

# Indian Currents

www.indiancurrents.org • Vol. XXXIV • Issue 2 • 03 - 09 January 2022 • ₹15

Total Pages - 44 Including Cover



## CHRISTIANS ON EDGE SCARRED, NOT SCARED

Rightwing Hindutva groups perpetrate violence on Christians across the country amidst dreadful silence of powers-that-be

# JNANA DEEPA INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

**ADMISSIONS OPEN**

## JNANA DEEPA OFFERS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMMES

### FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

- A) First Cycle:      1. Baccalaureate in Philosophy (PhB)  
                                 2. Two-Year Non-degree
- B) Second Cycle:    1. Licentiate in Systematic Philosophy (PhL)  
                                 2. Licentiate in Interfacing Science, Philosophy and Religion (PhL)
- C) Third Cycle:      Canonical Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD)

### FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

- A) First Cycle:      1. Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (STB)  
                                 2. Three-year Diploma  
                                 3. Two-year Diploma  
                                 4. One-year Diploma
- B) Second Cycle:    1. Licentiate in Theology specialization in Systematic Theology (STL)  
                                 2. Licentiate in Theology specialization in Biblical Studies (STL)  
                                 3. Licentiate in Theology specialization in Missiology (STL)  
                                 4. Licentiate in Theology specialization in Moral Theology (STL)  
                                 5. Licentiate in Theology specialization in Spirituality (STL)  
                                 6. One-year Diploma with specialization in Spirituality and Counselling
- C) Third Cycle:      Canonical Doctorate in Theology (STD)



- Hostel facilities for all women students and men students in Licentiate and Doctorate
- Nature-friendly campus and excellent library
- Unique experience of interacting with more than 700 students from across India from over 65 dioceses, 45 men and women religious congregations

For more information,  
contact Registrar  
by email  
([registrar@jdv.edu.in](mailto:registrar@jdv.edu.in))

**Pontifical Athenaeum  
Jnana Deepa  
Institute of Philosophy and Theology**  
P B 3022, Ramwadi, Nagar Road,  
Pune- 411014, Maharashtra, India  
Cell: 84218 95331 /020 - 27031227



## ATTACKS ON SCRIPTED LINES



It was the rarest of rare 'Christmas gift' that the Christians in India never bargained for. Several Churches and their institutions were vandalized across the country, especially in BJP-ruled States, reportedly by the Hindutva forces during the Christmas week. The hooligans went around wreaking havoc, damaging churches, razing statues, disrupting Christmas celebrations and thrashing Christians. They ran amok with a vengeance; it is a clear message to those who still believe that the minorities are in safe hands of the present government. The sant samagam's war cry at Haridwar calling for genocide of the Muslim community has come as the last nail in the coffin of secularism or whatever is left of it. It is a scary situation that the Uttarakhand police have not even mentioned the name/s of the accused in the FIR, who openly called for genocide and violence, and till date none has been arrested.

The scripts for the attacks and assaults seem to have been written well in advance by senior Hindutva functionaries. A BJP legislator in Madhya Pradesh recently made their objective explicit when he said, 'Make India Chadar Mukht, Father Mukht' (Make India free of veil-wearing Muslims and Christians). A couple of months back, more than 1,000 people had gathered in the Surguja district of Chhattisgarh for a "Band Karo Dharmantran" (Stop Religious Conversions) rally. Addressing the gathering, Parmatmanand Maharaj, a far-right Hindu leader, urged the people to "arm themselves with axes to teach Christians indulging in conversions a lesson". Such exhortations are an 'advanced version' of what former RSS Sarsanghchalak M.S. Golwalkar said: The minorities can stay in this country as second class citizens "claiming nothing...not even citizen's rights".

The most unkindest cut of all is the non-renewal of the FCRA registration of the Missionaries of Charity, whose members are known as 'angels in the garb of nuns', under some mysterious charge of 'adverse inputs.' The decision of the government would put the life of over 22,000 inmates at different centres run by the much-admired congregation which is into serving humanity selflessly. This action comes a couple of weeks after an FIR was registered against a children's home run by the same Congregation in Gujarat.

Even as Christians are becoming sitting ducks to Hindutva activists, what is frightening is the indifference of law-enforcing agencies. When right-wing mobs take law into their hands and hound Christians, police personnel turn a blind eye to them. Instead of arresting the culprits and putting them behind bars, they are asking Christians to refrain from assembling for prayer services. The same law enforcement agencies spring into action when trumped up charges are levelled against minorities.

However, the Church hierarchy does not seem to have grasped the gravity of the situation. They are yet to realize that sand is slipping beneath their feet. Their knee-jerk reaction, through press releases without touching the real issues, is tantamount to turning a blind eye to the attackers. The government might try to sweep the attacks under the carpet, terming such incidents as isolated ones indulged in by fringe elements. It is time for every Christian denomination to come under one umbrella to protect the right to profess, practice and propagate their religion. The government's sincerity in inviting the Pope to visit India will be tested in cracking the whip against the attackers of Christians and their institutions.

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

Happy Reading!

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

**Dr. Suresh Mathew**

Editor

✉ → [frsureshmathew@gmail.com](mailto:frsureshmathew@gmail.com)

# contents

MEMBER,  
INDIAN NEWSPAPER SOCIETY (INS)

VOLUME XXXIV  
ISSUE 2

## CHRISTIANS ON EDGE SCARRED, NOT SCARED



COVER  
STORY  
**06**

## A YEAR OF AGONY FOR CHRISTIANS

BY CEDRIC PRAKASH



**12**

A CLOSE LOOK

## GENOCIDAL TALK SILENCE IS NO VIRTUE

BY A.J. PHILIP



**16**

REFLECTION

## REFLECTIONS ON FACING THE CRISIS

PLIGHT OF CHRISTIANS BITTER  
BY ARCHBISHOP FELIX MACHADO

EDITOR:  
Dr. Suresh Mathew

EDITORIAL BOARD:  
John Dayal, AJ Philip, Marydasan John

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

DESIGN & LAYOUT:  
Dani Jose

CIRCULATION:  
Ashish Victor

FINANCE MANAGER:  
Jainamma

### Indian Current Publications

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

### DISCLAIMER

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

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

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

This issue of Indian Currents contains 44 pages including cover.



**19 ANTI CONVERSION BILL**  
**The Conversion of Bommai**  
BY JOHN DAYAL

**23 NEWS**  
**Hindutva leaders call for killing of Muslims at Haridwar and Delhi events**

**28 FCRA**  
**A 'Gift' Wrapped in FCRA Rejection**  
BY JOHN DAYAL

**32 HONOUR**  
**Kerala Tops Health Index**  
BY MANOJ VARGHESE

**34 INTERVIEW**  
**Public Investment is Key to Progress: Kerala CM - Pinarayi Vijayan**

**36 TRIBUTES**  
**A People's Shepherd**  
BY DR. PRAKASH LOUIS

**40 BOOK REVIEW**  
**The Price of Modi Years**  
BY LANCY LOBO

**42 BOB'S BANTER**  
**'No Room!' Shout Mobs and Lawmakers, but..!**  
BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

## POWER QUOTES



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



A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one  
**George R.R. Martin**  
• • •



Competing at the highest level is not about winning. It's about preparation, courage, understanding, nurturing your people, and heart. Winning is the result  
**Joe Torre**  
• • •



Losers quit when they fail. Winners fail until they succeed  
**Robert T. Kiyosaki**  
• • •



Life has many ways of testing a person's will, either by having nothing happen at all or by having everything happen all at once  
**Paulo Coelho**  
• • •



Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking  
**Marcus Aurelius**  
• • •



The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has been before  
**Albert Einstein**  
• • •



Life's like a movie, write your own ending. Keep believing, keep pretending  
**Jim Hensen**  
• • •





# CHRISTIANS ON EDGE SCARRED, NOT SCARED

Rightwing Hindutva groups perpetrate violence on Christians across the country amidst dreadful silence of powers-that-be

# A YEAR OF AGONY FOR CHRISTIANS

There is more to the targeting of Christians than meets the eye. It is primarily the polarisation and the consolidation of majoritarianism

BY **CEDRIC PRAKASH**

The Year 2021 will certainly go down in the annals of Indian history on several counts. From the second wave of COVID-19 which took a toll on lives and the livelihood of the poor and the marginalised to the Omicron that is already creating havoc. From the worlds biggest and longest protest by the farmers (they were victorious in the end) to the skyrocketing prices on every front. From the incarceration of human rights defenders to the death of Jesuit Fr Stan Swamy. From the systematic pillaging of our fragile eco-systems to the wanton looting of our forests and other natural resources. From the mainstreaming of corruption to the exclusion of vast sections of the population. India has seen it all – plummeting to unbelievable depths in every global survey on the social, political and economic front.

The worst, however, was the way religion was abused and minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, were targeted throughout the year. The last two months saw any number of attacks on these two communities. Any thinking citizen would wince even at the thought of these attacks. India today



figures in the 'Hall of Shame' in the international arena with some of the top print and electronic media reporting the happenings. For a democracy wedded to secularism, the year 2021 is a painful reality with an uncaring and callous Government at the helm.

What is happening to Muslims and Christians is on face value an attack on minorities. It is, however, much more than that. It is primarily the polarisation and the consolidation of majoritarianism. These attacks also defocus from the real problems which the country faces: abject poverty, rising prices, growing unemployment, suicides by farmers and casual labour, pollution, environmental degradation, an economy in the doldrums, lack of governance and much more.

The attacks replete with falsehood, half-truths and 'feku'isms are lapped up and propagated by the media, the crony capitalists and the 'bhakts' who have very little intelligence and objectivity. This pays rich dividends at the polls. We have seen this happening in Gujarat and in several other states. In typical Goebbelsian manner "tell a lie a thousand times, and people will start believing it!" In the end the road is clear for the destruction of the Constitution and the total establishment of a fascist state.

In 2003, political scientist Dr. Lawrence Britt wrote an article about fascism after studying several fascist regimes all over the world. He identified fourteen characteristics of fascism which emerged from his study. All fourteen exist in India today: not merely applicable but very real; five of them which need to be highlighted are:

## **Disdain for the Recognition of Human Rights**

Because of fear of enemies and the need for security, the people in fascist regimes are persuaded that human rights can be ignored in certain cases because of "need." The people tend to look the other

India today figures in the 'Hall of Shame' in the international arena with some of the top print and electronic media reporting the happenings. For a democracy wedded to secularism, the year 2021 is a painful reality with an uncaring and callous Government at the helm



mental power and authority to protect their friends from accountability. It is not uncommon in fascist regimes for national resources and even treasures to be appropriated or even outright stolen by government leaders.

A very convenient and effective strategy of fascists and dictators from time immemorial is to denigrate, demonize, divide and destroy 'the other'. The targets are always the minorities and other vulnerable sections of the society. These groups just

way or even approve of torture, summary executions, assassinations, long incarcerations of prisoners, etc.

### **Identification of Enemies/Scapegoats as a Unifying Cause**

The people are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat or foe: racial, ethnic or religious minorities; liberals; communists; socialists, terrorists, etc.

### **Controlled Mass Media**

Sometimes media is directly controlled by the government, but in other cases, the media is indirectly controlled by government regulation, or sympathetic media spokespeople and executives. Censorship, especially in war time, is very common.

### **Religion and Government are Intertwined**

Governments in fascist nations tend to use the most common religion in the nation as a tool to manipulate public opinion. Religious rhetoric and terminology are common from government leaders, even when the major tenets of the religion are diametrically opposed to the government's policies or actions.

### **Rampant Cronyism and Corruption**

Fascist regimes almost always are governed by groups of friends and associates who appoint each other to government positions and use govern-

do not have a place in their scheme of things. This is also true when the 'other' are those who dissent, those who do selfless work which they are unable to do or simply those they are unable to deal with. At times, they are ignored and at other times, they are made to feel as though they are a major burden in the country, they are incarcerated and even killed.

The Muslims are regarded as "terrorists" and those who indulge in "love jihad". The Christians "are out to convert you". These are the familiar false platitudes that are dished out. They are 'anti-nationals'! It does not matter if there is no evidence to prove their point; their lies sell! Sadly, even so-called 'intelligent people' fall in this trap and of such 'bogey's.' It is exactly the way Hitler exterminated the Jews, the Catholics, the gypsies, the nomads, the homosexuals, the writers and the poets of his times.

The past few weeks in India have seen several examples of how these fascists have been using every possible act from their violent and dirty bag of tricks to terrorise minorities in the country. The Christians of India have always been a 'soft target'; in their ascent to power since the late 1990s the BJP and their ilk in the Sangh Parivar have systematically targeted the community in different ways and all over the country.

Some media have carried stories on their front pages: The 'bogey' of forced conversion, the desecration of sacred objects, the attacks on Christians and their places of worship and institutions, the myriad threats, intimidation and harassments, the spread-



**A very convenient and effective strategy of fascists and dictators from time immemorial is to denigrate, demonize, divide and destroy 'the other'. The targets are always the minorities and other vulnerable sections of the society**

ing of canard – are all part of a wider game plan to polarize the majority community and put Christians in bad light. The month of December – just before, on and after Christmas – has seen a surge of this orchestrated campaign against the Christians in several parts of the country and particularly in the states ruled by the BJP.

The Missionaries of Charity (MCs – the Sisters and Brothers Congregations founded by Mother Teresa) is high-up at the receiving end of this viciousness and vilification.

Mother Teresa is an icon today all over the world; an embodiment of charity, a Saint revered by millions all over. Her legacy which is continued selflessly by the Missionaries of Charity is the highest of Christian Charity reaching out to the dying destitute, the poorest of the poor, the orphan and widow,

the unloved and rejected, the lost, the lonely, the last and least irrespective of one's religious belief. False cases, like that of conversion, are foisted on the Sisters. The latest has been the many twists and turns regarding the FCRA accounts of the MCs. Initial reports state that their accounts were frozen. However, an MHA communique states that their FCRA was 'not renewed due to non-compliance' (whatever that means). International media has given wide coverage to this.

The MCs care for thousands of the rejected of India day in and day out without counting the cost. Stopping or even temporarily suspending the flow of funds to the MCs, in simple terms, means depriving the poorest of the poor in India -- humans whom no one cares for -- the basic humanitarian needs of shelter and food, not to mention the acceptance, warmth and love which they desperately need and which the Sisters and Brothers give them so ungrudgingly.

The Government has to reconsider this inhuman decision and restore the good name and work of the MCs. There may certainly be some laxities or shortcomings (no one is contesting that). If so, the authorities must help the MCs to rectify/address them; and above all, to ensure that those who are cared for in the MC institutions are not deprived of this basic humanitarian assistance. The good work of the MCs is there for all to see. It is an open fact. They do the nation proud.



## What is happening in India today is not merely about Christians and Muslims but it is about the heart and soul of India: our Constitution. It is about our pluralistic fabric wedded to secularism. It is about justice, liberty, equality and fraternity

Celebrated media personality Rajdeep Sardesai in an article (December 31, 2021) titled 'In 2022, a prayer for a better year for India', which is going viral, says: He prays for "An India where no religious or political leader from any community is allowed to get away with hate speech or incitement to violence; where the atrocities of Aurangzeb in the 17th century should not determine the fate of the Indian Muslim in the 21st; where scars of past animosities can't become the template for an India of the future; where the electoral battle shouldn't be over who rebuilds how many places of worship, but who builds how many quality schools and hospitals; where mobs who break into church halls are seen as criminals who must be prosecuted; where the real battle is not between Hindu and Hindutvawadi but between constitutionalism and anti-constitutionalism; where the State stops intervening in personal freedoms; where what we eat and drink, who we marry, how we pray must remain a matter of fierce individual choice".

Sardesai hits the nail on the head. What is happening in India today is not merely about Chris-



tians and Muslims but it is about the heart and soul of India: our Constitution. It is about our pluralistic fabric wedded to secularism. It is about justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. About the values and rights enshrined in our Constitution particularly in today's context Articles 19 and 25. It is about democratic space which is shrinking day by day. Ordinary citizens are made to become reactionaries. Fear creeps in – as people wonder if they will be the next targets. This will not help in the long run: for the future of the country and for generation next. We the people of India must come out; take a visible and vocal stand at all the rot happening in the country. We owe this to our children. Fascists thrive and succeed when the majority are silent.

The Catholic Church authorities in India (barring a few exceptions) have been 'officially' very silent on these recent attacks. This is very unfortunate. It is imperative that the Church shuns all 'diplomacy' and demonstrates the prophetic courage to speak out for the Constitution and the people of India. In his message for the 55th World Day of Peace (January 1, 2022) Pope Francis reminds us that, "As in the days of the prophets of old, so in our own day *the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth* constantly make themselves heard, pleading for justice and peace," He also gives a directive, "To government leaders and to all those charged with political and social responsibilities, to priests and pastoral workers, and to all men and women of good will, I make this appeal: let us walk together with courage and creativity on the path of intergenerational dialogue, education, and work. May more and more men and women strive daily, with quiet humility and courage, to be artisans of peace. And may they be ever inspired and accompanied by the blessings of the God of peace!"

The words of the German Lutheran pastor and



# SPIKE IN ATTACKS

## Hindutva brigade vandalized, attacked, disrupted Christmas celebrations at several places across the country

1. On Christmas Eve, members belonging to the Bajrang Dal and other right-wing groups set an effigy of Santa Claus on fire in the middle of a street in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, while shouting “Santa Claus Murdabad”.
2. In Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, a group of right-wing men carrying saffron flags protested outside the Matridham Ashram before a Christmas event was due to take place. The group of 20-30 people raised the “Jai Shri Ram” slogan, along with ‘Dharman-tran band karo’ (stop conversion), ‘Church murdabad’ (death to the church) and ‘Isai missionariyo hosh mein ao’ (Christian missionaries come to your senses.)
3. The conversion-by-Santa theme was voiced by a wing of the Bajrang Dal in Haryana, led by one Harish Ramkali who posted photographs on his Facebook account on December 23, saying that any school who would make a child dress as Santa Claus without the permission of their family would have a case filed against them and be closed. He followed this up with a post on Christmas Eve saying that the Bajrang Dal had begun visiting and ‘noting’ down the names of schools, attaching an image of conversations with people who are presumably school authorities, and children wearing Santa hats.
4. Hanuman Chalisa was played by a few zealots in Kurukshetra, Haryana on a stage set up for Christmas celebrations.
5. On Christmas night, a statue of Jesus Christ in the British-Era Holy Redeemer Church premises in Ambala Cantonment, was torn down by two unidentified miscreants.
6. On Christmas day in Gurugram, Haryana, a group of Hindutva fundamentalists entered a school organising a Christmas event and stormed the stage, where one member was videotaped saying, “We are not disrespecting Christians, but I will say to the next generation...follow the rules...do not go to any religion from greed or Indian culture will be destroyed. You need to take resolution to protect it...Take that resolution and chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’”  
The right wingers then led a series of slogans including ‘Jai Shri Ram’, ‘Sanatan Dharm ki Jai’ (Long live Hinduism) and ‘Adharm ka naash ho’ (May the irreligious be destroyed.)
7. In Assam, the Bajrang Dal was also involved in impeding the Christmas midnight mass celebrations in Silchar. The men allegedly forced their way into the church and demanded that the celebration be shut down as Hindus could not take part in the festivities.
8. Members of a Hindutva organisation stormed into a school in Karnataka’s Mandya district where a Christmas celebration was taking place and demanded that the teachers stop the festivities. Videos of the incident that took place at Nirmala English High School and College in Mandya’s Pandavapura town have gone viral. The visuals show a group of men shouting at teachers and others gathered in a school building. One person, from the group, can be heard asking if the school will allow a saffron shalya (shawl), over the shoulder.
9. The latest to be added to the above list is the “refusal to renew the FCRA” of Missionaries of Charity sisters by the Home Ministry.

theologian Martin Niemöller have come to us as a powerful reminder so often:

*First, they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist*

*Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me*

But are we listening? Do we have that prophetic courage to act now? ©

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**FR CEDRIC PRAKASH SJ** is a human rights, reconciliation and peace activist/writer. Contact: cedricprakash@gmail.com



# GENOCIDAL TALK SILENCE IS NO VIRTUE

Neither Modi nor his deputy and home minister Amit Shah thought it necessary to condemn the “Sants”, who wanted every Hindu to wield the sword and start killing Muslims, let alone take action against them

BY **A.J. PHILIP**

In early December 2021, I visited Haridwar. Though I had passed by the pilgrim centre several times on the way to Dehradun, I could not visit Har Ki Puri, the most sacred spot, where the Ganga leaves the hills and joins the plains. Watching thousands of people taking baths on both sides of the river was in itself a great experience. I look forward to visiting the place again and spending a whole day taking pictures of people's piety.

Haridwar is believed to be one of the four places where the drops of Amrita, the elixir of immortality, accidentally spilled over from the pitcher or Kumbha, in which it was being carried away by Garuda, the celestial bird and the vehicle of Lord Vishnu.

My younger son knows the place better, as he had stayed there for almost the entire duration of one Kumbh Mela while he was with the Press Trust of India.



Millions of Hindus from all over the world flock to Haridwar during the Mela for it is believed that bathing in the river will cleanse them of all their sins. I took a few photographs of an impressive building there under the impression that it was a shrine or an ashram, which are dime a dozen there.

It turned out to be the police control room, set up to control the crowds.

Recently, Haridwar was in the news for another reason. A three-day Dharam Sansad (Parliament of Religion) was held there. One should not compare it with the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in the 19th century in which Swami Vivekananda made a soul-stirring speech which instantly converted him into the preeminent spokesman of Hinduism. He continues to be on that pedestal.

Several decades later, I visited Sasthamkotta, a village in Kollam district in Kerala, where on the banks of the only fresh-water lake in the state and under the leadership of MKK Nair, a great man of many parts, a World Parliament of Religions was held.

As in Chicago, the attempt was to find and promote the commonalities among various religions with a view to ending religious strife everywhere. What I witnessed there was unity in diversity.

No such lofty thoughts guided the saffron-clad, as they congregated at Haridwar (December 17-19) in the name of Sanatana Dharma. I have seen the videos of some of the speeches made by the so-called Sants or Saints. One of the main organisers of the Sansad, Prabodhanand Giri, was heard praising the Myanmar people for killing and driving out Rohingya Muslims, some of whom have reached India as refugees. He sought the help of the Indian Army also in this campaign.

Anyone can visit the camp of the Rohingya Muslims in Faridabad, near Delhi, where they live in



Har Ki Puri at Haridwar where the Ganga leaves the hills and joins the plains (Photo: AJP)



Swami Prabodhanand Giri, Sadhvi Annapurna aka Pooja Shakun Pandey and Swami Anandswaroop

subhuman conditions with children looking for food in waste dumps. A recent fire – accidental or engineered – destroyed whatever little movable property they had, including the cards that identified them as refugees.

The Swami wants the Hindus in India to imitate the Buddhists in Myanmar to drive out the Muslims from the country. A female speaker was shriller and more diabolical. She wanted every Hindu to wield the sword and start killing Muslims.

The chief functionary of a news channel, which mischievously planned to do a story on the Muslim Jihad through the UPSC, was seen giving an oath to those present that they would do everything necessary to convert India into a Hindu nation. He should have told them how Nepal prospered when it was a Hindu country before the people themselves discarded the nation's religious identity.

By the way, the Supreme Court had to intervene to stop the channel from telecasting the story which was aimed at preventing Muslims from getting into the coveted services like the IAS and the IPS.

Those who have read about the rise and fall of Hitler in Germany would know that he never asked his followers to kill the Jews. He used euphemisms like “final solution” which meant sending the Jews to the gas chambers. However, in Haridwar, they used direct exhortations to kill the Muslims. They were not ordinary people.

I have seen videos of Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami touching the feet of the main organiser. As I mentioned, the police control room at Haridwar is one of the largest in the country. Yet, no action was taken against them. All those who advocated genocide against the Muslims should have been rounded up instantly and sent to jail. It would

Behind all the madness, there is a method. A few diehards of Hindutva are organised. They troop into a church or worship centre, allege that what they are doing is conversion, ransack the place and beat up the men and women and quietly disperse. They are called vigilantes

have made an impact. And the people would have believed that the Modi government would not tolerate any nonsense.

Now imagine how the same government would have reacted if a mad Muslim had said something like what the “Sants” said at Haridwar. He would have been arrested if he was able to escape lynching. What's worse, even a week after the Haridwar videos went viral, nothing was done against the murder-mongers.

People all over the world would have wondered how they were allowed to get away in a country which professes secularism as its creed and which promotes ideals like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means “the world is one family”. Modi is never tired of mentioning this concept in his speeches, especially when he is abroad.



The impressive police control room at Haridwar (Photo: AJP)



Yet, neither Modi nor his deputy and home minister Amit Shah thought it necessary to condemn the “Sants”, let alone take action against them. The inaction encouraged others to organise such outrageous programmes in the rest of the country.

At a similar Sansad at Raipur in Chhattisgarh, one of the “Sants” was found using the forum to pour scorn on Mahatma Gandhi and to eulogise his killer Nathuram Godse.

The fellow called Gandhi names and the audience responded with clapping of their hands. His language, looks and mannerisms were criminal. It must also be said to the credit of another swami that he showed the guts to use the same platform to praise Gandhi and remind the audience of what all he did for the nation before walking out of the Sansad in protest.

Whenever an incident of terrorism happened in the country, one of the common refrains of the people was: “We know that all the Muslims are not terrorists. We also know that only a few of them are terrorists. Our question is, why are the majority of the Muslims not condemning the terrorists?” It is a weird argument.

If a so-called Christian does something wrong, why should I as a Christian apologise for it? The law of the land should be applied to him without showing any mercy. Having said that, I found it inexplicable why most political leaders, social thinkers, writers, scientists and scholars did not find it necessary to condemn the Haridwar conclave.

No, I do not forget the unequivocal statements of Dr Karan Singh, easily one of the tallest exponents of Hinduism in the country and advocate Prashant Bhushan. The Chief Justice of India, who the other day lamented at the death of investigative journal-

ism in the country, did not think it necessary to take suo motu action against the organisers of the Haridwar meet.

That is, even after 76 leading Supreme Court lawyers reminded him about the need to initiate action against them. After all, what the “Sants” threatened to do was to throw to the winds all the Constitutional values which every constitutional authority in the country has vowed to uphold at all times. Otherwise, they cannot continue in power.

True, cases have been registered against some. One of them was arrested from a lodge in Madhya Pradesh. The “Sants” have also retaliated by filing a case against the Muslims for vitiating the atmosphere. God alone knows what the Muslims had done to force them to file a case against them.

Curiously, the first person against whom the police took action at Haridwar was a Muslim, Waseem Rizvi, who turned a Hindu Swami like the one who goes by the name M. His new name is Jitendra Narayan Tyagi. Alas, even conversion did not save him.

What I found disconcerting is the bonhomie the “Sants” had with the police when they went to the Haridwar police station to file a case against the Muslims. There, one of them is heard saying that the police were with them in their crusade against the Muslims. A police officer is seen smilingly accepting the statement.

I remembered what a young Muslim told me at Robertsganj in Uttar Pradesh some 30 years ago. “We do not fear the Hindus. We can face them. What we can’t face are the policemen who are expected to be impartial!” The worst perpetrators in communal incidents are the police, either through their inaction or through their overexertion.

There are some Christians who take solace from the fact that the Haridwar congregation did not



**Pooja Shakun Pandey, leader of the Mahasabha, shooting an effigy of Mahatma Gandhi**



attack Christians, only Muslims. They are mistaken. As former Union Home Minister P Chidambaram said, the Christians are the next preys of Hindutva. There have been a series of incidents against Christian establishments, including the century-old Redeemer Church at Ambala, where I had an occasion to attend the service a few months ago.

Behind all the madness, there is a method. A few diehards of Hindutva are organised. They troop into a church or worship centre, allege that what they are doing is conversion, ransack the place and beat up the men and women and quietly disperse. They are called vigilantes.

That is what happened at a church in Dwarka in New Delhi. There is no point in informing the police for they reach late or do nothing against the criminals. This has become the standard practice against the minorities. No organisation takes credit for the attacks and it helps the police to keep mum.

Muslim farmers are afraid of keeping cows or grazing them for they never know when they can be accused of cow slaughter. In village after village, Christians find assembling for prayer and worship dangerous. The governments like in Karnataka, Haryana and Gujarat are more interested in strengthening laws to prevent conversion, little realising that persecution has only promoted conversion.

Many in the country believe that what the speakers at Haridwar said represent the views of those in power. Many years ago when I visited a university at Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, my host wanted to show me something special. He took me to the library

**Today Gandhi is respected more outside of India than in India where even ruling party MPs believe that Godse did a great thing by using a German pistol against him at Birla Bhavan in Delhi. The woman in saffron who used a toy gun in a symbolic act of killing Gandhi is still roaming the country preaching hatred**



**Members of the 'Dharma Sansad' or religious assembly in Uttarakhand's Haridwar are seen in a video laughing with a police officer, who they said will be "on our side"**

where he showed me a statue of Mahatma Gandhi.

At that time I was actually amused. Later, when I visited New York and took a boat to reach the Statue of Liberty, what struck me the most was a Gandhi quote displayed in large neon lights that said, "An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind". Whether Gandhi really said this or not, it summarises the non-violent principle of his teaching.

Today Gandhi is respected more outside of India than in India where even ruling party MPs believe that Godse did a great thing by using a German pistol against him at Birla Bhavan in Delhi. The woman in saffron who used a toy gun in a symbolic act of killing Gandhi is still roaming the country preaching hatred.

Recently, I saw a video of a government functionary conducting a raid at a children's home run by Christian nuns. He was heard asking the nuns why the Bible was kept there. I do not know when keeping the Bible in a children's home has become a criminal act. The hounding of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Saint Teresa, is also done with a purpose. It is a reminder to the Christians that they are not welcome here.

Those in power will realise, sooner than later, that no community can be subjugated except at a terrible cost to the nation. Millions of people sacrificed everything they had to gain freedom for the country. They certainly did not envisage that in the second decade of the 21st century, some cranks would be allowed to have a field day in the name of promoting a religion. Where is sanatana or dharma in such activities? ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**AJ PHILIP** is a citizen journalist and social worker. He can be reached at: [ajphilip@gmail.com](mailto:ajphilip@gmail.com)

# REFLECTIONS ON FACING THE CRISIS

## PLIGHT OF CHRISTIANS BITTER, SAYS CBCI SECRETARY GENERAL

Arbitrary, capricious and unrestrained attacks on Christians need urgent attention of all citizens of India. “Heart, Head and Hands” need to be put together by all *bona fide* citizens of this great nation in order to resolve the increasingly bitter plight of Christians in India

BY **ARCHBISHOP FELIX MACHADO**

**W**e are told that “a true Hindu can never be intolerant or be tempted by power” (Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *Indian Express*, 16 December 2021, p.14). It is also true that good and bad coexist in the same person. And this is true for people of all religious traditions. Every religion has shining examples of sincerity, moral credibility and adherents who follow a grammar of constructive action. The problem is when collective narcissism comes in the way of basic human decencies and violates the terms of social contract that honors the basic dignity of the individual.

One can be perfectly free to speak about a country’s population in terms of minority or majority. But by that the country, especially a country with democratic system, does not belong either to minority or to majority. I have had to often correct people who, unconsciously, speak about “a Christian country”, “a



Muslim country” or “a Hindu country” when they actually wish to point out the country’s majority population which belongs to a particular religion; following that erring logic, human rights are said to belong to or considered prerogative of only the majority or the minority. India is a nation which has people of many religions. Thus, India is

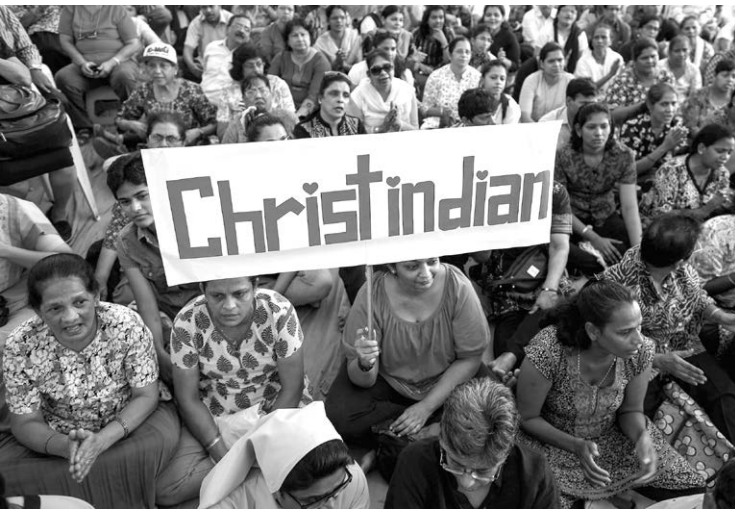
also the nation of Christians or Muslims or Hindus or others.

Attack on one individual is necessarily attack on all people. Arbitrary, capricious and unrestrained attacks on Christians need urgent attention of all citizens of India. “Heart, Head and Hands” need to be put together by all *bona fide* citizens of this great nation in order to resolve the increasingly bitter plight of Christians in India.

The reports of attacks on Christians are widely circulated and to say that the Christians are sad about this news is an understatement. The increasing incidents of attacks have been reported to have taken place just before and during the festivities of



While the main stream media has not completely avoided covering the attacks, they have rather fallen short in giving a thorough investigation of the attacks



Christmas. While the main stream media has not completely avoided covering the attacks, they have rather fallen short in giving a thorough investigation of the attacks. This is intriguing and disturbing to say the least. Moreover, attacks have been reported mostly in areas where Christians are in tiny minority and their material and social conditions seem to be poor and they are vulnerable and defenseless.

In some cases, we read that the police do register the complaints but often nothing much happens afterwards. In other cases, those attacked are reported to be at the mercy of the attackers. This situation is frustrating and is causing anxiety, anger and even, a sense of helplessness. To add to it, the fear of covid-19 keeps threatening the lives of people who have also suffered brutal attacks. Laws in the name of 'freedom of religion' are being imposed during the pandemic in some more States.

How are the Christians to respond to this crisis? Those living in big cities or towns with sizable number of Christians do not seem to be aware of the news of violence against Christians. Even those aware of it do not know how they should respond, especially in this precarious situation of covid-19 as it has brought movement to a standstill; people find it almost impossible to move in order to provide help to those who have been attacked. In a number of cases, the reports fail to give details of who are attacked, for what reasons, by whom, etc. Those concerned wanting to do something feel helpless.

The attacks, harassment and violence against Christians should certainly not pass before our eyes as a newsreel on TV; it should not be ignored by our passive and impersonal observation as if to just

watch and wait. However, seeing the complex situation, one asks what exactly needs to be done to bring this insanity under control. Who is to do that?

Peace and reconciliation are the key words and historical context in which God's story of love unfolds and it is popularly celebrated as Christmas. But how do we celebrate peace and reconciliation with those who attack us? Even the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* speak of Peace and Reconciliation: "Never a brother may hate brother or a sister hate sister, united in heart and in purpose commune sweetly together" (AV III, 30, 4); the *Sanatana Dharma* emphatically teaches that "there can be no earthly peace if there is discord in Man's inner being" (AV XIX,9).

Is there no way other than to counter attack those who attack? Or is one to just naively yield to every attack? What appeal can be made to the consciences of those who attack the innocent by referring to the Constitution of our country? There are voices that speak and write about the attacks in protest but are they eye witnesses to the plea of those who have been attacked? May be there are some who have been discreetly and, for the good of the victims, active in representing the plight of the victims in order to protect them by making efforts to bring peace and reconciliation in the tensed situations but have they to shout about it from the housetops?

Naming the enemy would not only need courage and bravery but also enough guarantee to establish facts, not only of attacks but also for legitimate reasons the victims were attacked (granted that no justification can be made for attacking anyone). Together with this, one cannot simply pose to be clean, guiltless and innocent, to stand in the court of law. As Christians we cannot ignore to self-examine and search for our motives in doing acts against which the attacks have been made. It is difficult to present attacks as hatred of one religion against another; however, we all tend to use, even unconsciously, ideological framework to perpetuate hate.

Instead of getting hooked to the worst kind of politics which provokes indiscriminate attacks on Christians or other vulnerable groups, is it not possible to be enlightened by the "Better Kind of Politics" which Pope Francis suggests in *Fratelli Tutti*, pp. 73-82? Otherwise, one hating the other can create a never-ending chain of hatred which will eventually lead to "a tooth for tooth and an eye for eye" situation. Are we closing the doors to dialogue altogether (to which the Church is irreversibly committed)



with innumerable Hindus of good will when we get trapped into a game of hatred?

But the question remains: How to come out of this intolerable situation? What is the solution? Use of power for us Christians is ruled out for external and internal logic of our faith. Submissive attitude does not resolve the situation. Perhaps, it may be time to do a deeper reflection on our own understanding of our faith, history and right approach to freedom of propagating the Gospel. True Religiosity is a quest for Truth, “Who” might have found us, but to pretend to own the Truth ourselves could be a hypocritical assumption and a provocation for trouble. In the absence of an authentic Religiosity, we would merely debate intellectually and argue endlessly. One of the ways out of this situation is to take the like-minded people of good will with us and carry out the “dialogue of collaboration” together, for the real issue is not the symptoms but the root, the heart that needs *metanoia*.

Beginning with us Christians, we must admit, that the term “Christians” is not a clear, analogous and precise term. I do not wish to say that it is ambiguous. But the term has been taking different nuances especially in our times. Do we really know all those who call themselves Christians and exactly what they believe by that claim? A good bit of my life has been dedicated to Ecumenism (A small book of mine on this topic has just been published a few days ago by ATC, Bangalore). Presently, a priest who left the Catholic Church a few months ago, has founded a Church of his own and has installed himself in the territory of our local Church, making alluring propositions to the Catholic flock. Obviously, we all possess right to freedom; but let us not ignore the unethical methods of spreading

the Gospel by some of us (Cf. “*Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World*”, jointly signed by Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches and World Evangelical Alliance, 2011). There appears to be also a “market-driven” preaching of religion. My point is that no human person should be attacked; however, no human person should indulge in activities which impinge the freedom of others, especially those who are emotionally vulnerable.

The language of “them” versus “us” can be not only risky but it can also be unbecoming of us Christians. Those who use such language often end up demonizing the “other”. If we wish to solve the problem, we cannot speak in these judgmental and excluding concepts and terminology.

India is a Secular Democratic country and as Christians we must be law abiding citizens who should seek ways to concretely prove that our legitimate rights are respected. When we are denied our rights, how do we prove that? The problem might have been aggravated and accelerated during several governments, but the accusation of “forced conversion” is not new only to one government, is it? How can we represent our case to the judiciary at its highest national level?

Obviously, distorted reading of history of India is another topic to be carefully studied and reflected upon by Christians. One thing is clear that the attacks are not sporadic but the predictable regularity appears to be systematic, planned and executed with minute precision. There have been representations made and responses are given from both sides. However, this has been more an argumentation, charged with anger and aggressiveness in most cases.

In contemporary India the miniscule 2.3% Christian population has undeniably been stigmatized or typed as the ‘other’. Public intellectuals must counter regime-sponsored historians’ compromise to ensure that revenge and domination DO NOT become the guiding path.

I wish to conclude this reflection by citing once again a cry of a powerful King (of *Brhadratha*): “I am like a frog in a dry well. Lord, you alone are our refuge, you alone are our refuge” (Maitri Upanishad 1,4 (# V 18)). ©



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ARCHBISHOP FELIX MACHADO**, CBCI Secretary General

# THE CONVERSION OF BOMMAI

The Karnataka Chief Minister, who was trained in the secular thesis of Janata Dal before joining BJP, is trying to be in the good books of his masters to save his chair

BY JOHN DAYAL

**B**asavaraj Somappa Bommai, who will be 62 years on 29 January 2022, is a fast learner. His political learning, rather than his age, is now of great importance to the Christian and Muslim population of Karnataka, the state he now governs as the Chief Minister.

The state's anti-conversion law, or Freedom of Religion Bill if you love euphemisms, is the blood sacrifice he has offered to his political gods to retain his chair. Muslims and Christians form only 12.92% and 1.87% respectively in the state's 6.1 crore population [2011 Census] which is less than their representation in the national population.

Though he is now a leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party and was once deemed to be close to Y. S. Yeddyurappa, the multi-term Chief Minister and Lingayat caste supremo in the party, Bommai was not always in the BJP; in fact, he has never been in



the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the powerhouse behind the party.

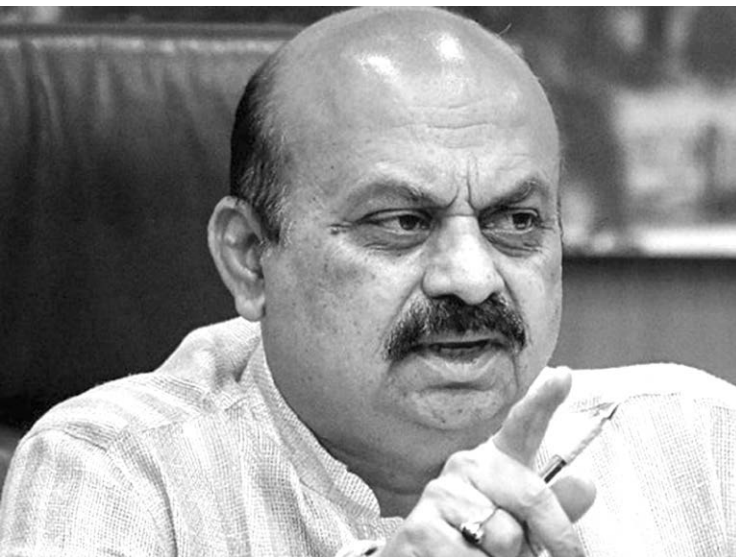
His upbringing and political training were in the secular thesis of the Janata Dal in which his father, the late S.R. Bommai, was a towering figure. Students of Indian constitutional history remember Bommai Senior as the man who contributed to safeguard

the autonomy of the states by getting the Supreme Court to agree that the Union Government could not arbitrarily sack regional governments.

Bommai inherited his father's standing in their Lingayat caste. He joined the Bharatiya Janata Party as late as 2008, soon becoming Yeddyurappa's obedient and trusted aide holding important ministerial portfolios.

It was then that Bommai also had his conversion, suddenly emerging as a strongman handling confrontations between the Muslims and the majority Hindu community.

With Tamil Nadu as the bastion of Dravida parties, Kerala given to choosing between the Congress



Karnataka CM Bommai

Students of Indian constitutional history remember Bommai Senior as the man who contributed to safeguard the autonomy of the states by getting the Supreme Court to agree that the Union Government could not arbitrarily sack regional governments

“

What the government seems to be saying is that you can be a Christian, but be a Christian only in your conscience. They seem to be saying, don't declare it (Christian faith), wear it or show it.

**- Peter Machado, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bengaluru**



and the Marxists, and the Telugu speaking Andhra and Telangana closed to anyone else, Karnataka has been seen by the RSS and the BJP as their solitary gateway to the South. The schism between the Lingayats, Vokkaliga and Dalits, greases its path, as does language, with Kannada, Konkani, Tamil in the capital Bengaluru and Marathi in the second capital Belagavi easy tracks for their cadres.

After Yeddyurappa's removal as Chief Minister, Bommai has reason to feel his chief ministership too is transient. A firm hand in dealing with religious minorities becomes important in earning brownie points with the Modi-Shah-Bhagwat reigning deities.

His anxieties are very real. The controversial anti-conversion law which has been crafted as much for the Muslims as for the Christians and goes far beyond the one the saffron-clad Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh imposed on his state, was in many ways his trump card. He braved a well organised civil society resistance, ably led by Bangalore Archbishop Peter Machado.

Much is seen in the party leadership in New Delhi patting him on the back within days of the state Assembly passing the Freedom of Religion Bill 2021 in the last session. He then did not pursue the Bill in the Upper House, or Legislative Council, where the party does not have a clear majority; but he is sure that in the new year, the political complexion of the Council would change, and the Bill would be passed.

Former Chief Minister and Congress leader Siddaramaiah has said, "The Congress will scrap the anti-conversion bill within a week of the party coming to power or the first session of the State Legislature after coming to power; there is no doubt about it."

But critics point out it was a Congress government that passed a similar law in Himachal Pradesh

**“It is needless to say that the idea of presuming that a conversion has or is about to take place alongside an inter-faith marriage is patently unconstitutional as it interferes with the right to privacy, marital freedom and freedom of belief”**

and did not scrap earlier anti-conversion laws in other states when it came to power. The Congress, alas, is no longer seen by many as the main bulwark against the sort of highspeed march to a Hindu Rashtra that the BJP leadership has geared up nationally, and in Karnataka.

The agitations have all but stopped as civil society, Muslim and Christian groups mull the legal option. A legal challenge will have to wait till the Bill becomes law. There are several stages before that happens. It will pass through the Legislative Council which, technically, can suggest some modification, before it is presented to the Governor for assent. It is only after the administration writes out the rules that the Bill becomes operational. Then, it can be challenged in the High Court.

Patently, the Bill has been raced through so far. It was, sort of, copy pasted from the existing laws in other states, notably Himachal and Uttar Pradesh, and then honed by enhancing coverage and punishments. It is in these enhancements that this Bill, and perhaps some other state laws also, face chal-



lenges in the High Court and then in the Supreme Court. The brilliant Constitutional lawyer and human rights activist Dr Colin Gonsalves said this law can and should be challenged both for its constitutional validity and for its potential to aggravate the existing pace of polarisation in the country. Many others see the Karnataka Bill, when it becomes law, will weaponize the targeting of Muslims and Christians as no other law has been able to do.

The twin Achilles Heels of the Bill are in its sections on marriage between persons of different religious communities – the groom’s minority religion as the main issue – and the time frames, penalties, and family objections, devolving on the couple, the clergy involved. This is more visible and implicit in conversion to Christianity where baptism and clergy have a more visible role.

The Karnataka Bill specifically empowers parents and siblings of the persons, especially the woman, in objecting to the marriage. It goes way beyond other similar laws in giving the same powers to just about anyone else even if they have no other locus standi than being members of the majority community, political parties and religious nationalistic non-state actors such as the RSS.

The interference of all these groups, parents included, had been an issue even in the nationally operational Special Marriages act. In most cases where the couple belonged to different religions, castes, or even socio-economic strata, parents would go to any extent to prevent a marriage once they come to know of it through the government

**While Christians are expected to have trouble in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh with a history of targeting the community, some states like Assam and Haryana are new on the list**

marriage office sending the notice to their home. Often, the women would be sent away, hurriedly married off, beaten, and bullied into submission to walk away from the marriage. Occasionally, she or her lover, or both, would be killed.

An editorial in *The Hindu* noted that Karnataka has now made ‘a promise of marriage’ a means of unlawful conversion. “It is needless to say that the idea of presuming that a conversion has or is about to take place alongside an inter-faith marriage is patently unconstitutional as it interferes with the right to privacy, marital freedom and freedom of belief.”

The editorial adds: “Anti-conversion laws have been upheld by the courts in the past on the ground that conversion by allurement, force or fraud poses a threat to public order and should be curbed. However, the only threat to public order seems to arise from rampaging groups out to create social discord.”

The Gujarat High Court has stayed provisions of a State law that made conversion ‘by marriage’ an offence, pointing out that it placed in jeopardy all marriages of those between two different faiths.

The government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi recently issued an order to all area magistrates and Marriage offices not to send notices to parents of couples under Special Marriage Act. The order came after a contempt case





was filed before Delhi High Court in August seeking action against a Sub Divisional Magistrate whose office had sent a notice to an interfaith couple's parents last year.

Following the official intimation, the woman had been detained by her family and was released only after her partner filed a habeas corpus before the court.

The Special Marriage Act was enacted to enable a special form of marriage for any Indian national, professing different faiths or desiring a civil form of marriage.

Civil society and minority religious groups have said that governments which profess such deep concern for communal harmony and want to stop all actions that jeopardise relations between minorities and the majority community should enact laws to curb targeted hate which precipitates violence against vulnerable individuals and groups.

One Christian church leader said: "I am very concerned at the way in which hatred is being normalised in India. The recent hate speeches at the Dharma Sansads at Haridwar in Uttar Pradesh and Raipur in Chhattisgarh are signs of it. The FIR lodged by the Raipur Police only mentions the speech against Mahatma Gandhi and not the calls to distribute weapons to Sanatani Hindus to wage war for a Hindu Rashtra."

"Videos of these meetings show the sadhus laughing with the police when they went to file a complaint against the Muslim religious leaders of Haridwar. They had the nerve to tell the police that

they expect them to be biased and support them. This impunity has never before been seen and it has been enabled systematically."

Not that the attackers, now generically labelled as Hindutva members distinct from religious terrorists, need more than the existing motivation to attack Muslims and Christians. Just on Christmas Day, 16 attacks on churches big and small, congregational meetings and celebrations took place. They were as spread out as Haryana, UP, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and, of course, Karnataka.

According to the Religious Liberty Commission of EFI, while Christians are expected to have trouble in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh with a history of targeting the community, some states like Assam and Haryana are new on the list.

"We are no longer safe in our prayer halls, Churches or even our homes. The government is seen doing nothing to protect the victims and to punish the offenders. The law machinery is too busy carrying out the will of their political masters and in many cases it is the police that targets worship services accompanied by members of right-wing Hindutva groups," said a clergyman.

The new Bill adds to the sense of fear, and gloom. ©

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JOHN DAYAL** is a veteran journalist and human rights activist.

# Hindutva leaders call for killing of Muslims at Haridwar and Delhi events

The speakers asked Hindus to buy weapons for genocide against Muslims. BJP leaders attended the events

Multiple videos of Hindutva group members, journalists and a Bharatiya Janata Party leader calling for violence against Muslims sparked outrage on social media on Wednesday.

In one of the videos, Suresh Chavhanke, the editor-in-chief of Sudarshan News, can be seen administering an oath to a group of people to “die for and kill” to make India a “Hindu rashtra” or a Hindu nation. He made the comments while addressing an event of Hindutva group Hindu Yuva Vahini in Delhi on December 19.

“We take an oath and make a resolution that till our last breath, we shall fight, die for and if need be, kill, to make this country a Hindu rashtra,” Chavhanke said. Those present around him repeated his statements.

The Sudarshan News editor-in-chief himself posted a video on Twitter of him administering the oath. “The lions and lionesses of Hindu Yuva Vahini taking an oath for Hindu Rashtra,” he said in the tweet.

Social media users pointed out that Uttar Pradesh minister Rajeshwar Singh was also present at the event. Notably, the Facebook page of the Delhi unit of the Hindu Yuva Vahini claims that the group had been founded by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath.

## Haridwar event

At a separate event held in Uttarakhand’s Haridwar city between December 17 and December 19, several seers also openly called for genocide against Muslims and asked Hindus to buy weapons.

BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, who had been

arrested in August in connection with an event where inflammatory slogans calling for violence against Muslims were shouted at a rally in Delhi’s Jantar Mantar, was also present in Haridwar. He presented a “bhagwa samvidhaan” or a saffron constitution at the event.

Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, who has in the past made several extremist comments, said: “Economic boycott [against Muslims] will not work...No commu-

“We take an oath and make a resolution that till our last breath, we shall fight, die for and if need be, kill, to make this country a Hindu rashtra,” Suresh Chavhanke said. Those present around him repeated his statements



(From L-R) Sudarshan News Editor Suresh Chavhanke, BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay and seer Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati were among the speakers at the two events held between December 17 and 19 in Delhi and Haridwar.

(Photo courtesy: Twitter/Kaushik Raj and Mohammed Zubair)



nity can survive without picking up weapons...And swords won't work, they look good only on stages. You need to update your weapons...More and more offsprings and better weapons, only they can protect you." Upadhyay even asked Saraswati to unveil a book, which he described as "bhagwa samvidhaan". He referred to Saraswati as his "friend and guru".

He corroborated Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati's comments saying: "Maharaj ji's fight is not unconstitutional. I want to sum up whatever he said by linking it to the Constitution."

Annapurna, an office bearer of Hindutva organisation Hindu Mahasabha, declared at the event that

she would take up arms to protect the Hindu religion from Muslims. "We are ready to kill them even if we end up in jail," she added. "Even if we have an army of 100 people and if we manage to kill 20 lakh of them, we will win."

Another seer named Dharamdas said that he would have "followed the footsteps of Nathuram Godse [Mahatma Gandhi's assassin] to shoot [former Prime Minister] Manmohan Singh". He made the comments while referring to Singh's statement in Parliament in 2006, saying that minorities must have the first claim on resources of the country. ©

(Courtesy: Scroll.in)



## Haridwar hate speech case: Hindutva leaders, police officer laugh about being 'unbiased'

Swami Anand Swaroop reportedly said three more 'sansads' will be held in Aligarh, Kurukshetra and Shimla



Seers accused of hate speeches share a laugh with cop

**H**indutva leaders Sadhvi Annapurna – also known as Pooja Shakun Pandey – and Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, along with others, went to a police station to file a counter first information report in the Haridwar hate speech case, NDTV said. According to the report, the seers alleged that Muslim clerics have been "conspiring against Hindus and should be punished", but the police said that no FIR was filed.

In a video that is now viral on social media, Annapurna is seen telling a police officer that a message must be sent to the people that the police are not biased. "You are a constitutional officer and you will deliver justice equally," she added.

Following Annapurna's comments, Narsinghanand said, "Why are you asking him to be neutral...he's on our side," evoking laughter from those present, including the police officer.

A first information report filed on December 23 named just one person – former Shia Waqf board chief Jitendra Narayan Tyagi. He had changed his name from Wasim Rizvi after converting to Hinduism on December 6.

Three days after the FIR was filed, the Uttarakhand Police added the names of Sadhvi Annapurna, and priest Dharamdas Maharaj. Annapurna is general secretary of the Hindutva organisation, Hindu Mahasabha. © (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

# Akhadas Form Core Committee for Armed Struggle Against Muslims

Undeterred by cases registered against three of the several Hindutva leaders who delivered hate speech during a recent Dharam Sansad in Haridwar, the swamis of several Akhadas met in the city on Tuesday and formed a core committee of 21 leaders. They resolved to continue their fight against Islam, which they called a “gang of armed people”, and even filed a police complaint against the Quran and a number of the city’s Maulanas and imams at the Haridwar Kotwali police station.

“The Quran incites you to kill kafirs. This book has provocative sections. It should be banned,” Niranjani Akhada’s Darshan Bharti told The India Cable.

The leaders also decided to step up their campaign to convert India into a “Hindu Rashtra” and defended their speeches during the earlier event. “We are holding three more sansads in Aligarh, Kurukshetra and Shimla. We have resolved that this is about our freedom of speech, and we will continue to speak up,” Swami Anand Swaroop told The India Cable.

Among the core committee members are Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, Swami Prabodhanand, Hindu Mahasabha’s general secretary Annapurna Bharti alias Pooja Shakun, Pandit Adhir Kaushik, Sindhu Maharaj and Swami Darshan Bharti. All were present at the event where calls to eliminate Muslims were made.

In what seems to be a tactical decision, they unanimously “decided to stay quiet on M.K. Gandhi.” “We have decided not to comment on Gandhi,” said Bharti, refusing to elaborate on the reasoning.

The India Cable had reported about the armed vigilante brigades which these leaders have raised in the last few years. They reiterated their resolve to continue with weaponization in the gathering.

“Is it wrong to talk about Hindu dharma in India? Adi Shankaracharya had established akhadas 1,400 years ago and armed them with various weapons to save our religion from Buddhists. Akhadas were like an army of the religion, just like Guru Gobind Singh had created his army. There was never any controversy then. Why is there an issue now? It’s because Islam ek hathiyarband giroh hai (Islam is an armed gang). You can fight them only with arms,” said Darshan Bharti.

Expressing satisfaction at the response generated by the previous event, they said that Haridwar has delivered an apt lesson to the world. “Dharma Sansad is a step in the direction of making India a Hindu Rashtra.”

As they go about in their plans, how will their ideological patron, the BJP, deal with them? When asked whether the BJP would be able to publicly support them in their armed ventures, Bharti said: “BJP and RSS ne Hinduon ka theka thode le rakha hai? Koi

jaruri thode to BJP, VHP kahegi, vahi hoga. (The BJP and RSS are not the sole custodians of Hindus. They can’t dictate terms.) Anything is possible if people are awakened.”

The Hindutva leaders have declared their intent. A few mild police cases against just three of them seems to have only emboldened them. With BJP leaders tacitly supporting this brigade and Uttarakhand and UP elections just months away, its electoral impact can’t be underestimated. ©

(Courtesy: The India Cable / The Wire)



# At Raipur Dharma Sansad, Hindutva leaders raise call to take up arms for Hindu Rashtra

In targeting minority communities, leaders speaking at the event in Chhattisgarh echoed the statements that were made at the Haridwar meet

BY **TARUSHI ASWANI**

**A**fter calls for genocide were raised at the Haridwar Dharma Sansad held between December 17-19, around 20 Hindutva religious leaders met for a similar two-day event in Chhattisgarh's Raipur on December 25-26 to urge "Sanatani Hindus" to begin preparation for the realisation of the Hindu rashtra.

As some leaders asked those who were present at the Sansad to 'arm' themselves if they wanted India to become a Hindu rashtra, one leader, Kalicharan from Maharashtra, called Mahatma Gandhi a 'traitor' and praised his assassin, Nathuram Godse. In videos that have gone viral over social media, Kalicharan accuses Gandhi of destroying the nation.

Later, on the evening of December 26, an FIR was lodged against Kalicharan for promoting enmity between communities and obscene act in any public place on a complaint filed by the Congress leader Pramod Dubey, who was present at the event. He was arrested.

The Raipur Dharma Sansad was organised by the NGO Neelkanth Seva Samiti and the Doodhadhari

Math. It was also attended by Congress leader Pramod Dubey and BJP leaders Brijmohan Agrawal and Vishnu Deo Sai. Neelkanth Tripathi of the NGO Neelkanth Seva Samiti maintained that the event's organising committee included top Congress and BJP leaders.

The focal point of the event was the establishment of a Hindu rashtra. Tripathi said, "The way everyone has the freedom to express their views in parliament, in the same way everyone expressed their views in this event. But I do not agree with what was said about Mahatma Gandhi."

## Christian community targeted

Talking to The Wire about the event, Brijmohan Agrawal, a former minister in the state, repeated tired tropes about "Hinduism under attack" and unfounded claims about forced conversion of tribal communities by Christians.

Agrawal, who attended the sansad, claimed that members of tribal communities in Chhattisgarh were being "lured" in the name of healthcare and education and converted to Christianity. He claimed that in Odisha and Jharkhand, Christian missionaries were "taking advantage of the poor living conditions" of these tribes.

While Agrawal says he does not support violence and has 'no problem' with Christmas, he still feels that Christians should celebrate it in a way that "doesn't cause disturbance' to others", suggesting celebrations should be contained within religious spaces.

Agrawal justified the Sansad by saying, "An attack is being waged on Sanatan Dharm, anybody abuses Hindu gods and gets away with it,



Two key speakers at the event Kalicharan Maharaj and Sadhu Vibhanand Giri



this is a reaction to that attack.” Going further to defend calls for crackdown on Christians, he said, “Hinduism is under attack, conversions are happening, this is the reason that voices came forward.”

Commenting on the recent surge in violence against Christians in the backdrop of the event, Arun Pannalal, president of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum, told The Wire that an escalation in violence has been observed since 2018. Pannalal said, “This is not surprising. Last year, 40 Christians were removed from their homes in South Bastar’s Sukma and were kept in the field, guarded by spears and swords. So the attacks are only getting extreme, even our burial rights are now compromised.”

“They want to spread hatred against Christians, as they have done against Muslims. Even at the Raipur event, they rallied for the Christians to be done away with,” added Pannalal.

**“Even if these lunatics calling for the genocide of Christians make up 1% of 100 crore members of the Hindu community, you have 1 crore people thirsty for the blood of my community”**

- John Dayal

Hate crimes against Christians in Chhattisgarh have been on the rise. Locals feel that both the Congress and the BJP are trying to exploit the anti-minority sentiments in the state for political dividends. That Congress leaders attended the event has added to these worries.

Another speaker at the event, Sadhvi Vibhanand Giri, said the sansad should work towards ending “love jihad”, a conspiracy theory concocted by the right-wing. Furthering these unfounded claims, Vibhanand Giri said that “Muslims kidnap Hindu women and molest them”. If a Hindu girl meets a Muslim, every young Hindu must “save” her, the Sadhvi added. The former chairman of the Chhattisgarh State Waqf Board Salam Rizvi objected to the statement. He said issues like sexual assault or molestation should not be communalised.

Even as several Hindu priests applauded the anti-Christian propaganda at the Raipur sansad, one prominent mahant walked off stage when Gandhi was insulted. Mahant Ram Sundar Das, a former Congress MLA and the chairman of Chhattisgarh Gau Seva Ayog, walked off the stage in protest against Kalicharan’s use of language to describe Gandhi. Das, one of the main patrons of the sansad, later stated that he was disassociating himself from the event.

Pannalal, who met Das after the event, says, “Mahant Ram Sundar Das has assured support to the Christian community in Chhattisgarh. We need more people to protest when Christians are targeted.”

Pannalal also claims that there is constant narrative-building in Chhattisgarh by the BJP that all tribals are Hindus. He adds, “They constantly use rhetoric to falsely claim that all tribals are Hindus, that all Bhils and Gonds are Hindus. This is plain propaganda.”

John Dayal, former president of the All India Catholic Union, is deeply distressed by such calls for genocide. Dayal says that the most worrisome part is that propagandists are able to blatantly organise such events without worrying about consequences. The state machinery, the police as well as the criminal justice system, he says, are all complicit in granting impunity to such persons.

After the Haridwar event, several prominent persons have called for the arrest of the militant Hindutva leaders who advocated genocide. While a few leaders have been booked, many key speakers have not.

Dayal said, “The small Christian community is reeling under a fusillade of Sangh extremist violence against churches, statues of Christ, and as always, against children, women and men deep in worship.”

Dayal says, “Even if these lunatics calling for the genocide of Christians make up 1% of 100 crore members of the Hindu community, you have 1 crore people thirsty for the blood of my community.”

When The Wire spoke to Ajay Kumar Yadav, the senior superintendent of police in Raipur, about the event, he said the case against Kalicharan was registered the day the police received the complaint. “The FIR also holds him accountable for derogatory statements against minorities,” he said. Yadav said that the police had not received any other complaint regarding the statements made by any other leader and hence only Kalicharan faces the FIR as of now. ©

(Courtesy: The Wire)

# A 'GIFT' WRAPPED IN FCRA REJECTION

The MHA order would mean that after December 31 midnight, the Missionaries of Charity would have no funds to operate its large number of children and old people's homes which employ thousands of workers

BY JOHN DAYAL

I wouldn't know for sure if the signature of Mother Teresa of Calcutta was on the application of the Missionaries of Charity when they applied for permission under the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) to receive donations from people all over the world for their work with orphan babies and dying destitute in almost every state of India.

But there is little doubt that Union Home Minister Amit Shah's personal nod would have been necessary for the cancellation of the FCRA permission. Specially as it is the Christmas season when the eyes of the world are, unfortunately, so firmly fixed on India.

The small Christian community here is reeling under a fusillade of Sangh extremist violence against churches, statues of Christ, and as always, against children, women and men deep in worship, and perhaps singing lullabies to the new-born Yesu.

For the record, at least 300 cases of such violence were recorded primarily from Karnataka, which is enacting an anti-conversion law targeting Muslims and Christians, Assam which saw such communal violence in recent years, Haryana where the Friday Namaaz cannot be held in peace, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.



It would take the Home Minister's permission, if not his specific order, before any joint secretary in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs' FCRA cell to issue orders that the Missionaries of Charities' application for renewal was being rejected. After all, these were stated by the Mother, the people's saint, long before she won the Nobel peace

Prize, was bestowed India's highest civil honour, the Bharat Ratna, and then canonised a Saint of the Catholic Church.

The MHA order would automatically mean that after midnight of 31st December, the organisation would have no funds to operate its large number of children and old people's homes which also employ thousands of women and men workers in various occupations.

This is the first time the FCRA has not been renewed. The community hopes, together with the Sisters, that the government will renew the FCRA soon. Pope Francis has been invited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit India next year, and this

Pope Francis has been invited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit India next year, and this could be a major public relations disaster for the Indian leader



could be a major public relations disaster for the Indian leader.

The government panicked when it realised that the unthoughtful, in fact cruel, order had triggered mass outrage in India and the world. International news agencies and India's free press and its social media ensured that the news had gone viral.

After an initial silence, the Union Government admitted that it had not approved the renewal without which the Catholic organisation will have no money to function next year.

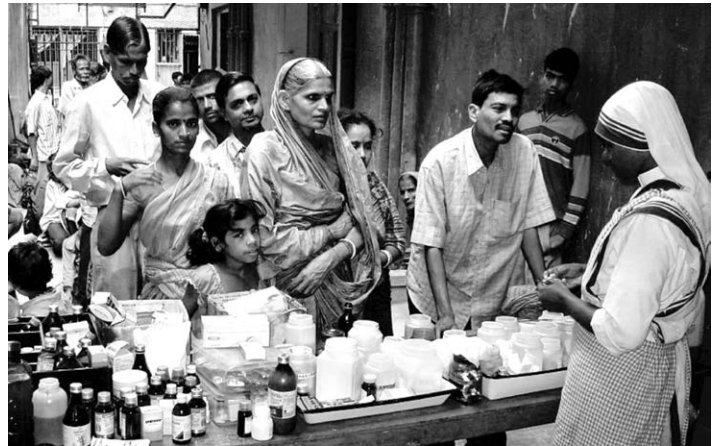
The damage to the government's image perhaps would have been a little less if it had said the licence was not renewed because of faulty accounting, procedural errors, or other issues. It chose to remain silent (initially).

## Mother Teresa's Sisters pose no threat to anyone in India or the world. The tiny Christian community, just 2.3 per cent of the population, also poses no threat to anyone

The outrage was swift, first from Catholic activists and then from political quarters. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, who knew the Mother well, tweeted her strong condemnation of the Modi government's action. The attempt at damage control was crude, as always.

First came a note issued by Mother Superior Prema which said, inter alia, "We would like to clarify that the FCRA registration has been neither suspended nor cancelled. We have been informed that our FCRA renewal application has not been approved. Therefore, as a measure to ensure that there is no lapse, we have asked our centres not to operate any of the FCRA accounts until the matter is resolved."

The Press Information Bureau of the Central Government issued a statement saying the "State Bank of India informed that the Missionaries of Charity itself sent a request to SBI to freeze its accounts. No request/revision application has been received from Missionaries of Charity for review of refusal of renewal."



It does not take the brains of an Einstein to see how the two statements play out. TMC leader O'Brien was quite right in dismissing the government statement as a damage control exercise.

This refusal of the government to renew the FCRA citing "adverse remarks" stigmatises not just the institutions of the Missionaries of Charity but the name of Mother St Teresa, who is revered not just by Catholics, but by vast numbers of people from all religious communities, and even the Communists of her home state of West Bengal.

The Mother had anyway been a target of vilification by the Sangh Parivar, the ideological parent of the Bharatiya Janata party which is in power with Narendra Modi as Prime minister. Even in the past, police and central organisations had tried to arrest Missionaries of Charity sisters on such charges as trafficking in children. All charges were false.

The government and the ruling party are also seemingly sending a message to the Christian community. Christians have made common cause with civil society and with the Muslims, who are the principal victims of government and political pressure on violations of civil liberties, freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

On its own issues, the community succeeded in gathering civil society to make strong protests against the anti-conversion law being brought in the Karnataka.

The Vajpayee and Modi governments at the centre and the BJP governments in the states have long wanted the Church to stop all social outreach work that empowers the people, especially the poor and the Adivasis. The Adivasis resist their natural resources including the forest where they dwell to be sold off to corporate houses.





And what did these 'adverse reports' presumably by the Intelligence Bureau, also under the MHA, and the Enforcement Directorate under Finance ministry, have to say? Did they discover anti-national activities, acts of treason or conspiracies to assassinate someone?

Mother Teresa's Sisters pose no threat to anyone in India or the world. The tiny Christian community, just 2.3 per cent of the population, also poses no threat to anyone.

The Missionaries of Charity Nuns and Brothers do not run plush schools or private universities that earn in millions of dollars. Nor are not funded by the government or its agencies. They run homes for new-born babies abandoned and left on the streets and garbage dumps by our own young women and men. They run homes for afflicted young that no government or charitable orphanage would willingly care. And they nurse the destitute and dying, lending some dignity to their last journey.

The Nuns and Brothers get no salary, but they do have staff members – drivers and cooks and others – who need to be paid a salary, and there are medicines and foodstuff to be bought. The FCRA ban is tantamount to starving them, and torturing the children and old in their care, to bring them to submission.

And yet they have been targeted often. In Jharkhand, the Missionaries of Charity had faced persecution, and now another state is hounding two sisters on trumped up charges of conversion.

Their Sisters faced physical violence in Kandhamal district of Orissa in 2008 during the anti-Christian mass violence in which over 390 churches and 5,600 houses or more were destroyed. Fortunately, no sister was injured though several Catholic and protestant priests were killed.

Christian persecution peaks every year at Christmas time. On an average, they face about 400 attacks a year. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh,

The situation of Christians, and Muslims, is the worst ever since the independence. Right wing forces have been empowered and strengthened, and the state is actively conniving with them

Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka are the worst impacted by right wing Hindu violence. This year, on Christmas Day, there were at least seven attacks on churches or Christian groups in Haryana, Karnataka, Assam, among others. The following were the Christmas Day incidents of violence:

1. Sangh Parivar activists burned the effigy of Santa Claus shouting 'Santa Claus Murdabad' in Agra, U.P.
2. Protests were held in front of Matridham Ashram, Varanasi, U.P. and slogans were raised against the church.
3. Haryana Bajrang Dal activists protested at Christian schools where celebrations were being held on Christmas.
4. 'Hanuman chalisa', a Hindu chant, was played by zealots in Kurukshetra, Haryana, on a stage set up for Christmas celebrations.
5. Statue of the Holy Redeemer was vandalised in Ambala, Haryana.
6. Christmas celebration was disrupted at Pataudi in Gurugram, Haryana.
7. Bajrang Dal activists stormed a church in Silchar, Assam, during the midnight Mass.
8. Christmas celebrations were interrupted by right wing Hindu groups at Nirmala school, Mandya, Karnataka.

The situation of Christians, and Muslims, is the worst ever since the independence. Right wing forces have been empowered and strengthened, and the state is actively conniving with them. Often, the police and lower judiciary are also complicit. This had never happened, and at such a scale, in the past, even when the BJP was in power between 1998-2004 with Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister. ©

(Courtesy: National Herald)

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JOHN DAYAL** is a veteran journalist and human rights activist.

## BJP MLA in Loni, UP, threatens meat seller with jail without bail, forbids sale of roosters

Nandkishor Gurjar is heard ordering a poultry shop owner in a video to pick up his business and "go sell in Delhi"

**N**and Kishor Gurjar, a Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Loni in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh was seen in a video that has begun to be circulated online, saying that roosters will not be sold in the constituency.

Gurjar, according to a News18 report, reached the Loni border on Monday, December 27. Once there, he allegedly threatened shop owners selling poultry that he will not allow roosters to be sold in Loni.

"From the video it appears as if no laws or regulations matter when it comes to Nandkishor Gurjar," the report noted.

In the video, Gurjar can be heard saying, "Listen, stop all this and run away or you will go to jail. Won't get bail at any price." The MLA appears to be talking to a man who owns one of the shops.

"Lift all this 'illegal' work from here, let me not see them tomorrow onwards. Go to Delhi and sell them. No chicken will be sold in Loni," he says in Hindi.

It is unclear why Gurjar specified roosters and if he meant chickens.

After ordering the shop owner to close the shop down, he appears to ask people off camera if they



"don't get the bad smell" from the shop. It is unclear what the answer is.

The crackdown on meat sellers and poultry shop owners has intensified among Hindutva groups and BJP leaders. Many such shops are owned by Muslim people. Videos showing members of rightwing Hindutva outfits mobilising outside meat shops to shut them down during the Navratri period emerged in large numbers from several north Indian cities during the festive season.

Earlier this year, the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) announced that it would close down meat shops every Tuesday, as the law governing them prescribes that they be closed once a week. ©

(Courtesy: The Wire)

---

↓

## Christians living in fear, says ICYM

**I**t is a matter of grave concern that Christians are living in fear in a democracy," said Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM), condemning the recent incidents of violence against the community in many States.

In a press release, the ICYM president Jyotsna D'Souza and secretary Adv. Antony Judy said Christians have been the target of discriminatory laws and practices in the country. "The legislative and executive do not care about us. They are with those who spread majoritarian nationalism that is haunting us," they said.

Stating that the Constitution of India says to protect the minorities but that is not happening, they said the majority can't ransom the minority. They asked the Government to intervene and take appropriate action against the culprits.

Narrating the incidents from across the country, they said that in the past eight years, attacks against minorities have been normalized.

In the past year, Christians have been attacked in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, and Delhi. ©

# KERALA TOPS HEALTH INDEX

What surprises many is that Delhi is among the worst performers in the Union Territories' category, despite its claims to have reformed Education and Health sectors

BY **MANOJ VARGHESE**

In 2017, Yogi Adityanath remarked that Kerala should learn from Uttar Pradesh what health care is all about. And, from then onwards, for the past four years, Kerala tops the annual Health Index, released by none other than the NITI Aayog itself. The woman behind this honour, Ms Shailaja teacher, the then State Health Minister, deserves a major share for these awards.

Kerala's success story is not just limited to the governance, but to people's awareness. What surprises many is that Delhi is amongst the worst performers in the Union Territories' category, despite their claims to have reformed the Education and the Health sectors.

The health index is a weighted composite index based on select indicators in three domains namely the health outcomes, governance and informa-



tion (quality of data collected and health-care sector efficiency); and key inputs and processes (health infrastructure and human resources).

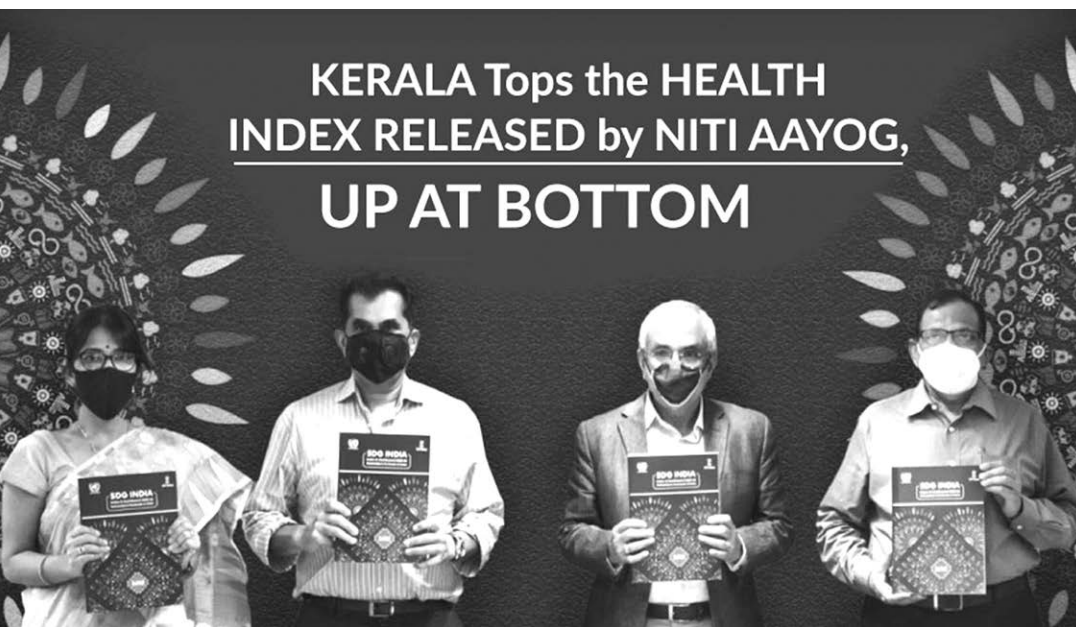
Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have topped the NITI Aayog's 2019-20 health index among larger states while Uttar Pradesh is the worst performer and stood at the bottom of the index with Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar being other four laggard states at the bottom.

The report has been prepared by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the World Bank. "From the base year (2018-19) to the reference year (2019-20), Uttar Pradesh led in improving the performance of 33 out of 43 indicators and sub-indicators. On the other

hand, Kerala showed improvement in only 19 indicators, and additionally had three indicators in the category of fully achieved," the Aayog said.

In his Facebook post, Shashi Tharoor, MP stated that Kerala is witnessing good governance and the state government is inclusive of all politics. Tharoor lauded Kerala for coming first in the Niti Aayog's health survey. Meanwhile, Tharoor also tagged UP Chief Minister Yogi

KERALA Tops the HEALTH  
INDEX RELEASED by NITI AAYOG,  
UP AT BOTTOM



## Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have topped the NITI Aayog's 2019-20 health index among larger states while Uttar Pradesh is the worst performer and stood at the bottom of the index

Adityanath in the post after UP ranked last in the same report.

Further, Tharoor also tweeted a 2017 news with Yogi's remark that Kerala should learn from UP about what health care is. "If the likes of Yogi Adityanath would learn not just health practices but good governance and inclusive politics from Kerala, the country would benefit. Instead, they keep trying to drag the country down to their level!" Tharoor Tweeted.

Further, among the smaller states, Mizoram ranked at the top and Nagaland at the bottom in 2019-20 while three of the smaller states, Mizoram, Sikkim and Meghalaya, improved their rankings from base year (2018-19) to reference year (2019-20).

Among the union territories, Daman & Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Chandigarh secured first and second ranks respectively in terms of overall performance in 2019-20 while Daman & Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep, Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir have improved in 2019-20 compared to the base year of 2018-19.

In 2018-2019, Kerala had a score of 81.6, and in the reference year of 82.2, an improvement of 0.6 points. On the other hand, UP at the 19th position among the larger states, which has been at the bottom of the ranking, jumped from 25.06 in the base year to 30.57 depicting an incremental rise in the reference year. Despite this fact, all the 'larger' states also reported a shortage of specialists at district hospitals.

The president of the Public Health Foundation of India, K. Srinath Reddy, said, "For a state like Kerala, which has already achieved a lot in maternal and child health indicators, there is not as much scope to improve as it is in improving on the front

of non-communicable diseases. For states like Uttar Pradesh, the challenge still is to improve maternal and child health indicators."

Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu registered NMR (Neonatal Mortality Rate) between 5 and 13 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births. The UN Sustainable Development Goal target is 12 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births. Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had also registered better NMR figures between 2017 and 2018.

The availability of functional First Referral Units (FRUs) was 100% or more in five 'larger' states - Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. According to the report, "A functional FRU is essential to provide specialised services close to the community and can help in improving access and decongesting the patient load at higher level facilities." Bihar continued to have the lowest availability of functional FRUs - 15.4% in the base year and 16% in the reference year.

In addition, the number of states with universal birth registration came down from four in the base year to three in the reference: Assam, Telangana and Uttarakhand; Kerala slipped from 100% to 98.2% in this period.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the state's health performance was the best in the country because of policies aimed at improving the public health system. Vijayan wrote on Twitter, "In @NITIAayog's HealthIndex, Kerala has once again emerged as the best-performing major state. The policy that focuses on developing the public health system, as well as the dedication of our health personnel to assure its success, are the main reasons for this achievement."

The recent spurt in Covid cases in Kerala is reported to be due to extra cautiousness and multiple testing. As per the Govt order, the person reported Covid positive is not supposed to undergo RTPCR test for the next three months, owing to the self-developed antibodies. But the health workers and village officers in Kerala made it a point not to allow anyone on the roads, without an RTPCR Negative report. Some fear, in the absence of Govt free testing, the private labs are doing a good business, charging over Rs 500 per RTPCR test. ©

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**MANOJ VARGHESE** is a Media and Communication Expert



# Public Investment is Key to Progress: Kerala CM - Pinarayi Vijayan

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is reaping the harvest of his previous term investment in the welfare and health of the people of the State. Despite all the odds and financial crunch, the Government is committed towards providing better health to one and all. **Manoj Varghese** of *Indian Currents* talked to **Pinarayi Vijayan** to know the success story of Kerala topping the Health Index.

**Q What is the key to Kerala's health success status?**

**A** Public investment is the key to the development of any of the fundamental sectors, be it agriculture, health, education, housing, industry and so on. As far as health goes, Kerala has been historically investing in it. During the previous LDF Government, we gave special attention to the public health system through the 'Aardram Mission' so that second and third generation health issues can be addressed.

Super specialty services were set up even in Taluk and District Hospitals. PHCs were upgraded into FHCs and OP timings were increased. Major infra-structural development has been ensured across the public health institutions in the State, all the way up to Medical Colleges. We are continuing with such initiatives under the present Government, with advanced planning to address the emergent challenges in the public health sector.

In the wake of COVID-19, we further focused on measures to contain the pandemic, through testing, tracing and isolating. Our Covid mitigation strategy included the participation of LSGIs and volunteers along with the administration, making it an act of truly people's intervention. Though the NITI Aayog Health Index covers the pre-Covid period, Kerala's public health success has extended throughout the subsequent period too.

**Q What has been the key processes initiated by the Kerala Govt in the recent times?**

**A** I have already made mention of the Aardram Mission, which has provided a facelift to the entire public health system in Kerala. Our focused interventions for mother and child care have helped in improving Kerala's IMR and MMR figures. And during this pandemic, we have focused on life saving interventions like Oxygen plants, additional ICU beds and ventilator support as well.

**Q Till last month, a major chunk of Covid-19 cases was reported from Kerala. What was the reason for it?**

**A** We have been diligently testing and tracing each probable Covid patient so as to ensure proper treatment and to contain the spread. The fact that our methods are worth emulating have been reiterated even by the Honourable Supreme Court and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. At national level review meetings, both the Union Health Minis-



ter and the Health Secretary have congratulated Kerala's exemplary performance in tackling the pandemic.

Several studies have pointed out that Kerala has the least number of unreported cases in the country. Our meticulous planning and implementation of Covid mitigation strategies have ensured that each and every case in the State is reported and treated. It needs to be noted that at no single stage of the pandemic, till date has Kerala's health care system been overburdened. This is a testament of how effective our health system is all about.

**Q Free testing for Covid-19 has almost come to a standstill in Kerala, what is the reason for it?**

**A** Tests, treatments and vaccinations for COVID-19 are free at all public health care facilities in the State even now.

**Q What has been your priority as a Chief Minister for the Kerala health sector?**

**A** Health is in our priority list. As Chief Minister my priority has been to ensure an all-round development of the State, along with increasing the scope and scale of welfare measures. By development, we mean sustainable interventions which touch every nook and corner of Kerala. Over the last 5 years our aim was to undertake development projects worth Rs. 50,000 crores through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board. However, we were able to initiate projects worth over Rs. 62,000 crores. This is in addition to the activities taken up using the Plan Fund and such statutory means. This time around, our goal is projects worth Rs. 60,000 crores in five years through KIIFB alone.

**Q How do you plan to address the new Omicron virus and its effects?**

**A** The World Health Organisation has stated that vaccination is the best defense against the novel Corona virus. Around 98% of Kerala's eligible population have received the first dose and around 75% have received both doses. Thus, we have already ensured the safety of the large majority of our people.

In addition, we have scaled up the vigil at our airports. All incoming passengers are being screened and passengers from risk countries are being compulsorily quarantined. Only once they get an RTPCR negative report, after their quarantine period

is over, are they free to mingle about. Those who test positive are taken to specialised facilities to restrict spread. Their samples are sent for genome sequencing to ensure that those infected by the Omicron variant are especially cared for as well.

**Q How do you plan to bring reforms in the Kerala health sector?**

**A** I think, I have already mentioned about our Aardram Mission in detail while responding to earlier questions. We have also revived Public Sector Enterprises like Kerala State Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited so that life-saving medicines can be provided to the public at a lower cost. We are also utilising the Kerala brand in health care to boost the pharmaceutical industry in the State.

We have set up centres like the Institute of Advanced Virology to conduct research and thereby prepare us for the health care challenges that are emergent. The International Ayurveda Research Institute is becoming a reality. We want to use scientific methods in the preparation of Ayurveda medicine and in the dissemination of our indigenous knowledge with regard to health care. With the abundance of educated youngsters in the State, we are foraying into the BT and medical equipment manufacturing sectors as well, which will in turn provide a fillip to our health sector as a whole.

We are trying to ensure free in-patient treatment of up to Rs. 5 lakh each, for 20 lakh families in the State. For the remaining families, Karunya Scheme is being strengthened so as to provide treatment of up to Rs. 2 lakh. Our effort is to improve all PHCs into FHCs and ensure lab and pharmacy facilities in all of them, even in the afternoons. As I had mentioned about the overall development of Kerala, even with regard to the health sector, it is a holistic vision that guides us, which is quality health care for all.

**Q Any particular message for the backward states like UP, Bihar to improve upon the health status?**

**A** It may not be fair for the Chief Minister of one State to comment upon another. The situations of other States are best known to those who are a part of it. I am sure that they will objectively look at their conditions and devise strategies to improve them. In that regard, if they require any guidance or assistance from Kerala, we could lend a helping hand within our limited means. ©

# A PEOPLE'S SHEPHERD

In the passing away of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the world has lost a stalwart who resisted every form of injustice and worked towards a just place to live

BY **DR. PRAKASH LOUIS**

**D**esmond Mpilo Tutu, who was also known as Archbishop Tutu, was Africa's great soul, freedom fighter, staunch believer in Christ and his values. He was also a South African Anglican bishop and theologian, globally known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist. He was Bishop of Johannesburg from 1985 to 1986 and then Archbishop of Cape Town from 1986 to 1996, in both cases being the first black African to hold the position. There were many other aspects which were first and unique to him.

He was born in 1931 in South Africa and died on 26th December, 2021 at a ripe age of 90. In his death, not only South Africa or Africa has lost a great freedom fighter and reconciler but the world lost a person who always wanted to unite all sections of people. It was reported that the bells of Cape Town's St. George's Cathedral will toll for 10 minutes every day at noon until Friday, 31st December, 2021 in honour of Archbishop Tutu.

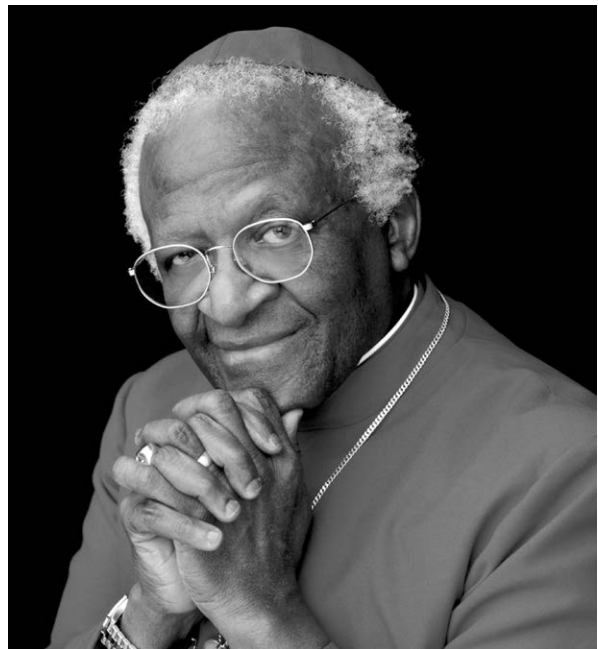
Tutu was born in a poor family and got trained as a teacher. In 1960, he was ordained as an Anglican priest and in 1962, he moved to the United Kingdom to study theology at King's College London. In 1966 he returned to Africa, teaching at the Federal Theological Seminary in South Africa, and then the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In 1972, he became the Theological Education Fund's Director for Africa, a position based in London but necessitating regular tours of the African continent. Back in southern Africa in 1975, he served first as Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg and then Bishop of Lesotho. It is not due to the positions he held, but due to his commitment to the suffering humanity globally, he was seen as a Shepherd of the People.

From 1978 to 1985, Tutu was the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, a position from which he was able to unite the churches and also become voice of the Church. His own back-



ground, his faith in Bible and Jesus Christ, his own experience of racial discrimination, his theological studies in a foreign land and cultural exposure, rooted in the lives of his own people groomed him to be a voice of the voiceless in Africa and world over. With these solid foundations, he emerged as one of the most prominent opponents of South Africa's apartheid, racial discrimination and white minority rule.

He was also deeply rooted in Christian theology which was basically black theology. As early as 1973, he had declared, "Black theology seeks to make sense of the life experience of the black man, which is largely black suffering at the hands of rampant white racism, and to understand this in the light of what God has said about himself, about man, and about the world in his very definite Word... Black theology has to do with whether it is possible to be black and continue to be Christian; it is to ask on



whose side is God; it is to be concerned about the humanisation of man, because those who ravage our humanity dehumanise themselves in the process; [it says] that the liberation of the black man is the other side of the liberation of the white man—so it is concerned with human liberation.”

Archbishop Tutu relentlessly carried out his struggle for liberation from all forms of injustices. He was not disappointed when his offer to serve as a mediator between the apartheid white government and leading black organisations was rebuffed. He continued his struggles and in 1985 led a small march of clergy through Johannesburg to protest the arrest of activists. In October 1985, he backed the National Initiative for Reconciliation's proposal for people to refrain from work and engage in a day of prayer, fasting, and mourning. He also proposed a nationwide strike against apartheid.

Along with Archbishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela stands out as two great giants who gave their life not only to put an end to apartheid in South Africa but any form of exploitative socio-political system anywhere in the world. It is reported that the Archbishop and Nelson Mandela first met at a debating competition in the early 1950s. But since Mandela was arrested and put in jail for leading the anti-apartheid struggle against the minority white rule, they could not meet soon. It was four decades later they met again, on the day that Mandela was released from prison. Mandela's first night as a free man was spent at the home of the Tutus in Cape Town. On that occasion before everyone retired for the night, Tutu offered a prayer of thanksgiving.

The apartheid state had frustrated attempts by both Mandela and Tutu to meet before the prison release on 11 February 1990. From then until Mandela passed away in 2013 they were in regular contact and their friendship deepened over time. They collaborated on a number of important initiatives. It was Tutu who held aloft Mandela's hand on the balcony of Cape Town's City Hall on 9th May 1994 and presented him to the assembled throngs as the country's new President and the first President after independence was obtained by long years of struggle.

In 1995, Mandela appointed him to chair the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a position Tutu used to drive endeavour to reckon with oppressive pasts but also to hold the new democratic government accountable. As Mandela reflected in that period: “His most characteristic quality is his



Archbp Desmond with Dalai Lama

readiness to take unpopular positions without fear ... He speaks his mind on matters of public morality. As a result, he annoyed many of the leaders of the apartheid system. Nor has he spared those that followed them -- he has from time to time annoyed many of us who belong to the new order. But such independence of mind -- however wrong and unstrategic it may at times be -- is vital to a thriving democracy.”

The establishment of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a pioneering international event. Never had any country sought to move forward from despotism to democracy both by exposing the past atrocities and achieving reconciliation with its former oppressors. At the centre of this unprecedented attempt at healing a nation has been Archbishop Desmond Tutu's mission. In this monumental work, Archbishop Tutu offered his reflections on the profound wisdom he had gained by helping South Africa to move towards freedom from all forms of bondage and exploitation through its painful experience of apartheid, white minority rule, division within the African communities, etc.

In 2004 he delivered the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, and used the platform to deliver a stinging critique of the governing party. The thrust of his argument was the extent to which leadership had failed society's most vulnerable. “We were involved in the struggle because we believed we would evolve a new kind of society. A caring, a compassionate society. At the moment many, too many, of our people live in gruelling, demeaning, dehumanising poverty.” Hence, Archbishop Tutu and Mandela are revered as powerful resources for social justice work locally and globally.

Before the 31st G8 Summit in Scotland, in 2005, Tutu called on world leaders to promote free trade with poorer countries and end expensive taxes on





**Archbp Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela**

anti-AIDS drugs. In July 2007, Tutu was declared Chair of the Elders, a group of world leaders to contribute their wisdom, kindness, leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's toughest problems. Tutu served in this capacity until May 2013. Upon stepping down and becoming an Honorary Elder, he said: "As Elders we should always oppose Presidents for Life". He led The Elders' visit to Sudan in October 2007, their first mission to foster peace in the Darfur crisis. He has also travelled with Elders delegations to Ivory Coast, Cyprus, Ethiopia, India, South Sudan and the Middle East.

During the 2008 Tibetan unrest, Tutu marched in a pro-Tibet demonstration in San Francisco and called on heads of states to boycott the 2008 Summer Olympics scheduled in Beijing. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu were considered to be two of the world's best-known spiritual leaders. They also developed a friendship rooted in a shared sense of joy, and of purpose: to foster and spread that joy around the globe, in order to address and counter its despair. Now Pope Francis is also ranked among them.

In June 2000, the Cape Town-based Desmond Tutu Peace Centre was launched, which started an Emerging Leadership Program to train priests and laity. Even when he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he strongly advocated "restorative justice," and not "retributive or punitive justice" something which he considered characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence "in the spirit of ubuntu." The meaning of Ubuntu is "humanity". It is sometimes translated as "I am because we are", "I am because you are", or "humanity towards others". The sense of the community is strongly stressed in this practice in Africa. With this sense of commu-

nity deeply rooted in African and Biblical values, he criticised the native government too and warned of widening wealth disparity among its population

It needs to be reiterated that Tutu never became anti-white. Instead, he stressed that it was apartheid -- rather than white people -- that was the enemy. He promoted racial reconciliation between South Africa's communities, believing that most blacks fundamentally wanted to live in harmony with whites, although he stressed that reconciliation would only be possible among equals, after blacks had been given full civil rights. When he held public prayers, he always included mention of those who upheld apartheid, such as politicians and police, alongside the system's victims, emphasising his view that all humans were the children of God.

He was clear in his thoughts, forthright in his speech, deeply religious and upheld hope that apartheid would be defeated. He had formulated his objective as "a democratic and just society without racial divisions", and had set forward the following points as minimum demands: 1) equal civil rights for all, 2) the abolition of South Africa's passport laws, 3) a common system of education, 4) the cessation of forced deportation from South Africa to the so-called "homelands". Many of these demands are applicable universally. Hence, he was also recipient of many awards including the Nobel Peace Prize.

He had many writings to his credit. In 'No Future Without Forgiveness', he argued that true reconciliation cannot be achieved by denying the past. But nor is it easy to reconcile when a nation "looks the beast in the eye." Rather than repeat platitudes about forgiveness, he presented a bold spirituality that recognizes the horrors people can inflict upon one another, and yet retains a sense of idealism about reconciliation. With a clarity of pitch born out of decades of experience, Tutu showed readers how to move forward with honesty and compassion to build a newer and more humane world.

Pope Francis lamented Tutu's death and praised him for promoting "racial equality and reconciliation in his native South Africa". Pope called him 'the Servant of the Gospel'. May this People's Shepherd continue to guide the entire world to resist every form of injustice and work towards a just world. ☪

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**DR. PRAKASH LOUIS** is an Action Researcher, Writer, Activist, and Animator, Trainer. He was the Director of Indian Social Institute, New Delhi and Bengaluru.

# Manipuri Christian Priest harassed by right-wing supporters, asked to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'

In a viral video of the incident, two men could also be heard accusing the priest of converting people in the area – a charge that the police and the priest denied.

A Christian priest from Manipur was heckled by a set of unidentified right-wing supporters in the Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir on Christmas for not saying 'Jai Shri Ram' as per their demand. A video of the incident went viral on December 30, Thursday, causing outrage among the community.

In the short clip circulated in WhatsApp groups and on Twitter, two men could be heard asking the priest to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' while also accusing him of "converting" people in the area – a charge that the police and the priest denied. The hecklers repeatedly asked him, "Where are you from? Who brought you here?"

While the visibly scared priest was seen trying to tell them that the family he had visited were Christians before he came to the area, the hecklers continued to push him to shout 'Jai Shri Ram' and asked him why wouldn't he say so. At some point, they also prodded the crowd, that had gathered to watch, to shout 'Jai Shri Ram', which they did.

The Wire contacted the priest, Chunglental Singnit, who said, "The incident happened around 3 pm on Christmas. I had gone to a believer's house nearby in Kathua to pray. I returned home and went out to the market to buy some gifts for my three children. That was when two men stopped me and began accusing me of converting the family I had visited that day and was forcing me to say 'Jai Shri Ram'."

Chunglental, who belongs to the Kuki tribe and is a native of Manipur's Kangpokpi district, said, "After some time, they phoned someone and one more person joined them. By then a crowd of 100 people had gathered, some of whom threatened to beat me for religious conversion while the three men slapped me a few times. In the video, you see me wetting my lips repeatedly; that was because I was so scared that my mouth and throat had gone dry. I could barely speak out of fear."

He said, "They also called the local police and accused me of carrying out religious conversion in the area."

"While I told the police what actually happened and denied carrying out any conversion, the police picked me up instead; kept me for over 24 hours in lockup, shouted abuses at me and also beat me in custody. The Kathua SSP said if I don't leave for Manipur within five days, action would be taken against me."

Chunglental said he has been residing in Kathua for the last three years and works as a priest in a



Christian organisation named Friends of Missionary Prayer Band. "I was released after 24 hours because my organisation members asked if I was arrested and sought a first information report copy to seek my bail."

The personal assistant to the SSP, Kathua, denied to The Wire any arrest or detention of a Christian priest on the charge of conversion. Saying that the senior officer was not at the office, he said, "We have no information about any such case in Kathua." ©

(Courtesy: The Wire)

# THE PRICE OF MODI YEARS

While many books on Modi are in the market, this one provides hard evidence and data about the failures and misdeeds of Modi regime

BY LANCY LOBO

Aakar Patel is a syndicated columnist who has edited English as well as Gujarati newspapers. His writings show his liberal and secular credentials. He has consistently critiqued *Hindu rashtra* and right-wing politics in India. He held the chair for Amnesty International, India which was subjected to the evil gaze of the current regime. In yet another book *Price of Modi Years* Patel has marshalled abundant empirical data to substantiate the very convincing position he has taken in puncturing the Modi bubble. Following are glimpses of these stances on several aspects of Modi rule.

First of all, Patel deals with Modi's character traits that are 'decisive, full of certitude, transparent, unlearned, energetic and charismatic'. He has cultivated *bhakts* (devotees) by mobilising the masses through bravado, bombast, glamour, and demagoguery on sentimental issues especially along religious axis. Asish Nandy, a psychologist who interviewed Modi, declared that Modi was a 'classic, clinical case of a fascist'. An authoritarian personality, 'who had a mix of puritanical rigidity, narrowing of emotional life, massive use of the ego defence of projection, denial of fear of his own passions combined with fantasies of violence'.

As a highly charismatic leader, Modi promised two things: inclusion and development of all (*Sab ka saath, sab ka vikas*). He promised a great change in

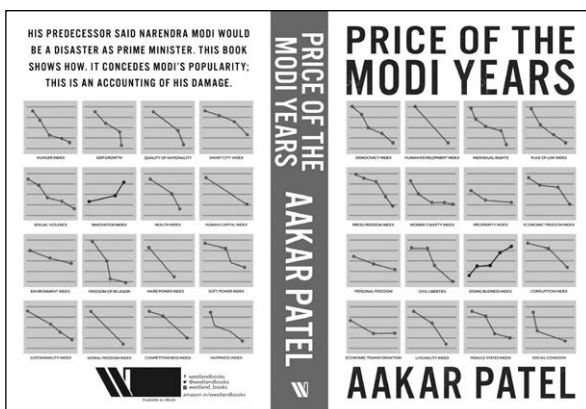


economic growth which he did not deliver. He has not brought much positive change to the majority of those who adored him.

Commenting on 'Brand versus Product' Patel refers to around twenty-five different indices on India, conducted by reputed organisations across the globe and shows how they have fallen during seven years of

Modi-rule. To mention a few -- Human Development Indicators, Democracy Index, National Civic Space Ratings, Religious Restrictions, Freedom in the World, World Competitive Ranking, Global Soft Power Index, Women, Peace and Security Index, Prosperity Index, Sustainable Development Solutions, Economic Freedom Index, Gender Gap Index, International Corruption Perception Index, Smart City Index, Quality of Life Index, Inclusive Internet Index, World Bank Doing Business Index, Global House Price Index, Quality of Nationality Index, Air Quality Index, Climate Risk Index, Food Sustainability Index, Migrant Integration Policy Index, Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index -- and the list goes on giving data on the fall of India's position on most of these indices.

Secondly, Modi promised inclusion but he was successful only in identifying an internal enemy, the Muslims primarily, and Christians secondarily, even though his mantra was inclusion and development of all. Three years into Modi's first term, a research



Modi promised two things: inclusion and development of all (*Sab ka saath, sab ka vikas*). He promised a great change in economic growth which he did not deliver. He has not brought much positive change to the majority of those who adored him

report found that 97 per cent of all cow-related violence came after he was elected. The report was from 2017 and it showed that 84 per cent of those killed were Muslims. In 30 per cent of the attacks the police registered cases against the victims. The data showed that half of the attacks were based on 'rumours'.

Further, 'offences promoting enmity between groups more than doubled over 2016. From 478 cases in 2016, the numbers rose to 958 and 1,114 in 2018'. Patel has chronologically documented these from 2015 to 2019. The legislations and speeches on cattle and beef are written to provoke violence needed for polarisation which in turn are beneficial in electoral policies and appeasing the Hindutva constituencies. Mob violence against the week is promoted by the BJP with the approval of Modi and feel no shame with lynching. This is the new normal. Give a dog a bad name and hang him!

The role of the police has been despicable in hate crimes against the Muslims. They have gone after the victims rather than the victimisers in cases of atrocities against Muslims. 'It is said that the police had deliberately gone after over 70 anti-CAA protestors, mostly Muslims, who were abused, threatened and coerced into giving false statements'.

In the case of 'Love Jihad', a cooked-up conspiracy was floated to harass the Muslims. India's laws allow inter-faith marriages under the Special Marriage Act (SMA). Love Jihad follows the pattern and format of beef lynching and the cow slaughter laws. The 'State deliberately stokes sentiment and introduces the legal mechanism through which Muslims can be harassed'. Coming to Christian minority, come Christmas the atrocities against Christians rise accusing them of converting Hindus. The Census of 2011 state that the Hindu population which was 83.8% in 2001 had reached 84%. The Muslim population in 2001 was 12.3, and it reached 12.9 % in 2011. The Christian population which was 1.91% in 2001 became 1.87% in 2011. If conversions were taking place as claimed by the Hindutvavadis then Christian population should have risen, instead of going down.

'Hinduism is in danger' and 'Hindu sentiments are hurt' are the common refrain to harass minorities. Around this Christmas, a series of events of vandalising Christian churches, statues, disruption of prayers and celebrations have taken place. This happened despite Modi visiting the Pope and hugging him. Modi is silent on these atrocities which goes to show that he approves such acts.

**'The law must take its own course,' but law is tampered and is one sided, favouring those in power. Except a handful of media persons, the entire media is the handmaiden of the BJP, provoking and promoting the denigration of the minorities especially Muslims and Christians**

The FCRA is used to cripple civil society organisations, especially the Christian organisations. Filing an FIR against the Missionaries of Charity Sisters of Vadodara by linking the presence of religious artefacts and literature to conversions and not renewing their FCRA license, giving vague excuses, show the *mala fide* intentions of the State. Those 22,000 inmates and other employees of MC centres being thrown on the street is no concern. Tolerance and compassion which were civilizational values of India have gone for a toss.

'The law must take its own course,' but law is tampered and is one sided, favouring those in power. Except a handful of media persons, the entire media is the handmaiden of the BJP, provoking and promoting the denigration of the minorities especially Muslims and Christians.

In conclusion, the book deals at length with Modi's failures in economy, policies, internal security, governance, judiciary, law and order, handling of Covid-19, Kashmir affair, relations with neighbouring countries, and so on.

While many books on Modi are in the market, this book is very strong in providing hard evidence and data to the reader about the failures and misdeeds of Modi regime. Aakar Patel has done a great service to secular India and minorities, by documenting and putting things in perspective the actors and factors responsible for the contemporary situation in the country. ©

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**LANCY LOBO** is a research scholar, Indian Social Institute, Delhi





## Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

bobsbanter@gmail.com

# 'No Room!' Shout Mobs and Lawmakers, but..!

**N**o room!' shout mobs as they rampage churches, burn Bibles!"

"No room," growl same mobs throwing stones on cross, on pulpit!"

"No room for you here," they whisper as in the silence of night they set a priest afire.

"No room! No room! No room in this nation!" chant mobs in town and village. But hush, who is this that runs frantically in front of same mobs, "Don't!" he shouts, "Don't say there is 'no room!"

The mobs they stop and listen. For in his eyes they see sadness, and in his body, fear, "What is it stranger, that you come running to tell us?" they ask, "That makes you unafraid of mob anger and wrath?"

"Save your anger and wrath!" whispers the stranger and as the mob gets closer they look at each other and whisper, "What strange clothes he wears! This is not one from our country where kurta and dhoti are our attire! Who is this?"

"Go back!" says the man in strange attire, "Go back and leave these people who follow the Baby born today alone!"

"How dare you say that?" the mobs roar, "We have no room for them in this country! No room!"

"Sssh!" says the man in strange attire, and in his eyes they see a pleading, "Ssssh!" he whispers, and the mobs become quiet, "I said the same! They came to me, and I told them, 'no room in my inn! Oh I wish I hadn't, I wish I hadn't! Now for all eternity I am remembered as the one who said, 'no room!"

The mob was hushed for in his eyes, they saw a pleading!

"Like you I had no room for them! Like you I thought I'd only room for those like me! And I thought



that that man and that pregnant woman, 'Mary, he called her' was not my type, and I muttered to myself, 'Outsiders!"

"Yes!" shout the mob, "Outsiders!"

"Oh the mistake I made!" cries the man in strange clothing. "I threw them out but I couldn't stop Him from coming in!"

"Who?" asks the mob.

"The very God whose words you burn in the Bibles they read, whose churches you stone, whose priests you attack, He walked into this world, even when I shouted 'no room! He did not need my permission!"

"And you want us to put down these stones, put out our fires, and keep away our choppers? You want us to stop passing laws that will keep Him out?" roar the mob, "Why have you come out today?"

"Because it's Christmas!" whispers the man in Bethlehem clothes, "And two thousand years ago when I said the same words, you mobsters and your lawmakers shout, He still strode into the world! He changed it! So don't waste your time screaming, 'No Room! Don't make laws saying, 'No Room! Because....." And the mob stood still as the innkeeper sang,

*'Oh, God will make a way  
Where there seems to be no way  
He works in ways we cannot see  
He will make a way you'll see  
He will make a way..! ©*

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

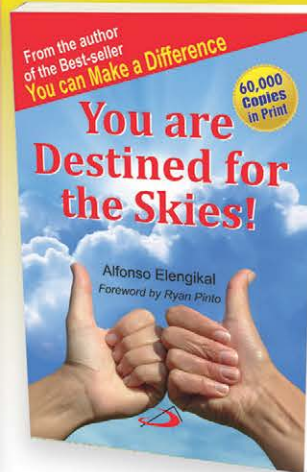
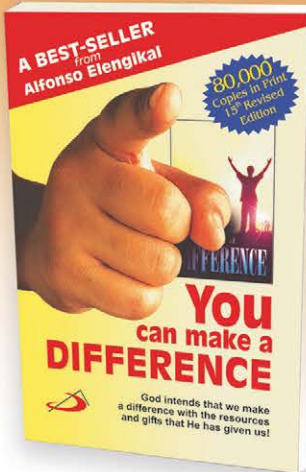
**ROBERT CLEMENTS** is a Newspaper Columnist, with an estimated readership of 6 million. He also conducts a short-term Writer's Course. Contact him on bobsbanter@gmail.com for more details



# A Perfect Gift Idea for all Special Occasions!

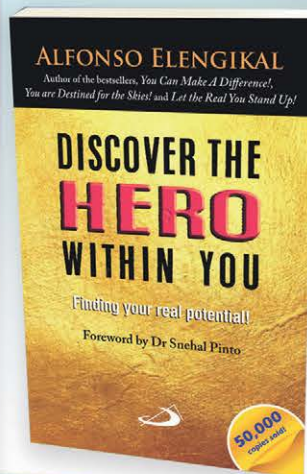
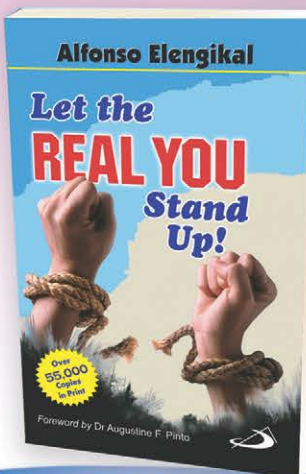
*From the Best Selling author Alfonso Elengikal*

Here's a book that you would like to read not once, but time and again, particularly when you are discouraged, depressed or disappointed. Citing the examples of the well-known and lesser-known individuals from all walks of life, the author challenges the reader to dream big, stating the fact that all of us have power to bring about a change, and to make a difference!



This book is a timeless piece of personal experience woven with anecdotes, inspiring thoughts, and splendid testimonies of multi-faceted personalities who have gone through travails and tribulations to finally emerge triumphant and become a powerful instrument to the entire world. It thoughtfully reflects on all that makes our world a wonderful place to live in.

Highly inspiring and motivational in content, the book lays great stress on the uniqueness of each person. It will surely help the reader encounter the marvel that he/she is within and become aware of the great potential the Creator has equipped him/her with. Each chapter of the book speaks volumes about the authors tete-a-tete with people of all age groups, specially the young.



The author shares real-life stories and anecdotes that will motivate and inspire readers in every age group, particularly the young. He believes that there is a hero / heroine living within each one of us. The discovery and emergence of that hero / heroine is what the contents of this book ably aim at. It is only when we discover that hero, we get to know who we truly are and the potential we hold within. The book will really help you do that.

**Price: ₹ 80 each. Full Set ₹ 250. Postage FREE**



**For orders contact  
BETTER YOURSELF BOOKS**

58 / 23<sup>rd</sup> Road, TPS III, Bandra West, Mumbai - 400 050; Email: [marketing@stpauls.in](mailto:marketing@stpauls.in)  
Visit us at: [www.betteryourselfbooks.com](http://www.betteryourselfbooks.com) OR Call M: 98338 07756





**ICPA AWARD WINNER**

**Indian Currents**  
JOURNALISM WITH A SOUL

**Uninterrupted publication of unbiased views**  
**Analysis of social and political issues**  
**Without Fear or Favour**



Normal Post	
1 Year	Rs. 780
2 Years	Rs. 1560
3 Years	Rs. 2340

Registered Post	
1 Year	Rs. 1500.00
2 Years	Rs. 3000.00
3 Years	Rs. 4500.00

Bank Transfer Details	
Bank Name	<b>FEDERAL BANK</b>
Branch Name	<b>MAYUR VIHAR-I</b>
Account Name	<b>INDIAN CURRENTS</b>
Account Number	<b>14780200001353</b>
IFSC Code	<b>FDRL0001478</b>

Indian Currents, 375-A, Pocket-2, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110091

Tel: 011 - 45873264 | Email: icdelhi@gmail.com, frsureshmathew@gmail.com

DD/MO/Cheque in favour of Indian Currents, Delhi

**NOTE**

After making the remittances please write to us giving the details  
 (name of the bank, date of remittance, amount, payment reference number)