaparambil has written the book, Enlightened Leadership. Besides highlighting the qualities needed for a leader, the book presents many examples of ordinary individuals who have displayed extraordinary leadership qualities. As Dr.

George Arickal has pointed out in the foreword of the book, "The different chapters in the book are not theoretical treatises on leadership, but they are referring to actual happenings in life. The background is real, the message is authentic and clearly articulated. Qualities, attitudes and capabilities needed for an enlightened leader are described in this book".

Since 2014 Fr. Jacob has been part of the USM team that facilitates one-week Enlightened Leadership Training for students. On the basis of his experience of interacting with young people he has written short articles on leadership since 2020.

This book will be an appropriate gift to students and teachers. It also can be a significant part of resource items for value education.

Varghese Alegaden

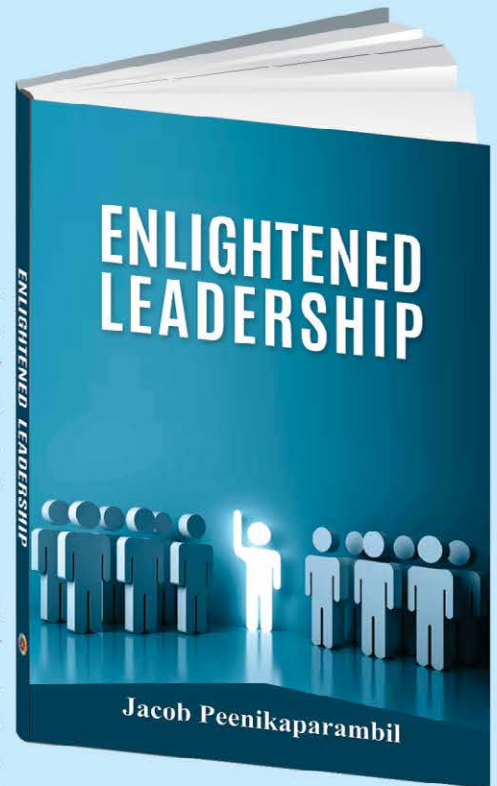
Pages: 152 | Size: 22 cm. x 14 cm. | Price: Rs. 170/- (Paper back)

Place your order to :



UNIVERSAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT
of Value Education for Peace

R-847, Mahalakshmi Nagar, Indore - 452010 (M.P.) Tel: 0731-4072057
E-mail: usmindore93@gmail.com / Web: www.universalsolidarity.in



TEMPLE VS TAPASYA



In the late forties when the question of the reconstruction of Somnath temple came up, Gandhiji told Sardar Patel and others that he was in favour of rebuilding the temple, but it should not be done with government funds. It has to be undertaken wholly with private funds, Gandhiji was emphatic about it. When the time for its inauguration came, President Rajendra Prasad was invited to do that honour. He consulted Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who dissuaded the former from it. Nehru told the President: "My dear Rajendra Babu, I confess that I do not like the idea of your associating yourself with a spectacular opening of the Somnath Temple. This is not merely visiting a temple, which can certainly be done by you or anyone else, but rather participating in a significant function which unfortunately has a number of implications." Nehru was highlighting the principle of separating state from religion. It is another matter that the President later attended the inauguration of the temple.

Cut to the present era. Addressing a public meeting in Tripura, which is going to polls in a month or two, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that the Ram temple at Ayodhya would be opened on January 1 next year. It is appalling that the announcement came neither from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, which is overseeing the temple construction, nor any religious leader associated with it. It is equally important to recall that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the master of ceremonies and the official *yajmaan* during the *Bhumi Pujan* ceremony of the temple in 2020. The Modi government has travelled miles and miles from the Nehru government which had the principle of separation of state from religion as one of its core agenda. With the BJP, apparently under the tutelage of the Sangh Parivar, coming to power, such niceties and distinctions have vanished into thin air.

Juxtapose this ostentatious and brazen politicization of religion with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's unambiguous announcement that Bharat Jodo Yatra is not for political gain, but it is a 'tapasya' meant to fight hate, fear, disharmony and division of the society on caste and religious lines. Religion and its associated rituals make the 'highway' to people's hearts. It is the easiest and surest method to exploit the ordinary mortals and manoeuvre the gullible public to garner votes. Rahul Gandhi's Tapasya may or may not bring in political dividends. But, at a time when the country is in the thick of religious and caste upheavals; when religious fundamentalists and fanatics clamour for a Hindu Rashtra; when the main religious minorities are threatened with annihilation, the *yatra* for unity and harmony sends out its message loud and clear.

The negativity of politicising religion has to be countered by the positivity of Rahul Gandhi's call for *tapasya*. The country needs politicians who desist from cashing in on the naivety of people. As the BJP enters the final year of its second term in the Centre, tide seems to have turned against it. The party is frantically searching for a vote-catching 'achievement' that would catapult it to power again. What better means than 'temple politics' to garner votes. But such short-cuts to power would do colossal damage to the country. Rahul's Tapasya route, on the other hand, would be the ideal path to keep the nation united.

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

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

Dr. Suresh Mathew
Editor

✉ → frsureshmathew@gmail.com

contents

OPEN LETTER TO AMIT SHAH

WHY BLAME THE CONGRESS?

BY A.J. PHILIP



COVER STORY
06

10 COVER STORY RAHUL GANDHI: CONGRESS A 'SANGATHAN OF TAPASYA', BJP-RSS OF 'FORCIBLE WORSHIP'



12 COVER STORY WALKING WITH A TAPASVI BY RAM PUNIYANI

EDITOR:
Dr. Suresh Mathew

EDITORIAL BOARD:
John Dayal, AJ Philip, Marydasan John

ADVISORY BOARD:
George Plathottam, Skylark George, PJ Joseph,
T. Dominic, PA Joseph, Anoop Abraham

DESIGN & LAYOUT:
Dani Jose

CIRCULATION:
Ashish Victor

FINANCE MANAGER:
Jainamma

Indian Current Publications

375 - A, Pocket - 2
Mayur Vihar Phase - I
New Delhi - 110091
Tel: 011-45873264, Mob: 7042562963
Email: icdelhi@gmail.com
frsureshmathew@gmail.com
indiancurrentsweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.indiancurrents.org

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed by the writers in this Magazine do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Indian Currents weekly or Editor.

Although all efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the content, neither the editor nor the publisher can take responsibility for consequences arising from errors or omissions in the information provided.

Reproduction in any manner without prior permission from the publisher is prohibited. All disputes to be settled in Delhi Courts only.

This issue of Indian Currents contains 36 pages including cover.

14 A SOCIAL CAUSE
Leave no one Behind
BY DR. GEORGE ARICKAL

17 REFLECTIONS
Living the Eucharist
Unites the Followers of Jesus
BY JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL

20 THE SHEPHERD
Pope Francis
A Sign of God's Love
BY SUNNY JACOB

22 REFLECTIONS
Funeral Fundas
BY CHHOTEBHAI

25 NEWS
Man arrested for desecrating
Catholic cemetery in Mumbai
BY MICHAEL GONSALVES

26 DIETARY TIPS
Towards a Better Food Culture
BY J. PRASANT PALAKKAPPILLIL

28 PASSENGER SAFETY
Rein in Mid-Air Unruliness
Zero Tolerance
BY AARTI

33 REFLECTIONS
Kaizen: A Praxis-oriented Life
BY P.A. JOSEPH

34 BOB'S BANTER
The Governors and the King..!
BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

POWER QUOTES



Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers

Socrates

• • •



The Pessimist Sees Difficulty In Every Opportunity. The Optimist Sees Opportunity In Every Difficulty

Winston Churchill

• • •



Words can inspire, thoughts can provoke, but only action truly brings you closer to your dreams

Brad Sugars

• • •



Having a specific meaning and purpose in your life helps to encourage you towards living a fulfilling and inspired life

Vic Johnson

• • •



No one is to blame for your future situation but yourself. If you want to be successful, then become "Successful."

Jaymin Shah

• • •



Every successful person in the world is a hustler one way or another. We all hustle to get where we need to be. Only a fool would sit around and wait on another man to feed him

K'wan

• • •



If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.

Vincent Van Gogh

• • •

OPEN LETTER TO AMIT SHAH

Why Blame the Congress?

BY A.J. PHILIP

Dear Shri Amit Shah Ji,

You have always surprised me. Like when you divided the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories without any rhyme or reason. This was not even mentioned in your party's election manifesto. At least in the case of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, it had been a core agenda of the party.

As such, the nation could expect your government to abrogate the Impugned Article but what was the logic for the vivisection of the state? The only logic I can find is that you want greater say in the administration of the Union Territories. Imagine how another home minister of another government uses some logic to divide the state of Gujarat.

I am sure destiny will force you or your successor to recreate J&K to save the loss of face India suffered. Be that as it may, what prompted me to write this letter is your recent speech in Tripura where you announced that the Ayodhya temple would be thrown open to the public on January 1, 2024.

I thought you were the home minister entrusted with the responsibility of managing internal security. I did not know that your brief included fixing the date and time of a temple inauguration. That is the



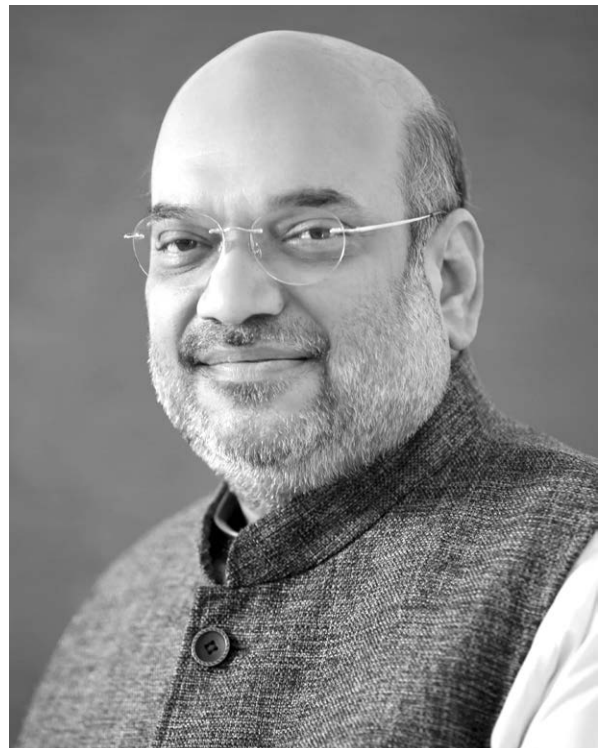
job of the priests who know which day and time are auspicious for the consecration of a temple.

What you did not realise is that by setting the date and time, you have admitted the fact that the Ayodhya temple is more a political project than a religious one. Let me be frank, I was never in doubt

about the whole Ayodhya movement which was out and out a political initiative.

I am not an apologist of the Congress party but I feel that you were not proper when you blamed the Congress party for delaying the construction of the temple. You said this because of either your ignorance or because you wanted to hide the truth. Either way, this does not redound to the credit of the home minister of the country.

I do not have to tell you that there was once a mosque at the place where the temple is coming



The Union Home Minister is entrusted with the responsibility of managing the internal security of the country. The job of fixing the date and time of a temple inauguration should be left to the priests who know which day and time are auspicious for its consecration

up. You wanted to demolish the mosque to build the temple. Otherwise, you could have built a grander temple anywhere in the country.

The Congress was not even formed when the Muslims were saying their prayers at the Babri Masjid. There is no historical evidence to suggest that a temple was demolished to build the mosque. Had that happened Tulsi Das who was a contemporary of Babur would have mentioned the incident in his monumental work, Ramacharitamanas.

Even the litigation about the ownership of the mosque/temple preceded the setting up of the Congress. It is a travesty of truth to blame the Congress for the case. In fact, the organisation was never an interested party in the Ramjanambhoomi/Babri Masjid case.

Did it occur to you why Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the man who saw the political potential in Ayodhya, Lal Krishna Advani, who held the portfolio of home for one full term, could not build the temple? This was because of the court case in which sundry organisations affiliated to the RSS were parties. There is a Biblical saying, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye".

I have read the Supreme Court verdict which clearly allowed the construction of the temple. But I did not find any argument worth the salt to let the Hindus occupy the land. In fact, the verdict upholds almost all the contentions of the Muslims. Yet, the court favoured the Hindus because the judges knew that it was in the larger interest of the country.

Incidentally, the Muslims were disappointed with the verdict but they did not protest anywhere in the country unlike the other party which claimed that it would not accept the verdict if it went against them. Obviously, the court knew the situation and took a decision, perhaps, in the long-term interest of the nation. It is a different matter that Justice should be blind when it dispenses justice.

I know why you are keen on opening the temple in 2024. Because that is the time the country will go to polls to elect the next government. You want to cash in on Ayodhya to win another election.

You are the home minister. Do you know any country where the ruling party builds a temple or church or mosque and takes credit for it? I never heard the Pakistan government taking credit for building a grand mosque in Islamabad. It was funded



by the royal family of Saudi Arabia, if I remember it correctly.

You spoke about the greatness of the temple which is nearing completion. For your information, a columnist of the British journal *The Economist* visited Ayodhya and gave details of the work there. He had to undergo a series of security checks before he could reach the sanctum sanctorum.

You boasted about the greatness of the temple. Even the tallest private or commercial building at Ayodhya will be less than one-third the height of the temple. I understand that the law was amended at Ayodhya to freeze the height of private and commercial buildings there.

I also understand that the cost of the new temple is Rs 1,800 crore (18 billion). Collective worship is Semitic in origin. That is why Muslims and Christians want a large space to worship. Unlike them, Hindus need only a little space to worship.

Sabarimala is one of the most popular temples in South India. It attracts millions of pilgrims from all over the South. Now, people from Maharashtra and Gujarat have also started arriving at the temple, situated on the Western Ghats. Do you know the idol of Lord Ayyappa is situated in a small room that can be approached only by climbing 18 small, sacred steps.

I have visited the Vaishnodevi temple in Jammu. If possible, please visit it. It will do your health good if you climb up the hill the traditional way as I did, instead of arriving there by air. If Rahul Gandhi can walk all the way from Kanyakumari to Kashmir wearing a T-shirt, why can't you climb the hill?

You will notice that the deity is placed in a small cave. The sanctum sanctorum at Tirupati is not large. The point I want to make is that size is not of the essence in Hinduism. Almost all the sacred temples, whether at Kedarnath or Varanasi, are small. In fact, a Hindu can comfortably pray in his own puja room at his house. He does not even have to go to a temple to worship.

By any reckoning, Rs 1,800 crore is a huge amount. At Rs 1.8 crore per school, the amount is sufficient to build 1,000 new schools in the country. There are thousands of government schools, even in Delhi, which do not have adequate infrastructure like laboratories and libraries.

You can imagine how impactful the amount would have been if it was utilised for education or healthcare. India was never a poor country. In fact, it was India's wealth that attracted invaders and colonisers down the centuries. Yet, when it came to development, it remained a poor, backward country.

As home minister, you can visit any place in and out of India. You will find grand temples like the ones at Tiruchendur and Tanjore in Tamil Nadu and the Sun temple at Konark in Odisha. Enormous sums of money were spent on constructing the temple.

What I say is true about European countries also. A few hundreds of years ago, people thought that the best way to please God was to construct large churches whose spires would pierce the skies. It took time for them to realise the futility of constructing such churches.



The cost of the Ram temple at Ayodhya is estimated to be around Rs 1,800 crore. At Rs 1.8 crore per school, the amount is sufficient to build 1,000 new schools in the country. There are thousands of government schools which do not have adequate infrastructure like laboratories and libraries

They no longer build churches. Instead, they build research centres and spend their surplus on improving the quality of life of their citizens. Just imagine, how India would have been if, instead of building large temples and temple gates, the money was used to set up schools.

The Buddhists and the Jains, to which community you belong, knew the value of education. That is why the rulers of the time encouraged setting up the Nalanda university long before Oxford and Harvard came up. Please find out what happened in the Eighth century when a certain gentleman from the deep South took the lead in driving out Buddhists from the country.



Jainism also suffered as a result of the onslaught that took the gentleman to the four corners of the country where he set up religious establishments whose pontiffs do not allow women to read the scriptures. Nor do they promote education of the masses. I am sorry to say that your own emphasis is not on education and public health.

When India attained Independence, Japan was in a pathetic condition. They had lost everything in the Second World War. They became the only people to suffer a nuclear attack. Within no time, they rose up like the phoenix bird. How could they do it?

They believed in universalisation of education. There is not a single illiterate in Japan. India and China were in an identical situation when revolution happened in China and independence occurred in India. You may blame Communism but you can't deny the fact that China wiped out illiteracy from the country. China also invested heavily in public health.

Japan became the world's second largest economy, a position taken over by China. This was possible because of the investments in school education and public health made by Japan and China.

I read recently that we are trying to develop health tourism. Your government does not spend even 3 percent of the GDP on public health. Yes, there are super speciality hospitals like the one Mata Amritanandamayi opened in Faridabad. There are hospital groups like Apollo which provide state-of-the-art medical care.

What is the condition of the poor people in your own state Gujarat? Are they assured of medical care? The fact is that if a poor man or woman becomes diabetic, he will die as he cannot afford insulin and other drugs. The government is not bothered about the millions who die without proper medical care. But we take pride in providing medical care to

If the Central Government is sure that it was able to develop the country, why do you need to mention Ayodhya when an election is held? Why not mention how demonetisation helped end black money and terrorism



some rich persons from countries like Sri Lanka and Maldives who come for treatment.

You built the world's tallest statue in Gujarat. It is taller than the Statue of Liberty in New York. Do you know that the American statue was built with the financial support from the readers of Joseph Pulitzer's newspaper. No government money was spent on the project. The statue was a gift from the people of Paris. In sharp contrast, you used public money to build the Statue of Unity.

If you are sure that your government was able to develop the country, why do you need to mention Ayodhya when an election is held? Why not mention how demonetisation helped end black money and terrorism, particularly when the recent Supreme Court majority verdict did not find anything amiss in cancelling Rs 1000 notes and printing Rs 2000 notes.

A Himalayan blunder was whitewashed in the process. You are the home minister. You know that Christians are one of the most peaceful communities in India. Statistics will bear me out on this.

Yet, why is it that nearly 600 violent incidents against Christians were reported from various parts of the country last year? Why is it that they are driven out from their villages as in the erstwhile Bastar district of undivided Madhya Pradesh?

You should look into all these, instead of fixing the most auspicious time for the consecration of the Ayodhya temple. Your party came to power by promising development. Let everyone in the country, irrespective of caste and creed, believe that your government is by the people, for the people and of the people. May God bless you!

Yours etc ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AJ PHILIP is a citizen journalist and social worker. He can be reached at: ajphilip@gmail.com

Rahul Gandhi: Congress a 'sangathan of tapasya', BJP-RSS of 'forcible worship'



Rahul Gandhi said he was “not interested where the Congress comes to power” but more interested in what it does during its tenure in states it forms the government. Hitting out at the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Congress leader called them “puja ka sangathan (organisation believing in worship)” unlike the Congress that is a “sangathan of tapasya (penance)”. He made the remarks at a press conference organised in Samana, Haryana, on the 114th day of the **Bharat Jodo Yatra**.

Asked about the purpose of the yatra and if it had brought changes in his party’s culture, Gandhi said, “I have understood that this fight is not a political battle. Superficially, it is a political battle. Today, there is a change in the country. Since the day RSS captured the institutions of this country, this fight has not remained political. It is another fight now. You can call it a battle of ideology or dharma, but it is not a political battle anymore.”

He said, “The Congress is a sangathan of tapasya, the BJP is a puja ka sangathan. If the Congress does tapasya, we draw strength out of it; they (BJP) draw strength out of their puja. Puja is two types – I go to God and ask him for something, but the initia-

tive is of the person who performs that puja. The RSS puja is different. RSS wants that their puja should be forcible. Modi ji wants sab log inki puja kare (everyone should worship him). Iska response tapasaya hi ho skata hai (The response to this can only be tapasya). That’s why this yatra is successful. A single person is not doing tapasya in this yatra, lakhs of people are doing it.”

He told reporters, “This country should have respect for the tapasya, for the skills that people possess. But the RSS-BJP say only those who worship them shall be respected. The RSS and the BJP are taking this country on the path of forcible worship, by capturing institutions, instilling fear in everybody, instilling fear in the media. That’s why Prime Minister is not facing you all. Somebody may ask him an odd question.”

Asked if the Congress was looking at making political gains through the Yatra, Gandhi said, “I am not interested in which states Congress government is formed. I am more interested in that wherever the Congress government is formed, what is that government going to do for the people in the five-year tenure.”

Gandhi said the Yatra was against the division of India. “There is another aim of this Yatra. It is also my personal aim. We are looking at this Yatra as a





tapasya. We love our country, we love the people of our country. This Yatra's aim is to make people hear the true voice of India. I can't say if it shall lead to political gains. Our aim is to unite India, fight against hatred. The economic inequality occurring in this country, three-four-five people controlling this country's institutions, media; rising unemployment, this Yatra is against all that. People are aware that it is because of this that majority of the wealth of this nation is in the hands of three-four people, which is why unemployment is rising. To raise people's voice against this is the aim of this yatra."

Asked about his takeaway from the Yatra, the Congress leader told reporters, "When Arjun was aiming for the fish's eye, did he say what he would do after shooting that arrow? The answer is there in the Bhagavad Gita, too. You do your job, whatever happens will happen. There will be another thing after this Yatra, followed by another thing. You all will see."

He reiterated he was not concerned about his image as projected by the BJP. "Rahul Gandhi is in your mind. I killed him. He is no longer in my mind. The person whom you are looking at is not Rahul Gandhi. He is visible to you only. Rahul Gandhi is in your brain. He is in BJP's brain. He is not in my brain. I have got nothing to do with my image. I have no interest in it. You can project it the way you want. I am just doing my job."

Talking about the farmers, Minimum Support Price (MSP), and the Swaminathan Commission's report on the issue, the Congress MP said, "These things can not be replied to



casually. We hold discussions on such issues in our manifesto committee meetings. We study its financial implications, other implications. It does not mean anything if I say yes or no to it, here right now. We accept that farmers are being hounded from all four directions. He is being killed directly because of rising fuel prices, he is indirectly being killed because he is not getting compensation for his crop losses. He is being killed by rising fertilizer prices. we realise that those who are the spine of our country are being killed. Three farm laws were weapons to kill our farmers. We realise they (farmers) need protection. We realise that farmers are being attacked. I can give a guarantee that wherever the Congress forms the government, farmers shall be protected, if loans can be waived for businessmen, farmers' loans shall also be waived off."

Replying to a question on several law-and-order issues in Chhattisgarh where the Congress is in power, Gandhi said, "Can you ask the same question in front of Narendra Modi? How many such press conferences has the PM done where he can be asked such questions? I am saying that hatred is being spread by dividing people based on religion. Has the Congress ever done this? Has the Congress ever said that people should be made to fight with each other

on religious grounds? If there is allegedly any wrong happening in Chhattisgarh, I shall go there and see it. If there will be any flaws, I shall speak there about that. There are land acquisition issues, there is tension in Chhattisgarh. But our policy is not that (divisive politics). After the Yatra concludes, I will visit Chhattisgarh and look into it." ©

(Courtesy: Indian Express)



Walking With a *Tapasvi*

Rath Yatra of L.K. Advani was followed by violence wherever it went while Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi is creating an ambience of peace and harmony

BY **RAM PUNIYANI**

Bharat Jodo Yatra, which began over three months ago, is in the closing phase of its journey; it is now in Haryana and heading for its destination in Srinagar. I had been following this *yatra* from Kanyakumari, its paying homage to Swami Vivekananda rock memorial and then carrying on its route, which covers twelve states and two Union Territories. Despite it being shunned by the mainstream media, its impact began right from the word go. Now it is assuming humongous proportions. To begin with there was a prediction from opponents that it will be a miniscule phenomenon. This was belied by the people's response. There was an argument that in North, cow-belt region, it will draw flak; but it is breaking records of sorts as people are joining it in unprecedented numbers in North too.

Personally speaking, I got involved with it when I attended the two-day conclave of civil society groups in Nagpur-Wardha to chart out the association with the *yatra* in Maharashtra from the civil society side. It gave me immense pleasure to see



that most of the civil society groups, which numbered over 125 or so, were the grass root workers engaged with different struggles related to human rights. We listened to the threat of the divisive politics and need to restore the atmosphere of peace, harmony and justice which guided our free-

dom movement and which has been deeply eroded by the rise of divisive, sectarian politics, particularly in the aftermath of another *yatra*, which was taken out on the Rath (Chariot) by BJP's Advani (a Toyota converted into Chariot looking body).

Anand Patwardhan, the outstanding documentary film-maker, had made a film around that *yatra* (*Ram Ke Naam, In the name of God*). He neatly compared Advani's *Yatra* and Bharat Jodo *yatra*. As per him the Rath *Yatra* was followed by violence wherever it went while Bharat Jodo *yatra* is creating an ambience of peace and harmony. While Rath *Yatra* for demolishing the Babri Mosque was taken out by those whose commitment to Indian Constitution is under a shadow of doubt, the Bharat Jodo *Yatra* is committed primarily to uphold the values of the Constitution.

For me, the two-day conclave was mirror of the thinking and response of the civil society groups to the *yatra*. Most friends opined that the *yatra* is the need of the hour and lots of expectations are there from the same. Following it on Twitter and Facebook gave me enough idea that the *yatra* has touched the heart of the masses. The peak of this came in the form of response which Rahul Gandhi showed while meeting and greeting the people. He sounded like an empathetic, knowledgeable friend rather than a leader with inflated ego. Easy to approach and ready to listen to people's woes, and reciprocating the love and affection of the people.

Finally, I got a chance to participate in the massive ongoing endeavor on 3rd

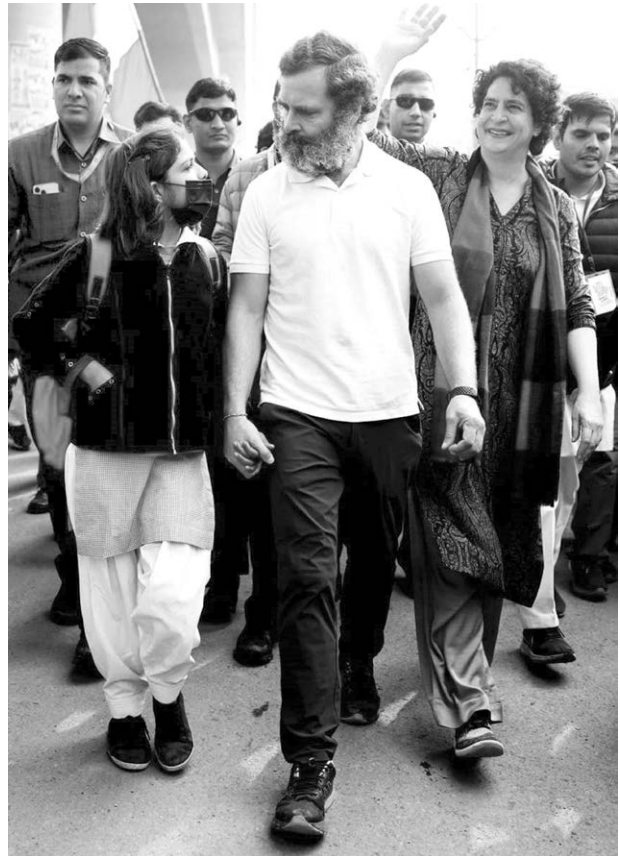


January 2023 morning when it was to crossover from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh. The crowds, enthusiastic, singing and shouting slogans, was a sight to behold. What took the cake was a group with photos of Ambedkar merging into Yatra. Rahul himself was focusing on warmly responding to the greetings of people lining both sides of the road. I got a chance to walk with him for a little while. He did repeat that it is a *tapasya* (penance) for him. I did express that fulfilling the aspirations of people suffering the divisive politics, which is increasing the economic hardships of people, needs to be put at the core of the program which should emerge from this massive effort. Observing his demeanor, it sounds true that he is deeply committed to the concerns of the people. I pointed out that the plight of minorities worsened over the last decade in particular and needs to be addressed. His response was very affirmative.

As far as the larger picture is concerned it is very true that this *yatra* has dented the dominant divisive narrative. This courageous effort is successfully countering the ruling sectarian narrative and the values which emerged during freedom movement seem to be coming back to the fore. There are reports and observations that Muslim minority which has been feeling tormented in many ways may feel less so with the impact of this effort.

The problem remains that can the message of this Yatra be pan India, as large sections of the society remain comparatively less impacted by this mammoth exercise being undertaken by Rahul and many *yatris* who are constantly on the march. The question also comes in whether this will help Congress party to undertake inner churning to rediscover itself to repair the weaknesses which have crept in the organization. Can Congress become ready to combat the electoral battles more effectively? There is also an apprehension whether this narrative being put up by the lakhs marching will really influence the national spirit? And the million-dollar question comes up whether this matchless endeavor can help Congress party to be the core around which a national coalition can come up to uphold Indian Nationalism, in contrast to Hindutva-Hindu Nationalism with all its exclusive streaks dominating at present?

There are many opposition parties which are equally disturbed by the tendencies which have come up during last decade or so. Half-hearted



coming together will not help in any way. A strong pillar of opposition is the need of the hour for future electoral battles. It is all the more important to restore our federal structure, to restore economic policies which are not based on charity but the concept of 'Rights' of the working people, concept of the right to employment and what have you.

The case lies in people's court. Average people have unequivocally come forward to associate with the statements of the one who was projected as *pappu* or *baba* (privileged simpleton) till recently. His maturity and taking the issues of people is to be seen and believed. No doubt many civil society groups have lots of criticism of Congress for its past actions. This has lots of substance in that. The need of the hour is to ensure a change of regime and to be on guard against future deviations from the path currently being articulated by the Yatra. Walking a few steps with the *Tapasvi* gave me some hope for better of our country in the future! ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

Leave No One Behind

Development is the best pill for tackling poverty, hunger and disaster. The strategy to reduce the number of the poor instead of fighting poverty is wrong

BY **DR. GEORGE ARICKAL**

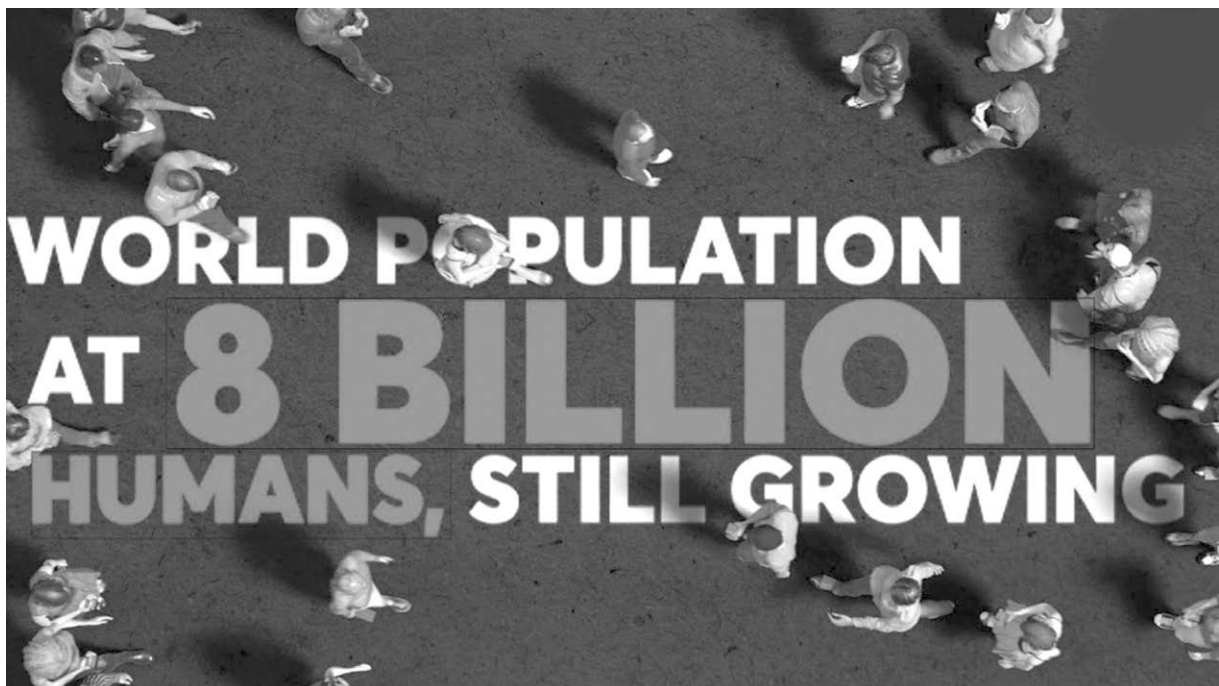
According to the recent reports in November 2022, eight billion (8000000000) people live on this globe. Between 385,000 and 400,000 babies are born every day; about 16,300 babies every hour. That's about 270 babies per minute and between four and five per second. There are about 164,380 deaths per day. That makes 60,000,000 deaths a year in the world.

Latest estimates by the United Nations (UN) indicate that the number of people on earth will increase to around 8.6 billion in 2030. By 2050 the estimated number will grow to 9.8 billion. The UN assumes that more than half of the global population growth by 2050 will take place on the African continent. Much of the population growth will be concentrated in poorer countries. These include African countries with particularly high birth rates such as Niger, Ethiopia, Tanzania and the DR Congo, as well as Asian countries with large populations like India, Pakistan and Indonesia. India would overtake China to



become the world's most populous country next year. Europe is the only region in the world whose population is projected to decline by 2050.

Many sense a great danger in the population development and there is even talk of the population explosion as the ticking bomb. Of course, population growth is an extraordinary challenge for humanity, because even today's world population is not able to meet its most important basic needs. The struggle in distribution intensifies when the number of those requesting the resources to survive increases. This development can be registered in the growing number of refugees. Many are afraid of this scenario and advocate lowering the birth rate by humane and inhumane means. Their strategy seems to be to reduce the number of poor instead of fighting poverty. It should be remembered that development is the best pill and that we should focus on tackling the real causes of poverty, hunger and disaster. Precisely



The irony of history is that the victims of the climate catastrophe are precisely those innocent people who least cause this development

these findings of the international community led to the Millennium Goals and the Agenda 2030 based on them with "Sustainable Development Goals".

Leave no one behind: According to this motto, the UN launched the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in September 2015. The goal of the agenda is to make global developments so sustainable by 2030 that even the poorest people in the world have prospects in life. This agenda is pursued by 17 sustainability goals taking the relevant dimensions of development into account. Ending poverty and fighting hunger through food security are top priorities. Inclusive and equitable education, health through access to good medical care, healthy nutrition, clean water and good air, equality between women and men, affordable & clean energy, sustainable economic growth, sustainable and efficient industry, humane working conditions, modern infrastructure, fair distribution of the income, sustainable cities and municipalities with affordable housing and a sustainable and integrated urban development policy, protection of life under water, intact ecosystems, good governance without corruption and last but not least the control of climate change are among the integrated sustainability goals of the Agenda 2030. A global partnership is called for to achieve these goals.

During the first few years after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, there was definitely success in realizing individual goals. The global discussion raised awareness of the challenges and prospects for action. Improvements were evident in the areas of nutrition, education, health and even poverty reduction. Unfortunately, this positive trend was stifled by the global pandemic. The former German Minister for Development Cooperation Gerd Müller says: "In many developing countries, the pandemic has led to a massive poverty, hunger and economic crisis. More than ever we have now to stick to our goal of a world without hunger and poverty".

The situation became worse when the devastating war in Ukraine with horrible consequences joined



with the pandemic. Due to globalization and global interdependence, even a regional war -- in contrast to earlier times -- causes the effects of a world war. Intensified crises are reflected in the sectors of energy, food, agriculture, industry, employment and in the increase in the price of essential products. Not to be neglected, of course, are the people who die in this war and those who become refugees. In 2030, the decision-makers in the process of the agenda for sustainable development goals may have regrettably to come to the conclusion that the tunnel to the light is lengthening. They have to agree upon a new period, especially because of the uncontrolled continuation of the dangerous climate change.

We experience more and more stormy years. The Earth's atmosphere is becoming more toxic; the ice is melting, global heat and sea levels are rising, many islands and some sea regions are disappearing from the surface of the earth. The dry period is getting longer and longer, the desert is growing, floods are destroying the harvest. Pollution is threatening habitat, water is becoming polluted and many bird and plant species are disappearing. The world is indeed heading towards a climate catastrophe.

Increasing poverty, hunger, disease, an increase in child mortality, distribution fights and mass exodus are some consequences of the threatening climate change. Specialist organizations of the UN estimate that by 2050 more than a billion people will be displaced by climate-related migration alone. The irony of history is that the victims of the climate



A world of 8 billion people

How do we balance the demands of population growth with the need to successfully meet the global goals?

catastrophe are precisely those innocent people who least cause this development. Every individual, every social unit, every municipality and every country has its obligations and opportunities to contribute to climate improvement and environmental protection. However, this does not replace a global climate policy agreed by the international community, because the climate knows no homeland, no leading culture, no religion, no race, no gender, no color and above all no national borders. The implications are global and they seek global solutions; enough reason for the international community to act together.

On November 6, 2022, the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27) began in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. For more than two weeks, around 40,000 participants from almost 200 countries struggled to find solutions and concrete agreements in the fight against climate change. In the final declaration, 200 states reaffirmed the decision to reduce the burning of climate-damaging coal. There is no talk of stopping fossil energies such as oil and gas. The 1.5 degree target remains unchanged. The statement falls short of proposals from many states, climate activists and environmentalists. An

end to dependency on dirty energy sources is for them imperative. For the first time COP 27 agreed on a common "Compensation fund" to compensate for climate damage in poorer countries. The amount of the fund and the individual contributions of the countries will be clarified later.

COP 27 revealed clear differences in the interests of individual countries in the area of climate policy. The industrial nations like the USA or Germany have achieved their economic growth with years of use of fossil energies causing severe damage to the global climate. It is easier to maintain their existing prosperity with the use of regenerative energy. Poorer countries like India, which find themselves on the path of necessary growth in the midst of enormous challenges, depend on the use of all energy sources. Abandoning fossil fuels and thus accepting a reduction in economic growth would have a toxic effect on the social climate although it would be beneficial to climate control. The decision-makers face in this case a crucial dilemma. Even a green Federal Minister of Economy in Germany decided to extend the use of some fossil energy sources in the midst of the energy crisis. With this decision he may have intended to reach social consensus. The developing countries have to take a long time to set up sufficient structures for using renewable energy sources., The climate is, however, not interested in such emergency situations. Being angry at man's plunder of creation, climate change will continue at an accelerated rate. Enhanced and sincere cooperation of the international community is more necessary than ever. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. GEORGE ARICKAL is one of the leading representatives of German non-governmental organizations in the field of development cooperation

Being angry at man's plunder of creation, climate change will continue at an accelerated rate. Enhanced and sincere cooperation of the international community is more necessary than ever

Living the Eucharist Unites the Followers of Jesus

Ritualism, legalism and dogmatism are the obstacles to growth in spirituality. Because of the obsession with these three fundamentalist tendencies, the followers of Jesus are not able to live the Eucharist 24X7

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

When the mode of offering the Eucharist has become a bone of contention and a cause for division in the Syro-Malabar Church, it is pertinent to reflect how Eucharist can be made a living experience to unite the followers of Jesus. Redemption or salvation of mankind is an on-going process and Jesus has shown the way of salvation by his life and teachings as recorded in the Gospels. According to the Gospel of Mark 3:14-15, Jesus chose the twelve disciples to be with him and to be sent out. In other words, the disciples of Jesus are expected to internalize his vision and values and to continue his mission. Internalization of the vision and values of Jesus takes place through contemplation on the word of God in relation to the context.

Commitment to Jesus' vision and teachings, especially his value system and the passion to continue his mission unite the disciples of Jesus. As we read in the Gospels, during his last fellowship meal with his disciples, Jesus took bread, blessed it and gave it to his disciples. He then took the wine, blessed it and gave it to the disciples and told them to do it in his memory. Eucharistic celebration is an effective means to recollect and relive the life and teachings of Jesus and thereby recommit oneself to follow the way of Jesus and carry on his mission. The Eucha-



ristic celebration reminds six significant aspects of the life of the followers of Jesus.

Six parts of the Holy Mass according to the Latin rite are: 1) Penitential service; 2) Word of God; 3) Offertory; 4) Consecration; 5) Holy Communion; and 6) Thanksgiving. The order of these six components

is different in the Mass according to the Syro-Malabar rite, but these components are found in both the rites. These six components symbolize or signify six core values of Jesus' teachings, which can definitely enrich the spiritual life of a follower of Jesus. The values symbolized by the Eucharist are forgiveness and reconciliation, commitment to the service of God and fellow human beings, altruism, availability, sharing, inclusiveness and attitude of gratitude.

The first part of the Mass is penitential service that invites the participants to reconcile with each other. Through various parables and by his own example of praying for his enemies while hanging on the cross, Jesus highlighted the paramount importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. Nursing enmity and hatred chocks one's creative energy and makes a person think and act negatively. Hence

There cannot be unity in Christian communities without forgiveness and reconciliation. Imposition of uniform laws on the members of the Church will only create discord and divisions



forgiving and getting reconciled with one's adversaries is a basic requirement for a peaceful life. Jesus has unambiguously told his followers that if someone comes for offering sacrifice and if she/he remembers that somebody has ill feelings against him/her, he/she has to leave the sacrifice and first get reconciled with the person who is estranged (Mt. 5:23-24).

Forgiveness and reconciliation are non-negotiable in the value system of Jesus. Therefore, if anyone participates in the Eucharistic celebration without being reconciled to others, he/she brings condemnation on himself/herself, according to St. Paul. "It follows that if anyone eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup in a way that dishonours him, he is guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood. So then, everyone should examine himself first, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup" (1Cor. 11:27-28). To be worthy of participating in the Eucharist, reconciliation is a must. Without reconciliation and forgiveness Eucharist will become an abomination.

There cannot be unity in Christian communities without forgiveness and reconciliation. Imposition of uniform laws on the members of the Church will only create discord and divisions. If the followers of Jesus, especially the bishops and priests, offer Mass without reconciling with their brethren who are wounded or hurt, they are bringing condemnation on them. In other words, they are causing a great scandal to the members of the Church.

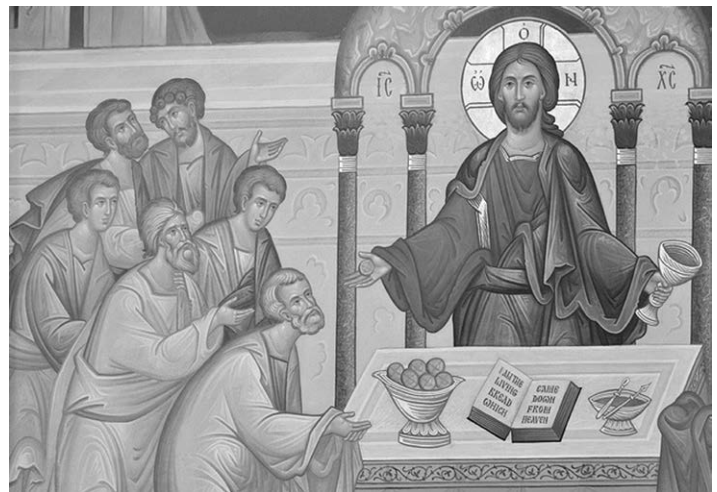
The second part of the Mass is reading the word of God. Simply reading from the Bible two or three portions will not be of any use, unless and until the participants of the Mass reflect on the word of God, draw insights from them and apply them to their life. For example, what message can I carry home after listening to the Gospel passage about the woman caught in adultery? When she was brought before Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus told them, "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her."

Jesus questioned the law that was discriminatory to women. Adultery cannot be committed by a woman alone; a man is definitely an accomplice in any case of adultery and why only the woman is punished? "As a disciple of Jesus, I will not discriminate against women and I will give equal honour to women. I will question if anyone indulges in any discriminatory practice against women". This could be the message one can take home. When the followers of Jesus contemplate on the word of God, they

will be guided by the values of Jesus and they will be living in peace and harmony not only among themselves, but also with people of different faiths.

Unfortunately, instead of reflecting the word of God and living the word of God, the Bible has become an object of worship. Often Decorated Bible is taken in procession and arti is offered to the Bible. Children and young people are told to copy the Bible. Are these practices leading to contemplation on the word of God and translating the message of God into the life of the followers of Jesus?

The third part of Eucharist is offertory. During the offertory, the priest and the participants of the Eucharistic celebration are expected to offer them-



selves to God. The offering in the Eucharist is nothing but the offering of all our resources: our talents, capacities, wealth, material resources and time. After participating in the Eucharist, I cannot keep my resources only for myself, but they are to be used for me, my family members and all human beings, especially the needy. If my neighbour is hospitalized and there is no one to be with the patient in the hospital I volunteer to be with him/her. If a guest comes to my house in the middle of the night, I joyfully go to the railway station to receive him/her, breaking my sleep.

After participating in the Eucharist, the followers of Jesus cannot be insensitive to the needs of others. Availability to others in spite of one's busy schedule is an explicit sign of living the Eucharist. It is a contradiction that many people who participate in the Mass daily remain insensitive and indifferent. The rich man in the parable, 'the Rich Man and Lazarus', was punished by God because of his insensitivity.

The fourth part of the Eucharistic celebration is consecration. The Catholics believe that through consecration bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. Bread is made by powdering many wheat grains and wine is made by crushing a large number of grapes. Both wheat and grapes lose their identity in the process of being made into bread and wine. As a result of taking part in the Eucharist, the disciples of Jesus are expected to undergo a radical transformation, annihilate their ego and give up petty identities in order to become the heralds of the Kingdom of God.

In the context of India today, the followers of Jesus have a great responsibility to rise above their identity as Catholics and Christians and function as agents of peace and harmony among the different communities and castes. When politicians use religion to divide people and make them fight each other, the followers of Jesus have to challenge the divisive politics by promoting harmony and understanding among the followers of different religions. Participation in the Eucharist should make them courageous to fight against religious fundamentalism within the Christian community as well as in other religions. Lack of openness and respect towards other religions is the result of religious fundamentalism.

The fifth part of Eucharistic celebration is communion. Communion is the process by which Jesus becomes part and parcel of the personality of the faithful; a fusion of the divine and the human takes place. It is nothing but a reaffirmation of the basic nature of the human person who is created in the image and likeness of God. Simultaneously communion is strengthened among those who participate in the Eucharist because of the presence of the same Jesus, the same Divine in every person. There is no discrimination at the Eucharistic table because all receive the same Jesus.

Communion is an invitation to all those who participate in the Eucharist to build inclusive communities or to transform the communities into inclusive ones by removing all kinds of discrimina-

tion and exclusions. If there is genuine communion, how can the members of the Church fight on the mode of offering Mass?

After participating in the Eucharist, the followers of Jesus cannot exclude people on the basis of religion, caste, occupation. They have to respect the human dignity of all those who live and work with them. Participation and transparency are essential for building communion. Does the participation in the Mass and receiving the Holy Communion inspire the faithful to build communion through participation and transparency?

The sixth and the last part of the Eucharistic celebration is thanksgiving. While thanking God for all the blessings we have received from God, we are also reminded of the task of making life a song of thanksgiving. The key to a happy and contented life is a grateful heart. Experiments have shown that persons

with a grateful heart are found to be happy even in the midst of crisis.

There are various ways to be grateful to God and others. One of them is counting the blessings. Counting the blessings reminds us about the good things we have received from God and others and the need for paying back to God and others by making the best use of the gifts

God has given us, especially time.

Ritualism, legalism and dogmatism are the obstacles to growth in spirituality. Because of the obsession with these three fundamentalist tendencies, the followers of Jesus are not able to live the Eucharist 24X7. History is a witness to the fact that these three tendencies have been the main causes of conflicts and divisions in the Church. Today also these tendencies are creating havoc in the Church. The Eucharist is to be lived and the cross is to be carried. When the followers of Jesus start living the Eucharist, they will be able to resolve conflicts among them amicably and live in harmony and unity. ©

The values symbolized by the Eucharist are forgiveness and reconciliation, commitment to the service of God and fellow human beings, altruism, availability, sharing, inclusiveness and attitude of gratitude

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL is a trainer and consultant to Non-Profit Organizations and presently a team member of Universal Solidarity Movement (USM) Indore. He can be reached at: jacobpt48@gmail.com

Pope Francis **A Sign of God's Love**

In our troubled world, Pope Francis symbolises hope. He is a Divine intervention in our times. He represents a theology that acknowledges the salvific grace of deprived persons

BY **SUNNY JACOB**

"Suffering is a call to conversion; it reminds us of our frailty and vulnerability," says Pope Francis, the 87-year-old Pontiff. He finds it difficult to walk due to a severe knee problem. He had suffered a small fracture in the knee when he took a mis-step while a ligament was inflamed. In fact, Pope Francis is suffering from an arthritic process which is affecting various joints. He is a man of hope in the midst of troubles.

But look at him, he is cheerful, and busy. He does all the works and prayers without any difficulty. He walks with the help of a walking stick, and moves on a wheel chair, addresses people, meets dignitaries, blesses all who meet him. Pope Francis walks



forward, teaches the world to be cheerful in the midst of pains and sufferings, wars and violence. I feel, he is a sign of God, a prophet of our times.

It is not only his physical pain that affects the Pope. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the making of millions of refugees and migrants in Central Asia and Middle East, the mindless kidnapping and persecution of people in Africa, the rigidity of political powers, the increasing religious discrimination, the ongoing prejudices against religions, the massively impacted pandemic, and the selfish nature of religious and political leaders, the mindless exploitation of Ecology by corporate houses, the erroneous policies of some govern-



ments, etc. cause worries to the Pope. Yet, he is hopeful, trying to bring all people of goodwill to come together to compact the destructive forces. He is a sign of Hope for the world.

“We must fan the flame of hope that has been given to us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart, and a far-sighted vision,” Pope Francis wrote in a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella. The motto of Pope Francis, on his coat of arms, “miserando atque eligendo” is taken from a homily by Saint Bede, roughly translates to “having mercy, he called him.” This motto is self-reflective in the life of the Pope. We are stewards of creation, called to ensure fruits of the earth are shared by all, not to exploit the earth or destroy it, says the Pope.

The Pope, even in his physical pain, is bent on sharing true joy with people whom he meets with. I am so touched by a picture where Pope Francis consoles a woman who is on a wheelchair like him. This makes me to think of our call to be an instrument of God’s mercy and love. We are called to be joyful and sharing God’s love with all, especially the weak, the marginalised, the refugees, the migrants, the sick and the suffering. However, often we are concerned about our own ‘aches and pains’. Very often our concerns are very limited and narrow. Our priorities are immediate, and our focus is very constrained. We have misplaced priorities and caught up in vicious circles of ritualistic nuances or parochial concerns.

When we look at the Catholic Church and its history, we must admit its manifold shortcomings and frailties. Yet, we must not forget its resilience and depth. The church has not crumbled itself in its self-deception and sins -- the Crusades, the Inquisition, and its most recent child abuse scandals, or under the weight of the onslaught of secularisation of Europe. In and through all these negativities, the Church navigated for more than 2,000 years and still moving ahead.

The Second Vatican Council, which addressed issues between the church and the modern world,

certainly reflects its ability to learn and grow.

The Catholic Church, with its glaring failures, reminds us there is hope for us. Yes, the Church has failed on many occasions. But it has stood as a beacon to the world with values of love, forgiveness, compassion, charity, faith and hope too. When we look at the Church and ourselves, we see, like the exodus journey, collectively as a Church and individually as each person, regardless of our human failures, we have had the Divine interventions to pick ourselves back up again, to journey in the way of faith.

For us, Pope Francis symbolises hope. He is a Divine intervention in our times. As an amazing Argentine Jesuit, he has a spirituality committed

to contemplation and action in the world. And he represents a theology that acknowledges the salvific grace of deprived persons.

It is apt that the Pope chose the name of St. Francis of Assisi. Numerous occasions he demonstrated similarities with Francis of Assisi. Like St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope is committed to inter-

faith dialogue. Francis has demonstrated Church’s commitment to respect and to befriending people of other faiths; a necessity in today’s pluralistic world. We have seen it in ample instances. Like St. Francis was called to rebuild the church of his day, the Pope is now doing the same.

Of course, there are several issues that affect the Church. However, the Pope is showing us the way. They Synodal Church proposed by him is a great opportunity for the Church to be relevant in today’s world. Nothing is impossible, if we too, who are ‘called to be saints, just like the multitude of witnesses before us, become heralds of hope for the world’. As Pope Francis exhorts young people, “Live, love, believe, and with God’s grace, never despair.” He is a sign of God’s presence among us, and so, we hope. ©

Very often our concerns are very limited and narrow. Our priorities are immediate, and our focus is very constrained. We have misplaced priorities and caught up in vicious circles of ritualistic nuances or parochial concerns

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SUNNY JACOB SJ is Assistant Secretary of Global Jesuit schools Network. sunnyjacobsj@gmail.com

Funeral Fundas

The funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, which was a show of pomp and pageantry, was in sharp contrast to that of Pope Benedict XVI which was a sober affair

BY **CHHOTEBHAI**

Funerals are usually dour affairs, nothing to write home about. Yet, having witnessed some interesting funerals on TV in the recent past, I did find some lessons to be learnt and thoughts to be shared.

The first one was that of Queen Elizabeth the Second (QE II) who died on 8th September 2022, aged 96. Her funeral was full of pomp and pageantry for which the British are renowned. This is faithfully followed by Indian Army regiments founded in the colonial era.

A friend, who happened to be in London at the time, confirmed the military precision and meticulous planning of the funeral. I had then observed a few things. The first was the complete lack of emotion, the proverbial British stiff upper lip! I was intrigued that the casket was closed, draped in a flag, and the body never exposed for public viewing. It was only later that I came to know that it was

hermeneutically sealed in a lead coffin, which is the norm for the monarchy. No wonder that there were leaden expressions for a leaden casket!

When the symbols of the monarchy were handed over to her son King Charles the Third, I noticed that together with the sceptre he was handed over a golden orb with a mounted cross. The commentator then said that it signified being head of the Church (Anglican) and tasked with defending and propagating Christianity around the world. Those who know the new king's proclivity for syncretic religion have already been asking if he will be later crowned as Defender of THE Faith or simply as the defender of faith?

The next funeral that I got a glimpse of was that of another king, that of another orb – the football. Pele, though not a head of State, did lie in state in his home ground football stadium, draped in the Brazilian flag, while 1,50,000 people paid homage.



The third funeral was that of another head of State and defender of the faith, Pope Benedict XVI (PB XVI). Pope Benedict's funeral was in sharp contrast to that of Queen Elizabeth II, marked by its simplicity and deep emotion. The 50,000 people present on the occasion were applauding and chanting when the plain wooden coffin was brought out for the requiem mass and then taken inside the basilica. Earlier, the body, in full liturgical dress, was displayed for two days in which 1,50,000 paid their respects.

I noticed that Pope Francis, who presided over the liturgy, looked shattered, as with a personal loss. I saw just two Swiss Guards in their traditional regalia. The twelve chamberlain pall bearers wore sombre black frock coats. Having served as an altar boy in boarding school for several years, I could vibe with the solemn Latin chants by the Sistine Chapel choir -- Dominus Vobiscum, Et tu Spiritu tuo, Ave Maria Gracia Plena and Agnus Dei.

Though there were many dignitaries from around the world, security was minimal, almost invisible; in sharp contrast to the assault weapon toting security personnel that accentuate the strong-arm image and cult of our desi VIPs. Even village headmen in India flex their security muscles. Only some African dictators beat us when it comes to flaunting their security.

Two other things caught my attention. One was the simple wooden crib, again in contrast with the shiny decorations put up in many parishes and homes. Alongside was a gigantic Christmas tree, a real one, cut down from a forest. We know that Santa Claus and trees have robbed Christmas of its true meaning. So, what need of this in St Peter's Square? Besides, it was incongruous at a funeral. Francis is a



strong advocate of environmental issues, so why did he perpetuate the counter witness of felling a tree?

The other jarring note caught on camera was of a man in a hood coming up to receive communion. He knelt to receive it on his tongue. When the priest hesitated, as communion was being given in the hand, the man seemed to make a grab for it with his mouth. The priest was taken aback and the man retreated. It is not clear if the man said or did something sacrilegious. However, some conservative commentators were quick to say that this was symptomatic of the church moving away from "tradition". Shades of Ernakulam here! What constitutes faith and/or tradition merits a separate discussion.

Images of the coffin being taken to the crypt below the basilica reminded me of my visit there in 2017. I had felt particularly blessed to pray at the tomb of Pope Paul VI whom I hold in great esteem for the way he steered the bark of Peter in the post-Vatican II churning.

Let us also recall what Francis said about his predecessor. EWTN News reported that they shared a special understanding of each other and the weight of the papacy. Francis' final gesture of bowing before the coffin and touching it was indeed touching. He obviously did not allow their contrasting pontificates to come in the way of mutual respect, though many conservatives are desperate to highlight the differences.

The day after the funeral I received a WhatsApp message that purported to be Francis' eulogy/obituary. Though it came from a respectable source it did not ring true. It sounded more like some new age guru. With some effort I was able to get the English translation of the original text in Italian. It began by

Those opposed to Pope Francis's reformist agenda based on the ecclesiology of Vatican II have been spreading canards about his resignation on health grounds. Nothing could be further from the truth. His extension of the Synod on Synodality to 2024 is a clear indication of that, as also his plans to visit several countries

quoting the Gospel of the day (Lk 23:39-46) "Father into your hands I commend my spirit".

I quote some extracts: "This is the invitation and the programme of life that he quietly inspires in us. Like a father (cf Is 29:16) he wishes to shape the heart of every pastor ... You belong to me, you belong to them, the Lord whispers, you are under the protection of my hands ... my heart. Stay in my hands and give me yours ... Like the Master, a shepherd bears the burden of interceding and the strain of anointing his people, especially in situations where goodness must struggle to prevail and the dignity of our brothers and sisters is threatened (cf Heb 5:7-9). In the course of this intercession the Lord quietly bestows the spirit of meekness that is ready to understand, accept, hope and risk, notwithstanding any misunderstandings that may result".

The eulogy is laced with scriptural quotes and Jesuit spirituality, painting Benedict as a humble and faithful servant of the Lord and the Gospel, rather than singling out any of his achievements, acts or ideas.

I shall now share some comments from journalists published from Rome. Vimal Tirimanna, probably a Sri Lankan theologian, says: "As a young progressive theologian Joseph Ratzinger's contribution at the Second Vatican Council can never be forgotten. Equally unforgettable are the radical changes in his theological thinking in the aftermath of Vatican II which were inversely proportionate to his gradual rise on the hierarchical ladder". Tirimanna also faults

PB XVI for being too Eurocentric and unable to come to grips with the contextualised theology of Asian countries that are rich in their own spiritual traditions.

Writing in La Croix International, Loup Besmond de Summeville observed that some conservative supporters of PB XVI wanted to make his funeral a show of strength even though just 50,000 turned up, in contrast with the 1 million for that of John Paul II. He says that they wanted to "make this funeral a demonstration of strength from Catholics attached to a vision of the church developed by Joseph Ratzinger as opposed to that which is being championed by Francis".

Those opposed to Pope Francis's reformist agenda based on the ecclesiology of Vatican II have been spreading canards about his resignation on health grounds. Nothing could be further from the truth.



His extension of the Synod on Synodality to 2024 is a clear indication of that, as also his plans to visit several countries.

PBXVI may have regressed theologically with time. Pope John Paul II also, towards the end of his papacy, fell back on pious devotions and a plethora of canonizations, in a way deviating from the scriptural basis of our faith. Not so with Francis. I see him emerging stronger and more resolute. However, I would agree that with PBXVI peeping over his shoulder, Francis may have had his restraints.

I feel that he will now come out with all guns blazing, calling for radical reform and renewal of the church, hopefully leading up to Vatican III. So, there are many fundas to be found in funerals. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHHOTEBHAI is the Convenor of the Indian Catholic Forum. He may be contacted at noronha.kp@gmail.com

Man arrested for desecrating Catholic cemetery in Mumbai

BY **MICHAEL GONSALVES**

Police arrested a Muslim man on Jan. 8, a day after he allegedly vandalized 18 crosses and tombstones in a Catholic cemetery in Mumbai in Maharashtra.

Dawood Ansari was detained after Father Bernard Lancy Pinto, parish priest at St. Michael's Church in the city's Mahim neighborhood, made a police complaint soon after the incident, urging police to arrest the culprit. If convicted, the accused could be in jail for up to two years. The police tracked down Ansari, 22, after analyzing CCTV footage.

"We arrested Ansari from the Kalamoli area in Navi Mumbai for vandalizing crosses at the cemetery.... So far the motive behind his acts is not clear," Manoj Patil, Deputy Commissioner of Police and head of the investigation team, told reporters on Jan. 8.

Patil said as per the video footage, Ansari was at the church for some time after the desecration and did not immediately flee. The police officer said it was a serious offense and all angles are being investigated to find out the culprit's motive, including the possibility of the accused working in conspiracy with someone else. Police also said Ansari appears to be mentally disturbed and unstable since his mother died last year and has stopped believing in God.

"We are happy that the culprit has been arrested but we want the police to look into the root cause of the vandalism and motives for entering our church premises," Father Pinto, the parish priest, told UCA News. Father Nigel Barrett, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Bombay, said he doubts the police claim the accused was mentally unstable.

"While we appreciated the promptness of the police in the arrest, we are hesitant to believe that this is the work of an unstable individual," Father Barrett said.

He said the fact that he ran away to Kalamoli in Navi Mumbai is an indicator that he understood the consequences of his actions.

"Due diligence to establish the motive is necessary and the police should investigate thoroughly without attempting to pass it off as the work of a deranged individual," Father Barrett said.

The police said the accused entered the cemetery by climbing its wall. He was carrying a marble-like object in his hand and vandalized the crosses with it.



He went to the church and sat there for a while before leaving.

A church watchman said that he was surprised to see him coming from the cemetery so early in the morning since the church gate opens at 6am. He took a photo of the man on his mobile phone which was shared with the police.

"It is regrettable and painful that the graves of Catholics were vandalized at the Church of St Michael, Mahim. The sentiments of the community are deeply hurt as this act not only involves the destruction of religious objects, but also disrespect for the dead. The police are investigating the incident," the Archdiocese of Bombay said in a statement on Jan. 7.

"While the Church appreciates the support and assistance of various groups, we strictly do not wish to give this act a communal overtone," it said.

Dolphy D'Souza, president of the Bombay Catholic Sabha, a Catholic forum, condemned the incident and called for the finding of the real motive.

"We urge full protection for our churches and graveyards in Mumbai," he said. Godfrey Pimenta, a prominent Catholic leader, and trustee of Watchdog Foundation NGO regretted that police didn't pay heed to earlier calls for better security at religious sites.

"Symbols of Christianity are being attacked time and again. In the past, we have made a number of appeals to the Mumbai police to increase patrols in and around religious sites. We repeat & reiterate our demand that the state government installs CCTV cameras at all places of worship on priority," he said. ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Towards a Better Food Culture

As life-style diseases are on the rise, doctors have begun to recommend millets as a dietary substitute, and there is much more demand for this than before

BY **J. PRASANT PALAKKAPPILLIL**

An India Government initiative to observe 2023 as the year of millets was accepted by the UN. The subtitle goes thus: 'Unleashing the potential of millets for well-being of people and the environment'. I would paraphrase it as: Millets for ONE Health – of people and of planet. As the global community moves towards the 2030 goals, though it might appear simplistic, I find focussing on millets can be one step closer to SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 1 – no poverty; SDG 2 – zero hunger; SDG 3 – good health & well-being; SDG 11 – climate action; SDG 12 – sustainable consumption and production; and SDG 15 – life on land.

Millets are collective group of small seeded annual grasses that are grown as grain crops, primarily on marginal land in dry areas of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical regions. Millets belong to the grass family, known for their edible small-seeds, rightly translated in Malayalam as '*cheru dhanyangal*' (small cereals), whereas Hindi dictionaries give equivalents like '*jondhri*' and '*mota anaj*'.

It formed the staple food for several millions in India and across the world, especially those living in arid and semi-arid regions. I made an effort to get a comprehensive list from various sources, and I have arrived at this:

- Bajra (Pearl Millet)
- Barri (Proso or Common Millet)
- Choti Kangni (Browntop Millet) Jhanghora/Sanwa (Barnyard Millet)
- Jowar (Sorghum) or Great Millet
- Kangni/Kakum (Foxtail or Italian Millet)
- Kodra (Kodo Millet)
- Kutki/Shavan (Little Millet)
- Ragi (Finger Millet)

Fonio (black and white) – one of the smallest



grains, usually grown in West Africa.

Eragrostis Teff – a tiny Ethiopian grain, but rich in Calcium. The last two appear to be confined to African terrains, whereas, the rest of them are said to be available in India.

Some others listed are: amaranth millet (Rajgira), Buckwheat millet (Kuttu) etc.

Research in Millets

At Solapur, Maharashtra, under Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR) has been established. The research over the years have led to the development of high yielding and hybrid varieties. But my fear is whether we will lose the original germplasms in the concern for producing more.

Research in ancillary technologies has led to developing machines that reduce the otherwise tedious task of extracting the edible part of the 'tiny nutrition balls'.

Millet Crop World-wide

97% of millet production (and perhaps, consumption as well) happens in developing countries indicative of its utility for the vulnerable sections, facing food and nourishment challenges.

Africa is the millet leader, producing 489 lakh tonnes from 423 lakh hectares, followed by Asia with 215 lakh tonnes from 163 lakh hectares. Though the US cultivates just 53 lakh ha, its productivity is almost equivalent to that of the whole of Asia -- 193 lakh tonnes! In India, production is concentrated in 6 states, viz., Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. While the world-wide productivity is 1229 kilos/ha, India is marginally better with 1239/kilos per hectare. (This is to be compared with the average productivity of

wheat at around 4.5 tonnes per ha., and that of rice ranging from 3 to 6 tonnes per ha.!)

While production has shown a steady increase of 228% from the 1950s to 2020, there is a steady decline in the total area cultivated since green revolution by 56%. And millet share to the global food basket has shrunk to 6% from 20% of the pre-green revolution days.

A Means towards One Health

“Millets are incredible ancestral crops with high nutritional value. Millets can play an important role and contribute to our collective efforts to empower smallholder farmers, achieve sustainable development, eliminate hunger, adapt to climate change, promote biodiversity, and transform agrifood systems,” FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

The attractions of this diverse crop varieties are their potential as a climate change resilient crop, requiring less water, which can grow in arid and semi-arid regions, lesser growth inputs when compared to the dominant crops like rice, wheat or maize and which needs and lesser duration. The high yielding varieties may require greater inputs, and now about 80 hybrid varieties are available in India.

Advantages: People's Health

- Gluten free grains
- Lower blood glucose response, making it a diabetes preventive food.
- It induces production of phase-2 detoxifying enzymes thus reducing cancer risk.
- Millets prevent the oxidation of low-density lipoproteins reducing lipase activity and hence hypertension occurrence.
- Nutri-cereals on account of the richer content of minerals, vitamins, anti-oxidants and fibre (detailed analysis in: https://millets.res.in/millets_info.php)

Advantages: Planet Health

- Dryland crop with greater crop duration
- Minimal water and other purchased input requirements (but responsive to higher inputs)
- Resilient to climate change (C4 plant) and an ideal contingent plant.
- Sustainable future food crop with multiple potentials – food (nutritional security), fodder, forage, fuel (energy).



Challenge: As life-style diseases are on the increase, doctors have begun to recommend millets as a dietary substitute, and there is much more demand for this than before. When it comes processed and attractively packaged, with the increased health benefits, they are now found to be more expensive than the dominant foodgrains like wheat or rice. On the other hand, this increased income does not get shared with the basic and marginal farmers who are involved in its production. A solution to this has to be found.

Milleting our Lives in 2023

- Identifying and presenting 'millet kitchen' – the various foods that can be prepared from millets. Local Millet Food Fests.
- Millet Expos – Presenting, familiarising and storing various varieties of millets – original and hybrid collections.
- Health benefits unique to each variety of millet could be identified and documented.
- Demo-plots by educational/religious institutions, voluntary development organisations and local government bodies.
- Agri(millet)-cooperatives for seed-banks, credits, storage, fair marketing and promoting organic production of millets. Preventive action against seed monopolies and genetic modification (GMO).

I have made my choice with inclusion of the attractive red Ragi (finger millets) in porridge/dosa/puttu forms in my regular diet beginning with January 1, 2023. How about you? ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PRASANT PALAKKAPPILLIL, former Principal of Sacred Heart College, Kochi, now works as Academic Director in Doha

Rein in Mid-Air Unruliness

Zero Tolerance

A crackdown on unruly behaviour with enforcement of rules in the right earnest - be it a VVIP, business class or an economy class passenger - is the way out

BY **AARTI**



The uncouth manner in which a 34-year-old inebriated “business class” passenger urinated on an elderly fellow passenger in the mid-air on New York-Delhi Air India flight last November 26 is horrendous.

In brief, reportedly, when the lights were turned off in the aircraft after lunch, the drunken man walked over to the victim’s seat and urinated on her and stayed there until one of his fellow passengers urged him to leave. More disconcerting is that despite her complaining, the airline crew failed to act. She was allegedly made to sit in the soiled seat and even though some first-class seats were said to be vacant, it was not offered to her. To cut the story short, after standing for 20 minutes, the victim was offered a small seat used by airline staff where she sat for about two hours. She was then asked to return to her own seat but when she refused, the victim was offered the steward’s seat for the rest of the journey. Even more shameful is that the man who urinated was allowed to go scot-free on landing.

It took about a month for the airline to act on the woman’s complaint. Air India has banned the accused person from its flights for unruly behaviour for 30 days – the maximum period for which a passenger can be punished by an airline unilaterally.

In the meanwhile, no sooner the incident made headlines in the first week of January this year and thankfully the man has since been apprehended, with his services terminated by the US-based employer, he is in jail.

Chairman, Tata Sons, the parent company of Air India, issued a statement regretting that the response of the airline should have been much swifter. The CEO and Managing Director of Air India also issued a statement that four cabin crew and one pilot have been issued show cause notices and de-rostered pending investigation. Apart from internal investigations that have been ordered to find out whether there were lapses by other staff, the policy on serving of alcohol in flight is also being reviewed.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), responsible for regulation of air transport services to/from/within India and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety and airworthiness standards, has since issued a show-cause notice to Air India after it failed to comply with the provisions related to handling of unruly passengers.

The cause for concern is that Air India ought to have acted on its own, in line with the extant Government guidelines, as unruly behaviour on-board aircraft has been declared as an offence and is a punishable act. Apart from the above said incident on Air India’s New York-Delhi flight, there have been two instances on its Paris-Delhi flight in December last year. It is not known if any action had been initiated on a drunk passenger who urinated on the blanket of woman co-passenger and another inebriated man caught smoking at the lavatory.

Who is an unruly passenger? A passenger who

fails to respect the rules of conduct at an airport or on board an aircraft or to follow the instructions of the airport staff or crew members and thereby disturbs the good order and discipline at an airport or on board the aircraft.

As a preventive measure, according to DGCA guidelines, it is incumbent upon airline staff monitor passengers who are likely to be unruly and they should be not allowed to board the flight if deemed to pose a threat to the safety and security of the flight, fellow passengers or staff while on board aircraft.

Unruly behaviour includes, consuming alcoholic beverages or drugs, smoking in an aircraft, failure to obey the instructions of the pilot, using threatening or abusive language towards a member of the crew or other passengers, behaving in a physically threatening, abusive and disorderly manner towards a member of the crew or other passengers, intentionally interfering with the performance of the duties of a crew member and endangering the safety of an aircraft and persons therein.

Airlines are required to establish mechanism to detect and report unruly passenger behaviour at check-in, in the lounges, at the boarding gate or any other place in the terminal building in order to prevent such passengers from boarding.

In case of occurrence of an act of unruly behaviour while the aircraft is on ground, such cases shall be reported immediately in writing and First Information Report must be lodged with security agency at the aerodrome.

There are three levels of abusive behaviour - Level 1: Unruly behaviour (physical gestures, verbal harassment, unruly inebriation etc.). Level 2: Physically abusive behaviour (pushing, kicking, hitting, grabbing or inappropriate touching or sexual harassment etc.). Level 3: Life-threatening behaviour (damage to aircraft operating systems, physical violence such as choking, eye gouging, murderous assault, attempted or actual breach of the flight crew compartment etc.)

The crew members must attempt to defuse a critical situation until it becomes clear that there is no way to resolve it through verbal communication and written notice to passenger. Applying restraining devices should be used when all conciliatory approaches have been exhausted.

World over, unruly passengers pose challenges to airline crew. Extremely unruly passengers or crew members who need to be restrained are controlled using a variety of methods. Some airlines are said to

carry flex cuffs while others use seatbelts, adhesive tape, neckties, shoe laces, waist belts, or whatever is available on the aircraft.

While the United States does not allow passengers to actually be confined to the seat or any other part of the aircraft – it only allows their individual body parts to be restrained. In Iceland, cabin crew can tie unruly passengers to the seat. In Australia, authorities are empowered to use stun guns to subdue unruly passengers.

Last year, in the US, unruly passenger behaviour reached new heights, where in one incident, a passenger punched a Southwest flight attendant and knocked out two of their teeth. Another passenger who punched and groped the cabin crew of Frontier Airlines was taped to his seat till the rest of the journey.

In 2021, a survey by the Association of Flight Attendants which represents American flight attendants at 17 airlines, found that 85 percent of the 5,000 flight attendants surveyed, dealt with unruly passengers.

Notably, disruptive passengers had used sexist, racist and/or homophobic language, according to 61 percent, while 17 percent said they had been victim of a physical attack.

The Federal Aviation Authority in the US had nearly 6000 complaints of unruly passengers in 2021. In 1,113 cases, investigations were initiated and 350 enforcement actions ordered and the FAA proposed USD 5 million in fines against unruly passengers.

Similarly in 2022, there were 2,359 reports of unruly passengers, 823 investigations were initiated and 553 enforcement action cases ordered.

Why do some passengers resort to unruly behaviour? No easy answers. But some studies seem to suggest that alcohol is a contributing factor. Passengers drink at the airport and board the plane and by the time the cabin crew realize how inebriated such passengers are, it's too late.

Unruly behaviour could be the result of an event of unsatisfactory service/condition or effect of a series of such events that build up.

A crackdown on unruly behaviour with a zero-tolerance policy can help rein in unruly passengers. New rules are not required but the existing ones ought to be enforced in the right earnest -- be it a VVIP, business class or an economy class passenger. Above all, the flight crew need to be trained and re-trained to be proactive in managing such sensitive and traumatic situations in the mid-air. ©

Inter-faith leaders slam attacks on tribal Christians



Some 300 people from different faith groups have joined for a prayer meeting on the side of a street in New Delhi to express solidarity with tribal Christians who were forced to flee their homes due to the violence in central India's Chhattisgarh state.

Leaders from Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Bahá'í faiths prayed with lighted candles on Jan. 8 asking the government to end violence against Christians for their refusal to recant their Christian faith. The Delhi Archdiocese's Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue organized the program in front of its Sacred Heart Cathedral drawing attention to the plight of tribal Christians in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur and Kondagaon districts, who were forced to flee their homes due to the violence.

Non-Christian tribal groups, backed by right-wing fringe elements, are reportedly insisting that tribal Christians give up their faith and return to their traditional animist practices.

Nearly 18 villages in Narayanpur and 15 in Kondagaon were attacked, according to a fact-finding team. The team, which visited the affected districts, said more than 1,000 people have been displaced due to the attacks and social boycotts which started in the second week of December in

tribal-dominated Chhattisgarh state.

Archbishop Anil Joseph Thomas Couto of Delhi extended his Church's support to the victims and called on the federal and state governments to take immediate steps to bring the situation under control.

"The attack on tribal Christians in Chhattisgarh is an attack on Indian faith, culture and tradition," said Hindu representative Goswami Sushil Maharaj, president of the Indian Parliament of Religions, while addressing the meeting.

He wanted the government to take appropriate action to end the violence.

Mohammad Salim Engineer, secretary-general of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, said, "the people who attack other people in the name of religion do not belong to any religious groups."

AK Merchant of Bahá'í Faith and Rabbi Ezekiel Malekar from Judaism also addressed the gathering, asking people to respect other faiths.

Church of North India Bishop Paul Swaroop, Auxiliary Bishop Deepak Tauro of Delhi and Father Vincent D'Souza, vicar-general of the archdiocese, joined the meeting.

Tension reportedly continues between two tribal groups – the minority tribal Christian community and the non-Christian indigenous people – in the state. ©

Vatican replaces Mysore bishop accused of serious crimes

A bishops' team probed allegations of murder, rape, sodomy, kidnapping, etc. against Bishop Kannikadass A William of Mysore.

A bishop probed by a Vatican-appointed team of bishops for alleged involvement in serious crimes like murder, rape and misappropriation of church funds, has been ordered to "take a period of absence from the ministry."

Bishop Kannikadass A William of Mysore has been replaced by retired Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore as apostolic administrator of southern India's Karnataka state.

"I wish to inform that The Dicastery of Evangelization has appointed His Grace Most Rev Bernard Moras, Apostolic Administrator sede plena et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis of the Diocese of Mysore for the ordinary administration and pastoral care of that local Church," Archbishop Felix Machado, secretary-general at the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, said in a Jan.7 communication to cardinals, archbishops and bishops in India.

The appointment became effective from Jan. 7, he added. Significantly, the Vatican order only mentions "a period of absence from the ministry" for Bishop William without specifying any details.

The prelate himself announced on Jan.1 after a Mass that he was going on "medical leave" and asked for prayers.

"The Vatican decision has proved the universal saying that truth triumphs and the Catholic Church stands for truth, justice and for the Gospel values, [and] thus never reconciles with the powers of Hades," Father Gnana Prakash, a senior priest of Mysore diocese, who sought action against the bishop, told UCA News. Father Prakash said the Vatican action followed meticulous scrutiny and proper investigation of the allegations by a three-member bishops' inquiry committee comprising Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal, Bishop J. Susai Manickam of Sivagangai and Bishop Alex Vadakumthala of Kannur.

The priest, in a July 5, 2022, letter to Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, the apostolic nuncio to India, had



accused Bishop William who was appointed by Pope Francis in 2017, of murder, rape, sodomy, kidnapping, and embezzlement of funds.

A chaotic situation had persisted in the diocese for more than four years as some 37 priests reported scandalous issues involving the prelate to the Holy See.

Soon after the allegations surfaced, Bishop William told UCA

News that they were baseless and some priests were targeting him for his efforts to reform the Church.

"The hand of God has struck decisively, William has gone for good and the cleansing has begun but it will be a long process," retired Justice Michael F. Saldanha, who campaigned for the prelate's dismissal, told UCA News. The former high court judge had urged the pope and the apostolic nuncio to remove Bishop William latest by Jan.1, failing which he would file a complaint with the police for his alleged role in the murders of four diocesan priests and massive defalcation of parish funds for 11 years.

"Even though this may be termed as a 'soft dismissal' it is nevertheless a welcome step in the purgation of the Catholic Church in India," Chhotebhai, convener of the Indian Catholic Forum, a laity organization that sought action against the bishop, said in a statement. He said that even before his appointment as bishop, William had been under a cloud of suspicion for alleged criminal acts, including fathering of children and gross financial misappropriation.

"As many as 37 priests of the diocese and over 100 prominent lay persons had submitted several petitions to Propaganda Fide, the Nunciature, and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India," Chhotebhai, added.

Welcoming the Vatican action, Dominic Lobo, a prominent human rights activist, though said "it is too little too late."

"Defrocking the controversial prelate should prevent defaming the good image of the Catholic Church in this multi-faith country," he added. ☉

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Christians up in arms against police survey

Christians in Assam have decided not to cooperate with the police, who began a survey aiming to gather details of Catholics, their churches, institutions, and religious conversions.

“Catholic parishes and institutions have refused to give details because the government and state chief minister himself has disowned it,” said Archbishop John Moolachira of Guwahati on Jan. 5.

Archbishop Moolachira said Christians see the circular, issued by the police department in Assam on Dec. 16, as discriminatory as it singles out activities of the Church. Following the Christians' objection to the circular, the state's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma disowned it during a press conference.

The leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, said his administration did not want any survey of the activities of Christians in the state.

“I completely dissociate myself from the [police] circular,” Sarma told reporters.

Archbishop Moolachira told UCA News that since the chief minister had disowned the circular, the Church has advised Christians not to give any details to the police survey.

“We came to know about the circular during the Christmas season. Along with several other Christian organizations, we objected to it. Later, the government disowned the circular,” he said.

The police across all districts in the state were told to comply with the circular by Dec. 22.

It wanted to collect data on the number of churches established in the last year, instances of religious conversions in the past six years, and the prime factors leading to conversions.

The circular also wanted the police to identify the people who are working for religious conversions.

“It is strange that when we raised this issue with the state chief minister, he said he had no knowledge,” Archbishop Moolachira said.

“Why only Christians are being targeted? Why not details about temples and mosques or other such institutions?” asked Allen Brooks, a spokesperson for Assam Christian Forum, which represents all denominations in the state.

Brooks said Christian leaders like him wonder about the motive behind this move.

The circular created panic among the faithful, not only in Assam but also neighboring Meghalaya, a Christian-majority state. The circular is an attempt to “intimidate and threaten the Christian community,” the statement said.

Christians in Assam make up 3.74 percent of the state's 31 million people, as against the national average of 2.3 percent. ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)



Newly ordained Jesuit priest dies in road accident

BY **LALITA ROSHNI LAKRA**

A Jesuit priest died January 10 in a road accident in a little over two months after his priestly ordination.

Father Arun Bara died around 4 pm when his motorcycle was hit by a truck near Bandarchua village near Kunkuri in the Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh state. He was 33 and was ordained a priest on October 26, 2022. He was a Jesuit for 13 years. He was rushed to the Holy Cross Hospital in Kunkuri in a critical condition. However, he could not be saved because of his serious wounds. The doctors declared that he was already dead when he was brought to the hospital.

Father Bara was engaged in his pastoral ministry in Shanti Bhavan in Jashpur when the accident



occurred, according to a communication from the provincial of the Madhya Pradesh Jesuits.

“With a very heavy heart I share this sad news that Father Arun Bara, SJ, is no more. Soon after his accident, he left for his heavenly abode,” the provincial's letter said.

Father Bara was born on November 9, 1989. He joined the Jesuits on June 29, 2009 and pronounced his first vows on June 21, 2011. He did his juniorate studies at St Stanislaus College at Sitagarha in Jharkhand and college studies at Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. He studied philosophy at Satya Nilayam, Chennai and theology at the Regional Theology College in Ranchi and Vidya Jyoti College of Theology in Delhi. ©

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

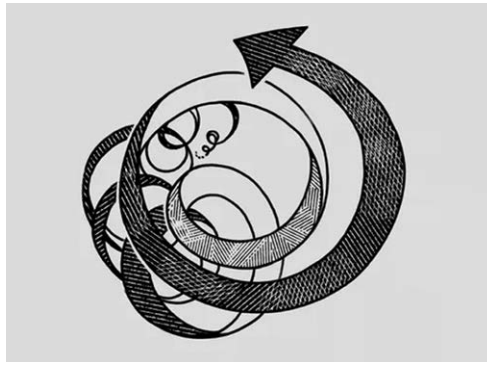
KAIZEN: A PRAXIS-ORIENTED LIFE

BY P.A. JOSEPH

Kaizen is a Japanese ideology and methodology of action and living. It is a practical philosophy and spirituality discovered, experienced and being lived by the Japanese people. It bears grant success. In short it forms and instructs for better ways of living in all circumstances. As an ideology it speaks volumes of struggle for success. It is a philosophy deeply praxis-oriented. As a spirituality it looks for the best way of performing and hence it takes you to that which is beyond oneself. It gives a divine and human power for the best.

Ultimately, we live what we believe. Hence our life is not mere functioning and it goes beyond. It is constantly in search of improvement and hence it is limitless and in a way infinite. Hence it constantly searches for needed change to discover the next step. The search for change is not for change's sake. It demands to identify practical goals both short-term and long-term ways of living. It always believes in making small and manageable steps to achieve the goals perceived. It always enforces changes to be taken step by step. Even a small step is significant, as every step looks to the next one ahead. It also demands to restart as we are bound to make mistake or prone to divert from the goal ahead.

When I say Kaizen is a process, it speaks of movement: physical, mental, psychological, environmental or even emotional; in one word: human. Similarly, any process, advance, progress, evolution, any operation, any undertaking, speaks of movement and action. In this process, or dynamism, I do not/should not fall into routine. For routine is unintelligent, irrational, and not really attuned to what is human. Animals can be trained in routine way of doing.



The search for change is not for change's sake. It demands to identify practical goals both short-term and long-term ways of living. It always believes in making small and manageable steps to achieve the goals perceived

When I follow routine, the role of intelligence in me collapses. If humans go routinized, he/she is less human and go close to being animalised. Every action must be guided by intelligence and not by habits and routine. In this context, I need to amend my life with small actions that are transformative. Hence, I should look at even small things, events, omissions, procedures, etc. as really significant. Little things are incremental with transformative effects.

Another dynamism of Kaizen-mode is the wisdom to prioritize. We deal with number of issues important and less important, casual and urgent, traditional and progressive, conservative and modern, and such issues. My

approach must be to negotiate what is relevant as the saying goes: "Need of the time is the will of God" (Theodosius Florentini). In this endeavour I need to analyse as to what is the priority in my procedure. Ability to prioritise is wisdom. Yet another aspect is to avoid toxic situation and be relaxed in the approach in confronting issues. This demands the Kaizen method of silence and reflection. There is much to learn from/in silence-culture than noise-culture. Kaizen-method well understood and followed, maximises possibilities in any one's life situations with all its negative and uphill milieu. Its dynamism is its positive approach to tough life situations.

The Kaizen philosophy assumes that our way of life – be it our working life, our social life, or our home life – deserves to be constantly improved (Mr Masaaki Imai).

Kaizen-method is a PASSPORT and VISA to be clearly and easily approved in my life even in a just few days and adopting new challenges. Kaizen will make me transparent. ©



Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

bobsbanter@gmail.com

The Governors and the King..!

King Charles! It seems a bit strange to call Charles the king of England, after getting used to addressing Britain's constitutional monarch as 'Her Majesty the Queen', so King it is, and a constitutional monarch it is, and nothing's changed except a man replacing his mother as the ceremonial chief. But in another part of the world in one of England's old colonies, there seems some confusion as the same constitutional heads of state governments have started getting squeamish about just being titular heads!

"Hi Governors!" Charles says as he meets these titular heads who have travelled across the seas to meet him, "You want me to play a bigger role than what my mom played?"

want to change the name from England to Angle Terre!"

"Angle Terre?" asked a flustered Charles.

"Yeah, I did it, your majesty," said one of the governors, "Told the elected representatives to change the name of their state!"

"Why would you ever do that?" asked Charles.

"To keep myself in the news!" said the same man as the other governors chuckled.

"He, he, he! That's very funny," said Charles, "But why do you want me to do what you chaps are doing down there? I'm quite happy, shooting ducks and otherwise trying to see my crown doesn't fall off my head!"

"We thought, if all we constitutional heads started



**Become a Powerful
Writer and Speaker!**

Online course of 1 month,
4 hours a week
and write like a Professional

- Write a book
- Speak at functions
- Create change around you

Taught by Robert Clements himself.

Just send a 👍 to +91 9892572883

"Yes," say all the governors, very respectfully, "We feel that just as we are telling our chief ministers to fall in place you also need to do the needful! Look at the upheaval we've caused in around three states in our country!"

"We were nobody!" said one of the governors, "We were given big palaces which you English left us with, and other than opening shops and museums we had no work at all, but now everybody is noticing us!"

"I stopped reading the full speech given to me," another governor piped in, "and read only some parts!"

King Charles looked back to see if Camilla was joining him then whispered, "We also want to play a bigger role, then just speaking of whales and dolphins!"

"Then assert yourself!" said one of the governors, "Speak against your elected representatives!"

"You mean against Rishi?" whispered Charles.

"Yes!" say something controversial, "Tell him you

getting noticed, then people would forget about their elected representatives and look up to only us!" chorused all the governors together. "And you historically being the first constitutional head in the world could lead the way!"

"What about Camilla?" asked Charles, "Will she also play a part? I like to include her in all my roles!"

The governors looked at one another, shook their heads, then trooped out of Buckingham Palace, "We already have chief ministers wanting to share in governing our states, we can't afford having our wives wanting to partner with us too!" they muttered as they walked out..! 🗨️

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

Colour your Dreams with us

JYOTI PRINTERS

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE



Designing Lab



Pre-press Unit



Printing Services



Binding Unit

OUR SERVICES

- News Paper
- Brochures
- Stickers
- Books
- Visiting Cards

- Pamphlet
- Catalogues
- Magazines
- Annual Report
- Identity Cards

- Flyers
- Posters
- Diary
- Calendar
- Writing Books

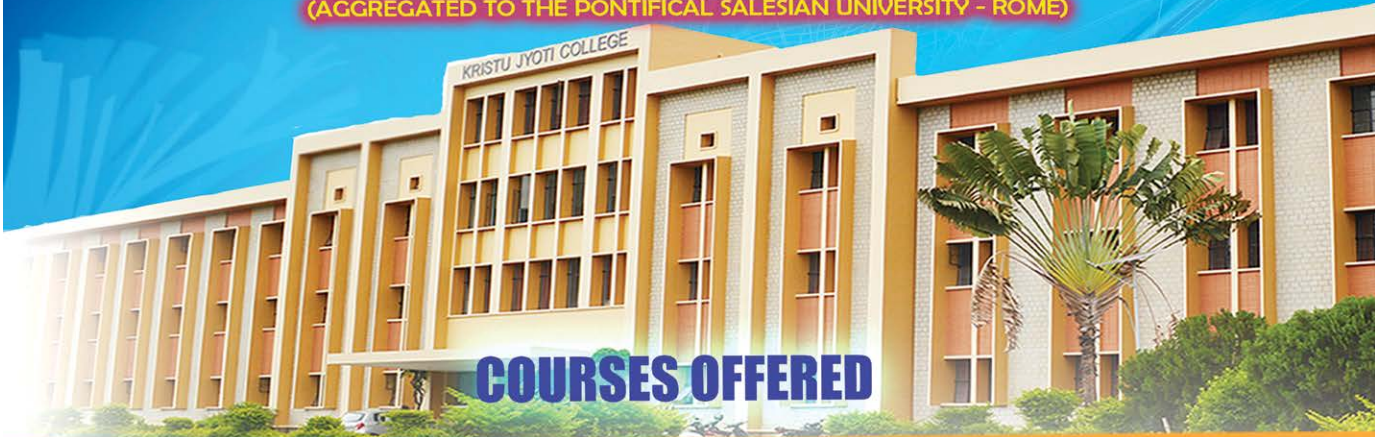


☎ 9289199317
 ☎ 9747691436
 ☎ 9990988511

KRISTU JYOTI COLLEGE

BENGALURU - 560036

(AGGREGATED TO THE PONTIFICAL SALESIAN UNIVERSITY - ROME)



COURSES OFFERED

1. A Two Years Master's Degree Course in Theology

- a). M.Th. with Specialization in Youth Ministry (June 2023 to March 2025)
- b). M.Th. with Specialization in Catechetics (June 2023 to March 2025)
- c). M.Th. with Specialization in Liturgy (June 2023 to March 2025)

2. A Three Years Bachelor's Degree Course in Theology (B.Th. in Theology)

- a). For students preparing for Priesthood (June 2023 to September 2026)
- b). For other students (June 2023 to March 2026)

(Two years of Philosophy is a must for obtaining a B.Th. Degree)

3. A Three Years Degree Course in Philosophy Cum B.A. in Sociology (with a B.A. from ICNOU : June 2023 to June 2026)

4. A Two Years Basic Course in Philosophy (June 2023 to March 2025)

5. A One year Diploma Course in Formation of Faith Education and Youth Ministers (June 2023 to March 2024)

It consists of : Phase I - Basic Theology for Faith Formators
Phase II - Faith Formation and Youth Ministry
Phase III - Audiovisuals in Pastoral Ministry

6. A Three months Certificate Course in Liturgy (June 2023 to August 2023)

7. A 10 week Certificate Course in Pastoral Communication (January 2024 to March 2024)

8. A 6 month Diploma Course in Formative Spirituality for the Formation of the Formation Guides (During the Summer - Spread over 3 Years)

ADDRESS

THE PRINCIPAL / REGISTRAR, KRISTU JYOTI COLLEGE, KRISHNARAJAPURAM, BANGALURU - 560036

Mobile : Principal (0) 9449362433; Registrar (0) 7795234212

E-mail : kjcpprincipal@gmail.com; registrarkristujyoti@gmail.com

For more details and application forms, log on to: www.kjcbllr.org (or) contact the Registrar or Principal