

Stinks of Majoritarian Politics! A+ for Hindutva!!



Kejriwal Turns Kesariya

Arvind Kejriwal's latest 'words of wisdom' that India's economic downturn can be reversed, and achieve prosperity, by having the images of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Lakshmi on the currency notes, expose his expertise in political plotting !!!



2023 Programme Schedule

1. (PSGA-1) **Post-Midlife Spirituality and Graceful Aging (January 15-29)**

This workshop explores the dynamics that affect the post-midlife years and provides approaches and exercises that enable one to age gracefully. (Age limit: 50 -70 years)

2. (EFS-1) **Enhancing Formation Skills (May 7-21)**

This workshop explores the challenges of religious and priestly formation today and provides formators insights from psychological theories and best practices to understand themselves, their formees, and the requisites for healthy formation and suggests ways and means for this and provides opportunities to learn from one another and be formed to form. (Age Limit- 25-55)

3. (ELS-1) **Enhancing Leadership Skills (May 27-June 11)**

This workshop explores concepts, styles, functions and challenges of effective leadership, particularly transformational leadership in Religious communities. Useful for current and future leaders. (Age limit: 35 – 55 years)

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KEJRIWAL EXPOSED



More Christian than Christ is an old cliché. It can now be paraphrased to make it contemporary. Aam Aadmi Party supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has turned more Hindutva than the most hardcore Hindutva proponents. His latest 'words of wisdom' that India's economic downturn can be reversed, and achieve prosperity, by having the images of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Lakshmi on the currency notes, expose his expertise in political plotting. He says the blessings of the deities on the currency notes would be the panacea for the economic crisis gripping the country. What a novel idea, sirji! What a profound economic prescription! The mercurial politician who upstaged his mentor Anna Hazare and highjacked the anti-corruption movement to get his political baptism has now shown his true colours. He has no qualms to go to any length, and depth, to suit his political purpose and expand his empire.

But his prescription and the path he has chosen are nothing but 'Tughlaqi' on several counts. The economy of any nation can be revived only through sound policies. There is no short cut to energize a sagging economy other than implementation of planned economic schemes. Institutions like Planning Commission; Economic Advisory Council; the Reserve Bank of India and similar institutions; and counsel of well-known economists are meant to take care of the economy and its problems. Hence, the prescription of Kejriwal is nothing less than crazy and bizarre. His intention is nothing but communalizing an area which has hitherto remained elusive to this diabolic measure. If images of deities can revive economy, the United Kingdom, which is in dire straits on economic front, can have the picture of Jesus Christ, along with that of the incumbent king, and could boost its economy. There would not have been any need for Liz Truss to resign either.

Kejriwal says that the existing picture of Mahatma Gandhi, placed at the centre of the currency note, can be retained. In that case, the image of the god and the goddess would have less prominence than the Gandhi picture which would be nothing but insult to the deities. It shows Kejriwal is playing a dangerous communal card to garner votes and outdo the BJP on electoral front. It is ridiculous that his craving for 'Hinduism and its deities' skyrocketed on the eve of the Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh where his party is testing the waters. The Delhi Municipal Elections too are round the corner. He had started off as a liberal who vouched for secularism. He was projected as the saviour of minorities. But as time changes, he has proved to be a fast adapter, be it on issues like nationalism or Hindutva. He has no qualms in changing his ideology as fast as the chameleon changes its colour.

Kejriwal is slowly perfecting his electoral politics as an art of achieving not only the possible but also the impossible. He knows that there is no other issue other than religious ones which would garner maximum support and votes for him. Unfortunately, in attempting to attain his aim, he is plunging to the depth of communal politics. His bid to be a 'carbon copy' of the original Hindutva forces will do more harm to the nation than any good.

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

Dr. Suresh Mathew
Editor

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POWER QUOTES



The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.

Mark Zuckerberg

• • •



You have to take risks. We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen.

Paulo Coelho

• • •



There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction.

John F. Kennedy

• • •



I think we consider too much the good luck of the early bird and not enough the bad luck of the early worm.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

• • •



Wise men speak because they have something to say; Fools because they have to say something.

Plato

• • •



To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

Tony Robbins

• • •



Be still when you have nothing to say; when genuine passion moves you, say what you've got to say, and say it hot.

D. H. Lawrence

• • •

It's the pits, Kejriwal Gods on currency notes

BY A.J. PHILIP

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is a genius. Nobody knew how to bolster the Indian rupee vis-a-vis the US dollar. Narendra Modi ridiculed the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the declining value of the rupee. He promised that the rupee would be brought up to be on a par with the US dollar.

Today, one has to give Rs 83 to buy \$1. At the rate at which the rupee has been falling, one will have to shell out Rs 100 to buy one dollar in the near future. It is against this backdrop that Kejriwal has come up with a brilliant suggestion to prop up the rupee, rejuvenate the economy and, thereby, become the world's economic powerhouse.

He is a practical person. As a Revenue official, he was accused of submitting fake documents, but got a clean certificate of honesty to enable him to join Anna Hazare's campaign for Lok Pal that virtually ended the Congress supremacy in the country.

What Kejriwal suggested is easy to implement. He wants the pictures of Ganesh and Lakshmi on the currency notes. He believes in co-existence. So, he does not mind keeping Gandhi along with the deities on the currency notes. In the wake of the Punjab elections, he removed the picture of Gandhi from his

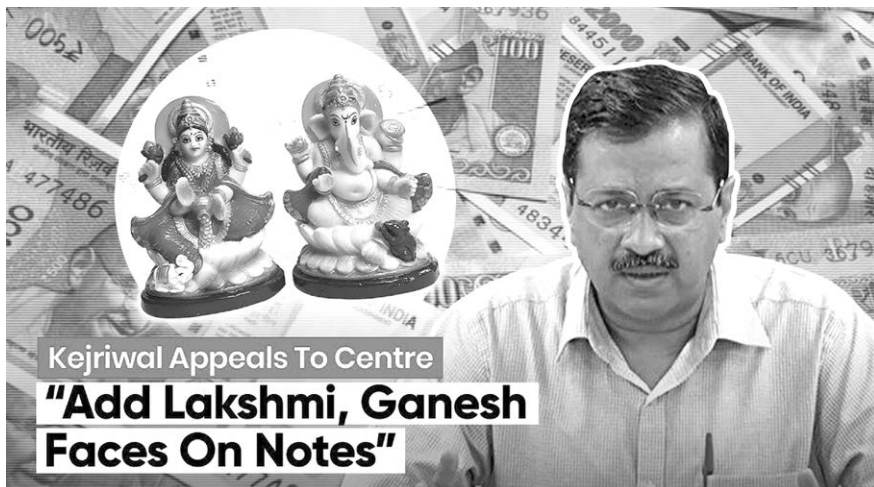


office room. In its place was put the picture of Bhagat Singh.

Bhagat Singh was an atheist, who cut his hair and beard. Yet, the Bhagat Singh depicted in the picture in Kejriwal's room has a yellowish turban. There were two others who were hanged by the British for their involvement in the Lahore conspiracy case. They were Rajguru and Sukhdev. Alas, the two martyrs were ignored! To ignore them was politically expedient.

Someone asked him why Gandhi's picture was removed. He said he had no objection to anyone keeping any photo, be it of Gandhi or Ambedkar. Perhaps, even Godse! He is such a democratic person, though one has to ask his ex-colleagues like Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav about his democratic credentials.

To return to the rupee, his magic formula is something which never occurred to the rulers anywhere. For millennia Hindu kings, the Mughals and the British ruled India. After Independence, too, persons of different political persuasion from Nehru to Morarji Desai to AB Vajpayee to Narendra Modi ruled the country. None of them had this idea of printing pictures of gods and goddesses on currency



Kejriwal Appeals To Centre
**"Add Lakshmi, Ganesh
Faces On Notes"**

Japan and China became the economic engines of Asia, not because they printed gods' pictures on currency notes but because they removed illiteracy from the two countries



notes. Even abroad also, neither Pagans nor Christians and Muslims ever thought of using the currency value of gods. To be fair to Kejriwal, he has given one concrete example of using a god's picture on a currency note. For this, he went to Indonesia.

As we all know, it is the single largest Muslim country in the world. It has more Muslims than Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Yet, they did not mind printing the picture of Ganesh, the God of Prosperity, on their Rupiah 20,000 currency note. If a Muslim country can do this, why can't a soon-to-be-Hindu nation use such religious icons on currency notes? Kejriwal seems to ask this question.

The poor former Indian Revenue official does not know that printing Ganesh's picture has not bolstered the Rupiah. For instance, an Indian Rupee is equivalent to IDR 188. In other words, an Indian can buy an Indonesian currency note valued at IDR 20,000 that has Ganesh's picture for as little as Rs 106.

If any of my readers has a relative who has a few dollars to spare, you can ask him or her to buy the IDR 20,000 Ganesh note. Believe me, it will cost him or her less than \$1.5. That is the kind of strength Kejriwal wants to give the Indian Rupee by printing pictures of gods on currency notes.

When the report appeared, the first thought that came to my mind was why he did not include Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, in the list of gods and goddesses whose pictures should be printed on currency notes. Kejriwal is one person who makes boastful claims about the educational reforms he

introduced in Delhi. I would like to discuss his claims vis-a-vis the reality in another column.

The reason is apparent. While Ganesh is the God of Prosperity, Lakshmi is the Goddess of Wealth. He knows that wealth and education do not co-exist.

Those familiar with the story of Krishna and Kuchela, also called Sudama, know this truth. Both were great friends and classmates. After education, Krishna became a social worker. Kuchela became a Vedic scholar. He could barely meet the needs of the family. Finally, his wife forced Kuchela to approach Krishna, who bestowed him with wealth. As the story goes, Kuchela could not reconcile himself to his sudden prosperity and died as a result.

Nearer to us, in the Eighth century, Adi Sankara had a philosophical argument with Mandan Mishra of Mahishi in Bihar. Mishra was a great scholar but as his wife told Sankara, he was so poor that he had only one piece of cloth to cover his nakedness. This may be the reason why he does not want the picture of Saraswati on the currency note.

Interestingly, Kejriwal mentioned the Ganesh picture on the Indonesian currency note. He did not mention what is printed on the other side of the same IDR 20,000. Actually, it depicts a classroom. Indonesians know the value of education and they also know the value of history.

Indonesia is an Islamic nation but it is not shy of admitting its hoary past when it had connections with a South Indian Hindu empire. That is why Hindu iconography finds a place in currency notes and the national emblem. They don't rewrite history. Nor do they change the Hindu names of places and streets like we change all Muslim names.

Nor do the Indonesians portray Hindus as invaders, who came to loot Indonesia as we often say



about the Mughals and the British. My first encounter with Indonesia was when I read SK Pottekkatt's classic travelogue entitled *Balidweep*, where he felt that he was indeed in another Kerala.

No attempt is being made to obliterate the Hindu cultural influences on the Indonesians. That does not make them lesser Muslims except in the eyes of the Islamic puritans who do not want their womenfolk to acquire education and be their partners in progress. Japan and China became the economic engines of Asia, not because they printed gods' pictures on currency notes but because they removed illiteracy from the two countries.

Kejriwal forgot one fundamental difference between the Indians and the Indonesians. Let me cite one recent example. A butcher in Uttar Pradesh was recently attacked by some people. Fortunately, he was not killed. No one charged him with slaughtering a cow in which case he would have been killed. He was selling goat's meat! So, why was he attacked?

While selling meat, he wrapped it in an old newspaper sheet that contained an advertisement that depicted the picture of a Hindu God. For the Indonesians, Ganesh is a cultural icon, not a religious icon. Islam prohibits all religious icons. Devout Hindus would not like depiction of gods on currency notes

When riots broke out in Northeast Delhi in which Muslims suffered the most with Hindus suffering only collateral damage, Kejriwal as Chief Minister should have gone to the riot-hit areas to control the situation. Instead, he preferred to go to Rajghat to "pray". Gandhi did not go to a temple when riots hit Noakhali, now in Bangladesh. He went to the area and dealt with the people there



Courtesy: Sattish Acharya

for they wouldn't like persons like the butcher to touch them.

As my friend and senior journalist Shastri Ramachandran asked in a Facebook post, how could Hindus keep currency notes that have Lakshmi or Ganesh in a leather wallet or allow them to be touched by the buttocks. When Yogi Adityanath became chief minister, the first thing he did was to remove all the leather upholstery from his office and home.

The lady who happens to be the Union finance minister started using a cloth bag, instead of a leather bag, to carry the Budget papers to Parliament. How can she allow disrespect to Gods and Goddesses if they are part of currency notes? Ask any banker and he will tell you that currency notes are the most ill-treated objects in the country.

There are people who argue that iron can be cut only with iron. They justify Kejriwal's conduct on these lines. They do not realise that he has disproved the theory that his Aam Aadmi Party is the B team of the BJP. Now, if anyone considers it the A+ team of the BJP, he cannot be mistaken.

He has been giving enough evidence. In the last elections, the minorities of Delhi voted en masse for him and his candidates. He credited his victory to the blessings of Hanuman and exhorted his party men to recite Hanuman Chalisa. He created a large replica of the Ayodhya temple in Delhi so that he, his ministers and MLAs could go there and worship Maryada Purushothama.

The makeshift temple that cost lakhs of rupees was dismantled a day after the prayers. Which ruler will commit such a folly? He has taken several groups

of people from Delhi to Ayodhya by hiring trains at state cost. One promise he has made to the electorate in Gujarat is that he would organise free trips to Ayodhya for the poor and the elderly.

Kejriwal does not know that Gujaratis are one of the richest and they do not need the government's help to do pilgrimage. For his knowledge, pilgrimage is not pilgrimage if it does not involve hardship and one's own money. The poor need food, not pilgrimage!

Kejriwal is one chief minister who does not have much powers. Neither land nor law and order



is under him. He is actually a glorified Mayor, of course, not like the Mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani, who showed his power in the wake of 9/11. He has been rightfully demanding full statehood for Delhi. I was with him on this.

But the moment Home Minister Amit Shah withdrew statehood from Jammu and Kashmir and vivisected the state into two Union Territories, Kejriwal was the first to welcome the move. It did not bother him that it was tantamount to cutting the branch of the tree on which he was sitting. So much for his commitment to democratic principles and good governance!

Even some BJP leaders had difficulty in reconciling themselves to the vivisection when the party had never promised it in any of its election manifestos. All it demanded was abrogation of Article 370 that

gave J&K some special powers which were watered over the decades by successive governments at the Centre. But that did not prevent the Delhi CM from welcoming Shah's ill-advised move.

Similarly, when thousands of people, not necessarily Muslims, protested against the new citizenship policy that bars Muslims, at Shaheen Bagh (2019-2020), Kejriwal preferred to ignore it. What mattered to him were votes, not principles.

Similarly, when riots broke out in Northeast Delhi in which Muslims suffered the most with Hindus suffering only collateral damage, Kejriwal as Chief Minister should have gone to the riot-hit areas to control the situation. Instead, he preferred to go to Rajghat to "pray". Gandhi did not go to a temple when riots hit Noakhali, now in Bangladesh. He went to the area and dealt with the people there.

Soon after Independence when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru heard that some Hindus were attacking Muslim refugees in Delhi, he rushed to the spot and raised his walking stick to control the situation. No, he did not go to a temple to pray.

As a Christian, I do not believe that there is a bad time for prayer, but prayer is not, and has never been meant to be, a substitute for constructive action. Let me narrate

a chilling scene in the 1971 film "Nicholas and Alexandra" in which Czar Nicholas II is facing the international crisis of July 1914 that led to World War I and doesn't know what to do.

He tells his former prime minister, Sergei Witte, "I've ordered prayers for peace to be said in every church in Russia". To that Witte responds, "We can pray when we bury the dead". Yes, Kejriwal Ji, prayer is not a substitute for action. How good it would have been if he had gone to Northeast Delhi and used his moral courage to face the hooligans who took the law into their own hands. Alas, courage has become a rare commodity in India today. ©

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The Emergence of Neo-Fascism

We see how democracy (and the values it embodies) is slowly but surely being dismantled in country after country. Rights and freedoms guaranteed in Constitutions held sacred by people across the globe are systematically being denied

BY **CEDRIC PRAKASH**

On 9 October 2022, the day of the canonization of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, a person who did so much for migrants in his lifetime, Pope Francis used very strong words which were unscripted; he thundered, “the exclusion of migrants is scandalous; indeed, the exclusion of migrants is criminal, it makes them die in front of us. Thus, the Mediterranean is the largest cemetery in the world. The exclusion of migrants is disgusting, it is sinful, it is criminal” He added, “we exclude them, we send them away to the concentration camps where they are exploited and sold as slaves. Brothers and sisters today do we think of our migrants, those who die and those who are able to enter, do we receive them as brothers or do we exploit them? I leave the question”. He continued, “we stop dividing ourselves on the basis of merit, the roles we hold or some other external aspect of life, and the internal walls, prejudices,



fall. Thus, finally, we rediscover ourselves as brothers. It does us good to take off our outer armour, our defensive barriers and take a nice bath of humility, reminding us that we are all fragile inside and in need of healing, all brothers, let us remember this: the Christian faith always asks us to walk together with others, never to be solitary walkers”.

Pope Francis’ strong words would not have been taken kindly by Giorgia Meloni’s who was elected as the new Prime Minister of Italy on 25 September. Her ‘Brothers of Italy’ party won the snap general elections in Italy. The party, which is the most ultra-right-wing party to gain power in Italy since Mussolini’s fascism is known for its anti-immigrant stand and its disdain for human rights particularly those

“The exclusion of migrants is scandalous; indeed, the exclusion of migrants is criminal, it makes them die in front of us. Thus, the Mediterranean is the largest cemetery in the world. The exclusion of migrants is disgusting, it is sinful, it is criminal”

– Pope Francis



Giorgia Meloni

of women and of the LGBTQI community. Meloni's Government took office on 22 October and in her maiden speech she reiterated,

"we must stop illegal departures and human trafficking"; repeating a campaign pledge to stop boats heading to Italy from North Africa. Several leading international editorials and op-eds have captioned Meloni's rise to power as 'the return of the fascists. It was exactly one hundred years ago, on 28 October 2022, that the fascists marched to the capital Rome, forcing the King to send a telegram to Benito Mussolini to form the government!

Some weeks earlier, there was another shock awaiting the people of Europe: Sweden, once regarded as a bastion of democracy and of liberal values voted by a slim margin for a right-wing Government. Analysts said that the recent vote had been one of the closest in modern times and reflected a desire by Swedes to move in a new direction after decades of centre-left policymaking that has included an openness toward asylum seekers, an emphasis on individual liberties and an adherence to socially liberal ideals. All cherished values of democracy! There are other countries in Europe like Belarus, Hungary and Poland that have blatantly shed any pretence of being democracies as authoritarianism takes over. In Belarus, the elections are openly rigged and civil liberties are throttled. The despotic President there has total control of the military, the judiciary and other institutions that are meant to be independent. Pro-democracy protests and movements are brutally dealt with.

The new UK Government with the Pakistani-origin Hindu Rishi Sunak at the helm clearly has very fascist and pro-capitalist trends. The reappointment of Suella Braverman as the Home Secretary is a clear sign of this. Braverman is considered to be a staunch supporter of Brexit and right-wing culture. She recently said *"I have concerns about having an open borders migration policy with India because I don't think that's what people voted for with Brexit. Look at migration in this country, the largest group of people who overstay are Indian migrants."* Braverman further said that the agreement between the Indian and the UK government to facilitate better cooperation on migration has not *"necessarily worked very well"*.

The world continues to wait in expectation for the second round of polling in the Brazilian elections on 30 October. If former President Lula wins (as he



is likely to do so) it will be, people say, a victory for Democracy. The past years governed by the right-wing President Bolsonaro have been disastrous for the poor and the marginalised, the indigenous peoples and for the Brazilian economy in general. Bolsonaro is in the same mould of Trump, Modi, Putin and Xi. Yes, democracy is in peril everywhere! There is no doubt about that!

We see how democracy (and the values it embodies) is slowly but surely being dismantled in country after country. Rights and freedoms guaranteed in Constitutions held sacred by people across the globe are systematically being denied. 'Neo-fascism' usually includes ultranationalism, racial supremacy, populism, authoritarianism, nativism, xenophobia, jingoism, exclusivism and anti-immigration sentiment, as well as opposition to liberal democracy, social democracy, parliamentarianism, liberalism, Marxism, neoliberalism, communism, and socialism. Under the pretence of democracy, that's exactly what's happening today!

Donald Trump and his cohorts are back in the news, as the trial continues with regard to the invasion of the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021. That was certainly a black day for democracy. Trump called his supporters to Washington DC for a 'Stop the Steal' rally on the day Congress would count the votes of the Electoral College. No one expected the violence and the mayhem, that would take place in the world's oldest democracy. The world watched with shock and angst. Such a terrible reality could not be happening in the United States and more so, instigated by an outgoing President

Watching the apparent falling apart of the great



Brazil's Bolsonaro

American Democracy- there was universal condemnation; world leaders reacted swiftly and strongly. Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor said Mr. Trump bore responsibility for the riot by his supporters “*unfortunately, President Trump did not accept his defeat since November, not even yesterday, and that has naturally created an environment that enabled such violent events.*” Her foreign minister, Heiko Maas, was even more blunt, drawing a parallel with Hitler’s power grab, “*Violent actions come from inflammatory words—on the steps of the Reichstag and now in the Capitol,*” he said, in reference to the burning of republican Germany’s parliament building in 1933. “*Disregarding democratic institutions has devastating consequences.*”

Democracy in India is in the doldrums too! India attained her independence on 15 August 1947; later the Constituent Assembly gave the people of India a democratic and visionary Constitution, based on the four non-negotiable pillars of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. For years India went to town priding herself of being the world’s largest democracy. But suddenly those very institutions which are meant to be the bulwark of democracy have begun collapsing, like a pack of cards. Thanks to the fascist regime!

Since 2019, there has been a dramatic and drastic erosion in the democratic space in every respect and particularly for dissent in the country; the ordinary citizen has been experiencing this in many brutal ways. The calculated destruction of democratic values and of the rights of the citizens, take place at a frightening regularity. Hate speech is on the rise; the demonization and the denigration of the

‘other’ particularly the minorities have gained official legitimacy! The perpetrators indulge in verbal and physical violence with impunity: knowing full well that nothing will eventually happen to them! On the other hand, a strategy that has been central to the erosion of democratic space, has been the weaponizing of the criminal justice system by the State, to harass and punish those who dare to protest against the anti-people and anti-Constitutional policies and actions of the Government.

The disheartening part is that the judiciary in India has not sufficiently played the role of being independent, impartial and for ‘the people of India’. Judges have often acted in a partisan manner and have been reluctant to speak truth to power and restore justice. Earlier, the mainstream media allowed for expression of protest and raised issues of such injustice; unfortunately, today it has become the voice of the State and an important medium to popularise the narrative of the State. Several human rights activists, friends and supporters of those in jail under these laws, have consistently and persistently built up a campaign for their release and against the use of draconian laws. Scores of people have been detained under various other repressive state laws. This includes journalists, human rights activists, trade union activists and workers, cultural activists, comedians, farmers and fishermen, environmentalists, youth, students, electricity and industrial workers, and large numbers of minorities, to create a false narrative of internal terrorism and threat to the nation.

Those who have taken a visible and vocal stand for justice and peace, those who have taken up cudgels for the excluded and exploited, the marginalised and the minorities are at the receiving end of a brutal vengeful system. Many, as those in the Bhima Koregaon conspiracy case are still languishing in jail without trial. Recently, Prof G. N Saibaba, Umar Khalid, Jyoti Jagtap, Siddique Kappan were denied bail. Stalwarts like Teesta Setalvad, R. B. Sreekumar and Sanjiv Bhatt are hounded and harassed no end. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to understand and realise that those who support constitutional rights and the democratic framework of the country have false and fabricated charges foisted on them

Last year a ‘National Campaign to Defend Democracy’ was launched when 165 movements, platforms and organizations, representing thousands of citi-

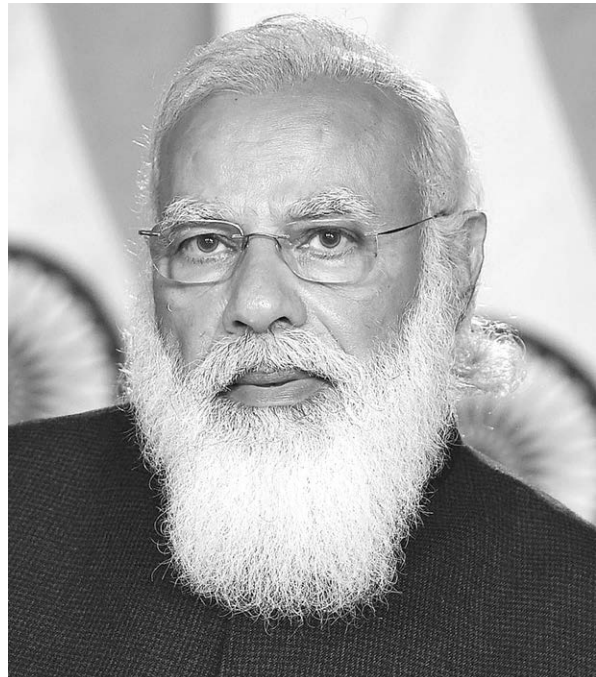
zens, gave a call for a country wide action to save our democracy: marking the international day for Indigenous people & Quit India movement day, as a day of Public Action. The action all over the country continued until 28 August with India's Independence Day (15 August) being the high point, when thousands pledged to campaign for the repeal of draconian laws and to protect our democracy. The pledge read: "On the occasion of the 75th Independence Day, on 15th August, we pledge to defend the legacy of our Freedom Movement, the spirit of the Preamble and the values of our Constitution. We pledge to campaign for repealing all draconian laws and assert the right to bail of every citizen. We believe that the right to question and the Right to Dissent are the foundation of our democratic, secular and socialist republic. We commit to campaign against all ideologies, laws, and state actions that deprive us of the freedoms of speech and opinion, conscience, association, and to non-violent opposition".

Strongmen, dictators, those who attempt to destroy democracy and democratic institutions have with them money: Modi and his ilk have amassed huge amounts of wealth, because of demonetization, electoral bonds, the GST and through corrupt deals. They have been able to buy up elected members from opposition parties and others, silence them, black mail them. Then there is muscle: the violence they use to intimidate, harass, incarcerate and even kill; the military establishment normally toe their line. They are adept at manipulation: both minds and machines. Then have with them the media which is completely 'godified'. Tell a lie a thousand times and people will accept it as the truth. That was the dictum of Josef Goebbels the information minister of Hitler

Some years ago, historian Lawrence Britt studied the fascist regimes of Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), Franco (Spain), Suharto (Indonesia), and Pinochet (Chile) and found they had 14 elements in common. He calls these the identifying characteristics of fascism. (published in 'Free Inquiry' Spring 2003, pg. 20 as 'Fascism Anyone?'); these are:

1. Powerful and Continuing Nationalism
2. Disdain for the Recognition of Human Rights.
3. Identification of Enemies/Scapegoats as a Unifying Cause
4. Supremacy of the Military
5. Rampant Sexism.
6. Controlled Mass Media

7. Obsession with National Security
8. Religion and Government are Intertwined
9. Protection of Corporate Power
10. Suppression of Labour Power
11. Disdain for Intellectuals and the Arts
12. Obsession with Crime and Punishment
13. Rampant Cronyism and Corruption
14. Fraudulent Elections



Britt provides clear indicators to each of the above characteristics. One does not need too much of an intelligence, to realise, that the above characteristics are a reality in India and elsewhere today! The fact is that with the throttling of the fundamental rights of citizens and the shrinking of democratic space, the emergence of neo-fascist regimes in India and elsewhere have gained ground as never before.

But all is not lost! 'We the people of India' need to take hope from the visionary inspiration of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian Constitution, who defined democracy as "a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed". We need to ensure that this much -needed change, takes place now! ©

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Rishi's Rise

Lessons for India

Rishi Sunak is the latest in the list of the people of Indian origin who could capture the attention of the whole world, as he has become the prime minister of the United Kingdom

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

Indians are proud of the achievements of people of Indian origin in other countries like the USA, Canada, UK and other European countries. CEOs of some renowned multinational companies have people of Indian origin as their CEOs. For example, Sundar Pichai of Alphabet Inc, Parag Agrawal of Twitter, Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Shantanu Narayen of Adobe Inc, Arvind Krishna of IBM and Laxman Narasimhan of Starbucks are some of them.

They are not discriminated against because of their religion or caste in the countries where they have received citizenship. On the contrary, their achievements are recognized and celebrated. Rishi Sunak is the latest in the list of the people of Indian origin who could capture the attention of the whole world, as he has become the prime minister of the United Kingdom.

Rishi Sunak's rise to the post of UK's PM is historical because he is the first non-white leader of the country, and the first Hindu prime minister. It was a



historic moment – “a former imperial power being led by someone whose heritage rests with the colonised rather than the colonisers”.

Rishi Sunak was born in Southampton in 1980 to Indian parents who had migrated to the UK from East Africa. The elevation

of Indian origin Rishi Sunak to the prime minister of UK is a moment of pride for Indians and at the same time an occasion for introspection. On the one hand, through hard work, determination and perseverance Sunak could rise to the top of the political ladder. On the other hand, the non-discriminatory socio-political environment of UK has been conducive to his emergence and growth as a politician.

The Constitution of India envisages a society/country that is inclusive and non-discriminatory that provides freedom, justice and equal opportunities to all. At the same time, a majoritarian ideology that is exclusive and discriminatory also existed in India at the time of independence. Gradually this ideology got momentum and acceptance, and for the last eight years it has become the dominant ideology under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The socio-political, cultural and religious context of India has been shaped by this ideology. The last eight years has seen unprecedented growth in hate speech, hate messages and violence against Muslims and Christians and demonization and exclusion of Muslims. That is why many opposition party leaders, while appreciating the election of Rishi Sunak as PM, reminded the Indians, the ruling party and its supporters that India has to learn from the UK.

Leaders of many political parties in India expressed their happiness on the election of Rishi Sunak as the Prime Minister of UK. At the same time, they raised a question whether this can happen in India in the present socio-political context. Some



Rishi Sunak

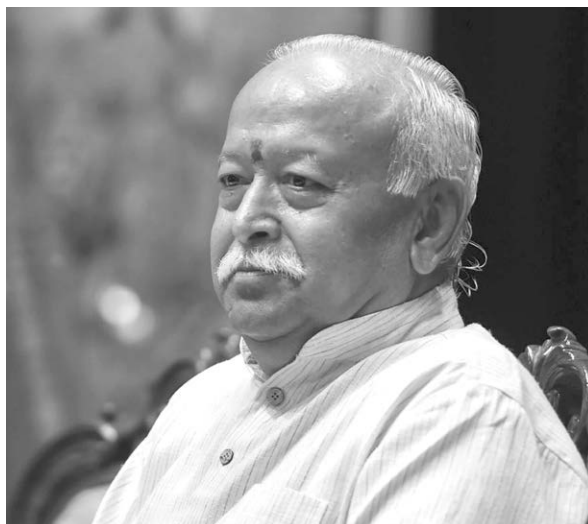
of them reminded the BJP of its opposition to Sonia Gandhi becoming the prime minister of India in 2004, when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) under the leadership of the Congress won the Lok Sabha election.

Former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mehbooba Mufti said, "Election of Rishi Sunak, a person of Indian origin as the prime minister of UK, is a moment of pride; but we Indians have to take it as a lesson. Britain could accept a leader from a minority community. We Indians are still bound by the discriminatory and divisive laws like CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) and NRC (National Register of Citizens)". Welcoming the election of Rishi Sunak, Mahua Moitra of TMC said that India has to be more tolerant.

P Chidambaram and Shashi Tharoor of the Congress welcomed the election of Rishi Sunak and said that India also has to follow this practice. "First Kamala Harris, now Rishi Sunak. The people of the US and the UK have embraced the non-majority citizens of their countries and elected them to high office in government," Chidambaram said on Twitter. "I think there is a lesson to be learned by India and the parties that practise majoritarianism," he also said. Tharoor said, "If this does happen, I think all of us will have to acknowledge that the British have done something very rare in the world, to place a member of a visible minority in the most powerful office. As we Indians celebrate the ascent of @RishiSunak, let's honestly ask: can it happen here?"

Asaduddin Owaisi of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen used the occasion to criticize the discriminatory policy of the BJP. "Halal meat is dangerous, the beard of Muslims is dangerous, the cap of Muslims is dangerous, the BJP is against the identity of Muslims. In Delhi, the prime minister says, (Support and development of all), but this is only lip's service, he said.

The BJP spokespersons came up with a counter argument that Dr. Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, was prime minister of India for ten years. This argument appears to be hollow because according to Hindutva protagonists, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are religions born in India and they come under the wider umbrella of Hinduism. The Hindutva ideology sees all religions born in the Indian subcontinent as similar, "Indic" religions. Moreover, RSS or BJP has never declared that they have modified the ideology of Hindutva as expounded by RSS ideologues:



Mohan Bhagwat

VD Savarkar and MS Golwalkar. Golwalkar has written explicitly in his book, "We or Our Nationhood Defined", that Muslims and Christians have only two options, either to become Hindus or to live in India without any rights, including the citizenship rights.

"The foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen's rights". (We or Our Nationhood Defined by MS Golwalkar)

Golwalkar rejected the concept of 'territorial nationalism', the modern variant of nationalism which identified a state with its territory and bestowed equal rights of citizenship on all those who lived within it. He and RSS became passionate advocates of Cultural Nationalism. This is diametrically opposed to Civic Nationalism, envisaged in the Indian Constitution.

Ever since BJP came to power in 2014 under the leadership of Narendra Modi, it has been implementing policies to realize the vision of the RSS. Passing CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act), Love Jihad laws and stringent anti-conversion laws passed by several BJP ruled states are a few prominent examples. Exclusion of Muslims who constitute 14.2% of the Indian population is reflected in their representation



in the BJP. Out of the 395 BJP Parliamentarians, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha together, there is no single Muslim and no BJP MLA in 31 assemblies of states and Union Territories. This fact exposes the hypocrisy of the slogan, Sabka saat sabka vikas (Support and development of all).

There have been some attempts in recent months by the leaders of RSS, the ideological parent of the BJP, to create an impression that the RSS is not against the Muslims. RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat agreed to engage a few Muslim intellectuals in dialogue and he visited a madrasa and a mosque in Delhi. It was reported in the media that this was the first time he visited a mosque. With regard to the Gyanvapi Mosque controversy, he had warned the Hindutva hotheads “not to look for a shivling in every mosque”.

The Muslim community is divided over the initiative of some Muslim intellectuals to have a dialogue with the RSS leaders. Those who oppose the initiative are of the view that the RSS is not sincere in its dialogue with Muslim community. They have pointed out that Mohan Bhagwat raked up the issue of “population imbalance”, even though one of the Muslim intellectuals had explained to Mohan Bhagwat, quoting the government statistics, that the decline in the growth rate of Muslim population during 2001 and 2011(-4.7%) was more than that of Hindu population (-3.1%).

As long as the RSS takes the position of a master and considers Muslims and Christians as slaves, there cannot be any meaningful dialogue. Secondly, any relevant dialogue between the Hindus and the minorities (Muslims and Christians) has to take place within the framework of the Indian Constitution. The ideology of RSS is antithetical to the vision and ideology of the Indian Constitution. Hence, the solution is RSS accepting and internalizing the concept

of equal citizenship guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

In order to create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue the leaders of the Sangh Parivar, especially the top leader of RSS and the head of the government, the prime minister, should send a strong message to all Sangh Parivar organization to stop taking law into their hands and threatening and attacking minorities on any assumed or imagined defaming of Hindu religion. It was reported in Matters India on 26th October that the right-wing Hindu activists burnt firecrackers in front of a Catholic school in Khandwa diocese to protest against staging a street play on the environmental protection and safe celebration of Diwali. The school students had put up the play to educate students how to celebrate Diwali without damaging the environment. The right-wing groups interpreted it as defaming the Hindu festival and Hindu religion. They even threatened the school management of serious consequences, if such events are repeated. Even the efforts to educate students on protecting the environment is interpreted as denigrating Hindu religion. This kind of behaviour on the part of the Hindutva outfits leads to lawlessness and deep insecurity among the minorities.

Rishi Sunak could climb to the top of the political ladder and become the prime minister because the UK practices equal citizenship that is the bedrock of secular democracy. This is an occasion for the leaders of all political parties to reaffirm their commitment to the core values of the Indian Constitution, particularly equal citizenship. Against this backdrop, the Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi deserves mention. The unprecedented support to the yatra by the common people is an indication that the exclusive and divisive Hindutva ideology can be effectively countered, if the political parties are able to come together and present a counter narrative. Let all political party leaders, especially the ruling party leaders, listen to what Rishi Sunak told in his short inaugural speech. “I will work day in and day out to deliver for you. This government will have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level”. ©

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The Xi Jinping Story: The Making of a Dictator

Instead of becoming bitter and turning himself into a rebel, Xi Jinping reinvented himself as a fervent communist through his re-education experience. He talks of his tough experience on the farms as a time that shaped his understanding of Chinese politics and the dynamics of power

BY **SACARIA JOSEPH**

With the election of Xi Jinping as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) for a third consecutive five-year term by the new Standing Committee on October 23, 2022, the Xi era, an era of totalitarianism in China has possibly begun. The world did have a foretaste of what is to come when former Chinese President Hu Jintao was forced out of the closing ceremony of the Congress of the CPC, where he was seated beside Xi Jinping, for reasons that China refuses to divulge. Was Hu Jintao the sole dissenting voice in the Congress that amended the CPC's constitution with a hundred per cent vote to honour Xi Jinping with the title of the 'core' leader elevating him to the status of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping? The CPC insists that all members of the CPC should "closely unite around the Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping as the core." A 'core leader' has absolute authority and cannot be questioned.

After Mao Zedong, Xi Jinping is the first leader to be elected for a third term as the General Secretary of the CPC. In fact, after having completed his two five-year terms, he should have stepped down as the General Secretary during the twentieth Congress of the party in 2022, but he did not because he had made himself indispensable in the CPC by redrafting

the rules of the game to suit his personal advantage.

Despite crossing the official retirement age of 68 and completing a 10-year tenure, on October 22, 2022, the 69-year-old was elected to the 380-member Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party – the political body that constitutes the high-ranking leaders of the party – by the CPC's Congress that comprises 2,296 delegates from all over the country.

The following day, the Central Committee approved the 24-member Polit Bureau that in turn handpicked the 7-member Standing Committee, CPC's topmost leadership and the highest decision-making body of the country. The Standing

Xi Jinping, who was once a victim of the totalitarian communist regime of Mao Zedong, today has come to enjoy power and status like that of his tormentor





Mao Zedong

Committee that would function under the CPC's General Secretary elected Xi Jinping as the General Secretary. With the Central Committee, the Polit Bureau and the Standing Committee that comprise the acolytes and loyalists of Xi Jinping, his election as the General Secretary was nothing more than a well-choreographed political drama long foretold.

Xi Jinping, who was once a victim of the totalitarian communist regime of Mao Zedong, today has come to enjoy power and status like that of his tormentor. In fact, Xi Jinping's has been an incredible journey. His family suffered much during the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,' known popularly as the 'Cultural Revolution' – the socio-political movement launched by Mao Zedong in the People's Republic of China in 1966 and continued until his death in 1976. In the name of the Cultural Revolution, Mao tried to cleanse Chinese communism of its capitalist and other so-called unhealthy influences of Chinese tradition. Mao went after Xi Zhongxun, one of the first generations of Chinese communist leaders and the former's adviser, just as he went after many top Chinese leaders of the time who were regarded as traitors of communist ideals. After Xi Zhongxun was accused of heading an 'anti-party clique,' along with his entire family, he was humiliated and tortured by Red Guards, cadres of young and firebrand Mao loyalists. One of Xi Zhongxun's two sons, Xi Jinping, aged 15 was sent along with

numerous educated youths to work on farms in the Chinese countryside where they were expected to get re-educated by the poor. Two years after the death of Mao in 1976, Xi Zhongxun was rehabilitated and reintroduced into the communist leadership by Deng Xiaoping, the de facto leader of the People's Republic of China from 1978 to the early 1990s. He was fortunate to rise later to the position of Vice Premier.

Instead of becoming bitter and turning himself into a rebel, Xi Jinping reinvented himself as a fervent communist through his re-education experience. He talks of his tough experience on the farms as a time that shaped his understanding of Chinese politics and the dynamics of power. He learned that by adhering to the very communist system that not only wrecked his early life of privilege but also ruined his family, he not only could survive but also succeed in life. Therefore, on his return from his 're-education programme', Xi Jinping wanted to join the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC), the youth wing of the Communist party that initiates youngsters into Communist party politics. Being the son of a once-tainted leader, he had to apply eight times for membership before his application was finally accepted. His membership in the CYLC did not make his membership in the CPC easy. He had to apply 11 times for his membership in the party. After he entered formal party politics, he rose rather quickly through the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party.

At the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, Hu Jintao who served as the General Secretary of the party for two terms from 2002 to 2012, and as the President of the People's

Xi Jinping who learned important lessons from Mao's style of governance emulates the latter in many ways. No wonder that by the time Xi Jinping completed his first term in office in 2017, he gained complete control over the party

Republic of China for two terms from 2003 to 2013, stepped down as the General Secretary. His act of handing over the batons of the General Secretary and the President post was in accordance with the limit of two terms for the Secretary and the President set by the former leader Deng Xiaoping in 1982. The two-term limit was introduced as a safeguard against the possible emergence of the regressive personality cult, one-man rule and totalitarianism that can happen when a dictatorial leader continues to enjoy unwarranted administrative power. From the example of Mao Zedong, the founder of the CPC and the first one to become the General Secretary of the party for the third time, the Chinese learnt the dangers of personality cult and totalitarian leadership.



In the race for the office of the General Secretary of the CPC in 2012, defeating Li Keqiang, the then Vice Premier, Xi Jinping made it to the coveted chair. Soon after assuming office, by means of his 'Eight-point Regulation,' he tried to do away with the culture of waste and corruption in the functioning of the party which in turn helped him to root out all political opposition or potential rivals from the party, and centralise power. This was a strategy that Mao followed by launching anti-corruption campaigns to purge the party of political rivals and establish his absolute power over the party. In 1951, Mao launched a campaign against three crimes – wastage, corruption and bureaucratism – which is referred to as the 'Three-anti Campaign' and targeted the members within the CPC who either became or were suspected to have become close to the capitalists. In his campaign against five

crimes – bribery, theft of state property, tax evasion, cheating on government contracts, and stealing state economic intelligence – called the 'Five-anti Campaign' launched in 1952, he targeted the capitalist class. His misguided socio-political experiment called 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' started in 1966 and continued till his death in 1976 was his successful but misguided effort to reassert his control over the party.

Xi Jinping who learned important lessons from Mao's style of governance emulates the latter in many ways. No wonder that by the time Xi Jinping completed his first term in office in 2017, he gained complete control over the party. During the 19th Congress of the party held in the same year, Xi Jinping ensured that his ideology known as 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,' commonly referred to as 'Xi Jinping Thought' was made part of the constitution of the party. In 2018, it became part of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China by means of an amendment to the preamble of the Constitution.

Xi Jinping became the General Secretary of the CPC and the President of China at a time when the party was concerned about its uneasy grip on the growing private sector, the Chinese economy and the infiltration of Western values. Once in power, while he established CPC's power over every sphere of life in China, he also established his control over the party, the government, and the country. With the noticeable decline of the influence of the Western democracies, especially of the United States, on the rest of the world, he was convinced of the scope of China to wield its influence on the world with its possible authoritarian governance.

After Xi Jinping's abolition of the two-term limit for the Chinese President in 2018 and his election as the General Secretary of the CPC, his becoming the president of China for a consecutive third term at the Chinese government's legislative session in March 2023 is a forgone conclusion. In fact, as of now, nothing stops him from remaining the General Secretary of the CPC and the president of China for life. As General Secretary and the president, Xi Jinping is automatically the head of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and the commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Xi Jinping who considers his predecessors as weak leaders and believes that strong leadership is the need of the hour, embodies the perfect formula

for the making of a supposed strong leader. He has unquestionable absolute power in hand; he has the advantage of heading a single-party political system; and he has no political rival, an enviable scenario that not even Mao Zedong enjoyed.

During the Xi Jinping era, especially between 2012 and 2019, the Chinese economy more than doubled from \$8.53 trillion to \$17.73 trillion. His dream is to make China the largest economy in the world surpassing that of the United States, transforming China from a manufacturing economy to a more service and consumption-based economy.

In the meantime, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and China's zero-Covid strategy, the crisis in the real estate sector, the roadblocks faced by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the government's regulatory crackdown on tech companies, increased budgetary allocation on defence spending, the growing rate of unemployment, and the alarmingly falling rate of birth and rising rate of ageing people are major concerns. All of them have contributed significantly to denting the growth rate of the economy. As per the prediction of the International Monetary Fund, China's GDP growth will remain at 3.2 per



cent in 2022 and 4.4 per cent in 2023. After all, as the American businessman and author Robert Kiyosaki says, "History reminds us that dictators and despots arise during times of severe economic crisis." Today, the market is concerned that with too many loyalists of Xi Jinping in the CPC's administrative machinery, President Xi Jinping could unilaterally initiate policies that are unfriendly towards the market. As he emerges as a force to reckon with, the world is waiting with bated breath to see how he will deal with it as he assumes the office of the president for the third time. ©



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Drowned Capuchin's body traced, funeral in Kerala

The body of a Capuchin priest was recovered five days after he was drowned in the Godavari River in the southern Indian state of Telangana.

"We have found the body of Tony Pullattukalayil (earlier reported as Pulladen) at 11:10 pm," says a message from Father Melvin, the secretary to the provincial of the St Joseph's Capuchin province, Kottayam.

The body was recovered from Kollur, almost 3 km from the spot of drowning.

The funeral is scheduled at 2:30 pm on October 30 at Capuchin Vidyabhavan in Thellakam, Kottayam, Kerala.

The Capuchins in India had intensified their prayers as Father Pullattukalayil's body remained untraced.

Father Pullattukalayil and seminarian Brother Bijo Thomas Palampurackal were taking bath in the river around 6 pm on October 23 when undercurrents swept them away near Errayipet village near Chennur town. The body of Brother Palampurackal was recovered the following morning.

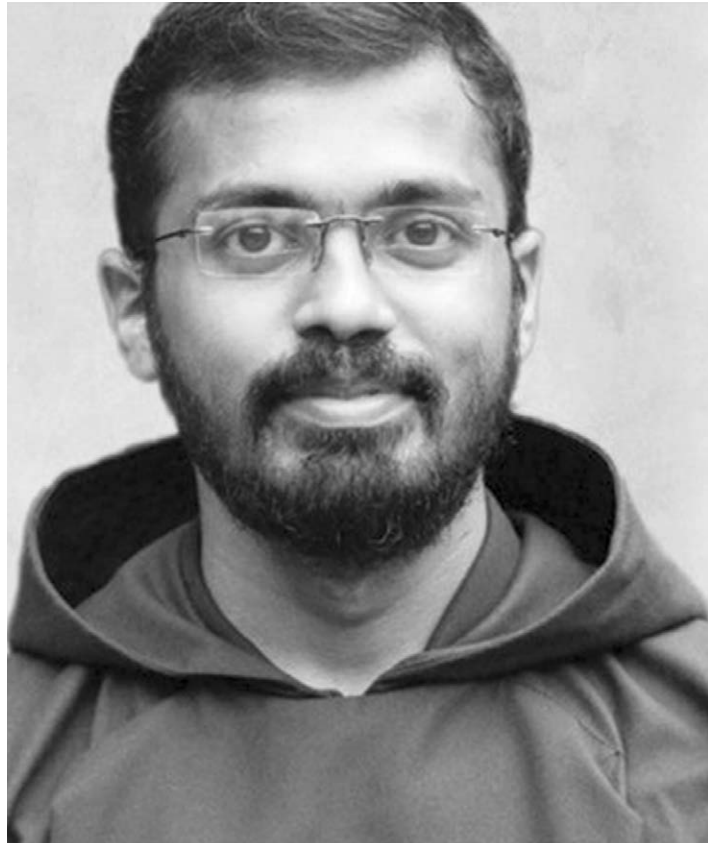
Father Antony Alphonse, another priest who was with them, escaped unhurt. He later explained that Brother Palampurackal had first entered the river to bathe but got stuck under the water. Father Pulladen had gone to his rescue the brother but himself got drowned.

The three have been serving the Capuchins' Adilabad mission in Telangana state.

The Adilabad Mission comes under the St Joseph's Capuchin province based in Kottayam.

A message from provincial Father George Antony Assaricheril on October 27 says hundreds of people, police force, expert fishermen, priests, religious and volunteers had conducted the search with motorized and normal boats and drone cameras.

Earlier, the body of Brother Palampurackal was taken to the province headquarters. The burial is scheduled at 2:30 pm on October 28 at the Capuchin Vidyabhavan Chapel, Thellakom, Kottayam, the provincial's message says.



Father Pullattukalayil was born March 10, 1991, under St. George Forane Church, Kaipuzha in Kottayam. He joined the Capuchins on May, 14, 2010, and was ordained a priest on November 18, 2019.

At the top of the memento card, he had prepared for the ordination was a quote from the Book of Psalms: "The deep calls to deep" with its reference Psalm 42.7. The complete verse is: "Deep calls to deep in the roar of your torrents,

The image printed above his picture depicted Jesus reaching down from the surface of the water into the deep to lift someone from the depths of the waters.

Brother Palampurackal was born on August 24, 1984, at Thellakom, and entered the congregation on June 5, 2016. He made his first vows on May 15, 2019. ©

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

Online Games: Skill or Chance?

According to reports, online rummy gained popularity during the lockdown period and simultaneously many mobile applications offering loans also appeared. In terms of growth, the online gaming industry is stated to have seen growth in revenue, users as well as usage

BY **AARTI**

There have been mixed reactions to the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Act, 2022 that was passed on this 19 October. The new legislation facilitates prohibition as well as the regulation of online gaming.

Following two back-to-back reported incidents of housewives allegedly committing suicides on June 5 and 7 this year in Chennai, directly and indirectly attributed to online rummy, the State Government revived its efforts to ban online gaming.

In the first incident, a 29-year-old woman allegedly ended her life after she lost 20 sovereigns of gold jewellery and Rs 3 lakh of her sisters' money in online gambling. During lockdown, she is said to have become addicted to online gambling, she mortgaged 20 sovereigns but lost the money in online gambling. She borrowed Rs 1.5 lakh each from her two sisters to redeem the pledged jewels but lost this money too in gambling.

In the next incident, a 39-year-old woman died by hanging, after her jobless husband, who became addicted to online gambling during lockdown, lost

close to Rs 20,000 in online rummy. The money was meant to be paid towards her son's school fees.

The previous AIADMK Government, too, faced with a spate of suicides arising out of online gambling introduced an Ordinance in November 2020 to amend the Tamil Nadu Gaming Act, 1930. It justified that playing games like rummy, poker etc., using computers or mobile phones, for money or other stakes were addictive in nature and as a result, innocent people were getting cheated leading to incidents of suicide. The said amendment prohibited all forms of games being conducted in cyberspace, irrespective of the game involved being a game of mere skill, if such game is played for a wager, bet, money or other stake. The same was struck down by the Madras High Court which ruled that the new law to be ultra vires the Constitution in its entirety. The Court however observed that nothing herein will prevent an appropriate legislation conforming to the constitutional sense of propriety being brought in the field of betting and gambling by the State.

According to the popular reference source, the Black's Law Dictionary, widely used by attorneys, judges and scholars' world over, "Games may be of chance, or of skill or of skill and chance combined".



Tamil Nadu Assembly passes Bill banning online gambling games

Today, online games have more than 300 million users in India and is growing. India makes up for 13 percent of the global market share with regard to online games played on mobile devices

However, it is the dominant element - "skill" or "chance" - which determines the character of a game.

So, a game of chance - like the throw of dice, turning a spin wheel or shuffling of cards - is determined entirely or in part by lot or mere luck where the result is wholly uncertain and doubtful.

Success in a game of skill - like chess, golf and rummy - primarily depends upon superior knowledge, training, experience, etc., of the player.

According to reports, online rummy gained popularity during the lockdown period and simultaneously many mobile applications offering loans also appeared. In terms of growth, the online gaming industry is stated to have seen growth in revenue, users as well as usage. The average time spent on mobile phones increased from 151 minutes before the COVID-19 lockdown to 218 minutes during the lockdown. From USD 1.1 billion in 2019, the industry has been growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 40 percent and is expected to cross USD 2.8 billion by 2022. Today, online games have more than 300 million users in India and is growing. India makes up for 13 percent of the global market share with regard to online games played on mobile devices.

The cause for concern is that according to reports, those who started off investing small amounts later started to put in larger amounts and the ones who lost their money started taking loans. Most of the people who accepted money through money lending apps were threatened and black-mailed. Such pathetic tales are aplenty.

A five-member committee led by retired Madras High Court Judge K Chandru was constituted by Chief Minister Mr MK Stalin in August this year to advise on enacting a fresh legislation on online games. Although the Report of the Justice Chandru Committee is not available in the public domain, references of the same have been made in the Ordinance no 4 of 2022 which intended to "prohibit online gambling and to regulate online games in Tamil Nadu" that was promulgated on 1 October.

It is elaborated that in the case of online version of games including online rummy, the algorithm for the random generators are known to the developers and hence are pseudo random generators; such games can be played with bots (an autonomous program or character designed to interact with systems or users); no mechanism is available



for auditing the centralised server architecture of the gaming systems; and artificial intelligence can be used to manipulate the games and lure the players into continued indulgence.

Online games are classified into two types - one which have minimal or negligible randomness factor, and another having random event or count generators which are pseudo random and are addictively designed. It has been recommended to regulate the former and to ban the latter.

On the effects of online games on school students, a recent Government survey conducted among more than two lakh teachers of the School Education Department is quoted which states more than 74 percent of the teachers were of the view that concentration of students was impacted. 67 percent of the respondents said that they noticed eye defects, more than 64 percent noticed decrease in intelligent quotient, writing skills and creativity of students, more than 76 percent noticed significant decrease in self-esteem of students, more than 77 percent noticed increase of anger in students and more than 72 percent noticed indiscipline among students.

With regard to public views on the proposed legislation, more than 99 percent of the general public (10,708 out of a total of 10,375 mails received) are said to have favoured imposition of a total ban on online games. 17 stakeholders, comprising of representatives from the online gaming industry, think tanks, political parties, players association and social activists, who were provided an opportunity to express their views in person are said to have given various suggestions ranging from self-regulation by the industry themselves, regulation by the Govern-

ment, need to differentiate real money games and other forms of games, to provide age and money restrictions, to ban advertisements, to prevent money laundering, to provide grievance redressal mechanism and to provide a total ban on online games.

Taking various factors into consideration, essentially, what the new statute prohibits includes 1) online gambling and playing online games of chance (rummy and poker); 2) advertisements directly or indirectly promoting gambling; 3) banks, financial institutions and payment gateway providers in engaging in any transaction or authorisation of funds towards payment for any online gambling or any online game of chance specified.

Local online games providers need to obtain a certificate of registration (valid for 3 years) from the authority before conducting online games in the State.

No nonlocal online game provider shall provide any online gambling service; allow playing of any

online game of chance as specified with money or other stakes and allow playing of any other online game contrary to the regulations.

Anyone indulging in online gambling or plays any online game of chance as specified is liable to be punished with a three-month imprisonment or with fine up to Rs 5000 or with both.

Any person who makes or causes to make advertisement in any media is liable to be imprisoned for a year or with fine up to Rs 5 lakh or with both.

Any person who provides online gambling service or any online game of chance is liable to be imprisoned for a term extending to 3 years or with fine up to Rs 10 lakh or with both.

Well, so far, so good.

Fingers crossed, it would be interesting to wait and see the outcome as the new regulations are expected to be challenged in the Court as the E-gaming Federation has reportedly stated that it would move the judiciary as the new legislation has categorized rummy and poker as games of chance. ©

Catholic groups urge Biden to seek diplomacy with Putin, avoid nuclear war

Catholic organizations and religious orders are calling President Joe Biden to undertake diplomatic means to prevent nuclear war with Russia.

In an Oct. 26 letter to Biden sent by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, the organizations condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine and urged Biden not to respond in kind if such weapons are used.

"We urge you to show great restraint, and to do everything in your power to de-escalate the conflict, to seek dialogue with Russia, and take immediate, concrete steps toward nuclear disarmament," the letter said. Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, said in a statement that "to work for peace in times of conflict requires imagination and faith."

"We hope President Biden is inspired by his Catholic faith, to see beyond the boundaries of race, religion and nation to keep pursuing diplomacy and dialogue, and not get caught in an escalation of arms but rather keep turning attention to the care for our common humanity that makes us all brothers and

sisters on this one Earth," she said.

It also cites statements from Pope Francis on the threat posed by nuclear weapons. It particularly pointed to the pope's Oct. 2 comments during the Angelus at the Vatican where he expressed concern about the "risk of nuclear escalation" that would give "rise to fears of uncontrollable and catastrophic consequences worldwide."

The correspondence also explains that the nuclear threat is "the single greater moral issue" facing Biden because any use of nuclear weapons "would hasten climate disaster."

The organizations said they would welcome a meeting with Biden to discuss their concerns and the necessity to pursue diplomacy to end the war in Ukraine. The letter was signed by the following organizations and religious orders: Franciscan Action Network, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Pax Christi USA, United States Catholic Mission Association, Sisters of Bon Secours, USA, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Sisters of St. Anne, Dominican Sisters of Peace and Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart. © (Courtesy: CNS)

Hindu outfit targets Dalits adopting Christianity

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has urged the Indian government to withdraw the benefits of its affirmative action program to Hindus who convert to Christianity.

Vijay Shankar Tiwari, the national VHP spokesman while addressing a press conference in Jaipur city in northwestern Rajasthan state on Oct. 19, alleged those converting to Christianity continue to use their Hindu names and credentials in official documents and draw benefits from the government's reservation policy for Dalits and tribal people.

"The central government should make a plan and do a survey to ensure that those people who are from the SC [Scheduled Caste, the official name for Dalits] and ST [Scheduled Tribes] communities and adopted Christianity don't get the reservation benefits," he demanded.

Tiwari further accused Christian missionaries and Muslim clerics of acting as pressure groups to pass on the benefits of education and employment reservations in government institutions under India's affirmative action program to those converted to their religions.

"Since these religious groups claim their religions do not have any caste system and that every individual is equal, they do not come under the reservation schemes," said Tiwari.

He said even India's founding fathers including its constitution maker Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had rejected the idea of providing reservations to converts as it would destroy the purpose of uplifting socially weak Hindu communities.

"These religious groups continue to raise the demand despite it being rejected by the apex court, too," Tiwari added while announcing the VHP will soon undertake an awareness campaign on the issue.

Indian Christians who were previously Dalits have been seeking the SC status to ensure them a share in the 15 percent reserved quota in parliament and state legislatures, government jobs, and education, at present extended only to Dalits belonging to Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist religions.

"We are fighting a legal battle in the Supreme Court to get Scheduled Caste status for Christians of Dalit origin and hence this statement from the VHP comes as no surprise," Father Vijay Kumar Nayak, secretary of the Indian Catholic Bishops' Office for Dalits and Lower Classes, told UCA News.

Father Nayak said no government in the past or present was ever serious about granting SC status and the present government of the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party is no different.

"If the benefits of reservations are extended to Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists why the step-motherly treatment to Christians and Muslims? Our demand is to be treated equally," the priest said.

D. Charles, general secretary of the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC) reminded that only recently the federal government had decided to appoint a commission to examine if Dalits who converted to Christianity or Islam can be accorded SC status.

Charles said the VHP statements were "clever tactics to avoid giving SC status to Christians and Muslims" while the Supreme Court is hearing a petition filed by the NCDC in January 2020 to make SC status "religion neutral." ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)



Goa's Tourism Fallacies

As the epitome of hospitality, Goa has remained unmatched. For nothing has it been touted as the most favoured travel destination globally

BY **PACHU MENON**

For a state that takes pride in showcasing its glorious past and everything that is unique about the region, it comes as a huge let down to have visitors to this glorious paradise riding roughshod over the feelings of the locals.

As the epitome of hospitality, Goa has remained unmatched. For nothing has it been touted as the most favoured travel destination globally.

The state is known to have slipped into a 'tourism mode' even before it realized the true potential that could one day transform it as a formidable force to reckon with in this field.

The scenic settings and the fun-loving people with their susegado culture were attractive distractions that further gave the expanse a mystic aura about itself.

But one can't help but nurture a feeling that it was the sudden transformation as a global hub of tourism that has cost the state dear.



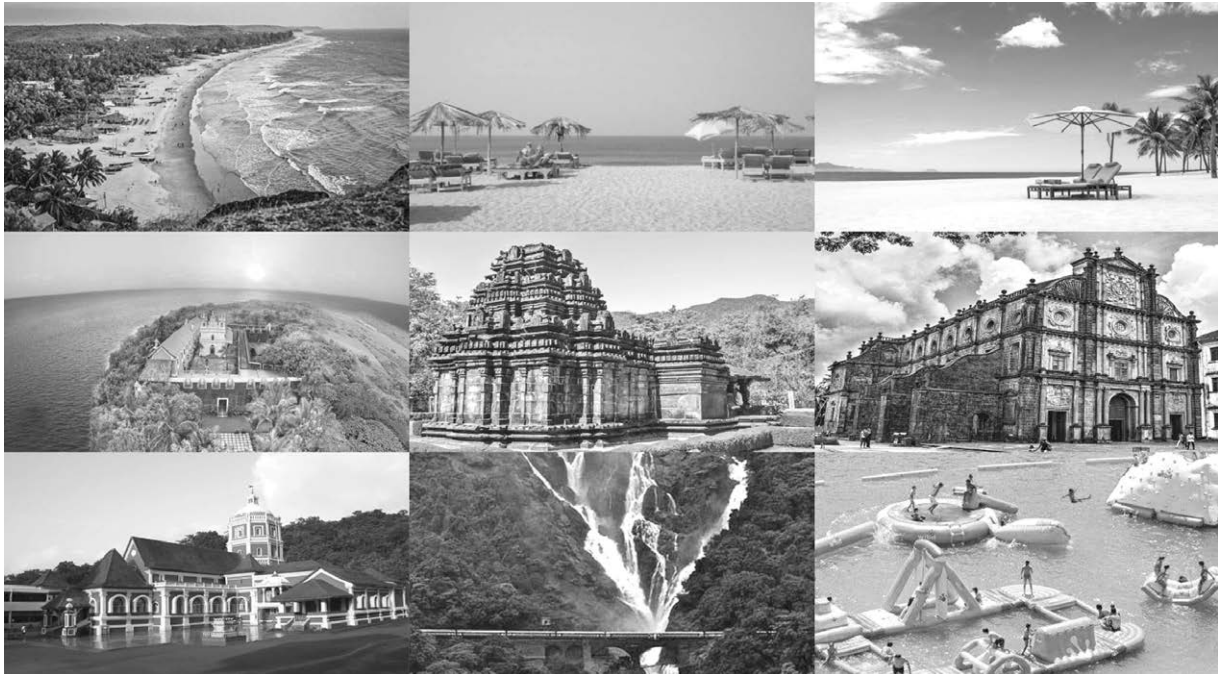
Initially it was the 5-star culture brought in by hotels that described a style of comfort and elegance affordable only to their rich clientele which gradually made Goa a costly place to be in.

The advent of Konkan railway ushered in an era of commuting connectivity which made travelling all the more easier for people. Air travel too has become more accessible for the middle class.

Meanwhile, the 'Charters' were bringing in an influx of foreign tourists and to this date they continue to give hope for Goa's beleaguered tourism sector. It is estimated that the sunshine state contributes a major share of India's charter business.

Goa had thus become far more accessible on the national and global map besides various avenues were opening up for both the tourists and those wishing to cash in on the tourism boom.

And then began that phase of tourism in Goa



which projected the region as everything else but the serene locale that it is popular as!

Understanding that gaming facilities are a prominent driver of tourism and economic development, casinos, ever since their establishment in Goa, have resisted decades of agitation to emerge as major revenue-earners for the government besides becoming a big part of modern Goa culture.

As a 'package' entertainment destination, tourism vistas in Goa have moved over from the traditional to the more sophisticated variety where spending ridiculously large amounts of money on leisurely activities re-defined the whole concept.

Goa in this respect has become an oasis of legal real-money pastimes.

With jet-setters converging in this coastal paradise, and with so much of money being thrown around, the proliferation of the more sleazy variety of operators plying their trade with brazen impunity was a natural consequence.

Although, as a sex and drugs haven, Goa has struck instantaneous fame as a 'sin-tourism' destination; the Goa of today does not need any elaboration from the tourism perspective as the region has already earned rave reviews as one of the hip places to be in.

It is however the preconceived notion about Goa harboured by the 'Desi' tourists that is giving the state authorities the headache now.

Undoubtedly, over the last few seasons, it is the domestic flock that has helped sustain tourism in Goa. From weekend revellers to those who arrive on package tours, the crowds have only been swelling with every passing year.

This 'transition' from international to domestic tourism may have been encouraging quantitatively, but in coping with the latter, it has always been the lack of class that has posed problems for tour-operators and the locals alike.

Goa has been attracting more of the economy class of Indian tourists for many of whom the state will forever remain a place best suited for a 'week-end' jaunt.

The net has been their most popular 'tour guide' with online searches assisting them zero down on reasonably good places to stay at and also helping procure rented bikes or cars to keep the more travel-savvy mobile.

Nevertheless, though a flourishing commercial activity in the state, the rent-a-bike/car business

has come with its own share of horrors and dreads for the administration.

The sudden surge in the spate of road accidents involving tourists has however not been taken seriously by the authorities and in the absence of any serious regulatory checks being enforced by the traffic cell, it has been a virtual riot on the roads.

In this context it is pertinent to condemn the 'Arpora incident' that raised a scare among people when a tourist-duo indulged in a show of daredevilry for sheer amusement.

Dangerously manoeuvring a jeep through the inner roads of Arpora village, the two were seated on top of the vehicle's open roof and negotiating the steering with their feet.

Needless to say, the stunt which went viral within no time only served to scare the living daylight out of the locals.

Merrymaking by desi tourists in coastal Goa has been an issue lately, with several such instances having come to light of tourists taking liberties with the law and getting into bouts of uncontrolled frolicking.

An editorial in a local daily aptly summed up the nonsensical situation prevalent as the state's utter failure to draw the line in terms of discipline, and went on to castigate the mute acceptance of these violations and illegalities in the name of hospitality and tourism by the police.

Turning a Nelson's eye to such incidents will only embolden the tourists to try out more insane 'experiments', far worse than the Arpora one. Of course, traffic authorities these days are known to wake up only after the severity of a road mishap generates social media backlash.

Already distressed over the drinking and driving antics of tourists, the state now has to contend with the ingenious ways of 'public harassment' devised by unruly visitors to the state.

Tourism is no doubt a vital economic lifeline for the state but should Goa be putting up with such crass behaviour by holidaymakers just to accentuate its credentials as a congenial host!

The sooner the administration comes to terms with such tourism fallacies, the better it is for the region. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PACHU MENON is a Goa based journalist

Bhopal archdiocese celebrates Bible festival

The Archdiocese of Bhopal has concluded a three-day Bible Mahotsav with the imposition of pallium upon Archbishop Alangaram Arokia Sebastian Durairaj.

The festival, a spiritual retreat for the laity, began with a procession of the Bible at 8:30 am on October 21 at Assumption Church. Father Ishwardas Minj, the vicar general of the archdiocese, inaugurated the retreat by concelebrating Mass.

On the second day, Vincentian Father Shaji, the retreat preacher, emphasized that the Catholics need to be rooted in the love of Christ through communion and participation to carry out the mission of Christ Jesus. It's an open invitation to become saints of God with Love, Joy and Peace, which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, he added.

Father Shaji from Jamshedpur also emphasized that everyone has to become a new creation. "God has called each one of us to become saints," he added.

The retreat concluded with a concelebrated Mass presided over by Divine Word Archbishop Durairaj.

Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, the guest of the day, bestowed pallium upon the archbishop. Pallium is a woolen vestment conferred by the Pope on archbishops. It consists of a narrow circular band placed round the shoulders with a short lappet hanging from front and back. It was given by Pope Francis to newly appointed archbishops on June 29 in a ceremony at the Vatican.



Archbishop Durairaj appreciated the people for coming together in large numbers to pray and to listen to the Word of God.

"The Bible is the basis of our lives. It is the Love Story of God and Man. Sometimes it's sour, sometimes it's sweet and this is the voice of God, to listen and to face the challenges of our daily lives," the archbishop told the gathering.

The main attraction of the retreat was Praise and Worship, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Confession and Solemn Holy Eucharist.

A large number of Catholics, religious nuns and priests from different districts of Bhopal archdiocese participated in the retreat. ☪

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

Young Catholic priest dies in Vijayawada, suicide suspected

A young Catholic priest has suspected to have died by suicide in the diocese of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

A message from the Vijaywada Bishop's House says Father Kondru Velankani Raju died at 8 pm on October 25. He was 33.

"We are deeply saddened by the news that we have lost Rev Fr Kondru Velankani Raju yesterday (October 25, 2022) at 8 pm," the message says.

It also said the requiem Mass would be celebrated at 3:30 pm on October 26 at Gunadala Parish Church. The main celebrant was Bishop Thelagathoti Joseph Raja Rao of Vijayawada. The body was later buried in the cemetery at Gunadala.

The deceased was the assistant parish priest of a town parish. The cause of his death is not yet known. ☪

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

Society of St Paul gets new Indian provincial

The Society of St Paul, an international Catholic religious congregation for men, has a new leader for its India province that comprises Great Britain and Ireland, besides India.

The congregation's superior general Father Dominic Soliman on October 24 appointed Father Joby Mathew as the Indian provincial during the council meeting.

Father Mathew succeeds Father Varghese Gnalian, who led the province since 2017, according to a circular from Brother Lorenzo Vezzani, secretary general of the congregation.

The new provincial has been serving as the director of Marketing and Sales of all St Paul's publications when he was elected the provincial. He is also the treasure of the Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA) since 2019.

Father Mathew says one of his priorities would be to make his congregation's ministry and media apostolate visible and relevant to the Church and people in India.

"Although we have been in India since 1938 and actively engaged in media ministry we are not very visible in the Indian Church as a media congregation mainly because we have not been making ourselves visible and available," Father Mathew told *Matters India* October 26.

Another priority for him is to read out to the young people of India, using "the enormous talents of the members of the province" and through its publications and media education ministry. "Greater efforts would be put in to engage with young people of the country to prepare them to use media responsibly," he added.

Father Mathew was born October 14, 1976, at Uzhavoor, a village in Kerala's Kottayam district. He belonged to St Pius X Church, Pius Mount under the Archdiocese of Kottayam.

After passing high school in 1991 from St Albert's High School, Ernakulam, he joined the Society of St Paul in Bangalore. After the initial years of formation, in 1996 he went to Mumbai to do his graduation in Economics from St Andrew's College, Bandra.

After graduation, he studied Philosophy from St Peter's Pontifical Seminary, Bengaluru, and Theol-



ogy from Jnanadeepa Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Pune. He was ordained a priest on January 28, 2006.

Immediately after his ordination, he was appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Teenager Today* magazine, a post he held for five years.

During his time, the magazine underwent a facelift, from two-color to multi-color. With a contemporary look, the youth magazine has now more than 18,000 subscriptions.

He was also the chief event organizer of the magazine's flagship youth program "The Teen of the Year," a personality and talent pageant that brought together those aged between 13 to 17 from all over India for training in personality development, soft skills, interpersonal skills, and confidence building exercises.

In 2011, he left for the United States to complete "Master of Science in Publishing (print and digital)" from New York University.

After his studies, he returned to India and in August 2015 and was appointed as the general editor of our English language publications in Mumbai. Later in 2018, he was appointed as the director of Marketing and Sales of all our publications and continued to hold this office until now.

The congregation is generally known as a leader in the Catholic publishing in India. They have two imprints – St Paul's for Catholics and Better Yourself Books for general public. They also run monthly magazines – *The Teenager Today* and *Inspirational Quote* – and a weekly leaflet – *The Sunday Liturgy* – for providing assistance in the celebration of the Sunday Mass. Since 2010, the congregation manages two media colleges – St Paul's Institute of Communication Education (SPICE) in Mumbai and St Paul's College in Bengaluru.

The Society of St Paul now serves 28 countries across the globe. India became an independent province in 1965. It has communities in Allahabad, New Delhi, Jalandhar, Ranchi, Jorhat, Guwahati, Vijayawada, Eluru, Pune, Bengaluru, Kochi, Kozhikode, Chennai and Mumbai. Some 140 members are now engaged in media ministry in three countries. ☺

(Courtesy: *Mattersindia*)

Franciscans conduct training on project management, fundraising

More than 90 priests, nuns and lay people from across India attended a four-day specialized training program on project management and fundraising in Kolkata.

The participants for the October 21-24 program at Jesuits' Dhyana Ashram hailed from 30 religious congregations and dioceses. The training aims to train them as development personnel.

They came from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi (National Capital Region), Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

The program is organized under the initiative of the Association of Franciscan Family in India (AFFI).

"We must give utmost importance to uplifting the lives of the poor through our intervention as rooted in Christian values. And this four-day training aimed at doing so," said AFFI vice president Franciscan Brother Aloysius, who was present especially to inaugurate the program.

He ended his talk by quoting Saint Francis of Assisi, "What we have done is nothing, let us begin

to do something."

L Prabhakar, project development officer of the Chennai Jesuits province, Jesuits Father Irudaya Jothi, director of Jesuits Refugee Service Mizoram-Manipur, Capuchin Father Nithiya Sagayam, AFFI secretary and director of Thalir Capuchin Ministries, Sacred Hearts Sister Sujata Jena, a social project coordinator, were the main resource persons of the training.

At the training the participants learned the components of the project, skills of fundraising, linkage between Charism-Apostolate and Project, Logical Framework Analysis, TimeLine and Budgeting, Social Media funding, Baseline Survey, Sustainable and Right Based Approach, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Social Analysis.

One of the participants, Sister Nirmala Mathew, the general councillor of St Anne's Society, Luzern, said, "Besides the project writing skills I gained a lot of knowledge on fund mobilization, linking Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals, and Right based approach in our apostolic intervention."

"The resource persons are very rich in knowledge with successful grassroots experiences of



working with people. The well-selected topics with meticulously organized sessions are very useful for our field of work. It is an enriching experience to be part of motivated and enthusiastic participants," added the nun who came from Secunderabad.

Another participant, Sister Agnes from Nagaland, said, "I am so happy to be part of this program on Skills Development for Social Work Directors. This program gives me lots of inputs, ideas, and knowledge to go ahead with my apostolate."

The nun who coordinates the Center for Development Initiative of Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians said, after having attended this training she can now contribute better to my apostolate as well as to her congregation.

Snehasis Sur, alumni of St Xavier' College Kolkata and president of the Press Club of Kolkata, was invited to share on the alumni model of local fundraising. He encouraged the participants to get the act together in starting the alumni and alumnae associations in their respective schools and colleges.

A lay participant, M Lawrence Rao, Andhra Pradesh Social Service Society of the Andhra and Telangana Bishop's Social work Forum- Project manager, expressed happiness to use the platform to build a network with various faith-based developmental organizations across the country.

"Being a member of the Rotary Club, it is an opportunity for me to create awareness about rotary projects to the people and I can connect all institutions across the country to the rotary club," Rao added.

One of the objectives of the training was to empower the participants to procure funds to respond to emerging needs by using scientific methods.

The participants celebrated Mass at the tomb of Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata and visited other significant places in the City of Joy.

Father Sagayam said they plan to organize a similar training in February 2023 as a follow-up due to the participants' request for advanced training. ☪

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)



Pope Francis warns seminarians that the vice of pornography 'weakens the soul'

Pope Francis warned seminarians this week about how the vice of digital pornography "weakens the priestly heart."

In a meeting with hundreds of seminarians studying in Rome, the pope underlined that it is important for seminarians and priests to be very careful about the "temptation of digital pornography" because "it weakens the soul."

"Dear brothers, be careful of this. The pure heart, the heart that receives Jesus every day, cannot receive this pornographic information," Pope Francis said on Oct. 24 in Paul VI Hall.

"And if from your cell phone you can delete this, delete it, so you won't have temptation at hand. And if you can't delete it, protect yourself properly so you don't have access to this. I tell you, it weakens the soul."

Pope Francis explained that he wanted to bring up the problem of pornography because "it is a

vice that so many people have – so many lay men, so many lay women, and even priests and religious sisters."

He added that he was not just talking about "criminal pornography, like child abuse," but what some people might call "'normal' pornography."

"The devil enters from there. It weakens the priestly heart," the pope repeated.

Pope Francis brought up pornography as he responded to 10 questions from seminarians ranging from spiritual direction and priestly formation to the war in Ukraine.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes pornography as "a grave offense" that "immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world," injures the dignity of its participants, and "perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other." ☪

(Courtesy: Catholic News Agency)

Norbertines elect communication expert as Mananthavady province leader

The province chapter of Mananthavady Norbertines has elected Father Jose Murickan as its ninth provincial.

The election on October 19 was presided over by Abbot General Jos Wouters. Abbot Marcus Champia from the Norbertine Abbey of Jamtara was the second official of the election.

Father Murickan, former director of the National Institute of Social Communications, Research and Training (NISCORT), the premier media college of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, will hold the post for the next six years.

The provincial council comprises Fathers Santhosh Theckayil, Jijo Ellathumkudiyil, Binu Pazhayaveetil, Cletus Therakathinkal, Subash Chalamkattil and Babu Poochalikalatthil.

The Order of Canons Regular of Premontre, also known as Norbertines, is a religious order of Canons Regular founded in 1120 by St Norbert of Xanten at Premontre near Laon, a city in northern France.

The Norbertines, the fifth oldest surviving religious congregation in the Catholic Church, was founded to bring about renewal in the clergy by bridging the gap between monastic life and clerical life. The Norbertine life is characterized by the ideal of communion. The order now has more than 1,000 male and 200 female members worldwide.



Since Norbertine abbeys (and most priories) are autonomous, practices and apostolates are different, depending on the needs of the local Church. Some houses are contemplative while others are active in pastoral ministry. However, each is guided by the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Constitutions established by the General Chapter of the Order.

In 1979, under the initiative of Abbot Wolf Gang Bohm, the Norbertines of the Stift Tepl in Villingen came to Mananthavady with the help of Bishop Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, then bishop of Mananthavady. The community in Mananthavady, established in the Syro Malabar Rite, is the first indigenous version of the international congregation. The Mananthavady unit was officially recognized as an independent province on November 20, 2007. It has now 105 professed members and 40 seminarians in different stages of formation.

The Mananthavady Norbertines are engaged in pastoral, social, educational, media and health care ministries. They serve different Syro Malabar dioceses in Kerala and Karnataka. They also serve the universal Church being in Germany, Austria, United States of America and South Africa.

Father Murickan has a doctorate in Social Communications from Gregorian University, Rome, with specialization in Visual Media and Pastoral Communications. He has 14 years of teaching experience and is a visiting faculty in many major seminaries and colleges in India.

Father Murickan has also published many articles on communications and media in different national magazines. Asked about his priorities, he said he wants to stress vocation promotion and formation of young priests to suit the needs of the changing times, so that they can be good missionaries.

He plans to work for empowering the local Church and for the renewal of clergy, as envisaged by Saint Norbert. ☪

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

The Norbertines, the fifth oldest surviving religious congregation in the Catholic Church, was founded to bring about renewal in the clergy by bridging the gap between monastic life and clerical life

Hindu activists accuse Christian missionaries of defaming their festivals

Right wing Hindu activists have burnt firecrackers in front of a Catholic school in Madhya Pradesh state to protest the staging a street play on environmental protection and safe celebration of Diwali, the festival of lights.

The protesters burst firecrackers before St Joseph's Convent School under the diocese of Khandwa, on the night of October 25, a day after Diwali, a popular Hindu festival. They accused the Christian missionaries of defaming Hindu festivals.

The school authorities, however, denied the allegations that their children targeted Hindu festival. "We never intended to target anybody or any religion or its festival," Sister Neha Mathew, the school principal, told Matters India on October 26.

The member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery said their students had tried to communicate message of celebrating the Diwali festival safely and that there was nothing against Hindu religion or its traditions."

The nun also added that the students and teachers together celebrate Diwali in her school and regretted that someone had tried to give a genuine object a communal color.

The Hindu activists were enraged at a street play the students and teachers of the Catholic school staged in the town on October 21 to create awareness about environmental protection and the need for celebrating Diwali safely.

The protesters accused the Catholic school of deliberately targeting the Hindu festival through the play claiming that cracking firecrackers would lead to environmental pollution, a charge the school authorities denied.

On Diwali people decorate their houses, offices and even government buildings with lights and burst firecrackers as part of the celebration.

Often the extensive use of firecrackers during Diwali leads to environmental pollution especially in major cities such as New Delhi, the national capital, and efforts are on to promote environmental friendly firecrackers to avoid pollution.

The protestors claiming themselves as representing the entire the Hindu community, alleged that "the objective of the play was to target Hindu



community as its focus was that the burning firecrackers would lead to environmental pollution."

They also warned the Christian missionaries of serious consequences in case the same is repeated and even threatened to beat them up.

"This is our first and last warning," said a protester. He told media persons that the Christian missionaries were trying to denigrate the Hindu religion and its festivals and such acts would not be tolerated.

Pointing out that Christians burst firecrackers on Christmas they asked, "Would it not cause environmental pollution?"

They also vowed to protect Hindu religion and its festivals.

Father Jaya Alex, the public relations officer of the diocese, also condemned targeting Christians for no reasons.

The priest, in a statement, said some people targeted Christian institutions, especially those managed by Catholics, to create communal divide in society.

The Christian community, Father Alex added, "Does not discriminate anyone on the basis of religion, caste, creed or other concerns."

Madhya Pradesh has witnessed several such incidents in the past and Christians accused right wing Hindu groups of targeting them even after doing so much of selfless services for the advancement of the poor and the downtrodden. ☪

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)



Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

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Our Festivals of Joy..!

“What’s wrong with you?” I said to my gardener last week as he stood with a crestfallen face before me. “Now you want money for Diwali, then your wife will want to buy new clothes during Christmas and finally you’ll ask me for a big advance for New Year!”

“I am sorry sir,” said my middle aged gardener, the wet mud still fresh on his hands and the smell of manure clinging onto him.

“Sorry for what?” I asked crossly, “Sorry for so many festivals or sorry for asking me for money? Why don’t you save your salary and buy useful things for the house like a pressure cooker, a gas stove, maybe even a refrigerator?”

“Sir,” said the poor man, “can you come with me to my home right now?”

“Okay,” I said eager to see where he lived so I could haul him up, if he ever took leave. “Go ahead, I will follow you.”

We walked through the shaded avenues of the bungalows and posh buildings. I followed him, quite happy for the exercise but slowly beginning to sweat, till he suddenly took a turn into a small gully which I never even knew existed. The gully seemed to climb like a serpent up a huge hill.

“Hey,” I shouted, “are we going trekking?” The man did not answer. Not a bush or a tree grew on the hill. There was no space for them, as every inch was crowded in by a tin shanty or mud hut. It was the biggest slum I had ever seen in my life. Naked children ran about all over, chased by busy flies. I held my nose and walked, the smell that surrounded me could have been used instead of anaesthesia to knock me out.

Pipelines ran through gutters and out again. The gutters ran into huts and were too choked to go out again.

“Sir,” said the gardener, bending low to enter a thatched hut, “this where I live.”



I followed him and looked around. There was no place for a fridge and if there was, there was no electricity to run it. There was hardly any place for a pressure cooker. Three children ran all around me, as delighted as their mother.

“What are they so happy about?” I asked, looking with distaste at the dirt and the squalor.

“It’s Diwali sir, there is so much to be happy about. Listen to the sound of crackers, see the fireworks, and divas and taste our simple sweets, all spreading joy around,” said his pretty little wife happily.

I smiled as I looked at her and her three children. I smiled again as I looked at her happy husband.

In India we needed our festivals, I realized. It was sunshine that kept everybody going.

“Okay,” I told the gardener, “you can have your advance and there’s a bonus for you at Christmas!”

There were tears in my eyes as I saw sunshine in his..! ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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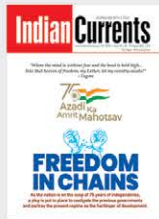
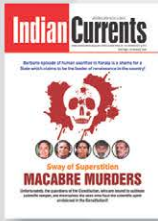
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