

# Indian Currents

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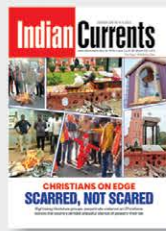
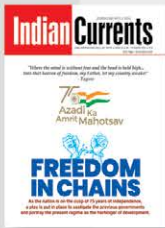
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*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high...  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!"  
- Tagore*



## FREEDOM IN CHAINS

As the nation is on the cusp of 75 years of independence, a ploy is put in place to castigate the previous governments and portray the present regime as the harbinger of development.



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## A JOURNEY SPANNING 75 YEARS



From subjugation to independence is no small step. For those who gave sweat and blood to an unprecedented struggle through the unheard method of non-violence, the Independence Day of 1947 was the most memorable one, unparalleled and supreme. Whatever the country is today, its evolution through layers of growth, is the result of many visionary leaders. It was Jawaharlal Nehru's left-of-the-centre ideology and long-term planning by then leaders and experts that gave birth to several public sector undertakings which changed the destiny of the country. Their focus on infrastructure development like dams, known as 'temples' of modern India, laid the foundation of a new nation.

As the nation is on the cusp of 75 years of independence, a narrative has emerged looking down upon the achievements of the past seven decades. A ploy is put in place to castigate the previous governments and portray the present regime as the harbinger of development. Only those who refuse to see the 'monuments and landmarks' of development would babble such non-sense and create a hallow around the incumbent government. Going into the whole gamut of data would be unwieldy, but a glimpse into some of the statistics would nail the lie of the camp followers of the present regime. From 21 universities in 1947, it has gone up to 1000 varsities; from 19 medical colleges, the number has zoomed to 542; those who play around with the education system should learn from the IITs and IIMs which played a stellar role in producing experts who worked wonders domestically and globally. Moving to another area, the total length of national highways at the time of independence was about 21,000 kms which has phenomenally gone up to 1.40 lakh kms, with India becoming the second largest road networks in the world. One can fetch an unending list of achievements since Independence though 'Goebbels in the government' would spin a yarn of different nature.

At a time when the focus has moved from promoting scientific temper to Vedic science, Vedic mathematics, myths and mythology, the ruling coterie refuses to admit the Herculean efforts undertaken for rebuilding India with the five-year-plans. Only those with jaundiced views can turn a blind eye to the mega public sector undertakings that revolutionized industrial production; the farm sector too made quantum jump making the country from a food grain importing one to exporting one. The present regime is reaping the benefits of the profit-making national assets, created by the previous regimes, by selling them to fill the public exchequer.

It is indisputable that the Modi government has implemented many major schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana with 42 crore bank accounts; Mudra Yojana through which a few lakh crores have been disbursed as loans; the Ujjwala Yojana under which as many as 9 crore LPG connections were given to the poor. The Swachh Bharat Mission was yet another ambitious project to build 10 crore toilets to make India open defecation free. So far so good. But the other side of these mega schemes are disconcerting. Over 4 crore households, who got gas connections under the scheme, have not gone for a refill; Many Jan Dhan Yojana accounts have no balance in their accounts; many of the toilets are lying unused. The ruling party and its government which tom-tom the success stories and find happiness in berating the previous regimes should give a thought to the success rate of its prestigious schemes.

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

Happy Reading!

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

**Dr. Suresh Mathew**  
Editor

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## POWER QUOTES



Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing

**Mother Teresa**

• • •



You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty

**Mahatma Gandhi**

• • •



Luxury and Lies have huge maintenance costs. But Truth and Simplicity are self-maintained without any cost

**APJ Abdul Kalam**

• • •



Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do

**Nelson Mandela**

• • •



If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door- or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present

**Rabindranath Tagore**

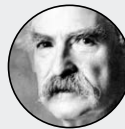
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If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door- or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present

**Soren Kierkegaard**

• • •



The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.

**Mark Twain**

• • •



Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hopes of reward after death

**Albert Einstein**

• • •

*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high...  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!"  
- Tagore*



**Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav**



**FREEDOM  
IN CHAINS**

# FREEDOM for WHOM?

Freedom is being throttled in India - at every possible level. Millions are still not free. It was not without reason that Tagore wrote long years ago, "Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!"

BY CEDRIC PRAKASH

Over one hundred years ago, Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote his immortal poem on 'Freedom.' It became part of his celebrated and prize-winning 'Gitanjali'. The visionary that he was, Tagore would perhaps have envisaged the India of 2022 when penning his poem. Even a superficial reading of the text would goad one to spontaneously exclaim, "the words are all about India today!" No one would be able to contest this hard truth when one reads,

*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*

*Where knowledge is free*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments*

*By narrow domestic walls*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection*

*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way*

*Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit*

*Where the mind is led forward by thee*

*Into ever-widening thought and action*

*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,  
let my country awake!"*



As India completes seventy-five years of freedom - a platinum jubilee - the only question one needs to ask at this critical juncture of the country's history is "Freedom for Whom?"

"Freedom for Whom?" Since March 2020, it has been a disastrous period for many: the pandemic COVID-19 played havoc with lives and livelihoods of millions. The victims, in good measure, were (and continue to be!) the poor and the vulnerable; the marginalised and the minorities; the excluded and the exploited; the Adivasis and the Dalits; women and children; the small farmers and the migrant workers and other sub-altern sections of society. It is a bad time for human rights in India: in a systematic but brutal manner, the legitimate rights of people are not only denied but are crushed. To add to it, human rights defenders, and others who take a visible and vocal stand against a regime which is anti-people, anti-democracy and anti-Constitutional, are at the receiving end of a system which reeks of vendetta.

"Freedom for Whom?" Not for Democracy! Democracy is slowly but

Law is not a mere one-way projection of authority. Renowned scholars have therefore argued that a law cannot really be classified as a 'law' unless it imbibes within itself the ideals of justice and equity

where the mind  
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and the head is held high  
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where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action  
into that heaven of freedom  
My Father  
let my country awake



rabindranath  
tagore

## The rights of minorities are being crushed: it keeps happening at a frightening regularity. Muslims and Christians are at the receiving end of venomous hate speeches, constant denigration and even attacks

systematically being dismantled in the country! Democratic space is shrinking! The V-Dem Institute at Sweden's University of Gothenburg recently published its 'Democracy Report 2022: Autocratisation Changing Nature?' India's performance is dismal. The report states that "an anti-plural political party (is) driving a country's autocratisation." It was ranked 93rd in the LDI (Liberal Democratic Index); India figures in the "bottom 50%" of countries. It has slipped further down in the Electoral Democracy Index, to 100, and even lower in the Deliberative Component Index, at 102. In South Asia, India is ranked below Sri Lanka (88), Nepal (71), and Bhutan (65) and above Pakistan (117) in the LDI.

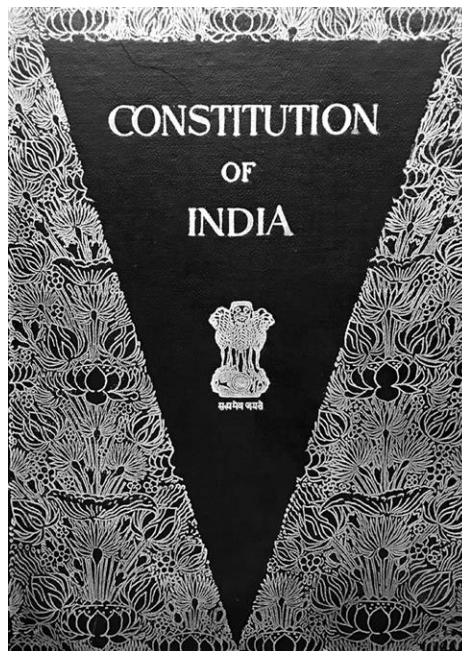
While delivering the inaugural speech recently at the Justice S.B. Sinha Memorial Lecture on 'Life of a Judge', Chief Justice of India, N.V. Ramana observed that in absence of judicial review, people's faith in the Constitution of India would have diminished. He added, "after the end of the 2nd World War, it was clear for modern democracies that law is not a mere one-way projection of authority. Renowned scholars have therefore argued that a law cannot really be classified as a 'law' unless it imbibes within itself the ideals of justice and equity. Any enactment devoid of the object of substantive fairness can never be justified on the grounds of meeting procedural fairness alone."

**"Freedom for Whom?"** Not for

human rights defenders, dissenters and others who take a visible and vocal stand for truth and justice. This regime brooks no dissent. What is happening to those arrested in the Bhima- Koregaon conspiracy case where fourteen are still languishing in prison (for more than three years) under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) is a case in point. There are many others who are incarcerated for no reason and even denied bail including those who protested against the CAA. Eminent citizens like Teesta Setalvad, R.B. Sreekumar, Sanjiv Bhatt and others are imprisoned and denied bail just because they spoke out against the regime! On 2 August, the Allahabad High Court rejected the bail plea of journalist Siddique Kappan, who was arrested in October 2021, booked under the UAPA and on charges of sedition in connection with the Hathras rape case. Interestingly, the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana while delivering the 17th Justice P.D. Desai Memorial Trust lecture on 30 June spoke at length about the importance of dissent and accountability in a democracy.

**"Freedom for Whom?"** Not for minorities! The rights of minorities are being crushed: it keeps happening at a frightening regularity. Muslims and Christians are at the receiving end of venomous hate speeches, constant denigration and even attacks. From the verdict on the Babri Masjid to the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A regarding Kashmir

has deepened the communal divide. The 'Love Jihad' law of UP is clearly focussed on a Muslim boy marrying a Hindu girl. There has been a spate of unconstitutional anti-conversion laws in the country. A real bogey and which certainly violates the fundamental rights of a citizen. The Gujarat Government wants the Bhagwad Gita to be taught in schools and that all primary schools must do a 'pujan' to 'Bharat Mata' these days. In Assam the latest is 'flood jihad' – when Muslims are held responsible (and even arrested) for the torrential rains and floods in the State. In Madhya Pradesh recently, in a mob lynching







incident for alleged cattle smuggling, a Muslim was killed and two others seriously injured!

For the second year in a row, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its Annual Report 2022 has placed India on the list of 'Countries of Particular Concern' (CPCs). In this list, India has been placed alongside countries like Afghanistan, China, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and a few others. The Report stated, "In 2021, religious freedom conditions in India significantly worsened. During the year, the Indian government escalated its promotion and enforcement of policies -- including those promoting a Hindu-nationalist agenda -- that negatively affect Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, and other religious minorities. The government continued to systemize its ideological vision of a Hindu state at both the national and state levels through the use of both existing and new laws and structural changes hostile to the country's religious minorities."

**"Freedom for Whom?"** Not for the environment!

The environment is being crushed and with that, the rights of all the citizens. Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has given a green signal to more than forty projects without the mandatory environmental clearances. Most of these projects favour their rich crony capitalist friends literally giving them a license to loot, plunder and rape the environment and much more. The felling of thousands of trees and the destruction of a natural sanctuary in Mollem, Goa, brought thousands of Goans out on the streets. The aim of

the project was to build a double track railway line for the shipping of coal for the Corporation of one of the country's henchmen. Our precious biodiversity and our fragile ecosystems are being destroyed. The Government does not care and has clearly gone on a downward spiral: doing everything they can to destroy the environment; the Western Ghats and the Aravalli Hills; the metro shed in the Aarey forest; the Bullet train project being re-started; the building of a dam in Dibang; the selling of coal mines to private companies and much more.

The Environment Performance Index 2022, by the World Economic Forum, has ranked India last among 180 countries on the list. According to the report, India's 10-year change in terms of environmental performance was in the negative range (-0.60). Even countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Myanmar rank ahead of India on the list. The Report states that, "The United States, along with China, India, and Russia, will account for over 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 unless decision-makers in these countries strengthen climate change policies and accelerate decarbonization efforts.... India, with increasingly dangerous air quality and rapidly rising greenhouse gas emissions, falls to the bottom of rankings for the first time."

"Freedom for Whom?" Not for equality! The 'World Inequality Report 2022' by the World Inequality Lab clearly states that, India is now among the most unequal countries in the world. According to the report, "The average national income of the Indian adult population is INR 204,200. While the bottom 50% earns INR 53,610, the top 10% earns more than 20 times more (INR 1,166,520). While the top 10% and top 1% hold respectively 57% and 22% of total national income, the bottom 50% share has gone down to 13%. India stands out as a poor and

**India's 10-year change in terms of environmental performance was in the negative range (-0.60). Even countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Myanmar rank ahead of India on the list**

very unequal country, with an affluent elite.” The report also talks about stark gender inequality in India. As per the report, the share of female labour income is a meagre 18 per cent. This value is one of the lowest in the world, slightly higher than the average share in the Middle East (15 per cent).

**“Freedom for Whom?”** Not for freedom of speech and expression! India’s ranking in the World Press Freedom Index 2022 fell to 150 out of the 180 countries that were ranked. The report, published by Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF-Reporters Without Borders), ranks countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists. India’s fact file in the report declares India as one of the world’s most dangerous countries for the media.

The report observes, “With an average of three or four journalists killed in connection with their work every year, Journalists are exposed to all kinds of physical violence including police violence, ambushes by political activists, and deadly reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt local officials. Supporters of Hindutva, the ideology that spawned the Hindu far right, wage all-out online attacks on any views that conflict with their thinking. Terrifying coordinated campaigns of hatred and calls for murder are conducted on social media, campaigns that are often even more violent when they target women journalists, whose personal data may be posted online as an additional incitement to violence. The situation is also still very worrisome in Kashmir, where reporters are often harassed by police and paramilitaries, with some being subjected to so-called “provisional” detention for several years.”

**“Freedom for Whom?”** Not for the Adivasis! Their



rights continue to be crushed: one experiences this, the way the jal-jungle-jameen is being taken away from them. The areas which they have inhabited for centuries are used for industrialisation and commercial purposes, mining is rampant for profiteering of the mafia, the so-called ‘development’ works and other mega-projects are geared to making the non-Adivasis richer! More than two million of Adivasis and other forest-dwellers still remain at risk of forced displaced and loss of livelihoods after their claims to stay on in their habitats under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected. Many Adivasis from the Kevadia area (which is around India’s latest white elephant – a statue in the name of Sardar Patel) were made to leave their homes overnight. Fortunately, for the moment the anti-Adivasi river-linking project has been stalled due to protests. Adivasis are being denied their rights under PESA (the Provisions of the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996) -- a law enacted by the Government of India for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India. Fr. Stan Swamy struggled for the dignity and the rights of the Adivasis and was ultimately the victim of an institutional murder.

**“Freedom for Whom?”** Not for the casual labourers, the migrant workers, the small farmers and the unemployed. Together they comprise a large section of India’s population and most of them are poor. They have to eke out a living even to survive. That is a fact. The anti-worker labour codes, the anti-farmer legislation (which is now kept in cold storage), the raw deal given to migrant workers are all symptomatic of a sick system which caters only to



a particular segment of people. In the 2021 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 101 out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate the GHI scores. With a score of 27.5, India has a level of hunger that is serious. Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021 (MPI) is in line with the global index released by the United Nations each year. According to the Global MPI 2021, India is ranked 66 out of 109 countries

**“Freedom for Whom?”** Not for those who oppose the Government! It is not only the human rights defenders who are targeted – but anyone who opposes the Government in any way including the opposition leaders. So, the Government introduces and uses draconian legislations like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Writing in Indian Express (29 July 2022), well-known intellectual Pratap Bhanu Mehta says, ‘By upholding PMLA, SC puts its stamp on Kafka’s law. The money laundering Act is opaque and draconian, gives state arbitrary powers over citizens. Now, it has the SC’s approval. Mehta firmly states, “So imagine a law that is Kafkaesque in its opacity. An investigation commences against you. Some vague ground of it is shared with you, but you are completely in the dark about the Enforcement Case Report (the analogue of an FIR). Or, you are summoned and you do not even know if you are being summoned as a witness or as an accused. Nor are the full grounds of arrest shared with you. Now imagine further that you apply for bail. You are considered such a threat to the state that bail cannot be granted without hearing the prosecution and you are required to prove your innocence



to get bail. Now further imagine that the definition of crime under this Act is almost infinitely elastic – what counts as money laundering crimes include everything in the kitchen sink. The sovereign has immense latitude to define what counts as the relevant crime. It can also in a classic instance of rule by law change the presumption of innocence”. The way citizens are being subjected to this draconian law is there for all to see.

A few days ago, a well-known school in Vadodara had planned a field trip for kindergarten children to a mosque in the city. All the parents (mainly Hindu) had given a written voluntary consent to this trip. However, the Bajrang Dal vehemently protested against it forcing the principal to cancel the trip. One of the parents said, “My daughter was very excited for this trip and we were even telling her about a mosque as she has never been there before... It is only a field trip and as parents, we have chosen to support the school that is trying to teach children the values of harmony and unity. There was no pressure on parents to send children to any activity or field trip.” That sums it all! Freedom is being throttled in India – at every possible level! Millions of Indians are still not free! It was not without reason that Tagore wrote long years ago, “Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!” ☺

**More than two million of Adivasis and other forest-dwellers still remain at risk of forced displaced and loss of livelihoods after their claims to stay on in their habitats under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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# Har Ghar Tiranga

## Symbolism without Substance

Let the *Har Ghar Tiranga* movement be an occasion for the BJP and the Sangh Parivar leaders to introspect on the core values symbolized by the tricolour

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

**A**s part of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to the people to strengthen the '*Har Ghar Tiranga*' movement by hoisting or displaying the national flag in their homes between August 13 and 14. "Today, we recall the monumental courage and efforts of all those who dreamt of a flag for free India when we were fighting colonial rule. We reiterate our commitment to fulfil their vision and build the India of their dreams," he said.

This is not the first time that the PM resorts to this kind of symbolic act. In order to face the situation of pandemic Covid 19, the PM asked people to come out with lamps, torches, candles or even use mobile phone's flashlights for 9 minutes at 9 pm on April 5, 2020 as a mark of 'our fight against Covid-19'. Prior to that, the PM had asked people to show up on their balconies and gates to applaud unsung warriors against coronavirus during the 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday, March 20, 2020. These two symbolic actions were not followed by real actions on the part of the government when the second wave of coronavi-



rus hit the people of India very badly. The frightening pictures of hundreds of bodies floating in the Ganga exposed the failure of the government to translate symbolism into reality.

As reported in the media, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, said that tricolour would be hoisted on more than 1.5 crore houses in the state. The million-dollar question is whether this spectacle will in any way contribute to strengthening the values symbolized by the tricolour, when the spirit of the Indian Constitution is recklessly being trampled upon by targeting the minorities and weakening the democratic institutions.

Many critics of the BJP have pointed out the hypocrisy of the saffron party for its intense love for the tricolour. Former Karnataka Minister K S Eshwarappa made a statement on 30th May 2022 that *Bhagwa Dwaj* will become the national flag in the future. "We place it before us in the *Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh* and pray daily to promote the concept of reunification. I have no doubt that it will become our national flag one day," he said. None of the BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, did utter a word against the statement of Eshwarappa. If the BJP holds the tricolour in high esteem the party should have immediately condemned the statement of Eshwarappa and warned him of making such 'anti-national' statements.

History is a witness to the aversion of the RSS, the parent organization of the ruling party and of the PM, towards the national flag. On the eve of Independence, when the nation was preparing to celebrate freedom, RSS's mouthpiece *Organiser* had declared that the tricolour will "never be respected and owned by the Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is inju-



rious to a country." The second sarsanghchalak of RSS, M S Golwalkar, in his book, *Bunch of Thoughts*, has expressed his dislike towards the tricolour. "Our leaders have set up a new flag for the country. Why did they do so? It is just a case of drifting and imitating... Ours is an ancient and great nation with a glorious past. Then, had we no flag of our own? Had we no national emblem at all these thousands of years? Undoubtedly, we had. Then why this utter void, this utter vacuum in our minds?"

It is pertinent to recall that RSS did not accept the present Constitution of India. Three days after the Constituent Assembly passed the Constitution, the *Organizer*, in an editorial, rejected it and demanded the archaic Manusmriti as the Constitution of India. It wrote, "But in our Constitution, there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day, his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing."

The national flag and the Constitution of India are not two separate entities. The national flag symbolizes the vision of India as reflected in the preamble of Constitution, an inclusive nation committed to dharma, rule of law. The three colours represent the diversity of India, especially diversity in religion and culture.

What does the national flag symbolize? Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, former President of India, has given a relevant explanation of the national flag and its symbolism. "*Bhagwa* or the Saffron denotes renunciation or disinterestedness. Our leaders must be indifferent to material gains and dedicate themselves to their work. The white in the centre is light, the path of truth to guide our conduct. The green shows our relation to (the) soil, our relation to the plant life here, on which all other life depends. The "Ashoka Chakra" in the centre of the white is the wheel of the law of dharma. Truth or *Satya*, *dharma* or virtue ought to be the controlling principle of those who work under this flag. Again, the wheel denotes motion. There is death in stagnation. There is life in movement. India should no more resist change, it must move and go forward. The wheel represents the dynamism of a peaceful change".

According to some political analysts, a significant underlying symbolism of the three colours is based

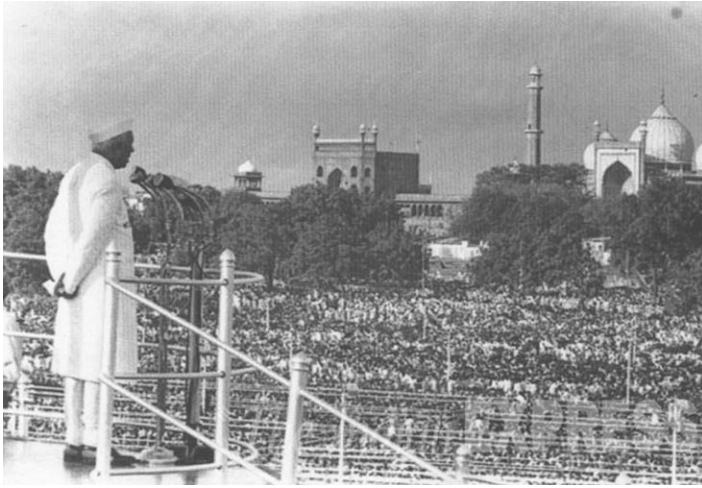


on the secular principles of Indian Constitution. "The saffron represents Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, the white is for Christianity and the green stands for Islam. The flag as a whole represents a confluence of all religious principles, but above all a philosophy of pluralism and righteousness as depicted by the Ashok Chakra in the middle".

According to the PM, the purpose of the *Har Ghar Tiranga* movement is to reiterate the commitment of the people to fulfil the vision of freedom fighters and build an India of their dreams. The vision and dream of the freedom fighters are unambiguously outlined in the Constitution of India, especially the preamble. The core constitutional values as mentioned in the preamble are Secular, Democracy, Justice, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity that assures the Dignity of the individual and the Unity and integrity of the nation. Are these values being protected and promoted under the aegis of the BJP government?

Ever since the BJP government came to power under the leadership of Narendra Modi in 2014, India has been witnessing a serious erosion in the practice of the constitutional values and principles. Prominent among them are dharma or rule of law and pluralism/secularism. The Ashok Chakra in the middle of the flag symbolizes these two core values. The *dharmachakra* with 24 spokes symbolizes the incredible diversity of India.

The government in a democracy is expected to be impartial and even-handed in implementing the laws. Rule of law or equality before law is the foundation of democracy. It appears that today two sets of laws are operative in India -- one for those



PM Nehru addresses the nation from the Red Fort on 15 August 1947

who are with the BJP government and its allies and the other for the opposition parties and those who are critical of the government. The BJP governments at the Centre and in the states have been blatantly partial in the application of laws. Examples are plenty. The central agencies like CBI and ED are haunting leaders of the opposition parties and putting them in jail without bail. Anil Deshmukh and Nawab Malik of Maharashtra are only two examples. Nobody claims that they are innocent, but the question is why the Central agencies are not finding any corruption cases against those who are in BJP and its supporters. Are they all saints? Why is no action being taken against those who joined the BJP after deserting their former parties? A good number of them were under the scanner of the central agencies before switching sides.

The bias of the government agencies was evident in the BJP leader Nupur Sharma's case. Despite her statements having dangerous and violent consequences, she was not arrested. On the contrary, Mohammad Zubair was arrested on frivolous charges in seven cases. The Supreme Court had to intervene and say that he was subjected to a "vicious cycle of criminal process". But the central agencies who are totally under the control of the BJP government continue their highly biased approach in different corruption cases. Against this backdrop one is compelled to ask "How is dharma symbolized by the Ashok Chakra in the middle of our national flag being practiced?"

Secularism or pluralism, the heritage of India for

millennia, has been the biggest casualty ever since the BJP came to power. The process of dismantling the secular fabric, initiated during the BJP regime under the moderate Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was intensified during the second innings of the Modi regime. Hate speech and violence against Muslims have become common since 2014. The passing of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the brutal suppression of protests against the anti-constitutional law is a proof of the blatant discrimination against Muslims by the government of a secular state which should not favour or disfavour any particular religion. No serious action was taken against the leaders of *Dharamsansad* who had given an open call for genocide of Muslims. According to the information furnished by a Delhi-based socio-cultural organization, Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD), in a book titled 'Hate Grips the Nation', from 2014 to 2022, around 878 cases of hate speech (54%) and hate crimes (46%) have occurred in India.

Different states have increasingly passed laws restricting Muslims' religious freedom, including anti-conversion laws, bans on praying in public places and on wearing headscarves in schools. The BJP governments have turned to extrajudicial means to punish Muslims, through a practice called, "bulldozer justice" invented by UP CM Yogi Adityanath and replicated by other BJP chief ministers. Recently the Karnataka chief minister Basvaraj Bommai said that his government would not shy away from adopting Yogi Adityanath's model to take tough action against 'anti-national and communal elements'.

Let the *Har Ghar Thiranka* movement be an occasion for the BJP and the Sangh Parivar leaders, including the Prime Minister, to introspect how they are practising the core values and principles symbolized by the tricolour. It is an occasion for the opposition leaders and people to reflect whether they are ready for a struggle to safeguard the core values of the Constitution and pay the price for protecting secular democracy that is being replaced by a majoritarian theocracy. ©

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Crimes rise against India's Dalits, Tribals

Crimes against tribal people and Dalits or former untouchables in India are steadily increasing, which Church leaders and rights activists say should get serious social attention.

Crimes against tribal people increased 26 percent between 2018 and 2020, while offenses against Dalit people increased by 17 percent a minister told parliament quoting official figures.

Ajay Kumar Mishra, Union junior minister of home, told parliament last week that crimes against Scheduled Tribes (STs), the official term for tribal people, rose from 6,528 in 2018 to 8,272 in 2020, a rise of 26.71 percent. He was quoting data collected by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB).

In the case of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the official term for Dalits, the figure rose from 42,793 to 52,291, an increase of 17.5 percent in three years.

The highest numbers of offenses against tribal and Dalit communities were registered in northern Uttar Pradesh and central Madhya Pradesh states, the minister said.

“The report presented by the minister is worrisome and alarming. The government and civil society should intervene to arrest the slide,” said Father Nicholas Barla, secretary of the Indian Catholic Bishops’ Commission for Tribal Affairs.

Father Barla said the ignorance of the law among the tribal and Dalit communities was being taken advantage of by their traditional oppressors.

“Most of the time the crimes don’t even get reported to the police,” Father Barla said.

Bezwada Wilson, a Dalit Christian activist and winner of the Ramon Magsaysay award, said the crime graph continued to rise over the years. “Irrespective of the government at the helm in New Delhi or the provinces, nothing changes,” he said.

The poor and marginalized people cannot afford the services of a lawyer to fight their cases. Mukti Prakash Tirkey, editor of a weekly newspaper in New Delhi, said “people have no fear for the law. Unless the mainstream society changes its attitude toward the weakest amongst them, nothing would change.”

The rise in crimes against the STs and SCs stood out in stark contrast to the overall trend of drop in crimes during the Covid pandemic period, especially due to the 68-day lockdown across the country, beginning on March 25, 2020.

Overall, recorded cases of crimes rose by 28 percent in the country but this was largely due to cases related to violations of Covid restrictions being registered by the police and administration. ©

(Courtesy: UCANEWS)



Dalit leaders and activists in the national capital protest against the alleged rape and murder of a minor Dalit girl, in New Delhi on Aug. 3, 2021. (Photo supplied)

# Army Still in Colonial Groove

The Indian Army is frozen in the time frame of 1947 when the forces were transferred to the Indian (and Pakistani) national governments

BY N. KUNJU



If a British Commander-in-Chief of pre-independence Indian Army were to walk out of his grave, he would find it as “British” as he left it, more ‘British’ than today’s British Army. It is as if the Indian Army is frozen in the time frame of 1947 when the forces were transferred to the Indian (and Pakistani) national governments.

The reasons for this are several. Almost all colonial struggles for independence were violent armed conflict. Only India opted for Gandhiji’s Ahimsa and Satyagraha. Therefore, the mainstream independence movement constituted passive resistance, ‘injure ourselves’ rather than the oppressors. The freedom fighters confronted bullets, lathis and imprisonment. But the British administrators were not wounded, at least bodily. Of course, many times, their conscience was injured; but then, that was what Satyagraha was all about.

It is a fact that apart from the non-violent stream, there were militant and subversive patriotic groups who attacked the empire. The British dealt with them mercilessly and the armed forces and the police were let loose on them. They were shot dead, those who were caught alive were hanged, and their near ones were tortured and terrorized. This was a field in which the British could cope with more easily than

with the non-violent freedom fighters.

Normally, the national liberation movements of colonial countries had an influence on the native armies. But in India, the Army was left alone by the non-violent as well as the violent streams of the freedom struggle. The British, chastened by the 1857 mutiny, did their best to alienate the Army from the civil. The troops were quarantined in cantonments, their interaction with the civil population was strictly restricted and the spirit of caste, religion and region was promoted to undermine the patriotic sentiments of the soldiers. As such, the national movements had very little effect on the armed forces till the World War II.

During the war, the Indian armed forces saw tremendous expansion. The British authorities could no more be choosy in having recruits for the forces. A large number of middle class youth had to be inducted into the technical wing of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The experience of the Indian troops who fought in the theatres of war in Europe and other parts of the world helped to widen their vision and inspire their patriotic sentiments. The joining of Soviet Russia with the Allies against the Nazi-Fascist Axis turned the imperialist war into a ‘peoples war’ for the communists all over the world. This removed the stigma of supporting the British in the war effort for a considerable section of the Indian political left. But they turned against the British when the war was over. They came out in open support of the national movement and against the racial discrimination by their British officers as happened in the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny and revolts in Air Force units.

The Indian National Army (INA) too caused the breakdown of army men’s colonial mindset. Thousands of Indian soldiers captured by the Japanese on the Eastern front joined the INA to fight the British. Of course, these men had to surrender to the British



when the Japanese were routed from Burma, Singapore and Malaya. But the defeat did not tarnish the image of INA; instead, they became the symbol of patriotism and national unity. The trial of INA officers by the tottering British regime in India became the rallying point for the national upsurge in 1945-46, in which the armed forces too took part.

All these show that, when India became independent, there were two streams in the armed forces – the mainstream military machine that the British handed over to the governments of India and Pakistan and the amalgam of rebels who took part overtly or covertly in the freedom struggle who were dismissed by the British. Naturally the two segments were antagonistic to each other.

No doubt, the national leaders who inherited power from the British had a soft corner in their hearts for those in the armed forces who had rebelled against the British and strengthened the freedom struggle. At least Jawaharlal Nehru, who became first Prime Minister, had justified the patriotic actions of the members of the armed forces. During the RIN revolt, Nehru said: “Our armed forces have every right to revolt against foreign ruler in order to achieve the freedom of the country. The C-in-C in his broadcast has said that he will not countenance any political intrigue in the armed forces and that discipline is the essential thing. I do believe in what he says. But that army should be a free army of a free country. Our boys cannot divorce politics and work as mere automatons of the foreign government. Our army, in my opinion, should be fully politically conscious, because besides being soldiers, they had to be the citizens of the country, they have to discharge that duty to the people. I have all sympathy for the RIN boys.”

Nehru had the clear vision of what free India's government should do to the freedom fighters of armed forces. He said the INA had fought well and he would use his good offices to reinstate them and place them in the correct order of seniority. India now required a national army with national outlook and hinted that Mohan Singh might become the C-in-C. Captain Mohan Singh of the Punjab Regiment was the organizer of the Indian National Army and became the General of the INA.

However, Nehru's vision was never fulfilled even though he remained Prime Minister for long 17 years. The reason was the Indian officers of the Army and the Navy resisted the freedom fighters of the armed forces in free India's forces and the British C-in-C



who continued to command the Indian Army supported their resistance.

The King's Commissioned Indian Officers (KCIOs) who surfaced to the top when hundreds of British officers left the country in 1947 were panicky that INA officers may usurp them from top posts when the British officers left. However, the exigencies of the post-independence developments and the Pak invasion of Kashmir, made the political leaders totally dependent on the then existing Indian officers. The senior officers, who were catapulted from colonels to generals, ensured that the freedom fighters of the forces never rejoined the armed forces of free India. They made rules that blacklisted the INA personnel and Naval mutineers and all servicemen dismissed by the British as undesirable. The politicians in power, who were themselves freedom fighters, ditched their colleagues in uniform when they made ICS and KCIOs as trustees of the administration of the country.

The civil-military bureaucracy in India prevailed upon the politicians in power to keep the Army in its colonial character on the excuse of keeping it apolitical. Communal regiments, devised by the British for their 'divide and rule' policy, still continue. It is caste and ethnic traditions rather than patriotism that motivate the Indian soldiers. The excuse for not effecting any radical changes has been that the system is time tested.

What path the Indian authorities should have taken to make Indian Army to come out of the colonial groove and would the Modi Government's Agnipath be the right path for the change? This can be discussed in another article. ©

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**N. KUNJU** is a journalist, and an ex-serviceman, who had served both in the British Indian and independent India's Army

# A Call to Freedom Struggle 2.0

At a time when India is moving away from democracy, hoisting national flag at homes could not be the sole criteria for showing one's patriotism

BY **GEORGE A. SEBASTIN BABU**

As India gears up for celebrating its 75th Independence Day, the Prime Minister appealed to people to strengthen the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' movement by hoisting or displaying the national flag in their homes between August 13 and 15. He insisted saying "we recall the monumental courage and efforts of all those who dreamt of a flag for free India when we were fighting colonial rule. We reiterate our commitment to fulfill their vision and build India of their dreams." On the other hand, the Union Home Minister reiterated that it is meant to strengthen patriotism of the countrymen. Keeping aside all the drawbacks, it is true that hoisting the national flag at my home may 'recall all those who dreamt and shed their blood for free India and further strengthen my patriotism.' Though the rulers have made these statements for political gain, I find a dangerous element that would bring back another freedom struggle.

Today, as a citizen of India, I celebrate the 75th Independence Day, but I fear that I am free no more. My fundamental rights like Right to Equality, Right to freedom, Right against exploitation, Right to freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights and Right to constitutional Remedies are taken away by the rulers. I pay tax for my daily food (GST); my land and minerals are sold to multinational companies; my money may lose its value (Demonetization); my citizenship is under threat (CAA, NRC); my security is under risk (*Agnipath*); my education is under peril (NEP, NEET); I can't eat what I like (beef); I can't wear the dress I prefer (hijab); I can't worship whom I like (*hindutva*); I can't express what I feel (ED, CBI, IT); I can't maintain my privacy (Pegasus); I can't reside at my home (bulldoze); I can't pinpoint my rulers' failures (unparliamentary words); nothing is safe in the country (No Data Available); my state govern-



ment may go unstable at any time (buying MLAs); I don't get justice from the judicial system; bills are passed with no discussion; my country's first citizen is used as political rubber stamp; my farmers commit suicide; employees go jobless; I don't get government services free of cost; the bank in which I deposit money may go bankrupt; and what else and what not... Ultimately my independent, democratic and constitutional rights and values are demolished and bulldozed by the rulers who talk about nationalism and patriotism.

Recalling the monumental courage and efforts of all those who dreamt of a flag for free India, is dangerous for the rulers today.

If the true patriotic spirit of those freedom fighters gets erupted, it will be unbearable for the present neo-colonial rule. If I 'raise the national flag at my home and recall the dreams of the freedom fighters,' my true patriotism should propel me to come to the streets fighting so that I may not lose my freedom once again in the hands of today's 'dictators'. The freedom is a gift brought about by the freedom fighters by their sacrifice and bloodshed, and it is my responsibility to hand it over to my next generation. For which, I should initiate the freedom fight 2.0 against the rulers who deny my rights and freedom. Obviously, the fear I have today in the prevailing situation was there in Dr Ambedkar too who predicted the present scenario.

After the Constitution came into existence, Dr. Ambedkar expressed his fear about losing Independence in the future. It is rather a prophetic call to be cautious about traitors and who would betray the nation. He said, "My mind is so fear of the future of our country... What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought comes to my mind... it is the thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but *she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people.*" He substantiated his fear with examples: "The anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above the country? I do not know." He prophesied, "But this much is certain that if the parties place



creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever."

Dr Ambedkar further said, "What would happen to her Democratic Constitution? It is not that India did not know what is democracy. This democratic system India lost. Will she lose it a second time? I do not know. But it is possible in a country like India, where democracy from its long disuse must be regarded as something quite new, there is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. It is quite possible for this new born democracy its form but give place to dictatorship in fact."

Dr. Ambedkar said about what should be done when Democracy is at stake: "One must not lay down liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions." He says by using the words of the Irish Patriot Daniel O'Connell, "*no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.*" He further says that this caution is very necessary in the case of India. *Bhakti* in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, *Bhakti* or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and eventual dictatorship.

Today, those who talk about patriotism have brought India to such a situation about which Dr Ambedkar feared. Every Indian citizen, on the 75th Independence Day, should undoubtedly re-read Dr. Ambedkar's dangerous prophetic words that foreshadowed today's Indian Constitutional and Democratic situation. There is no surprise even if one believes that India is transiting from democracy to dictatorship. Let us rejuvenate and reenergize our patriotism to come to the streets, keeping the dream of our freedom fighters at forefront, fighting for liberty, equality and fraternity. ☪

# Independence Day **A feast of memories**

We, as a nation, have a long way to go. Our journey began on August 15, 1947, not in 2014

BY **A.J. PHILIP**

I was born six years after India became an independent nation and three years after it became a Republic with a Constitution that incorporates the best in Constitutional thinking the world over. Few new-born countries have invested as much time and thought in the drafting of the Constitution as India. The debates in the Constituent Assembly, which are properly documented and recorded, bear proof of what I stated.

My earliest memory is that of my Aasan (teacher) initiating me into learning on the Vidyarambham (beginning of education) day by helping me write Om Hari Sri Ganapataye Namah (Salutations to Hari (Lord Vishnu), Shree (the Goddess of prosperity), and Lord Ganapathy) on a large plate of raw rice that was packed and given to him besides the Dakshina (offertory) that I was asked to give in a betel leaf with a



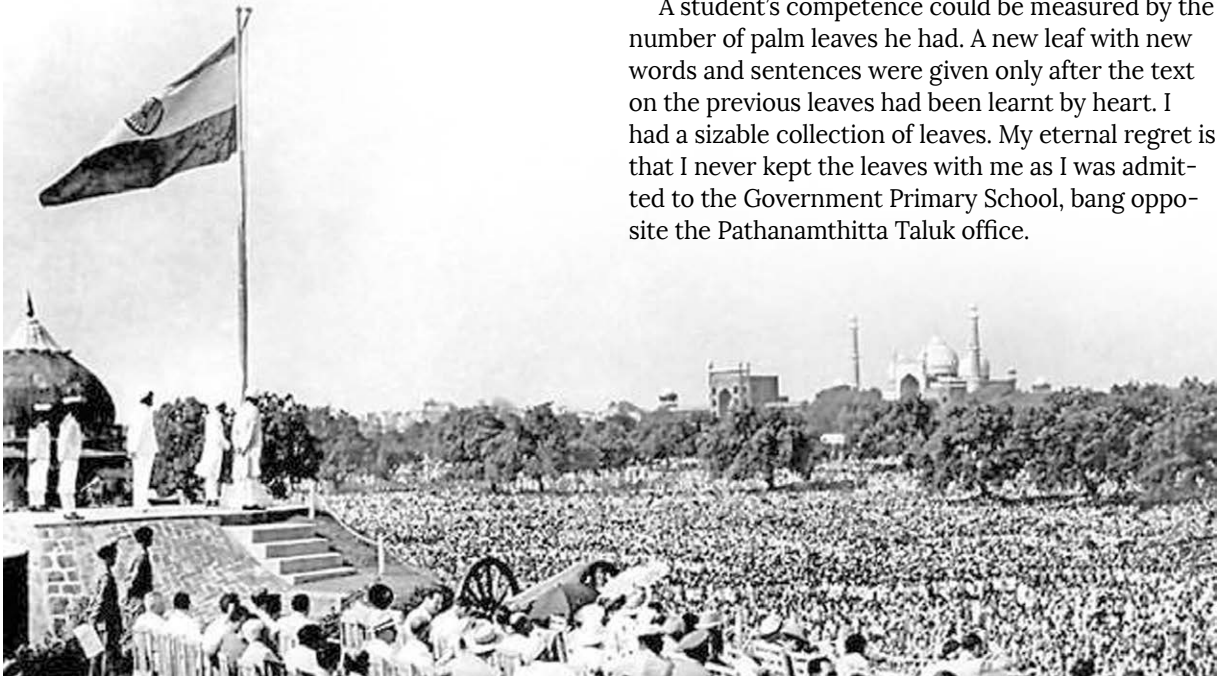
fresh areca nut.

Asan lived on the other side of the Achenkovil river, the only large river in Kerala that has not been tamed, and which is a tributary of the sacred Pampa. He had a nursery school in the heart of Pathanamthitta town where Radha Talkies came

up later. The school was just a small shed with a thatched roof. The only furniture was a stool on which Aasan sat occasionally.

We children brought our own mats to sit on the sand floor. Aasan used palm leaves to write the Malayalam alphabet. He used an iron writing instrument for this purpose. His handwriting was rounded and very beautiful. I was not a bad student. The school was about a kilometre from my house. Aasan took me there every day. Other children were jealous of my proximity to him.

A student's competence could be measured by the number of palm leaves he had. A new leaf with new words and sentences were given only after the text on the previous leaves had been learnt by heart. I had a sizable collection of leaves. My eternal regret is that I never kept the leaves with me as I was admitted to the Government Primary School, bang opposite the Pathanamthitta Taluk office.



I should normally have been admitted to the Marthoma School. Why my parents chose the government school was because we had a neighbour who taught there. She had two sons, one of whom was of my age. I would accompany the teacher and her sons to the school. My parents were free of the bother of my safety.

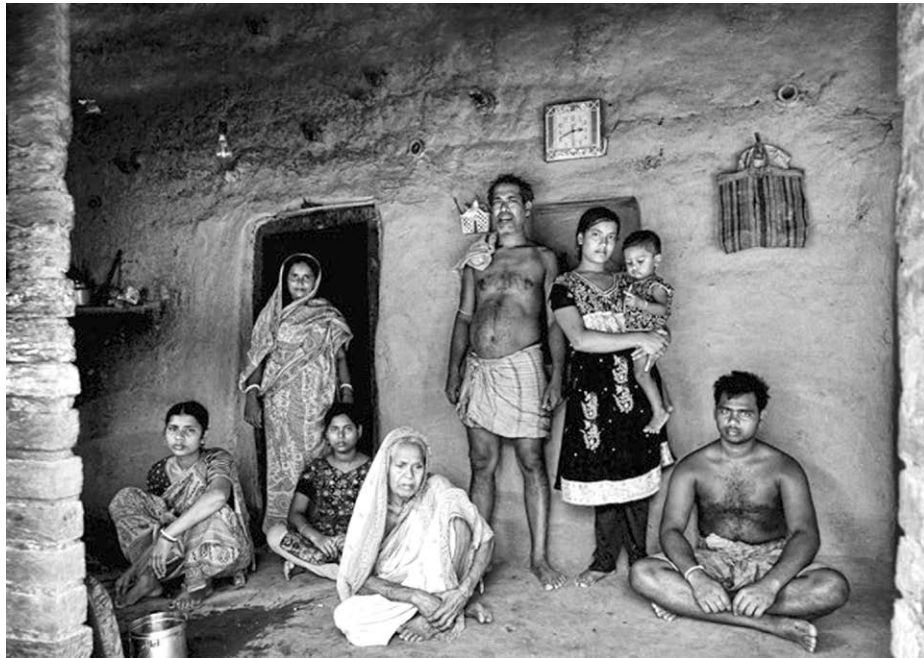
Most of my classmates were Muslims and they were very poor. They did not wear any shirts. All they wore was a towel around their waist. However, I felt jealous of them when at meal time, they were given a large glass of milk, made of milk powder that came courtesy the US government. They were also given Upma, made of imported material.

“Rich” and upper caste children were exempted from the mid-day meal scheme. I had to make do with whatever tiffin that my mother would put in the school bag. I could never taste the milk and Upma. I presume they were good as I had seen teachers having them to their heart’s content in the Teachers Room. I lamented that I was considered “rich”!

Poverty was a reality. In my neighbourhood, people subsisted mainly on dry tapioca. They could not always afford a side dish like the sardine curry. My immediate neighbour was our landlord, who got Rs 10 as monthly rent from us. He had a large family to support. He would go fishing in the Achenkovil. He would bring home some tiny fish after he had sold the main catches.

His wife always complained that he was miserly. They were tired of eating tapioca. She would once in a fortnight or so make dosa dough and make dosa in our kitchen. The children would come home surreptitiously and eat the dosa. She did so because her husband would ask her from where she managed to get rice and pulses to make the dough.

The children were good in studies. They seldom had rice. I saw them making a powder of tamarind seeds and making a dish of it. They used a little jaggery to make the dish tastier. I could never taste it as my mother said it was not good for the stomach. I wondered how they could eat without their stomach getting upset.



Rice was a luxury only a few could afford those days. The poor depended on other cheap substitutes. Around the time I completed my primary education, we shifted to Thekkepuram at Ranny. We had a perennial stream flowing in front of our house. I knew some children from the Paraya community.

I did not know at that time that the Parayas were the lowest in the caste structure. They were very poor. They had big bellies and both boys and girls wore a piece of the fibrous material from the Areca nut tree to cover their nakedness. In retrospect, I wonder why nobody gave them clothes to wear. There were enough rich people in the village.

I found the children very adventurous. They were not afraid of the snakes in the stream. I would follow them as they looked for crabs. Eventually, they would catch some. I did not know how they were cooked or eaten till many decades later my relative took me to an upmarket restaurant in Toronto where crabs and octopus were served.

The children’s parents would occasionally visit my grandfather for permission to pluck a jackfruit from our tree. He would get one plucked for ourselves too. Our house too had a thatched roof. Every year the palm leaves with which the roof was thatched had to be changed.

It was a grand occasion in the village. Neighbours and friends volunteered to do the job. In return they had a feast, served on plantain leaves. All the

crab-catching children too could have liberal helpings of payasam, a sweet dish served at the end of the meal.

School education was free till Class VIII. Most girls dropped out of school at that stage. They would remain at home till they are married off. The good-looking ones had better chances of an early marriage while the others had to wait till someone took pity on them and agreed to a marriage. One of my close friends who was good in studies dropped out at that stage, as he did not want to be a burden to his widowed mother. He started working as a labourer. He would borrow books from me to read.

The monthly fee in Class IX and X was Rs 6. It was a big sum those days. The daily wage of a labourer was Rs 3. That means the fees of a child was worth two days' wages. Today the daily wage is about Rs 1000. That means a monthly fee of Rs 2000! There was a fine of 25 paise if the fee was not paid before the 10th day of the month. The fine would double to 50 paise by the end of the month.

It did not bother the government that a poor boy or girl could not pay fees in time because he/she had no money. How could such students be expected to pay a fine too? I have seen students, especially girls, stop coming to school after their names are struck off the register for non-payment of fees.

Though I remember India's war with China in 1962, I do not have any memories of how it impacted life in our part of Kerala. All I remember is that I took

part in a rally in which we denounced the half-nosed Chou-en-Lai. We had no idea of who Mao was at that time.

However, I have vivid memories of the war with Pakistan in 1965. There was scarcity of food material at Ranny and nearby places. Rice was not available in any of the shops. There were also reports of looting of rice from trucks returning from the Food Corporation of India godown. It was a period when famine stared us in the face.

We had a relative who owned a wholesale ration depot. He managed to send us a sack of rice with which we managed a month. That was the time when tamarind seeds were once again in demand. People found substitutes for rice and tapioca. I remember the kind of relief the people of my village felt when the war ended.

It was the need to feed his family of mother, two brothers and one sister that forced my father to enrol himself in the Army, where he was posted in the Burmese sector during the Second World War. I remember these experiences whenever people talk loosely about a war as the ultimate solution for border disputes.

As children, we looked forward to celebrating Independence Day and Republic Day at the school. One attraction were the lozenges distributed free among the children by the school authorities. The lozenges would not have cost more than 5 paise per child but the happiness they gave us was immeasur-



able. No, we could not afford to have flags at home.

We had two big flags at home. My father would keep them safely. They were hoisted on our buses on Independence Day and the Republic Day.

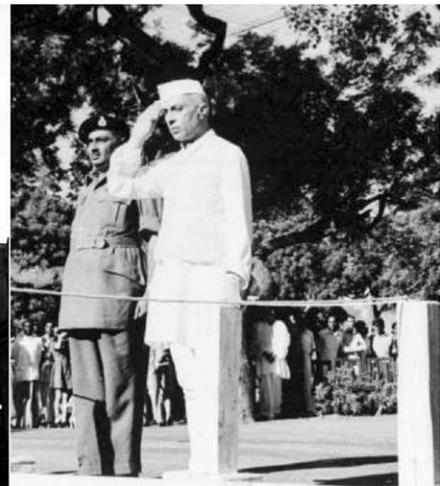
India was a poor country and poverty was visible everywhere. My dream was to buy a Raleigh bicycle but that never happened. The cycle was made in England. We had a teacher who owned a Raleigh. Soon the market was flooded with Indian brands like Hercules, Norton, Phillips and Hero.

It took many years for electricity to reach my village. Our neighbour first got it by paying for several poles to bring electricity to Thekkepuram from Manniram where the Marthoma Church has a diocese office now. That is when I developed the habit of sitting near my neighbour's house in the evening to listen to the Malayalam songs broadcast by Akashvani.

Those days transistor radio was the privilege of a soldier, who would bring it the first time he visited home after training. Most of them took the transistor back. Even if it was left at home, it would seldom be played to save the battery.

After 10th, only few could think of going to a college. By then colleges had come up at Pathanamthitta and Kozhencherry. The rich ones would send their wards to places like Ernakulam and Thiruvanthapuram. The opening of a college at Ranny was a godsend for many.

One of my friends was in the first batch. He became a doctor and settled himself in London after a nurse kicked up a shindy over his alleged affair. Another friend, who initiated me into Malayalam literature by forcing me to read MT Vasudevan Nair's Nalukettu, got a job in the Malayalam department of



Saint Thomas College, Ranny.

By then, we had gone back to Pathanamthitta where Radha Talkies stood where my nursery school once stood. Religiosity had reached such heights that the Orthodox Church bought half a cent of land at Pathanamthitta Junction for over Rs 1 lakh, a princely sum in the late-sixties, to erect a cross. Cross cultivation had become rampant.

On a visit to my alma mater recently, the Principal told me that Christians of the area were no longer interested in studying there. They prefer colleges in Bengaluru, if they can't afford to send their wards to London and Toronto. Kerala has changed and so has India.

The stark poverty that I found in Bihar where I lived for 10 years is no longer there. Nobody remains naked for want of clothes, though I was shocked to find an acquaintance's wife wearing an old blouse, torn multiple times in the first year of the 21st century.

India has come a long way since the time the Birlas bought an antiquated car factory and brought it piece by piece to Kolkata to make and sell Ambassador cars. Today, the first indigenously made aircraft carrier is ready to be commissioned in the Indian Navy. We, as a nation, have a long way to go. Our journey began on August 15, 1947, not in 2014 as some would claim, and we will become a great nation if our progress is not derailed in the name of religion and caste. I wish all my readers a very happy and prosperous Independence Day. ©

**We will become a great nation if our progress is not derailed in the name of religion and caste**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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# Droupadi Murmu

## Inspiring March to Raisina Hills

Droupadi Murmu, a Tribal who served as a ward Councillor, becoming the President of India instills hope and raises aspirations of many

BY **JESSY KURIAN**

**O**n 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022 when India celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day we can be proud that the country got its second woman President for the largest democracy in the world. 64-year-old Droupadi Murmu, born on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1958 as a Tribal child, in a remote village in Mayurbhanji district of Odisha where electricity and internet are unknown to many even today, suddenly marched to Raisina Hills making history.

It is reported that people from her ancestral village have to go to other villages to charge their mobile phones. However, when her Presidential candidature was announced and after media reports surfaced that people in the village are living without electricity, the Odisha government started the electrification work in a portion of Uparbeda, the ancestral village of Murmu. Her victory procession was marked with tribal dance.

When India celebrates its 75th Independence Day, it is pertinent to note the words of Gandhiji, "The role women played in the freedom struggle and making of India should be written in letters of gold". Women made India proud in almost all fields. Even in the writing of the Constitution there were 15 outstanding women in the Constituent Assembly. There were three women from Kerala, Ammu Swaminathan from Palghat district, Dakshayani Velayudhan from Cochin, the first and only Dalit Woman in the Constituent Assembly and Annie Mascarene from a Latin Catholic family from Trivandrum. Two women from Andhra Pradesh were Durgabai Deshmukh and Sarojini Naidu whose fight led to women's right to vote.

Hansa Jivraj Mehta from Gujarat played a vital role that her influence changed the wordings in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal". Leela Roy, Malati Choudhary and Ranuka Ray were from Bengal; U.P was repre-



sented by Purnima Banerjee, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Kamla Chaudhary and Begam Aizaz Rasul, who was the only Muslim woman in the Constituent Assembly; Sucheta Kriplani from Haryana played an important role in Quit India movement. Another eminent woman was Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Delhi who became the first Health Minister of India and founder of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

In sports field, there are several leading women who made our nation proud. The Phogat sisters and family are India's most famous sports women. The six sisters from Balali, Haryana, are known wrestlers on an international level. Deepika Kumari, the





daughter of a rickshaw driver/puller, is the first Indian archer (male and female) ever to be named number one in the world; Sania Mirza, India's finest tennis player; Saina Nehwal and P. V. Sindhu, world badminton champions; Mary Kom, a world boxing champion; Dipa Karmakar, world Gymnastic Champion; Anju Bobby George, a Commonwealth Games winner in long jump and high jump; Sakshi Malik, a world wrestler; Karnam Malleswari, a world champion in Weightlifting etc.

Beyond rocket boys, there are unsung rocket women in India's space history.

Tessy Thomas, a scientist and first woman Director General of Aeronautical systems; Anuradha T.K. who worked as a Project Director of ISRO; Ritu Karidhal, who was a Deputy Operations Director to India's Mars Orbital Mission, known as "Rocket Woman"; Muthayya Vanitha, electronics system engineer with ISRO; Moumita Dutta, Physicist involved in the development of Mars Orbiter Mission; Nandini Harinath, a Rocket scientist at ISRO; V.R. Lalithambika, the senior most scientists at Indian Space Agency, and so on should be remembered with folded hands.

Landmark judgements of the Supreme Court upholding equality and women's dignity are great contribution to the nation. Some of those judgements are: (1) Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan (1997) – women have equal right to work with human dignity/against sexual harassment at workplace; (2) Mary Roy vs State of Kerala(1986) -- Christian daughters have equal right to property as sons; (3) Lata Singh vs State of Uttar Pradesh (2006) -- Adult woman has the right to choose her partner; (4) Roxann Sharma vs Arun Sharma (2015) -- Under the

**The rise of a woman from the forest to the Raisina Hills inspires millions that efforts coupled with opportunity can raise any one to the highest position. As madam Murmu rightly said, "My election is a proof of the fact that in India, the poor can dream"**



**Women who shaped the Indian Constitution**

age of 5 the mother has the right to custody of the child; (5) Laxmi vs Union of India (2006) – Granting adequate compensation for the acid victim; and (6) The Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Punya and Ors (2020), where Supreme Court ordered for the Permanent Commission for women in Army.

However, the rise of a woman from the forest to the Raisina Hills inspires millions that efforts coupled with opportunity can raise any one to the highest position. As madam Murmu rightly said, "My election is a proof of the fact that in India, the poor can dream".

Truly, a Tribal who served as a ward Councilor becoming the President of India instills hope and raises the aspirations of Indians. President Murmu urges the youth to contribute to nation-building. Murmu's concern is highlighted when she said, "I want all our sisters and daughters to be empowered more and more so that they continue to increase their contribution in every field of nation building."

Women's rise in any field through tremendous struggle, and waging war against patriarchy is highly appreciable. Murmu's rise to Raisina Hills also upholds Article 15 of the Constitution that "There shall be no discrimination based on race, religion, caste, sex and place of birth."

In the reign of President Murmu, we look forward to strict implementation of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity ensured by the Constitution of India. ©

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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# Dependent Women in Independent India

BY KULANDAI YESU RAJA

**A**zadi ka Amrit Mahotsav means elixir of energy of independence. It also means elixir of inspirations of the warriors of freedom struggle; elixir of new ideas and pledges to commemorate the monumental occasion. This energy of independence would have been realized and actualized in each and every citizen of the country without any discrimination, inequality and partiality. But the fact is that women have not been energized with full independence; they are still identified as inferior and dependent in their economic, social and moral levels. We are in a position to appreciate and salute so many leaders who worked for the emancipation of women from grassroots level but the cry of women for their equality, safety and empowerment is heard even now in this modernised and technologized epoch. Firmly it can be said and can't be denied that women are still dependent in this independent country.

## Social Dependency

According to Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, we are told that the state shall not deny to any person equality before the laws or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. The state shall not discriminate any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste and sex. The essential premise of liberalism is to treat all citizens equally, and Article 14 ensures that all citizens receive the same treatment. Any individual's liberty is inextricably linked to the level of equality he or she enjoys in society. But

Though constitutionally men and women are equal, socially men are given priority. There are various areas wherein this discrimination is apparent. Most of the Indian families are still patriarchal

regarding equality to women the legal situation in our country is not yet realised entirely.

In comparison with some other social problems, gender discrimination does not “appear” to be a serious problem in India. It “appears” to be so because it has not been made a big social issue so far. But in reality, it has weakened the strength of the female community of India. Though constitutionally men and women are equal, socially men are given priority. There are various areas wherein this discrimination is apparent. Most of the Indian families are still patriarchal. Hence, the philosophy of equality of sex is not acceptable to them. Domestic works such as cooking, looking after the children, washing clothes and vessels, keeping the house neat and clean, looking after the domesticated animals, serving family members like a nurse on all days and especially when they fall sick, etc. are branded as “women’s work”.

## Moral Dependency

Crimes against women have been steadily rising in India over the years. According to the latest NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) report, 2019 saw over 4 lakh reported cases of crimes committed against women, up from 3.78 lakh in 2018 and 3.59 lakh cases in 2017. The report released in 2020 shows a heart-breaking scenario of 88 rape cases a day.



A report in Times of India in November 2021 says that crimes like rapes, women trafficking and sexual assault against minors saw a jump during the pandemic. It has become evident that their own houses are becoming unsafe for women and girls in this independent country.

### Economic Dependency

During the latter part of the Vedic period, the Aryans had sealed the fate of women culturally and socially by denying them the right to study Vedas and thus half of the population was deprived of one of the most fundamental human rights. They were regarded as slaves to men for their economic dependence on them. Even today, in spite of the recognition of women's status equal to that of men, majority of them suffer in primitive ignorance as ever before. Illiteracy and ignorance are prevalent more among women folk than among men-folk and this evil is rampant especially in rural areas and backward communities. Though different Commissions and Committees have made many suggestions, yet there are problems persisting in many fields.

Some of the hurdles in the education of women are: patriarchal system in some families, lack of social consciousness among women, lack of physical facilities, financial difficulties, lack of safety for girls in schools and colleges and problem of transport.

**Illiteracy and ignorance are prevalent more among women folk than among men-folk and this evil is rampant especially in rural areas and backward communities. Though different Commissions and Committees have made many suggestions, yet there are problems persisting in many fields**



### Political dependency

Former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi said that Mother India has offered us strong female freedom fighters like Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali, Durgabai Deshmukh and Savitri Phule, who not only defied the notorious patriarchal norms but also blazed a trail of women's empowerment. Unfortunately, in post-Independence India, women slipped to a secondary status where women leaders can be counted on the fingers: Indira Gandhi, Mayawati, Mamata Banerjee, Jayalalithaa. Women in general continue to remain the neglected sex.

We may acclaim that the new President of India is Droupadi Murmu but the role of the President is minimum to the core. The implementation of 33% reservation for women has not happened at all levels. Hence, the talk of raising it to 50 per cent is out of question.

Problems such as practice of 'sati', prohibition on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, devadasi system, etc. have almost disappeared. But problems have come up in new versions like women trafficking, child abuse, improper attitude towards girls and women and neglecting in the fields of politics and employment. Though women are making progress in the fields of science and technology, universalisation of education, socio-political movements, yet the dependency of women in many fields still remains. ©

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# The Authoritarian Yoke

The oppressor divides the oppressed and keeps them divided in order to remain in power. Do we get to see this tactic in India? If so, we are on the road to despotism

BY **MATHEW JOHN**

*“Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched -- criticism of government by those governed, of leadership by those led – this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society.” -- W E B DuBois*



*“Any people, and especially the Russian people, will always be able to distinguish between the true patriots from the scum and the traitors, and just to spit them out like a midge that accidentally flew into their mouths.” -- Russian President Vladimir Putin*

Political leaders are, for the most part, thin-skinned about anything adverse said about them, as evident from the venomous quote of Putin that prefaces this essay. But such hypersensitivity to criticism is the least problematic aspect of the havoc that Putin and his ilk have wreaked on the world and on the very idea of truth, justice and freedom. One had assumed till recently that Donald Trump coined the term “fake news” but long before the orange-haired fibber used it as a chant to discredit all reporting critical of him, the phrase was pervasive in Russia, where Putin mobilized an army of propagandists, dignified as “political technolo-

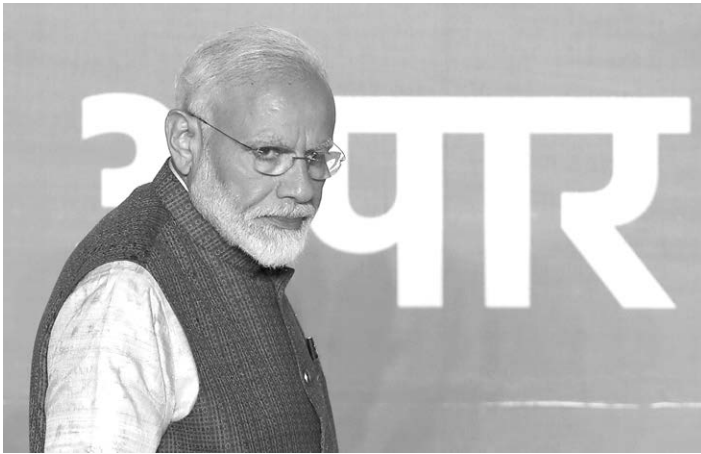
gists” to spin myths in favour of the regime, malign and persecute the critics for purveying fake news and then claim that their political fiction was the real deal.

The Russian propaganda and cyberwarfare unleashed abroad not only facilitated Brexit and weakened the European Union but also propelled Trump, a covert pupil of Putin, to the US presidency in 2016. A diabolical example of Russian tutoring was Trump’s mischievous and widely believed assertion that President Barack Obama was born in Africa, a canard that was first aired on Russian TV. Putin was even more brazen in demolishing factuality and creating his own reality, which Timothy Snyder describes as “implausible deniability”. In February 2014, almost a week after Russian tanks rolled into Crimea, he claimed that there was “no intention of rattling the sabre and sending troops to Crimea”, compounding the lie days later by asserting that Russian soldiers were local Ukrainian citizens who had purchased the uniforms from neighbourhood stores. Russia annexed Crimea even as Putin self-righteously proclaimed his innocence. Goebbels was a neophyte by comparison!

Apart from flagrant falsification and hounding of dissenters and critics, an authoritarian leader constantly feeds his people myths about the past, the present and the nation’s enemies, with the intent of keeping them quiescent and for maintaining the status quo. As so brilliantly analyzed by Paulo Freire in his seminal work “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, the oppressor’s mythicizing includes the myth that the oppressive order is a free society; the myth that this order respects human rights; the myth that the street vendor is as much an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory; the myth of the equality of all individuals. If needed, the oppressor divides the oppressed and keeps them divided in order to remain in power. Are these intimations of the wily strategies being deployed at home?

In our country under the present government, factuality, truth, tolerance of criticism in matters of





state are as tenuous as in Russia, the only difference being that we still have some of the trappings of a democracy, albeit one that is in its twilight. Intriguingly, in an interview to a magazine that, in keeping with the times, has metamorphosed from being a fiercely independent journal to “lapdog media”, the Prime Minister said that he attached great importance to criticism “which requires a lot of hard work and research.” He bemoaned the fact that the number of critics is few in number, alleging that most people “only level allegations and play games about perceptions.” (*It needs mentioning that under the present regime, not just the media but every institution has attained lapdog status.*) Thereafter, in a speech to a group of Brahma Kumaris, the Prime Minister stated: “We are all witness to how there are attempts to tarnish India’s image. A lot of this happens at the international level.”

Voltaire had observed: “The human brain is a complex organ with the wonderful power of enabling man to find reasons for continuing to believe whatever it is he wants to believe.” If the Prime Minister seriously believes in what he said about encouraging criticism and critics, then he is clearly a victim of self-delusion, or else, living in a sealed echo chamber that has filtered out his administration’s frontal assault on dissenting voices and opposing viewpoints.

In our see-through, cyber-powered information world, nothing can be hidden. We are witness to this government’s concerted campaign to silence dissent. It has, in fact, deployed the law-enforcement agencies to hound detractors of the regime, letting loose the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate, the Income Tax department, the NCB and even bulldozers, to bring dissenters to heel, with scores being sent to jail

for exercising their democratic right to criticize and protest against the government. Marching in step are the vitriolic saffron-banded storm-troopers and trolls who serve as an auxiliary extra-constitutional force under the overall guardianship of Nagpur, to intimidate and even physically punish dissenters. Journalists, students, comedians, human rights activists, movie stars, and political opponents have paid a heavy price for daring to criticize this government.

Even more chilling are the periodic killings and lynching of Muslims by Hindu vigilantes whose fiendish actions are sanctified by saffron-clad holy men in robes giving a call for the genocide of Muslims. Apologists for this government would have us believe that too much is being made of what they perceive as the random rants of ‘fringe elements’. But then, how does one explain the coldly calculated ‘othering’ of an entire community through plainly discriminatory laws such as the CAA, the Anti-Religious Conversion laws, the anti-love jihad campaigns and the routine, brutally overt targeting of Muslims by the law enforcement agencies? There is a method in the madness!

The Prime Minister has alleged that there is a conspiracy to tarnish India’s image at the international level. While it is true that the international community, particularly the liberal media, has been scathing about the shrinking of democracy in India, the criticism is directed at the Prime Minister and his government and not the people of India. For instance, the arrest of 23-year-old climate activist, Disha Ravi in 2021 on charges of sedition for her involvement in an on-line toolkit – a standard social justice communications document – supporting the farmers’ protests, led to global outrage as has the recent arrest of Mohammed Zubair, the co-founder of a fact-checking website which is doing an awesomely courageous job exposing the venomous fictions of hate-mongers, trolls and the spin doctors embedded in the IT Cell. The Prime Minister’s presumption that criticism of his government’s actions is an attack on India is a conceited fallacy.

The Prime Minister had rightly denounced those who were critical of him without doing their homework, but then, in a matter that concerns him personally, every possible barrier has been placed to prevent a proper enquiry being conducted to ferret out the truth. His university BA and MA degrees have been the subject of unending controversy. Only recently, Yashwant Sinha, a former BJP Minister, had

cast aspersions on the PM's Master's degree in "Entire Political Science". Strangely, regarding the Prime Minister's BA degree, the Delhi High Court affirmed Delhi University's plea that the varsity's BA exam records are held in a fiduciary capacity and cannot be disclosed. A similar Gujarat court injunction has put paid to investigation of his Master's degree. Even more curiously, the most powerful Prime Minister this country has seen, seems to prefer the shroud of secrecy rather than have the records placed in the public domain so that punitive action can be taken against those who have accused him of fakery.

Opacity is clearly the name of the game under this dispensation. We have still not been told how much of the old currency has been deposited in the Exchequer. The names of the major defaulters who have bled the banks with NPAs have not been divulged. The lawsuits relating to the dubious electoral bonds scheme, the plainly discriminatory CAA, the abrogation of Article 370, and the Pegasus spyware – any of which could cause a huge problem for the government – have been back-burnered by the Supreme Court without assigning any reason. With the political executive and the courts seemingly operating in tandem, democratic accountability is at a premium.

The brutal reality of Modi's India is that without getting even within sniffing distance of the best of times, we have plunged into the worst of times. In this year's United Nations' World Happiness Report, India has been ranked 136 out of 146 countries. Coming on top of the country's ranking of 101 in the hunger index and 143 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom index, we are definitely in a bad place. Highly reputed international rating agencies have variously described India as an 'electoral autocracy', a 'flawed democracy' and a 'partially free democracy'. Even as the Prime Minister announced to an international forum in April that India had enough food for its 1.4 billion people and was 'ready to supply food stocks to the world from tomorrow', comes news from the World Poverty Clock, an NGO financed by the German government, that India has overtaken Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world, with 83 million people living in extreme poverty (less than \$ 2 per day) compared to 70 million people in abject poverty in Nigeria. Notwithstanding the bravado, an overpowering miasma of despair has enveloped the country that bears little resemblance to what it once was -- politically, socially and culturally.

Apart from the countless victims of an iniquitous regime, even the ordinary citizens have been psychologically lacerated by the oppressive environment we live in. Every day, one receives intimations of the sense of deep melancholy and fear that stalk our benighted land. The other day, a poet friend who is working on an anthem of protest in the form of a bhajan, expressed her apprehensions about the consequences of her incubating act of dissent in a matter-of-fact sort of way: "My wrists are strong enough to take those handcuffs." It is chilling to think that even the critical imagination is an enemy of the authoritarian. More recently, in a discussion with two eminent professors, I imbibed significant new words, one German and the other Czech, that have been inducted into the English-speaking world to better describe the disquietude and hopelessness in our lives. The German word is "Weltschmerz" which denotes a deep sadness at the insufficiency of the world. "Litost", the Czech word that Milan Kundera introduced to the English reader, means "a state of agony and torment created by sudden sight of one's own misery." The all-round despondency has even affected my choice of reading material. Frothy novels, my staple diet at one time, are out and now I feed my angst with the writings of Orwell, Franz Kafka, Frantz Fanon, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky and the like.

Despite a wonderful family, great friends and a sinfully comfortable lifestyle amidst seething deprivation, there is an unremitting aura of gloom blighting my life. It recently got so bad that I was driven to consult a psychiatrist. The kindly gentleman concluded our *tete-a-tete* with these reassuring parting words: "Don't worry! This time will also pass!" Much as I would like to believe him, my gut tells me that the damage to our polity is irrevocable. The economy will bounce back for sure, and even if the impossible happens and the BJP loses a future election, the poison of hate and bigotry let loose into our societal bloodstream is going nowhere. With fraternity aka brotherhood lying in tatters, our hardened hearts and never-ending fratricidal wars portend a terrifying future; we will never again know peace. Am I making a mountain out of a molehill? In defence of my dark forebodings, I have Auden's affirmation:

*"And even madmen manage to convey  
Unwelcome truths in lonely gibberish."* ©

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**MATHEW JOHN** is a former civil servant. Views are personal

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## Stay away from drugs: Karate national champions urge Arunachali youth

**T**wo young men from Arunachal Pradesh who won gold medals at the national karate championship have appealed to the youth of Arunachal Pradesh to keep away from drugs and focus on future.

“Do not indulge in drugs and other unhealthy habits. Keep them away. Your youthful days are not going to be with you forever,” said Sadan Yun at a rousing welcome given to him and Roshan Tega July 28 when they returned after winning gold medals at the Youth Games National Karate Championship organized by Youth Games Council of India at Sonipat town in Haryana.

### Arunachal Pradesh on February 18 launched a yearlong Arunachal Against Substance Abuse campaign as part of the golden jubilee celebration of its statehood

“Many might ask what we will get from games and sports. If nothing at all, it will at least keep you healthy and there is nothing better than enjoying a good health,” Yun told young people of northeastern India.

Arunachal Pradesh on February 18 launched a yearlong Arunachal Against Substance Abuse campaign as part of the golden jubilee celebration of its statehood. For a long time, the state has been fighting the problem of drug addiction among its youths.

Yun, a resident of Tribal Colony in Tezu town, Lohit district, won the gold medal in the 84 kg plus category for men. Tega from Hawaii in Anjaw district won the championship in under 55 kg category.

Both were received by the Yun Welfare Society, All Lohit Karate Do Association and All Mishmi Students’ Union along with youth and public leaders at the Airfield Tezu gate with traditional stoles and bouquets.



“It is a moment of pride for all our Mishmi tribal society,” said Sawan Yun, the general secretary of Yun Welfare Society. “These two young boys have proven that hard work and determination in any field would bring you accolades and recognition. We are very proud of them both,” he added.

Replying at the felicitation program, Yun said he felt good to receive such a warm welcome from his own people.

He also appealed to the district administration to provide young people with proper training facility. “We have been practicing in the mud and in the rain. Having proper training facility will produce many champions in the district,” Yun added.

Sobetso Kri, the general secretary of Lohit District Olympic Association and All Lohit Karate Do Association, who was also present at the function, congratulated the two young men.

“Martial art can take you to places. Because the youth here do not know the scope martial art offers, many do not choose martial art as a sport. I hope that all our youth in the district and in Arunachal Pradesh will be inspired by the example of Sadan and Roshan,” he said.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh have been addicted to opium from the British era. A section of the opium growers is also its traders.

“A lot of people in the eastern Arunachal districts grow opium to earn a living. We have to give them an alternative livelihood option,” Koyu said.

According to doctors, addiction to opium causes sleeplessness and indigestion besides other neuropsychiatric-related problems. ©

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

# Time to Eradicate **WHITE COLLAR CRIMES**

That there exists a surreptitious network of agents, greedy officials and leaders who thrive on the exchange of lakhs of rupees for jobs is mind-boggling

BY **AARTI**

**W**hite collar crimes, defined as “a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of their occupation” are on the rise. White collar criminals are quite dangerous because they feed off the weaknesses of the system, harming many, either directly or indirectly. Shamefully, the multi-crore school jobs scam recently unearthed in West Bengal is the latest. Since such economic crimes harm a large section of the masses, it is time to eradicate them by bringing the culprits to book swiftly. Evidently, the certainty of punishment, which is far more convincing and consistent than for its severity, would serve as a deterrent.

The private sector may provide ample career opportunities and growth, but for many, government jobs have always been the most sought after for a plethora of reasons - be it job security, soci-



etal status, social security benefits and so on. Over the years, with an intent to ensure uniformity as well as transparency in expeditious selection, Recruitment Boards/Public Service Commissions have been established in the Centre/States. As such, government recruitments must also meet the constitutional requirements of Article 14 and 16, which among others, stipulate equality before law and equality in matters of public employment. That is, in a nutshell, the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State and no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State. There are well-structured rules, gazetted regulations and guidelines in vogue that specify no recruitment shall be made by public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, societies, without following a transparent and due process, including publishing advertisements inviting appli-

There are well-structured rules, gazetted regulations and guidelines in vogue that specify no recruitment shall be made by public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, societies, without following a transparent and due process, including publishing advertisements inviting applications from eligible candidates irrespective of class of the posts



cations from eligible candidates irrespective of class of the posts.

The stark reality is quite different.

Take the latest case in West Bengal. That at least 609 appointments in group D employees' posts, 381 in clerical (group-C) posts and a yet-to-be determined number of posts for assistant teachers for classes IX and X at government-sponsored and aided schools in the State made during 2019-20 are illegal shows something is wrong somewhere.

The teachers' recruitment scandal dates back to 2017-2018 when the West Bengal Central School Service Commission (WBCSSC, commonly referred to as the SSC) announced the results for the recruitment of 17,000 teachers and for 5,000 posts in the Group C and D categories. Instead of publishing merit lists with marks, candidates had to check individual scores and ranks online. The entire list with everyone's score and ranking was unavailable initially. With the intervention of the Calcutta High Court, SSC published the list on 20 June 2019 and this literally stirred the hornet's nest, so to say as many aspirants spotted candidates who scored lower marks had bagged appointments. Over 2,000 petitioners moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking a review of candidates appointed on recommendations by a "super committee" set up with the approval of then Education Minister Mr Partha Chatterjee. To cut the story short, the super committee comprising close aides of Mr Chatterjee allegedly recommended undeserving candidates. A committee headed by retired high court judge Justice Ranjit Kumar Bag appointed by a Division bench of the Calcutta High Court found anomalies in the recruitment. Those who got their jobs illegally have not only been sacked but ordered to return every rupee they received as salaries since appointment. A Minister's daughter who had secured appointment illegally lost her job and directed to return 41 months of salary paid to her in two instalments.

This July 22, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials conducted raids in 13 places throughout



the state including the residence of former West Bengal Education Minister Mr Partha Chatterjee and his close associate Arpita Mukherjee, a former model. Rs 21.20 crore is said to have been recovered from Arpita's residence apart from foreign currencies worth around Rs 60 lakh, gold ornaments worth around Rs 90 lakh, 20 iPhones, sale deeds of eight flats and documents of multiple high-end passenger vehicles. Two mysterious diaries recovered from her residence are under scrutiny. Besides Arpita, another close associate of Mr Partha, Monalisa Das, Head of the Department of Bengali at State-run Kazi Nazrul University in Asansol in Burdwan district has been found to own at least 10 flats in Bolpur-Santiniketan in Birbhum district. Some shell companies with Arpita as director which have also been found which is suspected to route the collections from the teachers' recruitment scam to different channels.

Well the law will take its course.

The recruitment of 1,700 police constables in Himachal Pradesh is another scam. The written test was held on this March 27 after the fitness test of the applicants and the results were declared two months later. The marks of three candidates surprised the authorities as they had scored just 50 per cent marks in their matriculation examinations but topped the written exam for constable recruitment scoring 70 out of 90 marks. On inquiry it was revealed that the trio had purchased the question papers from unknown persons for amounts ranging between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 8 lakh. The State Government, declared the test as null and void and set up a Special Investigation Team to probe the matter.

So far three FIRS have been registered and chargesheets filed against 171 persons including 116 candidates, nine parents and 46 agents (21 from Himachal and 25 from various states). Notably the SIT found that agents of some interstate gangs had kept a close watch on every examination right from the issuance of notification. They roped in coaching centres to identify candidates who were willing to pay for having access to the question paper. One of the members of the gang, who worked as paper cutter in the printing press, where the question papers were printed, leaked only the final 80 questions and not the draft of handwritten 200 questions prepared by the paper setting committee. SIT is said to have identified around 100 candidates who had purchased the question paper. The owner of the printing press where the question papers were printed for the past five years including this time



has also since been arrested and lodged in jail. 12 mobiles, storage devices and documents recovered from him have been sent for forensic examination. Reportedly, the call details and the bank accounts of the accused are being scrutinised. The exams were held for the second time on July 3 under stringent conditions. Out of 75,000 candidates who appeared, 2,336 candidates including 9,629 males and 2,707 females have been declared as qualified.

Another recruitment scam in Karnataka is worthy of mention. A notification was issued early last year to fill 545 Police sub-inspector (PSI) vacancies. Following physical tests, over 54,000 candidates appeared for the written exam across 92 centres in the State in January 2022. Two months later when

results were declared, several irregularities first came to light after social media posts revealed that a candidate who had ranked 7th, had been awarded 121 out of 150 marks even though he had attempted only 21 questions as per the carbon copy of his OMR sheet.

The Crime Investigation Department probe that followed unveiled one of the biggest recruitment scams in the State, which saw lakhs given in bribes and the arrests of over 60 candidates, local politicians, and top police officials in the Karnataka Police recruitment cell, including its then chief Additional Director General of Police. How did it happen? According to reports, many candidates were helped by the invigilators. While such candidates left most questions unanswered on OMR sheets, attempting only what they knew, the invigilators later filled the rest with correct answers. Some candidates also use bluetooth devices and the question paper was leaked from examination centres to touts who had a panel of experts relay the answers to the candidates via such bluetooth devices. Despite deploying metal detectors at the centres, the Bluetooth devices used in the PSI recruitment exams were very small, skin-coloured and undetectable. According to news reports, some 30 aspirants had paid Rs 30 lakh upwards to help tamper the OMR sheets and get into the toppers' list. Some of them had sold their land while others pledged their valuables to pay bribes. The recruitment process has since been annulled and fresh exams are to be conducted.

That there exists a surreptitious network of agents, greedy officials and leaders who thrive on the exchange of lakhs of rupees for jobs is mind-boggling. At the same time, it is hoped that the authorities in higher echelons of power swiftly act to nip the menace of white collared crimes by preventing their occurrence in the first place.

It is worthwhile to ponder over what the Gauhati High Court recently observed while hearing a recruitment scam in Assam Police where the written exam had to be cancelled as the question paper had been leaked through social messaging sites. "Recruitment scam in Government Service like the present one undermines public confidence in the system. It causes grave injustice to the deserving and meritorious candidates who burn midnight oil to get selected in the service. Such scams are, therefore, considered as anathema to public and societal interest". ©

## Man killed on suspicion of cattle smuggling in MP

**A** group of cow vigilantes has attacked a truck in suspicion of cattle smuggling that left a 50-year-old man dead and two others gravely wounded in Madhya Pradesh.

The incident occurred at around 12.30 am on the intervening night of August 2-3 when the cow vigilantes intercepted the Maharashtra-bound truck at Barakhad village near Seoni Malwa town of Narmadapuram district and assaulted the three men transporting 28 bovines, Narmadapuram Superintendent of Police Gurkaran Singh told NewsClick.

The deceased was identified as Nazir Ahmed.

Singh said the three men, all residents of Amravati district in Maharashtra, were illegally transporting cows in a truck bearing the registration number of the adjoining state for allegedly selling in a cattle fair.

“Attackers had a tip-off about the truck as it was attacked merely 8-10 km after it departed from Nanderwada village,” Singh said.

According to the police, Ahmad was accompanied by Sayed Mushtaq (40) and Shaikh Lala (38). The wounded under treatment are in a government hospital. The survivors told the police that their attackers were armed with sticks and rods and stopped their truck and assaulted them without inquiring.

On being informed by the local people, the police

rushed the three to a hospital where Nazir Ahmad succumbed to injuries during treatment.

Singh said that 26 cows have been rescued from the truck while two were found dead.

Police have lodged two FIRs in connection with the incident.

“As many as 12 unidentified people have been booked under section 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 147 (rioting) and 148 (rioting, armed with a deadly weapon) of the IPC, while another FIR was lodged for smuggling cows,” the police official said.

Lala, who was driving the truck, told reporters that villagers intercepted the vehicle that was heading to a cattle market in Amravati, Maharashtra.

This is the second such incident in Madhya Pradesh in the past three months. On May 2, two tribals were beaten to death on suspicion of cow slaughtering by a mob of 15 to 20 men in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district.

The deceased were identified as Sampat Batti, a resident of Sagar, and Simaria, who lived in Dhansa village.

The incident occurred early, between 2.30-3 am, in the Kurai police station limits of Seoni district. The police FIR said that the assailants belong to the Hindutva groups Bajrang Dal and Ram Sena. © (Courtesy: Newsclick.com)



## Mangaluru churches organize special prayers for communal harmony



**T**he Catholic churches in Mangaluru have organized special prayers for communal harmony as sectarian tension prevails in the southern Indian coastal city.

Two Muslim and one Hindu youth were killed in separate incidents of targeted violence by extremist groups from both the communities in the last week of July in Mangaluru suburbs forcing police to impose 144 section in the region until August 5.

Father Joseph Martis, parish priest of Most Holy Redeemer Church, Darebail, said in his Sunday sermon on July 31 that the city requires more prayers and divine blessings as communal tension mounts day by day.

“Young people are being sacrificed in the name of their religion and politics and people here live in fear and anxiety,” said the priest. A special prayer followed the homily.

The tension started with the murder of an 18-year-old Muslim B. Masood, in Sullia, some 85 km southeast of Mangaluru, followed by the killing of a Hindu youth, Praveen Nettaru, Taluk president of the Yuva Morcha, a youth wing of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The police could not make any serious breakthrough in both the cases and several office bearers of the youth wing resigned from their positions

to pressurize the state government to arrest the culprits.

Meanwhile, another youth Mohammed Fazil was killed by a group of masked men in Surathkal, near Mangaluru.

Around 20 young men were taken into custody for questioning, including the owner of the car used in the attack according to information from the police, as on August 1. The car owner arrested is a Catholic youth, who claimed to have only rented his car to the assailants.

Meanwhile on July 31, the student wing of the ruling party, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, entered state Home Minister Araga Inanendra's residence in Bengaluru and demanded a ban on the Islamic group, Popular Front of India (PFI), terming it as a terrorist organization.

Most Catholic churches organized prayer service for peace during the Sunday Mass on July 31.

“Whichever community they belonged, we have lost three young people. Let us join the grief of their family members and pray for peace,” Father Martis urged the congregation.

Mangaluru has experienced sporadic incidences of communal violence, moral policing, and attack on pubs and bars in the recent years. 📍

(Courtesy: Mattersindia)

# Pope appoints new apostolic administrator for Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese

Pope Francis on July 30 appointed Archbishop Andrews Thazhath of Trichur, a world renowned expert in the Oriental Code of Canon Law, as the apostolic administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese.

The Syro-Malabar archdiocese was lying vacant since July 26 when its metropolitan vicar Archbishop Archbishop Antony Kariyil tendered his resignation to Apostolic Nuncio to India Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli at the residence of the Ernakulam archbishop.

Archbishop Kariyil's resignation was seen as the fall out of his inability to convince the priests and laity in the archdiocese to follow the uniform mode of celebrating Mass as mandated by the synod of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Majority of the priests and lay people in the archdiocese want to retain the traditional way of offering Mass where the priest faces the congregation. The Pope appointed Archbishop Thazhath, a known

supporter of the uniform mode, according to the Oriental Code of Canon Law.

Archbishop Thazhath was born at Pudukkad in Trichur district on December 13, 1951. He

One of his major tasks in the new post is to implement the uniform mode in the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

In August 2021, the Syro-Malabar Church decided to implement the uniform Mass in all its 35 dioceses in India and overseas in a bid to find a permanent solution to the liturgical dispute and foster unity.

The synod's formula, seen as a compromise requires priests to face the congregation during the start and concluding parts of the Mass but face the altar during the Eucharistic prayer.

Barring the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, all Syro-Malabar dioceses implemented the synod decision with effect from November 2021. ©  
(Courtesy: Mattersindia)



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## Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

bobsbanter@gmail.com

# The Tongues, they are a Slippin'..!

**M**any tongues are slipping in the country! Let's leave the Rajya Sabha tongue that slipped over our new president, and travel to Maharashtra where a poor governor let his tongue slip not just over a syllable or word but a huge thought.

Governor Koshyari who seems to have had his fill of Marathi politics for the last three and a half years, suddenly allowed his frustrated feelings for the locals to surface by saying that if Gujaratis and Rajasthanis left Mumbai, there would be no money in the city!

Whoa! Whoa! That's huge. That's like telling the Delhiite that if south Indians left Delhi, the city would no longer be able to function as the national capital, or saying that if the Keralite left Chennai, the city would collapse!

Where did this happen? At a simple ceremony in suburban Andheri where the governor was called to inaugurate a chowk after a Gujarati family! And I guess in the excitement and relief of having only people of a community that loved him around him, he expressed his true feelings!

Not a politically correct comment, if you are governor of that same state.

So, how did the slip happen? I guess true feelings come out in some way or another.

And that is the difference between the word 'tolerance' and 'understanding'!

When you tolerate behaviour you also carry resentment inside, and this resentment is like a seething volcano that struggles to pour out its molten lava at some time or another. The seething lava of tolerance says, "Yes, I tolerate my neighbour from a different community but I wish he would stay somewhere else!"

But what happens when we are able to look at that neighbour as a human being just like us, and 'understand' that his pathway to God is different from mine. Immediately, with understanding our eyes and hearts open!



Probably if the governor had looked at the locals as men and women to be governed with love and not as irritants, he wouldn't have allowed the molten lava of his true feelings to have come out.

We cannot hide what is inside and it is time we got rid of the anger and hate we bear inside towards people from other communities. How often we instill this dislike in each other. "He's from such and such a community," we tell a subordinate in the office, "so we can't trust him!"

"Don't play with her," we tell our child, "She's not from our religion!"

Stop tolerating others, and start understanding them. Go even a step further, start loving others as a brother or a sister and you won't go through the 'governor slip' because inside instead of a volcano of dislike, there is a cauldron of love!

We need to do this, because to rise high and be respected as a manager, chairman, governor or prime minister, 'slippin' tongues' could slip you into oblivion ..! ©

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



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### **2022-2023: Programme Schedule**

- 1. Basic Counselling Course (BCC)**  
01 - 23 September 2022
- 2. Healing the Inner Child Program**  
14 -16 October 2022
- 3. Basic Counselling Course (BCC)**  
02 - 25 January 2023
- 4. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)**  
10 - 12 March 2023

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## CAPUCHIN ONLINE PRESENTS HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY



### INTERNATIONAL ONLINE CERTIFICATE COURSE FOR FORMATORS (12 WEEKS)

**TIME: 3RD WEEK OF THE MONTH, MONDAY-FRIDAY, 5:00pm-6:30pm (India)**

**PARTICIPANTS: Directors of Aspirants, Postulants, Novice Master/Mistress & Asst., Junior Mistress, Rectors, etc.**  
Visit for more details and to REGISTER, click this link: <https://bit.ly/formators-12wks>

PART A: GUIDING ON THE SPIRITUALITY AND VOCATION		
WEEK - I	18-22 July, 2022	Discerning one's Vocation
WEEK - II	15-19 August, 2022	Call Within the Call
WEEK - III	19-23 September, 2022	Guiding on Spiritual Growth
PART B: SUPPORTING ON THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL WELLBEING		
WEEK - IV	17-21 October, 2022	Healing the Childhood Pains & Growing into Inner Grace
WEEK - V	14-18 November, 2022	Personality Development
WEEK - VI	19-23 December, 2022	Relevance of Religious Community
WEEK - VII	16-20 January, 2023	Holistic (Spiritual, Physical, Emotional) Wellbeing of Formees
PART C: FOCUSING ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH		
WEEK - VIII	15-19 February, 2023	Understanding Other Religions
WEEK - IX	17-21 March, 2023	Documents of the Church
WEEK - X	19-23 April, 2023	Vision of Pope Francis and Religious Life
PART D: MOTIVATING ON THE APOSTOLATE		
WEEK - XI	13-17 May, 2023	History of Religious Life
WEEK - XII	20-24 June, 2023	Social Commitments

### INTERNATIONAL ONLINE CERTIFICATE TRAINING FOR FORMEES (6 WEEKS)

**TIME: 2ND WEEK OF THE MONTH, 5:00pm-6:30pm IST**

**PARTICIPANTS: Religious Aspirants, Postulants, Novices, Juniors, Seminarians etc.**  
Visit for more details and to REGISTER click this link: <https://bit.ly/formees-6wks>

PART A: ROOTEDNESS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH		
WEEK - I	08-12 August, 2022	Vocation to Religious life and Prayer
WEEK - II	12-16 September, 2022	Community Life – Interpersonal Relationships
PART B: GROWING INTO HOLISTIC HUMAN DEVELOPMENT		
WEEK - III	10-14 October, 2022	Self-Discovery Potentials and Excellence
WEEK - IV	07-11 November, 2022	Psychology of Self
PART C: UNDERSTANDING THE VOWS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE		
WEEK - V	12-16 December, 2022	Jesus Model for Religious Vows
WEEK - VI	09-13 January, 2023	Conviction of the Apostolates

### INTERNATIONAL ONLINE CERTIFICATE COURSE ON FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

**TIME: 4TH WEEK OF THE MONTH 5:00pm-6:30pm IST**

Visit for more details and to REGISTER, Click: <https://bit.ly/franciscans-10wks>

WEEK - I	22-26 August, 2022	Life of Francis with Socio-historic Context
WEEK - II	26-30 September, 2022	Writings of Francis of Assisi: Primary and secondary
WEEK - III	24-28 October, 2022	Early Biographies and other biographies on Francis
WEEK - IV	21-25 November, 2022	St. Clare: life, Writings and Spirituality – In depth analysis
WEEK - V	26-30 December, 2022	<i>Franciscan Christmas Experience</i>
WEEK - VI	23-27 January, 2023	Third Order: Context, Rule, growth and Relevance
WEEK - VII	20-24 February, 2023	Growth of Franciscan Order: From early stages till date
WEEK - VIII	27-31 March, 2023	Franciscan and the Missions: Challenges & innovations
WEEK - IX	24-28 April, 2023	Fundamentals of Franciscan Spirituality
WEEK - X	22-26 May, 2023	Franciscan Places & symbols and their relevance

Further Details: Br. Nithiya OFM.Cap, Director – Capuchin Online, Thalir Centre, India  
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