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VIRGINITY TEST



TESTING TIME

Delhi High Court declares the virginity test performed on a Catholic nun 15 years ago in the course of a probe as unconstitutional, sexist, archaic, abhorrent and a violation of right to human dignity!



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TESTING TIME FOR WOMEN



Myth survives over scientific temper. As they are embedded in people's conscience, it is not easy to weed them out. Even those who boast of scientifically empowered succumb to myths when it comes to personal and religious life. One such entrenched myth is the belief that 'two-finger test' can determine the virginity of girls or women. The virginity test is mostly conducted in rape cases to determine whether the victim is a sexually active person. It is also carried out wherein a sex angle exists in a case. The test is apparently meant to decide how habitual a person is in her sexual activities and the result is used as a yardstick to determine the veracity of one's claims. It is based on the wrong assumption that women's chastity or sexual history of the victims is important in rape trials.

The Supreme Court has come down heavily on this practice which is based on a patriarchal and unscientific assumption that virginity test is the right method to confirm the sexual life of a person; it is equally absurd to presume that a sexually active person would be immoral in her life. The apex court in its various judgements in the past few years and the Delhi High Court in its recent verdict have conclusively and unequivocally stated that virginity test is regressive, unscientific and offensive to the dignity of women. The High Court order came on a plea moved by Sr. Sephy who pleaded to declare the virginity test on her, in connection with a nun's death in Kerala, as unconstitutional.

The courts have castigated the authorities concerned who continue to resort to this inhuman practice. They have held that the test is against right to privacy which is recognized as part of Article 21 of the Constitution. On equal measure, it is also violation of human dignity.

Besides these verdicts, studies published in reputed medical journals and opinions of experts in the field show that inspection of hymen cannot give conclusive evidence of vaginal penetration or any other sexual activity. Hence, Justice J. S. Verma committee, set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya case in Delhi, had recommended its banning. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013, introduced after the Nirbhaya case, stipulates that a person's sexual behaviour should not be considered relevant to deciding the morality of a person. There is yet another danger in conducting virginity test. As several court verdicts and experts have pointed out, in some women hymen may not tear during vaginal intercourse, while in others they may tear even without vaginal sexual intercourse due to sports and other activities and some women may not even have one. This is the established position of hymen. Hence, judging a woman on the basis of 'two-finger test' is unscientific, inaccurate and is nothing less than perpetuating a myth.

It would be pertinent to point out a study from 1906, as reported in *The Guardian*, which showed that a sex worker's hymen was still intact. Another survey of 2004, which studied 36 pregnant women of whom 34 still had an intact hymen, too disproves the myth of virginity test. Still, the myth is so compelling that people would rather believe in virginity test as it helps to preserve a patriarchal mindset. Judicial intervention along with awareness creation could, to some extent, erase this myth from human conscience and belief.

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

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

Dr. Suresh Mathew
Editor

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VIRGINITY TEST A DISGRACE

The Delhi High Court held that the virginity test conducted on Sr. Sephy violated her right to live with basic human dignity, right to honour, reputation and privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution
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 World Health Organization

Virginity testing can lead to harmful mental - as well as physical - health consequences.




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POWER QUOTES



I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples

- **Mother Teresa**

• • •



The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall

- **Nelson Mandela**

• • •



Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world

- **Harriet Tubman**

• • •



Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more

- **H. Jackson Brown, Jr.**

• • •



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

- **Bill Keane**

• • •



Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful

- **Joshua J. Marine**

• • •



Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people

- **Leo Burnett**

• • •



The best portion of a good man's life is his little nameless, unencumbered acts of kindness and of love

- **William Wordsworth**

• • •



Sometimes you can't see yourself clearly until you see yourself through the eyes of others.

- **Ellen DeGeneres**

• • •



VIRGINITY TEST A DISGRACE

The Delhi High Court held that the virginity test conducted on Sr. Sephy violated her right to live with basic human dignity, right to honour, reputation and privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution

BY **ADV. ROMY CHACKO**

Sr. Abhaya, a Christian nun and an inmate of Pious X Convent Hostel, Kottayam, Kerala was found dead in a well on 27.03.1992. The local police registered the case as 'unnatural death'. The CBI which took over the investigation, in its final report submitted on 29.11.1996, narrated that "the materials/evidence collected during investigation do not conclusively establish beyond reasonable doubt as to whether Sr. Abhaya's death is suicidal or homicidal".

Later, on behalf of the Kochi Unit of the CBI, Nanda Kumar Nair undertook the investigation from November 01, 2008. Sr. Sephy and two other



accused were implicated for the offence of murder. The Prosecution version is that on 27.03.1992 Sr. Abhaya allegedly saw two priests and Sr. Sephy in a compromising position. Fearing exposure, the accused persons killed Sr. Abhaya.

Sr. Sephy was arrested on 19.11.2008. The prosecution was not able to produce any evidence to prove any meeting between the nun and the other accused at Pius X hostel on the fateful day or the alleged immoral relationship between them. However, in a bid to prove the motive attributed to the accused, CBI subjected the nun to virginity test on 25.11.2008 i.e., 16 years after the alleged incident

It is shocking that a catholic nun was subjected to virginity test by the premier investigating agency of the country to prove her involvement in a murder case. Virginity is of prime importance to a catholic nun for her religious and personal life as she has to take a vow of chastity

took place. I do not know whether the investigating agency conducted any investigation if she had access to men between 27.3.1992 and 25.11.2008.

To the utter dismay of the CBI, the tests conducted by the doctors proved that the hymen of the complainant was found intact. As the result of the virginity test conducted on Sr. Sephy proved counter-productive, CBI officials, to save their face, fabricated a new story to the effect that Sr. Sephy had undergone surgery for suturing of hymen or “hymenoplasty” and released their version to the print and electronic media.

On the days that followed, the print and electronic media released the news of the virginity test conducted on Sr. Sephy and the CBI story of petitioner having undergone surgery for suturing of hymen. It is pertinent to point out that the above reports were made public by the CBI even before the result of the test was submitted before the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court on 02.12.2008. Later she was released on bail by the High Court of Kerala.

The Medico-Legal Case (MLC) filed by the respondent does not show that she had undergone hymenoplasty. On the contrary it states:

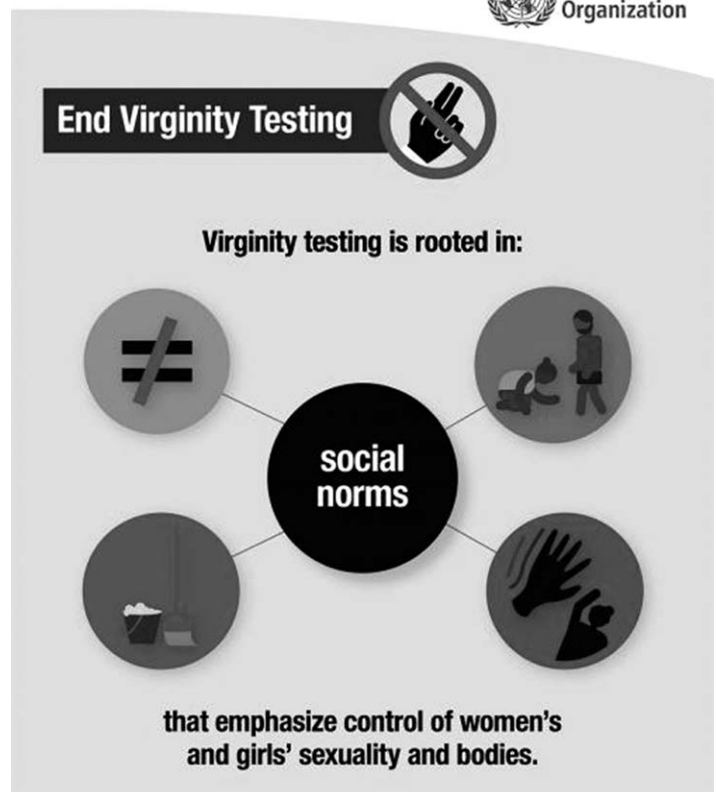
“There is evidence of scarring to hymen which could be due to surgical interference. Hence, a definite opinion as to whether she had undergone penetration due to vaginal intercourse in the past cannot be stated. There is no evidence of having undergone anal intercourse in the past.”

The above report does not suggest that the victim was not a virgin or that she had undergone hymenoplasty. The inference that she had undergone hymenoplasty is solely based on the reference of scarring

to hymen in the MLC. There was no other evidence to prove that she had undergone hymenoplasty. There is also no evidence of any facility for hymenoplasty anywhere in India at the relevant time or that the accused had availed of it. Hence it has to be concluded that the story of hymenoplasty is nothing but an attempt to cover up the failure of the investigating agency to prove that she was not a virgin.

In fact, way back in 2009 itself, Justice Hema of Kerala High Court observed at the time of granting bail to the complainant/accused that the virginity test does not serve any purpose other than making an attempt to throw mud on a nun in public.

Immediately after this, Sr. Sephy and the nuns from her congregation approached me seeking redressal of their grievances against the CBI. I was shocked by the physical and psychological harm that she suffered at the hands of the investigating agency and the general public. She was in a state of depression which cannot be described in words. She was not able to attend any function or travel in a public conveyance as she was made an object of public ridicule by the CBI. She was not allowed to live with basic human dignity guaranteed under the Constitu-





tion of India. Sr. Sephy was very particular that what happened to her should not happen to any other woman in future.

I filed a complaint before the National Human Rights Commission. The same was not entertained. Thereafter a writ petition was filed on behalf of the sister before Delhi High Court seeking a declaration that the virginity test administered on the sister was unconstitutional and to take appropriate action

against the officials responsible for the same. The case passed through various judges over the period of 13 years before it was finally allowed by Justice Swaran Kant Sharma on 7th February 2023.

During the pendency of trial proceedings accused No.2 Fr. Puthrukayil was discharged by the CBI Court on 7.3.2018 and the same was confirmed by the High Court of Kerala on 9.4.2019. As a result the alleged scene witnessed by Sr. Abhaya had to be altered during the trial.

It is shocking that a catholic nun was subjected to virginity test by the premier investigating agency of the country to prove her involvement in a murder case. Virginity is of prime importance to a catholic nun for her religious and personal life as she has to take a vow of chastity before being admitted to the religious order.

The virginity test conducted on Sr. Sephy violated her right to live with basic human dignity, right to honour, reputation and privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. It is not only an attack on her honour and reputation but also gross abuse of power by the investigating agency.

International Organisations have also declared Virginity Testing as unscientific, harmful, painful, humiliating, traumatic and rooted in entrenched system of discrimination against women and girls

After a long wait of 14 years, finally justice has been done to a catholic nun who was subjected to public ridicule and humiliation by the premier investigating agency of the country

International Organisations have also declared Virginity Testing as unscientific, harmful, painful, humiliating, traumatic and rooted in entrenched system of discrimination against women and girls. Recently an Interagency Statement based on various medico-legal literatures was published by 3 UN agencies i.e., World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and UN Women. The Report provides that Virginity testing is unscientific, medically unnecessary and unreliable and that governments; health professionals and their associations; international, regional and national health agencies; and communities at large should take the initiative to ban virginity testing.

Neither the Cr.P.C. nor any other law empower the investigating agency to conduct virginity test on an accused. It is common sense that subjecting the accused to virginity test on 25.11.2008 could not have produced any evidence to prove that she was in a compromising position with the other accused on 25.03.1992 i.e. the date of death of Sister Abhaya (motive attributed to the crime by the CBI).

The law-makers did not include virginity test as a



tool for investigation. Medical test which does not come within the ambit of section 53 CR.P.C. cannot be administered by the investigating agency without the previous permission of the court. It is also well settled law that there must be sufficient materials before the court to permit parties to be subjected to medical tests. It is an admitted fact that the CBI did not obtain any permission from the Court for subjecting Sr. Sephy to virginity test possibly because there were no materials available to justify the same.

Delhi High Court declared that virginity test conducted on a female detainee, accused under investigation or in custody whether judicial or police is unconstitutional and violative of Article 21 of the Constitution which includes right to dignity. It was further observed that virginity test amounts to interference with bodily integrity and psychological integrity of a woman and that it makes no difference whether it is conducted on a victim or an accused. The court held that the virginity test is sexist and it amounts to violation of human right to dignity.

The National Human Rights Commission was also directed to consider afresh the representation filed by Sr. Sephy regarding custodial torture for compensation once the criminal trial against her is over.

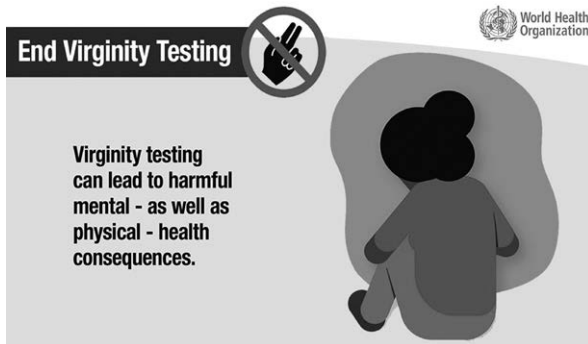
After a long wait of 14 years, finally justice has been done to a catholic nun who was subjected to public ridicule and humiliation by the premier investigating agency of the country. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ADV. ROMY CHACKO is a noted Supreme Court Lawyer who argued the case of Sr Sephy, the petitioner, in the Delhi High Court



‘Virginity testing’: A human rights violation, with no scientific basis - UN



A group of United Nations agencies has issued a joint statement calling for a ban on tests meant to assess the virginity of a girl or a woman, which is a common practice in at least 20 countries.

The statement, which was issued during the World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) in Rio de Janeiro, stresses that such tests are both unscientific, and a violation of human rights.

So-called “virginity testing” – also often referred to as hymen, “two-finger” or per vaginal examination – is a gynecological inspection of female genitalia carried out in the false belief that it can reliably determine whether a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse.

In a global call to eliminate violence against women and girls everywhere, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), UN Women and the World Health Organization (WHO), said that “this medically unnecessary, and often times painful, humiliating and traumatic practice must end”.

The practice is a long-standing tradition documented in at least 20 countries, spanning all regions of the world. Women and girls are often forced to undergo virginity testing for various reasons, including requests from parents or potential partners to establish marriage eligibility or even from potential employers.

It is mostly performed by doctors, police officers, or community leaders on women and girls, in order to assess their virtue, honour or social value.

In their statement, the UN agencies explained that the practice has “no scientific or clinical basis” and that “there is no examination that can prove a girl or

woman has had sex”, as the “appearance of girl’s or woman’s hymen cannot prove whether they have had sexual intercourse or are sexually active or not”.

Virginity testing reinforces stereotypes and gender inequality

In addition, the UN agencies denounce virginity testing as a violation of the rights of girls and women, which can be detrimental to their physical, psychological and social well-being. The examination can be “painful, humiliating and traumatic” and reinforces stereotyped notions of female sexuality and gender inequality.

In some regions, it is common for health professionals to perform virginity testing on victims of rape, supposedly to ascertain whether or not rape occurred. Given the lack of clinical basis, the procedure is deemed “unnecessary” and “can cause pain and mimic the original act of sexual violence, exacerbating survivors’ sense of disempowerment and cause re-victimisation,” said the agencies.

“The result of this unscientific test can impact upon judicial proceedings, often to the detriment of victims and in favour of perpetrators, sometimes resulting in perpetrators being acquitted,” the statement added.

“Given that these procedures are unnecessary and potentially harmful, it is unethical for doctors or other health providers to undertake them. Such procedures must never be carried out,” the joint statement read, calling for a collaborative response across societies, supported by the public health community and all health professionals.

“Health professionals can be great agents for change,” said Dr. Princess Nothema Simelela, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Family, Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health.

“With support from health systems and governments, they can recognise that ‘virginity testing’ has no medical or clinical bases, refuse to carry out the harmful practice, and educate the public about this,” she noted, adding that that, in doing so, they would be “upholding the Hippocratic oath of ‘do no harm’ and safeguarding the human rights of girls and women in their care”.

(Courtesy: news.un.org, 17 Oct 2022)

Supreme Court slams two-finger test in rape cases; calls out 'patriarchal and sexist' mindset

It is “patriarchal and sexist” to suggest that a woman cannot be believed when she states that she was raped merely because she is sexually active, the Supreme Court said while directing that those conducting the two-finger (virginity) test on rape survivors should be prosecuted for criminal misconduct.

Underlining that the two-finger test stands proscribed by the top court through a raft of judgments starting 2013, the SC bench headed by justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud frowned upon the continuance of the practice even though it was established to be lacking any scientific basis to ascertain the sexual history of the victim.

“This court has time and again deprecated the use of two-finger test in cases alleging rape and sexual assault. The so-called test has no scientific basis and is an invasive method of examining rape survivors... It instead re-victimises and re-traumatizes women. The two-finger test must not be conducted,” justice Chandrachud said while reading out the operative part of a judgment in a criminal case.

He added, “The test is based on an incorrect assumption that a sexually active woman cannot be raped. Nothing can be further from the truth.”

The apex court highlighted that the probative value of a woman’s testimony does not depend on her sexual history. “It is patriarchal and sexist to suggest that a woman cannot be believed when she states that she was raped merely because she is sexually active,” said the bench.

Issuing a slew of directives to ensure implementation of its previous judgments, the top court directed the Centre and states to ensure that the guidelines formulated by the department of health and family welfare banning the two-finger test are recirculated

It is patriarchal and sexist to suggest that a woman cannot be believed when she states that she was raped merely because she is sexually active



to all government and private hospitals.

It further said that workshops must be conducted for health care providers to communicate appropriate procedure for examining survivors of sexual assault.

The court also favoured a review of curriculums in medical schools to state that the two-finger test is not prescribed as one of the procedures to be adopted while examining survivors of sexual assault and rape.

The SC passed the judgment on Monday while setting aside the acquittal of a man in a rape and murder case, and sentencing him to life term.

The Supreme Court had in May 2013 ruled that the two-finger test on a rape victim violates her right to privacy, and asked the government to provide better medical procedures to confirm sexual assault.

Referring to various international covenants, the 2013 judgment said that rape survivors are entitled to legal recourse that does not violate their physical or mental integrity and dignity. “Medical procedures should not be carried out in a manner that constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and health should be of paramount consideration while dealing with gender-based violence,” it had stated back then. ©

(Courtesy: Hindustan Times, 31 Oct 2022)

Survey or Raid

No Difference to BBC

BY A.J. PHILIP

The word survey means “to examine and record the area and features of a place so as to construct a map, plan, or description”. It also means “to collect data over a period in order to assess them and reach a conclusion”.

The word raid means “a rapid surprise attack on an enemy by troops, aircraft, or other armed forces”. In the civil context, it means sending a large number of officers to an office or home to collect evidence, without giving time to the people concerned to hide or camouflage wealth or data”.

The Income Tax Department says it did not conduct a “raid” on the offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in Delhi and Mumbai. What it conducted was a “survey”. What exactly did the department do? It did not give any advance notice to the BBC about the “survey”.

What happened was that a large number of Income Tax officers descended on the two buildings and started searching the offices. The staff, including journalists, were not allowed to make telephone calls, hold meetings or leave the offices. Their computers were opened and they were asked so many questions. The “survey” continued for two days.

How can this be called a survey when it resembles a “raid”? The government wanted to give the impres-



sion that what it did was a routine “survey” of the two offices and there was nothing more than met the eye in the action. Let it be made clear that only fools can be misled in this manner.

There was a report circulated by Hindenburg Research, which the mainstream media tried to ignore when it came out. But when it became viral on social media, the media was compelled to take notice of it. What did the report say?

It said that the Adani Group, headed by Gautam Adani, was using devious means to achieve its growth rate. It mentioned how it saved money on tax, how it parked money abroad and how it used the parked money to re-invest in the company and how the company used the expansion process to become richer and richer, day by day.

Adani was just a small company when, in 2014, he gave Narendra Modi his commodious helicopter to campaign all over the country. He is a good investor and he knew that the investment he made in providing a helicopter with full tank aviation fuel and staff throughout the period of the campaign would fetch him rewards.

What a proud moment it was for Adani when Modi arrived in Delhi to take over as the Prime Minister of India in his aircraft! Modi was very grate-



ful to him. Whenever he went abroad, he took with him a group of businessmen in his special aircraft.

He stopped the practice of letting journalists travel with him. Among the businessmen who accompanied him on such trips was Gautam Adani. Neither JRD Tata nor Dhirubhai Ambani had the privilege of travelling with Prime Minister.

Adani used the connections so well that he began to outstep every company in the country. The Tatas, the Birlas, the Ambanis and the Mahindras were all overtaken by the Adani Group in no time. When Covid struck the nation and the government imposed a lockdown on the country, millions of people lost their livelihood.

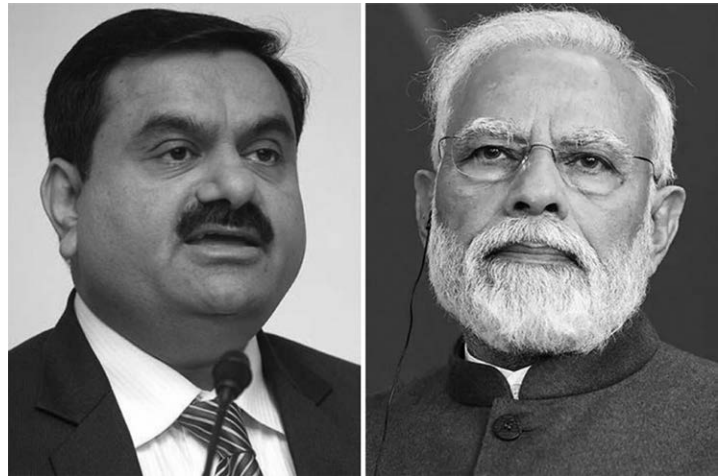
We saw tens of thousands of people leaving cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad and walking all the way to their villages in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, etc. It was the period when even middle class people were dipping into their savings to manage their day-to-day affairs, as many companies were closed or could not pay salaries.

One extraordinary thing was happening in the country during this period. The Adani Group was growing by leaps and bounds. Everyday its assets were increasing by about Rs 1700 crore. Did Adani invent a new product like a car which can run 10,000 miles on a single litre of petrol?

No, he was doing what a good trader always does. He was fleecing the customer, in this case, the Indian state. He was bypassing every law of the land to become richer. The government helped him in the process by letting him have the contracts for new airports and new seaports.

Suddenly, Gautam Adani became the richest person in India, richer than Mukesh Ambani. What's more, he became the richest person in Asia that includes China. He also became the third richest person in the world, overtaking Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

Adani used the connections so well that he began to outstep every company in the country. The Tatas, the Birlas, the Ambanis and the Mahindras were all overtaken by the Adani Group in no time



Speculations already began when he would become the world's richest person. That is when the Hindenburg Research report came. It was just a prick for the over-aided Adani balloon. Within days, he came down from the position of the third richest person to the 24th richest person!

Social media is full of stories of how he cheated investors and the government to become so rich. All his wealth was based on cooked-up figures. The Group tried to brave the challenge by going forward with its follow-on-public offer worth Rs 20,000 crore.

As was required, some shares were earmarked for the employees of Adani. Who knows the company better than the employees? Is it, therefore, any surprise that only 50 per cent of the shares earmarked for the staff were sold? Only 11 per cent of the shares meant for the general public were lifted?

It means that the people believe in the Hindenburg Research report that the Adani Group used "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud". What the report said was known to everyone who matters in the country. If one searches Parliament records, he will know how Opposition MPs had pointed their accusing finger at the Adani Group.

The company was forced to withdraw its follow-on-public offer. It offered to return the money invested to the investors. If the investors were various outfits of the same Group, it could be treated as a coincidence.

As the controversy over the Adani saga filled the minds of the people, one person remained silent. He is Narendra Modi. Even when he was asked specific questions in Parliament, he preferred to attack the Congress for what it did in the hoary past.

A sensible government would have ordered a



check of all the institutional mechanisms to ensure that if the Adani Group went down the Sabarmati River, it would not affect the general public, especially those whose money is deposited in banks like the State Bank of India and public sector companies like the Life Insurance Corporation of India.

Instead, a raid-like survey of the BBC was ordered. Ideally, the Income Tax authorities should have conducted the raid on the Adani Group offices to find out the truth contained in the Hindenburg Research report that the people in general believe. Why did it choose BBC, instead?

Let there be no mistakes. It is a retaliation in the context of the two-part documentary the BBC broadcast on the Gujarat riots of 2002 and later developments in the country titled "India: The Modi Question". Officially what the IT Department said was that the BBC was indulging in "transfer pricing" and "diversion of profit".

In these days when the Income Tax Department has access to all the banking transactions of a person

Ideally, the Income Tax authorities should have conducted the raid on the Adani Group offices to find out the truth contained in the Hindenburg Research report that the people in general believe. Why did it choose BBC, instead?

or a company, it is not difficult to find out if there are any suspicious transactions. In any case, the BBC is a public broadcaster which runs on the licence fee every British citizen pays to listen to or watch its programmes.

Its offices in Delhi do not have transactions which are worth even a fraction of the transaction of the Adani Group which is now under a cloud. The BBC is not new to India.

Former Defence Minister A.K. Antony's son was so perturbed over the BBC documentary that he even risked his membership in the Congress to attack the BBC. He asked rhetorically whether the BBC had not shown the Indian map, showing Kashmir as a disputed territory? Did he not know that Britain and the US did not give Modi a visa to visit their countries when he was the chief minister of Gujarat?

Did he not know that the BBC has been reporting India even before his father was born, i.e., when the Rashtrapati Bhavan was known as the Viceroy's House and the Union Jack received the salute of the Indian Army. If tomorrow India occupies what the Pakistanis call Azad Kashmir and what we call Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the BBC will show the map differently to indicate that Muzaffarabad and Gilgit are now part of India.

I would have been happy to know Antony Junior's response to the raid on the BBC, which Rajiv Gandhi tuned into to confirm whether the Intelligence Bureau report about her mother's assassination was correct or not. Modi was once an unabashed admirer of the BBC when All India Radio was known as All Indira Radio! It is a different matter that Modi evaded arrest and went abroad when the Emergency was clamped on the country.

Even a child knows that the IT survey was related to the BBC documentary which critically examined the riots in Gujarat in 2002, even giving the views of the ruling party. The overall impression it gave to the viewers was that the leadership in Gujarat at that time had a lot to explain for its acts of omission and commission. Modi was the chief minister at that time.

The commentary was a compilation of facts, figures, videos and statements that could be left to the people to reach their own conclusions. The aggrieved parties like the BJP could have come out with their own version of how and why the "pogrom" happened, particularly when the Union Home Minister Amit Shah himself claims credit for the achievements that flowed from the riots.

Perhaps, the government wants to proclaim that it can get even with any organisation that embarrasses it, even if it is by way of espousing the truth. Revenge has now become a state policy!

Even before the second part of the documentary was released, the Government ordered online media platforms to disable the links they had given to the first part of the documentary under rules which should not have been invoked at all.

It also ordered blocking of all tweets that had links to the documentary. Such a hyper-active reaction was unwarranted. It only raised doubts about the government's own credibility. It is against this backdrop that the people in general have reservations about the IT Survey.

Nobody argues that if the BBC violated Indian tax laws, it should be let off simply because it is a multi-national broadcaster with enormous clout. However, there are established ways in which its transgressions, if any, could have been dealt with. The survey was certainly not the way.

It is not the first time that government agencies like the CBI, the IT Department and the Enforcement Directorate have been used to pressurise media organisations which had either critically examined government policies or exposed some wrong-doing.

Organisations like NDTV, NewsClick, the Dainik Bhaskar Group of Publications and the organisation that funds the Centre for Policy Research have over the last few years experienced the high-handedness of such agencies. What the BBC has been undergoing is a similar kind of treatment.



Perhaps, the government wants to proclaim that it can get even with any organisation that embarrasses it, even if it is by way of espousing the truth. Revenge has now become a state policy!

A few years ago, the BBC did a documentary on the Uighars of the Xinjiang province of China, which was not to the liking of the government there. It brought to limelight the problem of missing Muslims. The broadcaster was condemned for what it did.

However, there is a fundamental difference between India and China. While it is a dictatorial regime that rules China, India takes pride in the fact that it is the largest democracy in the world.

A nation cannot be considered democratic, if it does not have a vibrant media that can critique the government. The media serves the purpose of a watchdog and if it is bridled, it will cease to be a democracy.

Ask any media person in Delhi and he will tell you how the government has stopped journalists from visiting the Central hall of Parliament to interact with political leaders. He will also tell you how the government has imposed more restrictions on journalists covering Parliament.

In short, the media has become “unwanted” in the country. Modi believes that he can communicate directly with the people through his tweets and Mann Ki Baath, little realising that a controlled media can play havoc, as it would give credence to rumours. Indira Gandhi realised the danger of controlling the media. Modi too will realise it, sooner than later.

See how the secrecy that surrounded the Adani companies finally brought it down when a mirror was shown to it by Hindenburg Research. ©

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Scapegoats and Holy Cows

Justice Delivery System in the era of Sectarian Nationalism is becoming biased against minorities. They often become scapegoats and are jailed for months and years before courts come to their rescue in some cases

BY **RAM PUNIYANI**

In the case of Jamia violence of 2019, 11 students were arrested. One of them was Sharjeel Imam who was a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. The others included Safoora Zargar and Asif Iqbal Tanha. While discharging them, the Court commented that the 'police was unable to apprehend the actual perpetrators and surely managed to rope them (the accused) as scapegoats in the matter.' The Court also observed that the police have been filing supplementary charge sheets with nothing new to offer. Surely it was to drag the case and keep these eleven in the jail. There are many others like Umar Khalid who were talking of harmony and peace, but are behind bar now. However, Anurag Thakur got promotion from Minister of State to Cabinet Minister after his provocative goli maro (shoot them) slogan.

In the wake of Covid 19, it came to be known that many Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) members were having a conclave in Delhi. Some had come from abroad. The Godi (lap) media jumped to the opportunity and blamed the TJ members for spreading Corona calling it 'Corona Jihad' and 'Corona bomb', and many delegates were arrested. Around the same time a massive Namaste Trump meeting was held in Ahmadabad; Kanika Kapoor a noted singer had come from aboard and was holding many shows; and a Sikh Granthi



who had come from abroad also was having many meetings. The arrested TJ members underwent a painful ordeal and later they were released. Releasing them, the High Court observed, "A political Government tries to find the scapegoat when there is pandemic or calamity and the circumstances show that there is probability that these foreigners were chosen to make them scapegoats. The aforesaid circumstances and the latest figures of infection in India show that such action against present petitioners should not have been taken."

In the wake of a series of blasts in Malegaon, Mecca Masjid and Ajmer, many Muslim youth were arrested and later released for lack of any evidence, but their careers stood ruined and their families defamed. ANHAD, the human rights organization, did come out with a report "Scapegoats and Holy Cows". Similarly, Jamia Teachers' Association published a report, 'Framed, Dammed and Acquitted'. The report points out how Muslims are implicated, tried and later released after long a period of imprisonment. It is the Courts which occasionally come to their rescue and they are released.

There is an 'other' side of the story. Many saffron clads and those owing allegiance to sectarian agenda

In the wake of a series of blasts in Malegaon, Mecca Masjid and Ajmer, many Muslim youth were arrested and later released for lack of any evidence, but their careers stood ruined and their families defamed





spread hate with gay abandon. One recalls the fairly recent utterance of the Bhopal MP, Pragy Singh Thakur, who is currently on bail in Malegaon blast case, asking people to keep sharp knives for punishing those indulging in love jihad. In the last couple of weeks there has been a spate of hate speeches from 'holy' men and women and even those who are part of ruling party. There are rallies where BJP leaders are seen and hate speeches are blurted out with impunity.

One 'Hindu Janakrosh Morcha' held over 20 rallies in Maharashtra and spewed hate against Muslim community on the issue of conversion and love jihad. It had planned a rally in Mumbai on 6th February in which in addition to conversion and love jihad it was to give a call for boycott of Muslim traders. A petition was filed against it. The Court in its wisdom directed the police to take action against hate speech under section 151. When this provision is there why have the police not taken action?

A rally of various Hindutva groups was held in Delhi at Jantar Mantar (5th February 2023) where a call was given to stock weapons to kill Muslims and Christians. As per a report in The Scroll, "In one of the videos, which has been widely shared on social media, a monk is seen asking Hindus to stock weapons to kill Muslims and Christians. In another video, Bharatiya Janata Party leader Suraj Pal Amu is seen calling for violence..." We have been seeing such calls being given in Dharm Sansads by the likes of Yati Narsinghnanad and company who surely are having a state cover and enjoy impunity.

In the last couple of years, Yati Narsinghanad, the Mahamandleshwar of Juna Akhara, has been doing the same with increased intensity. Many FIRs were lodged against him for his comments against women and his Hardwar Dharma Sansad hate speech. He was arrested but later got bail with ease.

Let's look at the contrasting situation. The Muslim youth are generally put under UAPA and other clauses where bail is difficult or a deliberate delay is created by authorities to keep them behind bars. The Hindutva/BJP/Saffron-clad saints are charged with lenient sections in which case jail is rare.

In a way, two sets of justice delivery systems have developed in the society due to the rise of communal politics. Myths, prejudices and biases against minority communities are getting deep-rooted due to organized propaganda. A large section of media, IT cell, and thousands of WhatsApp groups have been set up by them.

This is at basic level. As they go up in the hierarchy of political structure and organizations floated by them, they try to put on sophisticated language



to hide hate ideology. So, an RSS chief will say that 'we are all Hindus' and 'we will talk of Vasudhi-ava Kutumbkam' due to which many ideologues and thinkers feel it is worth having a dialogue with this organization. Their pet agenda leads to a stage where Yogi Adityanath will talk of Sanatan Hindu Rashtra.

Can hate be combated in any rational way? The emotive issues are further worsening the situation and starting from Ram Temple, to beef to various types of jihad and lately love jihad becomes the divisive and hate-spreading slogan on which the sectarian nationalist ideology thrives. There is a need to promote fraternity and the police/state officials in particular need to be trained in the Indian culture and history, which is plural and inclusive. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

Subverting Democracy

The absolute *dadagiri* of the ruling party in Parliament in refusing to discuss the Adani issue tell a cautionary tale - that the powerful cannot be called to account

BY **MATHEW JOHN**

"I don't actually subscribe to the view that all power corrupts, but absolute power - when secured on the back of massive parliamentary majorities, which don't reflect the balance of political opinion in the country - can corrupt absolutely." - Charles Kennedy



"Parliament's job is to conduct discussions. But, many a time, Parliament is used to ignore issues, and, in such situations, obstruction of Parliament is in favour of democracy. Therefore, parliamentary obstruction is not undemocratic." -- Arun Jaitley

We are at a tipping point in the life of our nation, with democracy on the line. The impunity with which this Government is subverting democratic norms in trying to bail out the biggest corporate brigand ever, even as it glosses over its own complicity in his murky dealings, is stunning in its brazenness. Last week, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar

interrupted Mallikarjun Kharge's speech on the Adani group's malfeasance with this outrageous obiter dictum: "We have to say (sic) from this platform only that which is in national interest." In effect, the V-P was insinuating that criticism of Adani and the government's alleged crony links with

the Adani group were detrimental to the nation's well-being and could be deemed anti-national.

A preposterous rationale for not allowing a debate in Parliament on the biggest corporate fraud in history was trotted out by a former law minister and head toady who asserted that it was contrary to the Rules of Business to arraign any person who was not present in the House to defend himself. He further stated that the Opposition should prove their charges before a discussion or a Joint Parliamentary Probe could be considered. The Chairman's objection is absurd and akin to an SHO at a police station demanding foolproof





evidence before registering the FIR of a complainant.

Every possible argument, unfair and foul, was used to stall any debate into 'Adani-gate'. Plumbing a new low in parliamentary censorship, the Speaker expunged large portions from the speeches of Rahul Gandhi and Mahua Moitra in the Lok Sabha, just as Kharge's allegations in the Rajya Sabha against the Adani group and its links with the government were blanked out.

There are soccer pundits who believe that attack is the best form of defence especially when your defence is weak; or, as Bertolt Brecht said, attack when you know the truth is too weak to defend itself. Embracing the all-out attack strategy, on successive days in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the PM put on an impeccable display of 56-inch, chest-thumping machismo, using the grandiose Caesar-like third-person singular, thundering ala our tinsel heroes, "Desh dekh raha, ek akela kitno ko bhari padh raha hai (the country is watching how one person outweighs so many)." He went into rapturous trumpet blowing and theatrical overdrive about having devoted his life to serving the nation, about how "Modi is living for 25 crore families", and how, in the face of the muck hurled at him, the Lotus would bloom, even as the puppets around him thumped their desks, chanting in adoration: "Modi! Modi!" It reminded one of the refrains in Orwell's *Animal Farm*; "Napoleon is always right."

Ironically, the man who rode imperiously to power as an anti-corruption crusader in 2014 on the back of a country-wide, anti-corruption movement, was now unabashedly proclaiming that the trust reposed in him, and his government by 140 crore people was "a protective shield that neither abuse nor false allegations can pierce," (and behind which he was taking refuge). He did not once mention the biggest corporate scandal ever, but instead deflected attention to

the scams during the UPA years.

Significantly, on the day of his diatribe in Parliament against Nehru, the Gandhis and the Congress, the lead story in one of the world's most respected English language economic journals, *The Economist*, was the Adani scam with all the gory details and featuring Adani along with Modi on the cover. Every day there are new revelations of this government's deeply troubling partisan association with the Adani group but the government steadfastly refuses demands of the Opposition for a detailed probe to get to the heart of this humongous financial fraud.

In the no-holds-barred, arrogant and often ugly tirade against his opponents in Parliament, the PM stressed that public sentiment – 140 crore people, 25 crore families -- was on his side, and as Lincoln said, "Public sentiment is everything; with it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed." To claim that 140 crore people are with him may be bit of a stretch, but one cannot deny that despite a series of humongous blunders and dubious acts – demonetization, hastily implemented GST, mishandling of the pandemic, the Rafale and Pegasus scandals – he remains the supremely dominant force in Indian politics. The common view is that the PM will ride the "Adani-gate" storm and return to power in 2024 with an even bigger majority. The tragedy of our world today is that our basest instincts of prejudice and hate determine our choice of leaders and not dispassionate appraisal of their performance in making the lives of their people better.

The PM never tires of reminding his countrymen of various welfare measures initiated by his govern-





ment such as the free ration programme for 80 crore people (does it not alarm this Government that over 70 percent of our people depend on government largesse for their bare survival?), PM-KISAN, Ujjwala, PM Awaas, opening bank accounts and other schemes. Apart from the fact that he takes personal credit for schemes that are wholly funded by the people's taxes, these handouts have been unerringly described by a friend as "dole by a dole overlord" that do not bring about social empowerment and instrumental autonomy, which can only be engendered through employment, improvement in access to education and health, social belonging, creation of self-help mechanisms.

Uniquely different from any other world leader, the PM pats himself on the back for any good thing that has happened in his watch, affixing his name and image to any and everything, even on our Covid vaccination certificates. However, the most outrageous example of delusory self-promotion is his taking fulsome credit for the digital revolution, also known as the Third Industrial Revolution, an inexorable technological march across the world that has transformed interconnectedness and access to information, an unstoppable hi-tech surge which has been slowed down only by totalitarian regimes. It's happening in India as an inevitable evolutionary advancement, steered by our talented techies, but the laurels are showered on the PM.

In the high-decibel, theatrical demagoguery that the PM unleashed in Parliament, covering a range of issues, the most ominous was his message on secu-

larism, which is the underpinning moral code of our Republic. For our Supreme Leader, the social schemes initiated by his government in "azadi ka Amrit Kaal" are what constitute "true secularism" and social justice. His self-serving, fragmented definition of secularism reminded me of Woody Allen's condensation of Tolstoy's War and Peace: "It's all about Russia!" The secularism that our founding fathers envisaged required not only the Preamble but also the Directive Principles of State Policy for full exposition of its import, but secularism has been hollowed out in the last few years. The cruellest manifestation of the State's betrayal of the secular promise of our Constitution is the continued incarceration of two young student activists, Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, for alleged sedition but, in truth, because they protested against the iniquities of this regime, an unforgivable crime if you are Muslim!

The ugliness and absolute *dadagiri* of the ruling party in Parliament over the last two weeks in refusing to investigate one of the biggest scams ever tell a cautionary tale -- that the powerful cannot be called to account. We have diminished freedom, equality and fraternity as fundamental values of our democracy. Instead, we have embraced the PM's take that secularism is about economic security and not freedom. Like Charles Kennedy warned, an absolute majority in Parliament can corrupt absolutely, and it has! ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATHEW JOHN is a former civil servant. The views are personal.

A New Model for Christian Schools

With the number of priests and religious dwindling, it is time to focus on lay collaboration in running Christian educational institutions

BY **KURUVILLA V**

The Church in India runs several educational institutions with high repute. Some of them are at the University level and are also at the secondary school level. A vast number of educational institutions are headed by priests/nuns. The institutions have been multiplying over the years. With the dwindling number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life and the aging of the present Heads, it is imperative that Bishops and Major Superiors need to search for an alternative model with a minimum number of priests/religious personnel at the helm and at the same time Christian values and unique charisms of religious congregations are imparted to teachers and students in our schools and higher educational institutions. Currently, different models are practiced in different parts of the world. We shall look at one of the models tried out in one part of our country.

Beginnings have been made in some of the dioceses and religious provinces by appointing lay persons as Principals or Vice-Principals. Most of the



time it was done as no competent or qualified persons could be found as required by the Board or University. However, of late some Bishops/Major Superiors have shown interest to appoint lay persons to head our institutions provided suitable candidates are available. The Church authorities have

been advocating lay partnership in educational apostolate. Church in India must dream of multiplying its educational apostolate through lay collaboration. Are clergy and religious are ready to hand over the running of the educational institutions to the hands of lay leaders? Is there fear in Church authorities/major superiors who suspect that handing over the administration to lay leaders will end up in mismanagement? With a large number of institutions and the diminishing number of clergy/religious, the challenge in the Church is to make serious efforts to share the responsibility of running the institutions with lay persons. The time is not far when lay collaborators will be heading most of our institutions. The Church will be forced to do so due to a lack of clergy/religious personnel.

We shall look at how some of the Jesuit Provinces in India have opted for lay collaboration in their educational work. In Gujrat Jesuit Province where out of 50 schools 32 are either managed by religious sisters or lay collaborators. In Mumbai out of 10 Jesuit higher educational institutions, only 2 are headed by Jesuits. Out of 35 schools in Mumbai Province, 27 are managed by lay collaborators. The scenario is no different in other Jesuit Provinces. In the Central zone, Dumka Province has a total of 25 schools out of which 8 are run by Religious sisters. Jamshedpur province runs 32 schools out of which 7 are run by lay collaborators and 4 are by religious sisters.

Rev. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the former Supe-



DNS Principals with Director 2023

rior General, in 1980, stated that it was not the lack of Jesuits that should determine the number of Lay collaborators in our Secondary schools but the profound conviction that lay people could make a valuable contribution to our apostolates. Fr. Arrupe realized that we need multipliers, and that is what our collaborators are meant to be. He expressed his conviction in the following words: "What I have in mind is more than just a type of partnership. I am talking about offering to those lay persons who are well prepared, not just administrative assignments but the very highest levels of educational responsibility. This includes even the direction of the school as Principal or Headmaster when it is necessary or useful. We reserve to the Society only its essential role as animator and inspirator."

We need to look for an appropriate alternative model which will enable fewer clergy/religious to manage several institutions with the help of committed lay collaborators. Church authorities and major superiors will have to begin a sincere evaluation and planning of various educational institutions within their dioceses or provinces and plan an effective way of managing them. The way forward is through lay collaboration.

The model that has been successfully working for over 40 years is the model De Nobili unit school's system in Jamshedpur Jesuit Province. It provides ample evidence for a successful model of running Christian educational mission with lay persons not only as teachers and staff but also as school leaders.

We need to look for an appropriate alternative model which will enable fewer clergy/religious to manage several institutions with the help of committed lay collaborators



George A. Hess S.J. pioneered the DNS Branch schools

It was Fr George Hess S.J, an American Jesuit priest and Principal of De Nobili School, FRI, in 1963, who conceived and pioneered the idea of starting the De Nobili unit schools with lay collaborators as school headmasters. De Nobili School, FRI, established in 1956, was already well known in the coalfields of Dhanbad for quality education. Hence, requests came from various Public Sector companies in coalfields, such as Eastern Coalfields Ltd., Damodar Valley Corporation, Central Mining Research Institute, Bharat Coking Coal Ltd, and Fertilizer Corporation of

India, to open the branches of De Nobili, FRI, in their respective areas. The idea was to replicate the model of De Nobili school, FRI, in those places. The companies, in turn, were ready to provide infrastructural facilities such as land, buildings, and playground to start the schools. The Management of De Nobili, FRI, would be responsible for the administration of these schools with no interference from the companies.

The first school to start with the De Nobili name was at Sijua, in Dhanbad district, Jharkhand in 1975 with Mr. V.J. Abraham, a layperson well-formed in Christian and Ignatian values, as its first Headmaster. He had been the Registrar at De Nobili school, FRI. The Principal of De Nobili, FRI, would remain the Principal of all Branch schools, and laypersons formed in Christin and Ignatian values were selected from among the teachers at De Nobili school, FRI. They were appointed as Headmasters of the branch schools. In fact, it was the beginning of the De Nobili Schools Network and was an innovative and creative idea in India in the 1970s to entrust the responsibility of running Jesuit schools to committed laypersons. In a span of six years, another five schools were opened at Mugma, Sindri, Chandrapura, Maithon and CMRI, Dhanbad, with laypersons as Heads of schools. Some of the Heads of schools were non-Christians.

Today, De Nobili schools as a network operate under the leadership of a Jesuit Director and impart quality education to 16,057 students in nine De Nobili schools with the cooperation of 434 lay teachers and employ 724 lay persons. Three rural Jesuit schools

have also become part of this network. All De Nobili schools are units of De Nobili Jealgora, a registered society under the Indian Societies Registration Act 1860. A Jesuit Director is appointed to monitor the working of all 9 schools and his office is at De Nobili Bhavan in Dhanbad which is the Secretariat for De Nobili schools.

The Director conducts regular monthly meetings where common programmes and activities are planned. The meeting of all principals is an occasion to exchange views on various topics related to school education. The Governing board consisting of Jesuits is the final authority and makes major decisions that affect the schools. Regular workshops and in-service programmes are organised by the Director for teachers and the school leaders. The role of the Director is crucial as he is the appointing authority and the Secretary of the Registered Society.

In a country, which is profoundly multi-religious and multi-cultural, education is an eminent tool to bring about tolerance, cohesion, and unity among the people. De Nobili Schools, under the lay leadership, have promoted holistic Christian education while promoting our country's constitutional values and rich diversity. Six De Nobili Schools are managed by Lay principals. Out of them, three are Hindu women who have been successfully managing these schools. The network has Vice-Principal/Coordinators who belong to other faith traditions.

As we look at the brighter side of lay collaboration, it is also important to become aware of its pitfalls and challenges in running Christian schools in the multicultural context of India. With the dwindling number of Christian teachers, where can we find dedicated Christian leaders who are capable of administering our schools? Can lay collabora-

The administration of educational institutions through lay collaboration has been working successfully for many years in Dhanbad and hopes that this successful model can be replicated elsewhere



Principals meeting at 1999

tors who profess non-Christian religions effectively be leaders of Christian institutions? Are they able to imbibe and implement Christian values and religious charisms? Do we appreciate and accept laypersons as school leaders and work under them? Are they competent to run a Christian and a Jesuit school? Do they understand and value Christian and Jesuit goals of education?

Normally teachers who have been with the institution for a number of years and have shown their loyalty and commitment to Christian and Jesuit ideals are selected to assume leadership roles in these institutions. During the years of their service as Coordinators or as vice-principals, they are sent for training for leadership roles in schools. All of them require years of preparation to assimilate the values of Christian and Jesuit education. They are gradually inducted into the system. The selection of a person who has imbibed Christian and Ignatian values is a key element for the success of the lay collaboration/partnership. The necessary component is to provide for the training of our mission partners. The administration of educational institutions through lay collaboration has been working successfully for many years in Dhanbad and hopes that this successful model can be replicated elsewhere. Lay collaboration must become an integral part of our educational mission today. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Weird Ways of Politicians

A politician lives on people's lack of intelligence and his entire power rests on the people's ignorance. Political mind suffers from inferiority complex

BY **DON AGUIAR**

Anybody who is interested in power is suffering from an inferiority complex; deep down he feels himself worthless, inferior to others and transmits this inferiority complex to his team, nation or whoever they interact with.

In many ways everybody is inferior. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not a Manmohan Singh, but there is no need to feel inferior because he cannot be, and it is not his cup of business. Manmohan Singh is not him (Modi) either.

But the political mind suffers from a wound of inferiority, and the politician Modi goes on scratching the wound.

Politics does not really remove it, only covers it. Just sitting on a chair as the Prime Minister, what difference can it make to his inner situation?

He has reached higher and higher, and on each step of the ladder, the hope was that on the next step the wound would be healed.

People reach the highest rung of the ladder, then they become aware that they have arrived, but where? They have arrived the place for which they

had been fighting – and it was not a small fight; it was tooth and nail – and destroying so many people, using so many people as means, and stepping on their heads.

Prime Minister Modi has arrived at the last rung of the ladder but what has he gained? It is better to go on smiling, give the Indian citizens false promises, control the freedom of speech of the citizens, opposition parties, judiciary and media, spread fake news and communal hatred with aim to establishing a Hindu Rashtra, and go on keeping the illusion: at least his bhakts believe that he is great.

The Modi government sells religion to the masses and make coin for themselves. It's been that way since they came to power in 2014. The Assam tableau had a Kamakhya replica; J&K tableau had Amaranth with chants of 'bam bam bole'; Maharashtra had a Devi theme; Haryana had a Mahabharata Tableau; UP had Ramayana; Jharkhand had Badrinath Temple. In short, Hindu religiosity was on full display at the Republic Day Parade 2023.

In many ways everybody is inferior. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not a Manmohan Singh, but there is no need to feel inferior because he cannot be, and it is not his cup of business. Manmohan Singh is not him (Modi) either



The more ignorant the people are, the more powerful the politician can be. The very meaning of politics is that people are not intelligent, but politicians are

A politician lives on people's lack of intelligence and his entire power rests on the people's ignorance. The more ignorant the people are, the more powerful the politician can be. The very meaning of politics is that people are not intelligent, but politicians are. They will give the people a code of laws to help them organize their life. People are not intelligent enough to organize their own life; give the politicians the power and they will give the people a system. The people cannot be their own master; but make the politicians their masters who will take care of them, look after their interests; but alas! it speaks of a nation of politicians when its International medal winners are accusing a ruling party MP and their federation boss of sexual harassment and no action is taken.

Criticism is essential for democracy; it strengthens democracy, rejuvenates and spiritizes democracy. But unfortunately, all through these 9 years, the present government has embraced 'Compulsive Criticism' in place of 'Constructive Criticism'.

Prime Minister Modi is a leader with a huge bhakt following who cannot work out what to do on their own. So, politics will never want people to become aware – they should remain asleep. The circle of politics requires anger, hostility, jealousy, envy, spite, conflict. Only as long as these flames are burning within you, you are able to remain in politics. Violence, the urge to dominate others, the desire to oppress others, competition, rivalry – all these are needed in politics, which is identical to this leader.

A politician feeds on war. If wars were to disappear, the politician would have no power. When there is a war, a politician becomes a great leader. Have you noticed (The surgical strikes across the border)? The greatness of any great political leader in the world depends on there being a war. If there isn't a war, a politician cannot become a great leader in his lifetime. So, every politician wants a big war to take place during his lifetime so that he can be victo-

rious and can prove that he was the right man. Politics is an expansion of the ego.

However, in the light of what's happening, I find it disturbing that people are so casual about going to war without fully understanding the ramifications of it!

It doesn't matter which party is in power or opposition as both have their agendas mapped out and this is an age-old trick from any history book where you create a sense of insecurity and fear to manipulate people and what you get is a dance of fascism, jingoistic performative patriotism that furthers their own agenda.

What's sad is that once our fear of national security is dubiously stoked, we start to panic and behave like rats following a savage pied piper, leading us to our own fall and fatality.

The greatness of this leader is to get his Research-Planning-Expert Collaboration-Presentation-Building Informed Opinion-Building Consensus-Strategy & Communications-Collaborative Execution-Public Private Partnership (in specific instances) to further his control to maintain absolute control of the nation.

In the case of Prime Minister Modi, it's becoming amply clear that this greatness has been employed in full with the total backing of his cadre.

It is like when you're dead, you don't know you're dead. The pain is felt by others. The same thing happens when you're stupid.

It's really pathetic when those who scream war expect someone else's son to take a bullet for their pseudo patriotism! War is expensive, and no one wins except the ones from whom we import weapons and political parties who make you believe that they are protecting you dubiously.

I know my country will be looted by its own people, all I care is that I do not want war unnecessarily, especially when an alternative is at hand.

We need to launch a war globally on terrorism. People in power need to sit across and talk sensibly to ensure that innocent lives are not lost. We must be careful of our fragile egos that are getting played and manipulated with loose talks of who outdid the other in surgical strikes. So, let's get off our testosterone fuelled, hijacked brain and bruised ego, to take a moment to see how this fear of our national safety is manipulating us to manufacture hate and create unrest at a time when we need to simply come together as a nation and work towards building it. ©

Time to End this Stink

Despite many steps taken by the government, manual scavenging continues to be a bane of modernity in India. It shows lack of willingness to end this menace

BY AARTI

On 4 February this year, Bengaluru police booked five people after two men aged 25 and 29, employed to clean a sewage treatment plant at a suburban apartment were found dead under mysterious circumstances. On 6 February, Coimbatore police booked a contractor for allegedly engaging an elderly person to clean the septic tank of a public toilet situated inside a bus stand with bare hands. A 47-year-old man who was sent along with two more workers to clean the septic tank of a Chennai suburban residential complex comprising of some 270 flats collapsed immediately after coming out of it.

The above incidents clearly highlight how brazenly some unscrupulous elements seem to browbeat an existing Central law that bans manual scavenging.

Initially, with the intent to liberate the manual scavengers from the inhuman task of carrying night soil, the Employment of manual scavengers and construction of Dry Latrine (Prohibition) Act was enacted in 1993. It prohibited the construction and or maintenance of dry latrines and employment of manual scavengers. However, the Census 2011 portrayed that there were still 26 lakh insani-

tary latrines in the country which indicated night-soil either got deposited into open drains or was removed manually. To eradicate this dehumanizing practice as also gainfully rehabilitate human scavengers, the Government enacted the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (MS Act, 2013).

In 1994, the Union Government established the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament. NCSK had an extendable tenure till 2004. Thereafter, NCSK has been acting as a non-statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the current extension is up to 1 March 2025. NCSK's mandate is to monitor the implementation of the MS Act, 2013; enquire into complaints regarding contravention thereof and convey its findings along with recommendation requiring further action. Besides advising the Central and the State Governments for effective implementation of the provisions of the Act, it is empowered to take suo motu notice of any matter relating to non-implementation of the Act.

Only about a third of our urban households are connected to the sewer system. Some 38.2 per cent of houses as per Census 2011 use toilets connected to septic tanks. Reports indicate that often these tanks that are buried underground in populated areas are not constructed as per required standards



Coming to sewer and septic tanks, as per the census 2011, only about a third of our urban households are connected to the sewer system. Some 38.2 per cent of houses as per Census 2011 use toilets connected to septic tanks. Reports indicate that often these tanks that are buried underground in populated areas are not constructed as per required standards. Consequently, the treatment of sewage is partial and there are illegal sewage connections to storm water drains which result in pollution of waterbodies. Imagine the challenging task before municipalities to separate the nearly 1.75 million tonnes of excreta generated daily from water.

Septic tanks seem to have been misused with impunity. For instance, in Punjab, a man allegedly murdered his uncle after he suspected the latter of having an illicit affair with his mother and threw the dead body in the septic tank at his house. Not long ago in Delhi, a 34-year-old woman allegedly strangled her inebriated husband and dumped it in the septic tank at their house. The man used to abuse her physically and verbally after drinking. To avoid the stench from spreading, she hired some labourers and got the lid of the septic tank cemented. The Hindustan Times reported how septic tanks and large pits constructed for toilets in some places under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan had turned into drinking water storage tanks. Crafty bootleggers devised an unusual ploy to smuggle liquor worth nearly Rs 5 lakh in a septic tank sludge container near the Union territory of Daman. But they were caught and liquor was seized.

According to statistics compiled by NCSK between 1993 and 2022, sewer deaths has taken a toll of 1054 people. What's the way out? The Supreme Court in "Safai Karamchari Andolan and Ors vs Union of India and Ors (2014)" observed that if the practice of manual scavenging has to be brought to a close and also to prevent future generations from the inhuman practice of manual scavenging, rehabilitation of manual scavengers will need to include sewer deaths. Entering sewer lines without safety gear should be made a crime even in emergency situations. For each such death, compensation of Rs 10 lakhs should be given to the family of



the deceased. (Tamil Nadu has increased this to Rs 15 Lakh). Identify the families of all persons who have died in sewerage work (manholes, septic tanks) since 1993 and award compensation of Rs 10 lakhs for each such death to the family members depending on them.

Well, in 2013, the Government had also brought about the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules, 2013 which is quite comprehensive. More recently, Tamil Nadu put in force the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules, 2022. Among others, it lists the safety precautions to be taken before cleaning sewer/septic tanks. Some 15 cleaning devices

With an intent to put an end to manual scavenging, in this year's Union Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that all cities and towns will be enabled for 100 per cent mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers to transition from manhole to machine hole mode

like sewer line cleaning bucketing machine, jetting machine, manual rods, shovels, spades, drainage cleaning machines and steel scrapers with handles, hoses and washing instruments, etc. are to be made available to the worker. Besides, comfortable body-suits shall be made available to the worker who has to enter the sewers/ septic tanks for their cleaning.

The employer shall provide full body suits to workers entering machine holes of depth more than five feet and alternatively, partial fishing wader body suits to those entering machine holes of depth less than five feet. The employer or the contractor shall also ensure several safety precautions before a person is engaged in the cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank, namely: There shall be a minimum of three employees present all the time, one of whom shall be a supervisor. The atmosphere within the confined space shall be tested for oxygen deficiency and toxic and combustible gases including but not limited to poisonous gases like Hydrogen Sulphide, Carbon Monoxide, Methane and gasoline vapours, through detection tests including the following: (i) lowering a detector lamp into the machine hole; (ii) inserting wet lead acetate paper which changes colour in the presence of hazardous gases; (iii) detection of gases through gas detector masks. Regular medical check-up of sewage workers has been made mandatory which includes the examination of respiratory organs, skin injuries and other occupational diseases and injuries for their treatment to ensure that sewage workers afflicted with such diseases or injuries do not enter sewers for cleaning.

To rehabilitate identified manual scavengers, Tamil Nadu would provide one-time cash assistance of Rs.40,000 to one from each family, immediately after identification. The members of the scavenging community shall be given preference in the award of contracts for maintaining the public toilets, urinals and bathrooms in railways stations, bus stands, markets and so on. They shall be engaged as waste collectors through outsourcing for door-to-door

collection with segregation of solid waste in local bodies. Adequate financial assistance under various Government schemes/bank loans is to be provided to any member of the scavenging community, who intend to launch his own business / economic activity.

The children of the manual scavenger shall be entitled to scholarship as per relevant scheme of Central Government or the State Government or the local authorities, as the case may be. The listed persons through the survey shall be allotted a residential plot and financial assistance for house construction, or a ready built house with financial assistance, subject to eligibility and willingness of the manual scavengers as per the provisions of the relevant scheme. At least one member of their family shall be given subject to eligibility and will-

ingness, training in livelihood skill and shall be paid a monthly stipend during such period. At least one adult member of their family shall be given, subject to eligibility and willingness, subsidy and concessional loan for taking up an alternative occupation on sustainable basis as per the provisions of the relevant scheme.

With an intent to put an end to manual scavenging, in this year's Union

Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that all cities and towns will be enabled for 100 per cent mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers to transition from manhole to machine hole mode. Nearly Rs 100 crore allocation is to be provided in this year's Budget for the newly christened NAMASTE (National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem) scheme.

A survey had found that many manual scavengers suffered from skin ailments which can be directly traced to the dangerous and unhygienic nature of work without safety gear. TB, Malaria, Fever and stomach pain also seemed to be rampant. Hopefully the NAMASTE scheme will provide a full stop to manual scavenging. At a macro level, there is an imperative need for proper management, planning and effective monitoring. ©

A survey had found that many manual scavengers suffered from skin ailments which can be directly traced to the dangerous and unhygienic nature of work without safety gear. TB, Malaria, Fever and stomach pain also seemed to be rampant

Two ABVP Members Arrested for Disrupting Talk on Indian Constitution at Odisha University

On February 13, Bhubaneswar police arrested two activists with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in connection with disrupting a symposium on the Indian constitution and injuring two people at the Utkal University campus in Bhubaneswar in Odisha a day earlier, officials told *The Wire*. Claiming that a resource person had made ‘anti-national’ comments during a talk, some ABVP activists had attacked two persons during the symposium at Utkal University on February 12. A resource person and an organiser were injured and the Bhubaneswar police registered two cases in connection with the incident.

Symposium on Indian constitution

On the morning of February 12, Surajit Mazumdar, a professor in economics at New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University, was speaking about the Indian constitution and quoting B.R. Ambedkar in this regard at the symposium, organised by the Citizens’ Forum at the P.G. Council Hall in Utkal University.

The first part of the symposium – beginning with Mazumdar’s talk – pertained to constitutional challenges, and the second was to focus on the National Education Policy, said Pradipta Nayak, convenor of the Citizens’ Forum. The Citizens’ Forum is a collective of intellectuals, retired bureaucrats and “people who are secular and followers of democracy”, according to Nayak, and the Forum conducts regular symposiums on various topics including secularism.

It was a “peaceful gathering”, and students were taking notes on Mazumdar’s presentation, until two individuals took the name of the RSS and BJP and raised questions about Mazumdar’s talk, said Nayak.

Though they were asked to wait till the end of the talk to ask questions, the ABVP activists persisted and demanded that the meeting be called off immediately, said Nayak. ABVP is affiliated to the RSS.

According to Mazumdar, the members of the ABVP came forward and asked the audience to disperse. Arguments between the ABVP members and the organisers soon escalated to bodily blows, according to him.

Not “anti-national”

“They beat me mercilessly,” said Nayak. His right shoulder is still in constant pain, as is his left eye and the little finger on his right hand that is possibly frac-

tured, said Nayak. Surendra Jena, a teacher in Surajmal Saha Mahavidyalaya, Puri, who was also scheduled to talk at the symposium, sustained injuries in the attack too. There were around 10-15 ABVP activists who demanded that the meeting be called off, alleged Nayak. The activists also verbally abused the gathering using “unparliamentary” language and tore down the symposium banner.

“The police had to rescue us [Nayak and Jena] from their clutches,” Nayak told *The Wire*. Both Nayak and members of the ABVP have filed police complaints.

Members of the ABVP alleged that Mazumdar had made “anti-national comments” in his talk, and that “upper caste people were at the helm of governance”, *The Hindu* reported.

However, Mazumdar told *The Wire* that he never mentioned the word “upper caste” in his speech, and neither was there anything that could be considered “anti-national” or “unconstitutional”.

“All I did was present different provisions in the Indian constitution and the significant amendments made to it,” said Mazumdar. Specifically, he spoke about what the Directive Principles of State Policy say about the distribution of wealth and income in India and an amendment made to the directives in 1978 which explicitly states that the state shall strive to reduce inequality in income, he said.

“There was nothing unconstitutional in what I said. I quoted only from the constitution, and from B.R. Ambedkar.” “It was clearly a planned attempt to disturb the meeting,” said Mazumdar, calling the attack a “premeditated” one.

Mazumdar spoke about the Indian constitution and Ambedkar’s views on the document in the context of welfarism, said Nayak. “He talked about an economic issue, and did not say anything about the BJP, [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi or anyone.”

An official with the Bhubaneswar police confirmed to *The Wire* on February 13 that two ABVP activists have been arrested in connection with the case. They will soon be presented in court, the official added.

Nayak said despite the arrests, the actions of the ABVP members are “not acceptable in a democracy”.

“How dare they do this in a democracy,” Nayak said. “Where are our democratic values? What topic we talk about is our right, a right given by the constitution,” he said. © (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

Pope sends aid to quake-struck Turkey and Syria: 'Don't forget those who suffer'

Pope Francis sends aid to earthquake-struck communities in Syria and Turkey, through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity.

Following the catastrophe caused by the earthquakes that struck Syria and Turkey on 6 February, Pope Francis appealed for closeness and concrete support to alleviate the pain of those who are suffering from the disaster.

Nine days after the powerful earthquakes, the rising death toll has topped 41,000. Millions of people have been left without a home and a livelihood.

While the Pope issued his appeal during Sunday's Angelus, he too put words into action through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity.

Crates of aid departed from the Port of Naples on Wednesday morning aboard the MSC Aurelia Cargo ship that is scheduled to dock in Iskenderum, Turkey in two days' time. As well as aid from the Italian government and other NGOs, the ship carries 10,000 thermal jumpers delivered personally by Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the Papal Almoner.

The thermal garments are destined for the Kilis refugee camp in Turkey, 50 km from Gaziantep and 60 km from the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The distribution of aid will be entrusted to oper-



ators of the Rava Foundation, which has been present in the area for some time and provides food and shelter to thousands of homeless people. Following the outbreak of war in Syria, the camp has expanded to accommodate some 60,000 refugees, but it is also home to many others who live in makeshift tents. As expected, the earthquake has aggravated the situation and hundreds of people are joining the refugee families.

It will be deployed in the territory to support a population that is already exhausted by years of war and whose suffering is now compounded by the consequences of the devastating earthquake. ☉

(Vaticannews.va)



Evangelical church torched in Madhya Pradesh

Unidentified persons have set fire to a Protestant church in Madhya Pradesh. Police have launched a probe against those behind the burning of the Evangelical Lutheran church under Kesla police station in Narmadapuram district.

People came to know about the incident only on February 12 morning when they went the church for their Sunday service.

"I do not know when it happened, but we came to know it on Sunday morning," Church pastor Mahesh Kumre told Matters India on February 13. According to him, the vandals entered the church through the grill after breaking it open.

They burnt everything inside the six-year-old church including a copy of the Bible, prayer books,

fans and chairs among others. Since none stayed in the church the vandals had sufficient time to destroy everything inside the church, the pastor said.

The miscreants also wrote on the church wall "Ram" after deleting a slogan in Hindi hailing Jesus.

Pastor Kumre expressed the hope that the police probe would unravel the mystery behind the sacrilegious act. Sub-divisional officer of police Mahendra Singh Chauhan told media that a case has been registered against unidentified persons and efforts are on to trace the culprits.

The officer said special teams have been formed to identify and nab the vandals and a case has been registered under Indian Penal Code Section 295 for injuring or defiling place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class. ☉ (Courtesy: Mattersindia)

Demolition threatens 400-year-old chapel in Daman



A four-century-old chapel in western India dating back to the Portuguese colonial era faces a threat of demolition as the administration aims to acquire land to turn it into a football stadium, local Catholics say.

Catholic leaders say the chapel of Our Lady Of Remedies in Daman faces threat due to a controversial beautification drive planned by Praful Patel, the administrator and a leader of the pro-Hindu Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Daman and Diu is a federally ruled territory that comes directly under the administrative control of the BJP-led government in New Delhi.

Territory's administrator Patel neither confirmed nor denied the move to demolish the chapel to expand the football field. "No, I have no idea, you ask the local authorities," he told UCA News.

"They want to acquire the chapel's land...once they acquire the land, they can do whatever they want. And they want to expand the football field which means they want to flatten the chapel. We fully understand their intention. We are not fools," Rui Pereira, a local Catholic leader said.

Pereira along with a group of Catholic leaders recently met Daman Municipal Council president

Sonal Patel to express their concerns. The chapel was built in 1607 when Daman was a Portuguese colony, published records show. Portuguese colonialism ended in Daman and Diu in 1961 but the chapel continues to be a place of worship for local Catholics. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has not declared it a heritage structure, "despite its architectural antiquity and unique wood carving, which should be preserved," said Pereira.

"But this should not be done. We are with the Christian community," said council president Sonal Patel. Pramod Rana, an independent member of the council, also echoes the president's sentiments, voicing support for the catholic community.

"We adopted a resolution stating that local Catholics should be taken into confidence before carrying out any activity, or any decision that might impact them. We cannot allow the chapel to be bulldozed just like that," he said.

Father Brian Rodrigues, who provides religious services at the chapel said they "are preparing to take the case to the High Court in Bombay," said a report in pontofinal-macao.com, a Portuguese publication based in Macao. © (Courtesy: UCANEWS)

Two Muslim Men Found Charred to Death in Alleged Case of Cow Vigilantism



In what is being described as yet another case of cow vigilantism leading to the loss of life, merely 100 kilometers from the national capital, two Muslim men from the Rajasthan-Haryana border were allegedly attacked and abducted by a mob that later set them ablaze, alive while they were inside their car.

This is said to have happened after accusations of cow smuggling were made against the victims. The dead have been identified as Junaid and Nasir, both residents of Ghatmeeka village in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district. A first information report (FIR) under the following sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered against the accused Lokesh, Rinku Saini, Srikant, and Monu Manesar under Sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 365 (abduction), 367 (kidnapping or abducting in order to subject a person to grievous hurt, slavery) and 368 (wrongful Confinement).

The Wire accessed a copy of the FIR and spoke to the family of Junaid. Junaid's cousin, Ismail, told that when his family could not trace Junaid for several hours, they complained to the local police after learning that Bajrang Dal members had abducted the two men. Later, say Junaid's relatives, the members of the Bajrang Dal took the duo to the Firozpur Jhirka police in Haryana. But they were not taken into custody by the police since they were grievously injured due to the assault, the family has alleged.

Junaid's family maintains that the bodies had been badly charred due to the burning and could be only identified because of the car's license number. Junaid is survived by his daughter and wife. A local reporter told *The Wire* that the family is yet to

receive the bodies of the deceased that have been sent for post-mortem now. In a tweet, the Bharatpur Police said that an investigation into the incident was ongoing and an FIR has been lodged against the accused at the Gopalgarh police station. Police Station Officer, Gopalgarh, has been instructed to take "immediate action" in the matter. The police are waiting for the postmortem report to ascertain the cause of death.

Speaking to the media, DSP Jagat Singh Loharu said that it's not clear if they have been set ablaze or if it is an accident.

A few days back, a Muslim man named Waris had died in the same area. According to Waris' family, he was lynched by Bajrang Dal members led by Monu Manesar. Manesar has denied the charge. Police officials told the media that Waris died in a road accident. Before his death, a seemingly injured Waris who could still speak was featured in a Facebook video (now deleted) posted by Bajrang Dal leader Monu Manesar, who is also named as an accused in the burning of Junaid and Nasir. In a Facebook post uploaded a few hours ago, Monu Manesar has denied the fresh charges against him. He wrote, "Neither my team nor Bajrang Dal Haryana unit has got anything to do with the incident that happened in Gopalgarh police station in Rajasthan."

An investigation by *Alt News'* Shinjinee Majumdar found that Monu and his team have uploaded several violent videos on social media in the past with little attention from law enforcement authorities. In many photos uploaded on his social media, his team can be spotted grabbing injured men by their hair who he claims are cow smugglers. © (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

Raipur archdiocese celebrates golden jubilee

The archdiocese of Raipur on February 8 celebrated the golden jubilee of its formation.

“I wish this celebration gives you new impetus to build the kingdom of God in Chhattisgarh,” said Apostolic Nuncio to India Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, who was the chief guest of the celebration at Amlidih, Raipur.

Congratulating for the dedicated services of the diocese over the past 50 years, the nuncio said, “You have grown over the years in spiritual life.”

Remarking on the local gifts of steel, coal and rice brought at the offertory procession, the Vatican representative remarked, “You have been blessed with God’s gifts.”

“Chhattisgarh is known for its culture and the people are very friendly. I experience that,” he remarked.

Bhupesh Baghel, the Congress chief minister of the state, said, “Missionaries in the state are known for their services, especially in the field of education and health care.” He appreciated the special services rendered to the lepers at Abhanpur and during the Covid-19 time.

Cardinal Anthony Poola, the archbishop of Hyderabad who was present, said he saw “the spirit of synodality among you.”

The first missionaries to the region were the Fransalian priests, who halted at Raipur when they travelled by bullock cart from Visakhapatnam to Nagpur, to serve the few Catholics there.

Later missionaries from Nagpur served this region.

Bifurcating from Nagpur, three civil districts around Raipur region was entrusted to the South German province of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, commonly known as the Pallottine Fathers, on June 27, 1950. Declared an Apostolic Prefecture on January 16, 1964, German Pallottine Father John Weidner was appointed its prefect apostolic.

It was raised as a diocese on July 5, 1973, and Monsignor Weidner was nominated the apostolic administrator on February 8, 1974.

Monsignor Weidner died suddenly on August 17, 1974, at the age of 56. He was succeeded by another



er pioneering German Pallottine missionary, Father Francis Werner Hunold on Aug 23, 1975. After his resignation in 1983, Jesuit Bishop Philip Ekka, transferred from Ambikapur, was installed as Raipur’s first bishop on January 6, 1985.

Bishop Joseph Augustine succeeded him on June 6, 2004, followed by Bishop Victor Henry Thakur – both were of Raipur diocesan clergy.

In an area of 60, 814 square kilometers, with 19 civil districts, 92 diocesan clergy, 81 Religious priests and nuns belonging to 31 religious congregations serve the 68 parishes and various institutions of the archdiocese.

Raipur diocese in the capital of Chhattisgarh was raised as an archdiocese on March 18, 2004. Raigarh, Ambikapur, Jashpur and Jagadapur are its suffragan dioceses.

During the Jubilee year, many spiritual, pastoral, social, cultural and welfare programs were organized in parishes, deaneries and diocesan levels.

The jubilee celebration was attended by a number of Catholics, priests and nuns from all the parishes and missions of the archdiocese, besides many bishops, civil dignitaries and guests.

The jubilee began on July 15, 2022, with the Mass, hoisting of the jubilee flag, and presenting the jubilee logo, ‘Rooted in Christ for the life of the world’ by Archbishop Thakur in Raipur in the presence of many faithful.

Although the jubilee program was celebrated on February 8 for the convenience of all, the jubilee year will conclude on July 5. ©

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)



Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

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Blind Dogs and the Dog Farm..!

Once upon a time, there was a dog farm, with many species of dogs in it. The dogs in the farm had won their freedom from foreign dogs who had ruled their farm for many years, and who ruled by using the 'divide and rule' method, causing a huge division between dogs who ate bones holding them between their paws and dogs who chewed directly.

The foreign dogs had been kicked out, through a 'Quit the Farm' movement but not before the farm was divided and some of the dogs who ate using their paws carved out their own farm, from the big farm and the others remained in the original farm.

instead created more rifts among the 'paw eaters' and 'direct eaters'!

One of the dog colonies sent their investigative dog who returned and howled every night about ruthless tales of the doggy leader. The leader immediately put up sound barriers around the farm to prevent the 'howling' news from reaching the dogs in his farm.

This insulation method continued for many years, and while the two dog communities went on fighting about the correct way to eat, their leader dog, continued his destruction of the farm bit by bit,



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For over fifty years the dog farm, even with a few upheavals managed to stay quite peaceably together!

But suddenly a new canine fostered himself as their ruler, using the old method, that the dogs who had remained and ate with their paws were slowly growing in number and would uproot the majority of dogs who ate directly. The 'direct' eating dogs, who still remembered the days of the partitioning of the farm, immediately grew insecure, and even though the 'paw eating' dogs were much more miniscule in number, grew afraid, and voted for the 'fear mongering' leader.

The leader dog used the same fear tactic at every doggy election and moved from strength to strength using only this method.

Meanwhile the reputation of the dog farm became worse among all the other surrounding farms. 'Dog News' a canine newspaper mentioned that the dogs in the farm were not allowed to bark, also that the farm had a lot of starving dogs. These news flashes were immediately refuted by the doggy leaders who

quite often selling tracts of land to business dogs he favoured.

The other dog farms scratched themselves sore wondering why the dogs in the farm couldn't see what was happening to them and their farm, till one day, a giant light from the skies above shone on the farm dogs and the whole dog world realized that the dogs inside were blind.

They had scratched each other's eyes out, and their leader dog, with only blind dogs under him, ruled like a tyrant!

His formula, 'Give them something petty to fight about, then grab their liberty'

And the blind ones continue to fight, as the farm 'goes to the dogs'..! 🐾

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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