

# Indian Currents

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## DEATH KNELL FOR FISHERS!!



## PORT PROTEST



## HUMAN RIGHTS IN DEEP WATERS!

The BJP-led Central government and the Marxist-led Kerala government are comrades-in-arms lending a shoulder to each other in grabbing the 'share of the loaves that fall from the corporate tables'

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## RIGHTS IN DEEP WATER



The world witnessed one of the worst episodes of human rights violation when attacks were unleashed on hundreds of fisherfolk at Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram in the southern tip of Kerala; and it happened barely two weeks before the Human Rights Day on December 10.

The epicentre of violence was where the Adani Port is coming up, threatening the livelihood of tens of thousands of fishers. The port is showcased as a harbinger of development. But studies, reports, research and independent analysis by experts do not support this claim. They point to the perils to the coast and its sweeping adverse impact on the life of those who solely depend on it. The argument on development is a story mired in controversies.

Shrinking coastline is no more a tale told by vested interests. It has become a reality, sounding a death knell for the fishers whose life solely depends on the vast coast and the sea. In several places in and around the affected areas, as reports say, the coast has been eroded drastically, reducing it to a shadow of what it used to be. Those displaced due to the project are living in pigeonhole-like accommodation in cement godowns. Their rehabilitation is nowhere in sight. The government's promises on the fishers' demands remain merely on paper. In the face of utter apathy of the authorities, the victims stare at a bleak and uncertain future.

No words are enough to condemn the brashness of the government and some political parties branding the sons of the sea as terrorists and anti-nationals. Those who were praised as the saviours and angels, for their rescue operation in the food-hit regions of the State, have overnight become anti-nationals and their movement for survival is termed as treason and sedition.

Equally deplorable is the attempt to give a communal colour to their struggle for survival. It is unacceptable to look at the children of sea through the prism of caste, creed or religion. The government has stooped to unfathomable depth by registering cases against the Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram and others who were not even present at the site where violence erupted last week. According to reports, violence was unleashed on people who went to the police station seeking release of those arrested for no rhyme or reason.

The easiest way to tarnish and tackle any rights movement is to smear it with 'extremist' or 'anti-national' tag; an equally malicious ploy is to brand it as a 'conspiracy' in connivance with those plotting against the country. Both the Central and the Kerala state government seem to be comrades-in-arms in this regard. We saw this in the Bhima-Koregaon incident in which over a dozen rights activists, academicians and intellectuals were put behind bars under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

The way Fr. Stan Swamy, the messiah of Tribals, was jailed branding him as a Maoist and anti-national, leading to his death in custody, is still fresh in our minds. The corporate-leaning governments did the same with the farmers' agitation; and they do it with every human rights movement, tagging each one with 'anti-nationalism'. Unfortunately, both the Left and Right governments and political parties are lending a shoulder to each other in grabbing the 'share of the loaves that fall from the corporate tables.'

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



Life has got all those twists and turns. You've got to hold on tight and off you go

- **Nicole Kidman**

• • •



The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot

- **Michael Altschuler**

• • •



Keep your face always toward the sunshine, and shadows will fall behind you

- **Walt Whitman**

• • •



You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream

- **Malala Yousafzai**

• • •



What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

• • •



Not having the best situation, but seeing the best in your situation is the key to happiness

- **Marie Forleo**

• • •



If you have good thoughts they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely

- **Roald Dahl**

• • •



The simple act of listening to someone and making them feel as if they have truly been heard is a most treasured gift

- **L. A. Villafane**

• • •



We have to be better. We have to love more, hate less. We've gotta listen more and talk less. We've gotta know that this is everybody's responsibility

- **Meghan Rapinoe**

# Vizhinjam Port Protest Cry of the Oppressed

The fishing communities' cry for survival aligns with the roaring of the seas: "we will continue our protest"

BY **VINCENT PEREPPADAN**

**W**hy the 135-day-old fisher people's protest movement for their coastal-life-survival at Vizhinjam in Kerala has suddenly been termed a foreign-funded anti-national activity by the Communist-led government in the State? Why the peaceful protestors have been brutally assaulted by a ruthless police force? Why a communal conglomerate headed by the BJP engaged their mob in provoking and assaulting the peaceful protestors?

The answers are simple. First, it is Adani, the global corporate giant, nurtured by the Modi government, on the opposite of the oppressed. Second, it is the BJP and its communal allies, who crave for fishing in the murky waters of communal polarization in Kerala, playing the dirty politics.

And third, it is the corporatized government led by Pinarayi Vijayan that has hands-in-glove with Adani at the cost of Kerala's people and wealth, exposing its inhuman face.

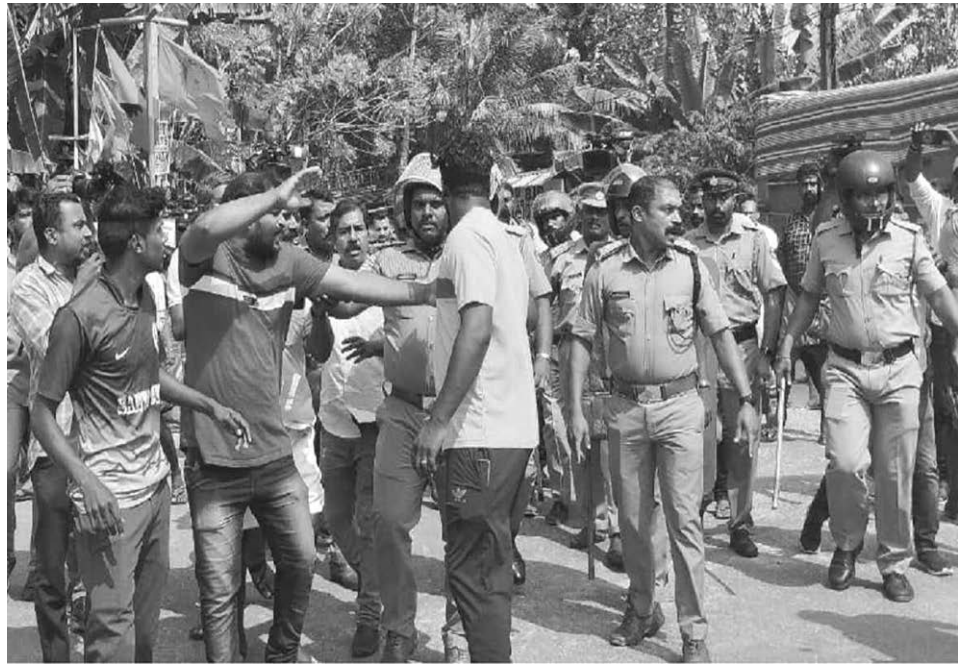
Thus, a people's movement for justice and survival has suddenly been renamed anti-national and foreign-funded. Anyone in India now knows that those two terms are two dangerous weapons with a government to target, demonize, and demoralize any citizen or movement and justify any terror against people. The Vizhinjam protest movement is the last in such a series.

## **Assault on Protesters**

Eruption of the brutal attack on protestors around



Vizhinjam police station and at the protest site in front of the Adani International Transshipment Port under construction on November 26 and 27 were apparently preplanned and orchestrated by the government, the police, and the BJP-led pro-port campaigners. While the protesting fish workers were totally unprepared for and unaware of any attack, they were intentionally provoked, abused, and physically assaulted by the pro-port campaigners and the police facilitated the violence with complete inaction. At the same time, five members of the protesting community were kept under police custody for no reason and a crowd that gathered demanding their release was suddenly



attacked, stoned, and hit by the police using batons.

An elderly woman who broke her hand in the police action told a TV channel that she could never guess the police would suddenly turn violent against the peaceful protestors. She explained that she heard a wireless gadget with one of the officers, who stood close to her, announcing, “they have reached behind, therefore start charging.” “Suddenly, rocks started pelting from behind us,” she continued.

“Surely, the stone-pelting was not by the protestors. Instead, the rocks and bricks came flying from behind where the pro-port campaigners stood. The police, who stood close to us, instantly turned

violent and started torturing us with their batons and terrifying us with grenades and explosives. In a lightning moment, the site turned into a war zone. The terror-stricken women and men were scattered around with loud cries. Police severely hit the people including me, an elderly woman. I lost my balance and fell on the ground,” she added.

The anti-dam protestors were unarmed and unprepared for an attack. According to the protocol followed before any police action, there should have been warnings through loudspeakers to disperse the crowd. While they were peacefully conducting their protest, the police who were deployed in huge numbers suddenly started charging the people and shouting abusive and derogative words. Then the police resorted to water cannons. It was a sudden orchestrated and ruthless police action apparently executed under higher orders.

Later came the statements from the state’s political leadership that the protestors were suspected to be anti-nationals. Some of the leaders alleged foreign nexus behind the protest. The next day, media carried that official version portraying the defenseless victims and the oppressed fisher folk as anti-national elements who try to overturn the state’s development project. However, an overview of the sequence of events and the discourses that followed from the political leadership expose the government’s hidden agenda. The victims are

**An overview of the sequence of events and the discourses that followed from the political leadership expose the government’s hidden agenda. The victims are demonized and portrayed as anti-national elements, creating the specter of a terror group**

demonized and portrayed as anti-national elements, creating the specter of a terror group.

According to reports, the police registered 165 criminal cases against the fishers' community leaders. Archbishop Dr. Thomas J. Netto is the prime accused in five cases attaching even non-bailable sections. On the other hand, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, through his harsh words against the victimized community, continues to double down his loyalty to Adani's corporate interests. From the reports it emerges that the fisher people's cry for their survival will be confronted by the hardened government stance using its brutal police force and communally divisive politics.

### A Massive Movement

The story of the Vizhinjam protest movement visibly began when less than 10 activists launched a Satyagraha at the Adani-owned Trivandrum International Airport's Terminal 1 on June 5. It was inaugurated by the Kudamkulam protest leader Mr. S.P. Udaykumar. However, a silent but deep research and campaign coordinated by Lok Munch, a collective of social activist organizations, in association with Trivandrum Social Service Society, was effectively spreading awareness in the fishers' villages about the unscientific port construction and its consequent land erosion and attrition impacts.

Meanwhile, the miserably unhygienic and crim-

**The obvious irony is the Communists' anti-democratic stance in Kerala. While they resist across the world capitalism's terror of development agenda, Kerala's subservient Communist government serves the capitalist's interest at the behest of the right-wing forces**

inally unattended situation of about 70 families languishing in a cement storage at Valiyathura was brought to light by the activists. They were temporarily accommodated when the Okhi cyclone hit the shore and took away their houses and lands. The government had done nothing in four years to rehabilitate those families. This criminal negligence and insensitivity toward the victims' miseries was corroborated with the port victims' fears of continued coastal land erosion and the terrible consequences. Several mass petitions and study reports were submitted to the authorities concerned, but they ended up in 'dead files'.

Consequently, the fisher community leaders alerted the social organizations and their religious leadership on the dangers posed by unscientific port construction and its life-threatening consequences. Thus, a collective protest front was formed under the leadership of the Federation of Independent Fish Workers of Kerala and the National Farmers Federation networking with several similar organizations. After many multi-level consultations and discernments, the Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum entered the protest movement.

The protest movement highlighted seven demands before the government. The most prominent among them was a decent and adequate rehabilitation package for the present and future victims of land dele-







tion/erosion. They further demanded reinstating the kerosene subsidy for fish workers. Their legitimate right for financial support when they couldn't go fishing due to unfavorable weather condition was another demand. The community also asked for a scientific study by a commission that includes the traditional fish workers on the consequences of the port construction. The last demand was inclusion of a clause that the port construction should be stopped until the study is over.

However, the government overtly and covertly went on bragging that all demands except the last one to stop the port construction was met. According to the protesting communities, the government's claim is a blatant lie as nothing has taken place on ground towards executing any of the assurances. They were only lip services to appease the public in favour of the oppressing corporate giant. Ironically, since a democratic protest movement was not found quite newsworthy by the corporate-led media, the government-sponsored corporate discourses made headlines.

### **“Will Continue Our Protest”**

“We have no choice other than continuing our fight

for survival,” says Monsignor Eugene H. Pereira who leads the protest from front. It is the struggle of a people who have been denied of their right to live like humans. Though their livelihood of fishing is made impossible with the ongoing port construction and its consequent impacts, the government and the corporate house have done nothing tangible to rehabilitate the victims. Instead, the elected government, taking the side of the corporate house, is ordering the people to run away from their land. This inhuman stance exposes a conspiracy of betrayal of the fishing community. The Centre, the State and the corporate house collectively push the emotionally volatile fishing community to an explosive situation, portraying them as terrorists who disrupt Kerala's peace and harmony.

The obvious irony is the Communists' anti-democratic stance in Kerala. While they resist across the world capitalism's terror of development agenda, Kerala's subservient Communist government serves the capitalist's interest at the behest of the right-wing forces. The marginalized and the oppressed are left with no choices for their survival. Therefore, the fishing communities' cry for survival aligns with the roaring of the seas: “we will continue our protest.” ©

# ‘Unfolding of a Scripted Drama’

**M**onsignor Eugene H. Pereira is the convenor of the Vizhinjam Protest Front. He was present in person when the police opened attack on the protestors on 27th November. In an interview with **Fr. Vincent Pereppadan**, he narrates the sequence of events that culminated in a brutal police action. According to Monsignor Pereira, it was the unfolding of a scripted drama at the behest of the corporate power behind the port construction. He alleges that the ruling Communist government is playing to the corporate giant's tune.

## Q Why do you say that the riot-like violence at the Vizhinjam police station was scripted?

A The warlike violence and terror at Vizhinjam on 26th and 27th November were the result of a conspired script between the ruling CPI (M) and the BJP. They created communal divide and promoted organized fight using the ugliest tactics. There were groups of people deployed to provoke the fish workers who were engaged in peaceful protest. Fish workers' fight was against the port construction that jeopardizes their life and survival. However, the all-party concocted meeting organized by the oppressor government and their cronies exposed their hidden agenda of victimizing the protestors. The truth should come out. Therefore, we demand a judicial probe into the incidents. We have nothing to hide.

## Q What did really happen those two days?

A On the 26th morning, a group of women from the neighbouring Pulinkudy village, who were on their way to the protest site, were stopped by a mob which claimed to be port-favouring agitators. They started verbally abusing, assaulting, and physically attacking the women. Some of them who managed to escape from the aggressors reported the bizarre incident to us. They were bleeding and many of them were seriously wounded. Similarly, Fr. Melcon, a pastor of a neighbouring parish, was brutally attacked on his way to the protest spot. He is still in the hospital. Some other pastors were also stopped by



Monsignor Eugene H. Pereira

the same group and were abused and assaulted. The priests played calm without responding to the verbal and physical attacks. Finally, it was a battalion of police who saved them.

The next assault was at the protest site. We were conducting our protest peacefully at the port gate. However, a group of allegedly pro-port campaigners started provoking the protesting fish workers, especially the women, with abusive language. By around 11.00 a.m. they started pelting stones at the people. Many men and women were wounded. An assistant pastor was stoned down. Still, the protesting

**The police arrested the council members and moved them to the reserve police's camp. There were no cases against any of them. It was clear that the police were faithfully playing their role in intensifying the provocative and tensed situation already created**

fish workers kept calm by avoiding a counterattack. When this provocation continued with repeated attacks, a youth group of fish workers had to chase the attackers away. The massive formation of police force around the place stood silent witnesses. A tensed and provocative situation was built up. It was intentionally intensified by repeated assaults and determined police inaction. Still, the agitated and angry fish workers were calmed and deterred by their leaders from retaliating.

However, on 27th Sunday, by around 2.30 p.m., the shadow police took Mr. Shelton, a quite fisherman and Ward Councillor, into custody for no reasons. His wife who went to the police station was brutally assaulted by the police. Meanwhile, two cases were framed against Archbishop Dr. Thomas Netto on account of the previous day's assaults while not a single case was registered against the actual assaulters. Interestingly, the Archbishop was nowhere in the scene. Minister Mr. Anil was lying in the media that there were no FIRs against the Archbishop. Police framed several false cases against many of us.

Intentionally, we did not propagate the booking of the Archbishop among the community members as a spark of instigation can have dire consequences of violence. I repeatedly asked the Police Commissioner to release Mr. Shelton on bail from custody even if the police registered a false case attaching Section 307.

By Sunday evening, an agitated crowd that gathered at the Vizhinjam church pressurized the pastor and the council members to demand Mr. Shelton's immediate release. To deter the angry crowd from violence, four parish council members were sent to the police station to negotiate Shelton's release. The police response was intentionally provocative. Instead of pacifying them, the police arrested the council members and moved them to the reserve police's camp. There were no cases against any of them. It was clear that the police were faithfully playing their role in intensifying the provocative and tensed situation already created.

When people in the neighbouring villages learned that the councillors were arrested, many women gathered around the Vizhinjam police station, and they were demonstrating against the unjust police custody of their men. I was faraway in the city at that time. When I got the information, I called the Police Commissioner for his instant intervention to ease the tension. He asked me to rush to the Vizhinjam

station to take control of the mob gathered there. While I was rushing to the site, I could see huge police forces deployed all the way. I was told by the police that the officers in the police station were under siege. Therefore, my priority was to release the officers who were trapped inside. However, when I reached there, I could see the police were safe within the compound walls while people were outside the gates. I moved towards the station to help the officers if they were wounded.

Suddenly, a teargas shell fell on my back. A fierce grenade attack was followed. Several grenades were exploded around, and people got scattered and ran for life. Instantly, the police station and its surrounding became a warzone. Before all these attacks started, a group of young men had destroyed the surveillance cameras around that site. Who ordered this police action? Who facilitated this terror? Meanwhile, a battalion of CRPF officers barged into the scene from one side. There were different police forces engaged in grenade actions. The same forces brutally attacked people with batons. Severely wounded women and men were crying for their life. No ministers nor government officials were found around to calm the situation. Therefore, it was clear that they were enacting a pre-scripted riot drama at the behest of the corporate powers.

**Q Were there no peace attempts from any side?**

**A** My mission at the scene was to calm the angry crowd. The government's agenda was evident from the sudden police action. It was a premeditated riot drama. Still, we were having dialogues and peace keeping attempts with the district authorities and police officials. I demanded immediate release of those who were kept in police custody unjustly. But the response was violence and police action against the protesting fish workers.

Thousands of villagers were preparing to rush to Vizhinjam. However, I pleaded with the community leaders and pastors to deter those people from the neighbouring villages from retaliation. At the same time, it becomes emphatically clear that the Communist government of Kerala conspired with the BJP and the corporate giant to portray the oppressed fisheries community as anti-nationals and rioters. They wanted the media and the public to carry such a narrative to facilitate the corporate power and to eliminate protesting fisher folks who fight for their life. ©

## Open Letter to Adani

# Wipe the Tears of Port Victims

BY A.J. PHILIP

Dear Shri Gautam Adani Ji,

First of all, please accept my hearty congratulations on your becoming the most successful businessman in the country, nay Asia. It is a different matter that your wealth was growing exponentially as the poor were becoming poorer, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Let me add here, I never imagined that I would ever have to write an open letter to you.

What forced me to make an exception is my growing distress over the happenings at Vizhinjam, near Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, where you have been building a trans-shipment port which, I am told, will be the largest in India. The port will always be known after your name, not Vizhinjam, where ships, big and small, had been berthing for centuries.

Why I mention this is because your name is inextricably linked to the port project and any untoward incident at Vizhinjam is bound to tarnish your image too. I do not have to tell you about what happened on Sunday last when for the first time reports of



violence emanated from Vizhinjam. I am a pacifist like Mahatma Gandhi and would never approve of violence.

I do not know whether you know about the Punnappra-Vayalar struggle in Kerala in which Communist workers were at the receiving end of the government.

When you meet Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan next, you may like to ask him about the struggle and he will tell you how the Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, tried to engineer violence so that it gave him a pretext to unleash the police and the military against the workers in which at least a thousand people were killed, to quote historian Sreedhara Menon.

The strategy used on November 27, 2022, was more or less the same. Except that it was a Communist government which used strategies that reminded the people of CP, who had to leave Travancore when he himself became a victim of violence. The moral of the story is that violence begets violence and there is no end to it.

Before I proceed, let me make a disclaimer. I am not against development, though the signs of development have changed. When I came to Delhi in 1973, the Indraprastha Power Station with its towering chimneys that billowed smoke in the heart of the city was a sign of progress. It was only many years later that I realised how dangerous the power plant was for the health of the people. Thank God it was closed!

I know that your port is almost ready to receive the first ship to anchor there. It will be literally a red-letter day for Kerala, where red is the official colour. To speak against the project at this juncture is to speak against the naivety of constructing a Congressman's statue near Vadodara at a cost of \$27 billion. Let me, therefore, leave the matter there.

In any case, the agitation at Vizhinjam is not



**Your port is huge and it is built against the natural inclinations of the sea. The reaction is felt on the northern side of the port where soil erosion and other causes induced by the construction have deprived the fish workers of their land and houses**

against the project. It is now 20 weeks since the agitation began. I am sure that nobody would have reported to you about the fish workers raising slogans for winding up the project. They have their seven minimum demands. Not one of them is to send you packing from Kerala. Instead, they are all humanitarian demands. I write to you because you can easily settle the problem.

True, Shri Pinarayi Vijayan could have gone to Vizhinjam, met the striking fish workers, and given them a hearing. He could surely have solved their problems in a few hours. It would have, in fact, added a feather to his cap. Instead, he preferred to remain vainglorious, little realising the damage he was causing to the Leftist ideology that he now professes for convenience.

I am sure that you know about Newton's famous law of motion which says that "for every action in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction". As I mentioned, ships used to anchor at Vizhinjam because it was a natural port.

Your port is huge and it is built against the natural inclinations of the sea. The reaction is felt on the northern side of the port where soil erosion and other causes induced by the construction have deprived the fish workers of their land and houses.

In short, they are the victims of your port. They have been temporarily housed in a cement godown where each family has a cabin of 10x10 feet with an open roof. I have seen a bungalow in Lutyens Delhi that you reportedly bought. I am not foolish enough to compare your house with their camp accommodation. All I want you to do is to visit their camp and see for yourself how they live. I am sure the agitators



would peacefully let you visit their camp.

I saw a video that depicts the conditions in which they live. An elderly woman was agonising over how her granddaughter lacked privacy in their cabin with Peeping Toms all around. Their living cabins also accommodated scorpions, lizards, rodents and occasional guests like cobras and pythons. They had just two toilets for 30 children, many of whom couldn't go to school every day.

They have been living in this miserable condition for the last four years. If they have become desperate, can you blame them? Imagine how you would feel if the air-conditioning system in your private aircraft fails once it takes off. You will feel out of sorts because your tolerance level is much below that of the fish workers who live by the sweat of their brow.

You may not know these fish workers but the whole of Kerala knows them. What occasioned it was the 2018 Great Flood that visited the state. When the rains continued ceaselessly, many Christians, who grew up reading Noah's account in the Bible, wondered whether they, too, needed to build an Ark. Fortunately, the downpour ended but not before flooding areas that were not even flood-prone.

One of my distant relatives – an elderly couple – was trapped inside the first floor of their house and there was no way they could be rescued. Their tech-savvy daughter-in-law contacted Pinarayi Vijayan's office and she was promised help. Soon, an Indian Air Force helicopter hovered over their house at Ranny but because of trees and other obstacles, they could not be rescued aerially.



**If you think Vijayan was your supporter, you are mistaken. You may not be able to read the CPM mouthpiece Deshabhimani. I have seen a day's issue devoting the whole front page to Vizhinjam. The newspaper described the port as an anti-people, anti-environment project**

A day or two earlier, the church bell at Vizhinjam rang and on the request of their bishop, the same fish workers set out for areas like Ranny, Chenganur, Pathanamthitta with their boats to rescue the marooned. They did not seek any reward or glory. They had to suffer loss of income and injuries. Many of their boats were damaged but they saw it as their duty.

The whole of Kerala saluted them for their heroic action that saved the lives of many. What a misfortune that they are today called by some in the government as anti-socials. Social media are full of posts calling them and the priests providing them moral courage anarchists, if not terrorists.

If you think Vijayan was your supporter, you are

mistaken. You may not be able to read the CPM mouthpiece Deshabhimani. I have seen a day's issue devoting the whole front page to Vizhinjam. The newspaper described the port as an anti-people, anti-environment project. The fish workers were Vijayan's voters when he sought re-election a year ago. In a way, he owes his return to power to their support.

It was Bismarck who said that "what we learn from history is that no one learns from history." Vijayan should have learnt from what happened at Singur in West Bengal. The CPM was in power at that time. The house of Tatas wanted to set up a plant at Singur to manufacture the world's cheapest car called Nano.

They wanted 1,000 acres of land for setting up the plant. I visited Singur. The Tatas eyed fertile, agricultural land. The government used a British-era law to forcibly acquire land. There was resistance from the people. The government went ahead with acquisition and the factory began coming up. The farmers were not happy with the compensation offered.

They expected the Tatas to chip in some money, but they refused to give even a rupee per acre. Around that time, the Tatas acquired the European steel plant Corus. Let me quote from the official Press note: "Tata Steel is happy to announce that the Company has completed its £6.2 billion (US\$12 billion) acquisition of Corus Group at a price of 608 pence per ordinary share in cash".

At that time, Ratan Tata told the media that he was prepared to pay much more to buy Corus. He did not

**Nobody can ask you to wind up your operations at Vizhinjam and leave Kerala. That would be a gross injustice. I know much of the Rs 75.25 billion required for the port would come from the public exchequer, not from your pockets, however deep they are**

say how many more millions or billions of dollars he was prepared to pay. He was the same person who refused to give even Re 1 per acre of Singur land.

Vijayan may not remember what happened later. When Narendra Modi offered a better deal in Gujarat, Ratan Tata shifted the plant overnight to Gujarat. The Marxists lost money, reputation and eventually their government. Even the Tatas did not gain. Nano was a total failure. Even Corus turned out to be a burden for the house of Tatas. No, I won't say that it was the result of the curse of the farmers of Singur!

Now what can be done to retrieve the situation? Nobody can ask you to wind up your operations at Vizhinjam and leave Kerala. That would be a gross injustice. I know much of the Rs 75.25 billion required for the port would come from the public exchequer, not from your pockets, however deep they are.

I am sure you would be able to recover much more than your investment during the 40 years that you would run the port. Now, let me make a suggestion. The heavens would not fall if you include compensation for all the fish workers who lost their "habitat" and are now braving verbal and physical assaults, while agitating for their rights, in the project cost.

If the rehabilitation of the fish workers would cost, say, Rs 50 crore or Rs 100 crore, please include it in the project cost. Nobody would object. If each displaced farmer gets a plot of land where he can build a permanent house, not far from the sea, he would be more than happy to withdraw the agitation.

Do you think I am asking for the moon? I remember reading in the Economic Times that you created wealth at an unprecedented speed of Rs 1,612 crore per day to double your wealth in the last one year

to beat Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos as the world's second-richest man. What I request is peanuts for you and your company.

Vijayan could also have done the same thing but he is virtually bankrupt. His interests are different now. One of the priests spearheading the agitation made an unfortunate comment for which he apologised. He has allowed his ministers to call the fish workers names and use abusive words like "Chri-Sanghi" for the priests.

Let me conclude this letter telling you that wealth has a little problem. As you know, it was Anil Ambani who built the Delhi Airport Metro Line, easily the best in the world at that time. Today, he is virtually bankrupt. He had to admit in public that he relied on his mother's munificence to manage his day-to-day affairs.



This reminded me of the great Malayalam poet Poonthanam's Inanappana (The fountain of wisdom) written in the 16th century which has these thought-provoking lines: "If God wishes, the people we see now or are with us now, may disappear or be dead in the next moment. Or, if He wishes, in a few days a healthy man may be paraded to his funeral pyre."

"If God wishes, the king living in a palace today may lose everything and end up carrying a dirty bag on his shoulders and walk around homeless". He reminds us about the fleeting nature of wealth. Now that you have the wealth, you have the capacity to wipe the tears off the face of all those who suffer because of the Vizhinjam port. May I hope that you will not let down the poor fish workers?

Yours etc ©

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# Where Rights are Wrong

Despite the Constitution of India ensuring human rights to everyone, it is found more in violation than in its observation in the country

BY **DR. ELSA LYCIAS JOEL**

**T**hough hailed as the largest democracy in the world, India has a chequered, if not dubious track record when it comes to safeguarding human rights. In fact, the essence of any democracy is that its marginalized voices are heard and any rule must emerge from that sensitivity. Vulnerable people of India have suffered one disastrous government after another in the past several decades, their lives filled with disappointment, setbacks, deprivations and humiliations. The list of notorious acts of commission and omission is a long one.

A majority of people participate in the race of life barefoot. Governments give only a few the riches to acquire horses, learn to ride it, train the animals and participate in this race. For a few cronies, chariots come. I'm not harping on compassion, empathy and sensitivity, but democracy/equality. When there is not even a semblance of effort to create living conditions for the less fortunate, there is bound to have suspicion over the government's intention. To deny any citizen her/his right to equality is a violation of the fundamental right our country's Constitution has guaranteed.

The more I observe and interact with people, the more I realize that majority of them think and act in fear. However, I've also noticed with amazement how the affected lot develop greater capacities to understand and fight for themselves once they are encour-

aged to speak up and stand up for their rights. By now lakhs of Indians have migrated to places where they can express their needs and are respected. Democracies, by definition, respect the concerns of the disadvantaged.

When we think of human rights, the first thing that comes to our minds is the descent-based discrimination that permeates everywhere. Strange enough, we also see outspoken human rights defenders being harassed and prosecuted. Even today we debate, weep and mourn the plight and fate of heroes who saw the value of constitutional provisions and advocated their use to protect the downtrodden. Thus, it's ensured that anybody who gears up to espouse the freedom and rights of fellow humans is put in his/her place with a number of laws and Acts. Given our track record, does this still shock!

Take the case of manual scavengers in India. A day without them will end in disaster and for them, every day is a disaster. They have no access to anything we call basic human rights --minimum wage and safety gear. I've seen humans inside manholes that are nearly full. Neck deep in muck, literally. Few years ago, I saw a dead man being pulled out of

**When there is not even a semblance of effort to create living conditions for the less fortunate, there is bound to have suspicion over the government's intention. To deny any citizen her/his right to equality is a violation of the fundamental right**





**Democratic discussion, debate and peaceful protests have been liberal traditions of India. The Constitution has given us this right, even as it has put some fetters on our right of expression**

a manhole as if he was another dead cockroach. People made frantic calls here, there and everywhere and an ambulance arrived 45 minutes after he stopped breathing. As far as human rights violations are concerned, the graph of faith in human nature is showing a greater dip.

India is built on diversity. All citizens enrich India with their own identity, culture and traditions. The video of a hijab-clad student heckled by boys wearing saffron scarves shook the nation. For India to shine, intellectuals and institution builders are needed. No one can build world class institutions without adopting the policy of inclusion. Universities and educational institutions cannot be built on foundations of hatred. The attacks on Jamia Millia Islamia and JNU showed us how the government can blatantly crush dissent, throwing caution and common sense to the wind. Democratic discussion, debate and peaceful protests have been liberal traditions of India. The Constitution has given us this right, even as it has put some fetters on our right of expression. But only the underprivileged are expected to exercise this right with caution, which also means they are supposed to remain quiet until they vanish.

Nine-year-old Indra Meghwal is also a citizen of India as much as any successful businessman or industrialist. Do our leaders have anything at all to flaunt after a small boy was beaten to death in a school, not for stealing, not for any malpractice but for touching a water pot that was meant for people belonging to another community?

If Rohith Vemula with a double JRF (Junior Research Fellowship) in hand felt that he was reduced to his immediate identity, to a vote, to a number, to a thing and called his birth a fatal accident before ending his life, imagine the plight of humans who live in constant fear of being raped, intimidated, lynched, paraded naked, offended, arrested, tortured and



sometimes even killed. A central university needed the life of a promising young scientist to release the stipend he rightfully deserved. On this day, let me rephrase what the 13th Dalai Lama wrote to the British Trade Agent in Tibet on his way to exile. 'That is, large insects continue to scare and devour smaller ones, which are also robbed of their rights to life and freedom!'

Struggles of activists have led them nowhere so far. We have seen them struggle till their last breath, to say nothing of the abuse and torment they go through. Father Stan Swamy's story is a good case in point. A champion of human rights, all he did was put service to the marginalized above his personal life and realizations.

Of the many real and implied threats to the idea of human rights, the gravest by far is that of communal violence. Alas, those who commit violence have invariably slipped away under the anonymity of being part of a mob. Clearly, political will can fix anybody who violates human rights. Unfortunately, when the enforcement agencies are prone to prejudices and shoddy work, 'due process of law' becomes a misnomer.

A hopeful handful still hope that despite frequent betrayal of our own ideals of democracy, we are a land of terrific potential. Sadly, according to many, as a society we long gave up on justice and human rights. Nevertheless, we hear songs of loss and yearning, of fighting those who use caste/religion for politics, of the imperative for a new religion which teaches us to be humane or human and of the need to walk together with broken souls and wounded hearts. ©

# Stop Hatred and Violence

Only by reviving the original culture of India – compassion, love and mutual respect - the country can attain its place among the comity of nations

BY **JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah openly acknowledged the role of the BJP in 2002 communal riots in Gujarat that resulted in the killing of more than 2000 Muslims and more than one lakh Muslims becoming homeless. Amit Shah considers it as a great achievement of the BJP and he has appealed to people of Gujarat to vote for the BJP for this achievement.



*and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat* by Harsh Mander, *Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover-up* by Rana Ayub and *Under Cover: My Journey into the Darkness of Hindutva* by Ashish Khetan.

Vipal Mudgal in his review of the book *Under Cover* in *The Times of India* on 17th

September 2021 summarized the content of the book in the following words. "He shows, through a series of sting operations, that it takes decades of work to infuse hostility and create an ecosystem of fear, discord, and meek mediocrity. Once the groundwork is done, absurdity can strike anyone in the face, anytime. It is possible, for instance, that routine people savagely react one day to something distant and oddly unconnected. The judge, the prosecutor, and the defence

Addressing a rally in Mahudha town of Kheda district in support of BJP candidates ahead of the next month's Assembly elections, Amit Shah alleged, "During the Congress rule in Gujarat (before 1995), communal riots were rampant. In 2002, they tried to indulge in communal violence... we taught them such a lesson, we put them in jail. It's been 22 years; we have not put a curfew even once. BJP has done the work to bring peace to a land that saw frequent communal riots," he said.

Many books and researched articles on 2002 Gujarat riots have exposed the brutality and the complicity of the Modi government in Gujarat. Prominent among them are *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy* by Siddharth Varadarajan, *Between Memory*

**The Godhra BJP MLA C K Raulji, who made the comment that the convicts (in Bilkis Bano case) who were released are Brahmins and they have good 'sanskar', is given a BJP ticket from Godhra in the Assembly elections. All these indicate that the BJP is proud of what it did in 2002**

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**"They Were Taught Lesson In 2002, Permanent Peace In Gujarat": Amit Shah** [ndtv.com/india-news/bjp...](https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/bjp...)

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lawyer can sometimes gang up to punish the victim or sabotage the trial. It is equally likely that the cops staging a daylight murder are rewarded handsomely and an honest investigator gets reprimanded or removed”.

For many years the BJP was in a denial mode of its role and Modi government's role in the 2002 Gujarat riots. They presented it as a natural reaction of Hindus to the Godhra carnage. When Narendra Modi, as the chief minister of Gujarat, was confronted in an interview by Kran Tapper in 2007 on questions related to Gujarat riots, he left the interview after three minutes. But now, the BJP has no hesitation to admit its role and Amit Shah has the audacity to present it as a great achievement of the BJP. That is why the Gujarat government prematurely released 11 persons who were convicted in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case. The central government gave its nod to the Gujarat government within two weeks. The Godhra BJP MLA C K Raulji, who made the comment that the convicts who were released are Brahmins and they have good 'sanskar', is given a BJP ticket from Godhra in the assembly elections. All these signs indicate that the BJP is proud of what it did in 2002.

One can notice a sea of change in the socio-political scenario of India ever since the BJP came to power at the Centre in 2014 under the leadership of Narendra Modi. Hindutva ideology based on hatred and prejudice has infiltrated into the different layers of society. The RSS-BJP combine makes profuse use of social media to spread hate messages and polarize the Hindus. The result is a phenomenal change in the mindset of the Hindus, the majority community. According to a Pew Research Centre

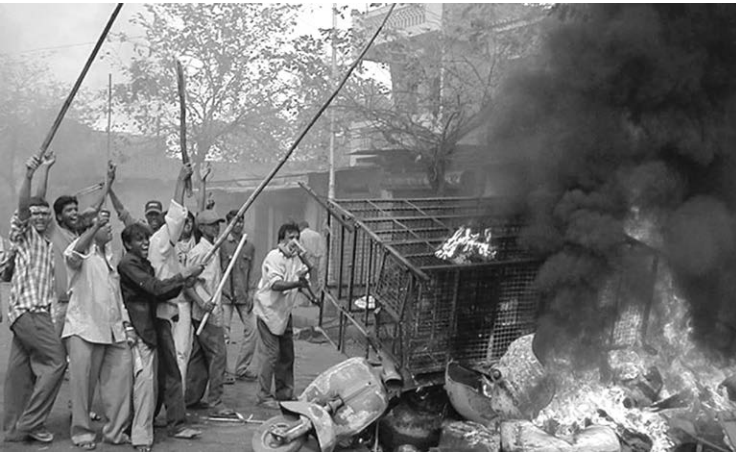
survey held between the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, nearly two-thirds of Hindus (64%) say it is very important to be a Hindu to be truly Indian, and nearly 59% say it is very important to *speaks Hindi* to be truly Indian. 72 percent of Hindus say that a person cannot be a Hindu, if he/she eats beef.

Hate and prejudice against the Muslims have become very common. NDTV News reported on 28th November an incident that took place at Manipal Institute of Technology, Udipi. A professor had reportedly asked a student his name, and on hearing a Muslim name, he blurted: "Oh, you are like Kasab!". Ajmal Kasab, the lone Pakistani terrorist captured alive after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, was executed in 2012. The professor was comparing the student to a terrorist. In a widely-shared video, the student was heard confronting the professor and accusing him of denigrating his religion by comparing him with a terrorist. Fortunately, the college has suspended the professor and an enquiry has been ordered. If a highly educated person like a college professor can become the victim of prejudice, what would be the situation of the ordinary Hindus who are bombarded with hate messages day in and day out?



Even crimes are given communal colour. For example, a communal angle is inserted by some people into the Shradha Walker Murder case because in this case the culprit is a Muslim, Aftab Amin Poonawalla. Indeed, it is a gruesome and utterly despicable crime. A crime is a crime whether it is committed by a Hindu, Muslim or Christian and what is important is the act of crime and not the religion of the person who committed the crime. But the Hindutva groups try to polarize people by making use of a crime.

BJP's Kapil Mishra tweeted, "Bollywood, media,



ads that promote false constructs like brotherhood, politics that is soaked in the blood of daughters, rich and upper middle classes drinking the poison of fake secularism, the sold police and the jihadi education model. Don't blame daughters for murders like Shradha."

NDTV News on 28th November reported that a police van carrying Aaftab Amin Poonawalla was attacked by a group of sword-wielding men in the evening. According to the report, the police managed to control the situation and Poonawalla is safe. The right-wing group Hindu Sena has taken responsibility for the attack. A statement from Vishnu Gupta, the National President of the organisation, said the whole country is "watching how Aftab cut a Hindu girl into pieces".

The same type of crimes- killing a person and cutting the body into several pieces and storing it in the fridge for several days before disposing of it at different places- were reported in the media during the last three weeks. A murder took place in Uttar

Pradesh, where a man was arrested for allegedly killing and chopping his ex-girlfriend into six parts before disposing them in a well. On 28th November the media reported a horrible killing. A 45-year-old man was allegedly killed by his wife and son in May this year. They cut his body into pieces and stored them inside their fridge for about two days and disposed of them in an open ground less than a kilometre away from their house in East Delhi's Trilokpuri. Such horrible crimes were committed in the past also, but people perceived them as crimes that are to be condemned and the criminals who are to be given the severest punishment. Unfortunately, the right-wing Hindutva groups have started using crimes in which a Muslim man and a Hindu girl are involved to create hatred in Hindus against Muslims.

Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi with its catchy slogan *Nafrat Chodo Bharat Jodo* (Give up hatred, unite India) appears to be a fitting response to the divisive, exclusive and hateful ideology of the ruling party and its protagonists. According to Rahul Gandhi, the goals of Bharat Jodo Yatra are 1) to unite India by liberating it from hatred, anger, fear, arrogance and violence, 2) to listen to the voice of people and thereby reduce the distance between people and political parties, and 3) to remind people about the culture of India: compassion, love and mutual respect.

"Some people have asked about the need for 'Bharat Jodo'. India has many critical goals to achieve... We have to reduce the suffering of millions of poor people. It's not easy. It can't be possible if India is divided, angry, full of hatred for itself. Every single person in this country is Indian and if anybody hates any other Indian, he is hating the idea of India itself. Today, we have an atmosphere of anger and hatred generated by a particular ideology," said Rahul Gandhi.

As long as politics of fear, hatred, exclusion, self-aggrandizement and arrogance dominate, the dream of India becoming a "Vishwa Guru" will remain only a day dream. Only by reviving and rejuvenating the original culture of India- compassion, love and mutual respect- India can attain its place among the comity of nations. ©

**The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi with its catchy slogan *Nafrat Chodo Bharat Jodo* (Give up hatred, unite India) appears to be a fitting response to the divisive, exclusive and hateful ideology of the ruling party and its protagonists**

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# World Cup Culture Wars

White world's manufactured outrage is nothing but "moral lesson giving, one-sided and just hypocrisy"

BY **MATHEW JOHN**

**B**rutal racism, arrogance, exploitation of labour and resources of subject nations have been the salient features of the imperialist project. The predatory West is culpable for many of the most inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history. And yet, as Edward Said had observed, it seeks to paper over its own inhumanity by disregarding, essentializing and denuding the humanity of other cultures and people. Decolonization has not blunted the West's obscene moralistic triumphalism and arrogance. On the big stage, wherever, there is an unabating crusade to contrast the civilized liberal West and its traditional commitment to human dignity, freedom and progress with the barbarism and obsolescent thinking in the Orient. Bah!

This ill-tempered prelude has been provoked by the cold, calculated rapacity of the West-dominated opinion makers and their hypocritical attack on Qatar, the venue of the greatest spectacle on earth – the FIFA World Cup. Their malevolent criticism revolves around a range of issues including the ban



on sale of alcohol during matches, Qatar's anachronistic LGBTQ policy and the treatment of migrant labourers involved in the construction of the stadia and other infrastructure for the World Cup, which their media has sensationalized by calling it "a stain on the conscience of the footballing

world."

The widely reported maltreatment of migrant labour in Qatar, drawn mainly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka relates to squalid accommodation, delayed payments, withholding of passports, inadequate nutrition, exposure to extreme heat and nationality-based discrimination. In the 12 years since the construction work started, there have been about 6750 migrant deaths due to on-site accidents and illnesses associated with the work environment. This is most definitely an unacceptably high number of deaths, but then, to quote the immortal biblical cautionary injunction: "Let him who has not sinned cast the first stone."

The West's sanctimonious criticism of the treatment meted out to migrant labour in Qatar is stun-



**By its own admission, in the European Union, more than 1000 workers are killed and over 800,000 workers injured every year in work-site related accidents, which makes their criticism of Qatar untenable – a phoney case of, at best, the kettle calling the pot black**

ning in its hypocrisy. The construction industry, a critical part of the economy of most countries, is recognized worldwide as the most hazardous of industries. A European Union Expert analysis has concluded that construction workers everywhere are three times more likely to be killed and twice as likely to be injured as workers in other occupations.

By its own admission, in the European Union, more than 1000 workers are killed and over 800,000 workers injured every year in work-site related accidents, which makes their criticism of Qatar untenable -- a phoney case of, at best, the kettle calling the pot black. Being slightly less reprehensible than the reprehensible does not make you a good man. The abysmal condition of construction workers is a universal blight which needs to be addressed, but certainly not by picking on one of the many defaulters, especially when the gratuitous criticism does not stem from an intent to improve matters but is aired merely to tarnish the image of Qatar at a most critical time. It is an ugly extension of the age-old culture war between the Muslim and Western world, with all the megaphones controlled by the West.

One is amazed by the sheer gumption of the Western world to raise the issue of ill-treatment of migrants. To be lectured on humanism by those guilty of the worst excesses against humanity is jarring. Have they forgotten the three-year-old Syrian toddler, Alan Kurdi, washed up on a beach in the Mediterranean, lying face down in the surf -- a heart-breaking image that is a scathing indictment of the inhumanity of a heartless Europe?

It was that great lady Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, who jolted the European Union out of



its awful apathy with her determined intercession, “*Wir schaffen das*” meaning “We’ll manage this (refugee influx).” Even as she sounded this noble humanitarian note, Hungary sent trainloads of refugees to Germany, 20000 of them arriving at the Munich station the same week, and scores thereafter. The burgeoning gang of rightists -- racists by another name -- led by Donald Trump, called her humane gesture “a catastrophic mistake” but despite the sustained and high-octane campaign, including severe rightwing violence demanding a pushback of her open-door policy, she refused to recant her words or her policy.

Notwithstanding Angela Merkel’s heroic support of the beleaguered migrants, the West has been less than human in its treatment of migrants, and hence has no moral right to preach to Qatar on the subject. To quote the justifiably furious but tactless President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, the White world’s manufactured outrage is nothing but “moral lesson giving, one-sided and just hypocrisy.”

Other issues that have at best, a tenuous, extraneous connection with sport have been weaponized to discountenance the organizers of the World Cup. The English media, with its practiced gift of making mountains of molehills, have gone to town on the restrictions imposed by Qatar on the sale of alcohol in the stadiums. Perhaps, that was to be expected, especially when one considers the universal verity expressed by a soccer aficionado; “I’ve never seen a sober English football fan in my life.” Although I am one who, like Eliza Doolittle’s aunt, genuinely believes that “gin is mother’s milk”, I also know that the world would be a wreck if determined by the needs of the liquor-guzzling lot.

The West-inspired outrage at the liquor ban in stadiums during match time is another blatant example of humbug. In England, alcohol is okay in the concourse but not in your seat; France does not permit alcohol at stadiums in the nation's top-flight league. The world should also know that in the two fabled soccer stadiums of the world -- Barcelona's Camp Nou and Real Madrid's Bernabeu -- alcohol is strictly prohibited during games. But Qatar's restriction is being viewed as another example of bigoted cultural provincialism.

For the first time, a 'Code of conduct' in the stadiums has been drawn up that forbids the spectators from being visibly under the influence of narcotics or alcohol or being in a state of undress or even shirtless and prohibits inflatable items and vuvuzelas. These are staid, square but unexceptionable rules of etiquette in a sporting arena.

There is also the needlessly hyped issue of Qatar's intolerance of gay people. Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar, as it has been in most countries of the world, including India, till a few years ago. Its secular courts can impose a punishment of up to three years in prison for any breach, and if one is Muslim, the Sharia law of the death sentence applies, a penalty that has never actually been executed. The law was in place when Qatar was awarded the contract to host the World Cup, which makes the present brouhaha on the issue a despicable and totally unwarranted distraction and another slur aimed at stigmatizing Qatar.

Hitherto, the World Cup venues were adjudged almost exclusively on their physical readiness to host the tournament, but Qatar is being subjected to a visceral analysis of its world view, its laws, even a microscopic examination of how it got the infrastructure in place. It has been one long exercise in fault-finding with the nefarious motive of telling the world that the global South is incapable of handling a soccer World Cup.

That infamous Sepp Blatter, the former FIFA president, an unsavoury wheeler-dealer, who presided

over FIFA's many questionable deals, including the choice of Qatar to host the World Cup, had the audacity to state, only days before the start of the tournament that it was a mistake to award the World Cup to Qatar as it is "too small a country" and the "World Cup is too big for it". Qatar has emphatically proved him wrong with the most spectacular show that the soccer world has seen.

We are being told that no amount of spending on creating the most magnificent infrastructure and bounteous conveniences can make up for the absence of that 'something', the special sensation that constitutes the very essence of a World Cup. Perhaps the customary raucousness, the drunken bonhomie among spectators will be muted this time around, but then, ultimately, the World Cup is about football, and this tournament has already provided the very best that football can offer.

There have been upsets galore in the first few days of the tournament, with Saudi Arabia claiming the scalp of Argentina; Germany losing to Japan; and Iran beating Wales. And you know what? Qatar is being held partly guilty for these unexpected results because it has scheduled the tournament in winter -- the first time ever -- upend-

ing the European soccer calendar and giving players less time to train with their national teams. My word! These guys are the sorest losers on mother earth!

Even as I write, we are a week into this exquisite celebration of life. The World Cup is not just about kicking, heading, weaving patterns with the ball and scoring goals; it's about radiating intoxicating sensations, about electric current running up the spine that makes you rejoice and grieve and laugh and curse, all in the space of 90 minutes, emotions that are revived through 64 matches. It is, ultimately, about *joie de vivre* and togetherness, and forgetting, albeit briefly, the grimness of life! Enjoy, and damn the critics! ©

**The World Cup is not just about kicking, heading, weaving patterns with the ball and scoring goals; it's about radiating intoxicating sensations, about electric current running up the spine that makes you rejoice and grieve and laugh and curse, all in the space of 90 minutes**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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

# Religion is like Cholesterol

Just as there is good and bad Cholesterol in human body, there are good and bad elements co-existing in every religion; people have to be wary of the bad elements in every religion

BY **DR M. D. THOMAS**

**C**holesterol is a class of organic molecules called 'lipids'. It is a 'waxy and fat-like substance that is found in all the cells of the body'. The body requires cholesterol to make the cells healthy with vitamins, hormones and other digestive elements. They are vital to the existence of the body. But, the level of cholesterol has to be sustained, preventing it from being high or low, in consideration of good health.

Cholesterol is a double-sided reality. There is good cholesterol and bad cholesterol, alike. 'Good cholesterol' is high density lipoprotein (HDL) and 'bad cholesterol' is low density lipoprotein (LDL). Good cholesterol is good because HDL carries cholesterol to the liver, where it can be removed from the bloodstream before it builds up in the arteries. Bad cholesterol takes cholesterol directly to the arteries and this can eventually cause a heart attack or stroke. A low ratio between them is ideal, as well.

Cholesterol has another component, namely 'triglycerides', and they are 'unused calories' that are stored as fat in the blood. Eating more calories than one could burn can cause triglycerides to build up in the bloodstream, increasing one's risk for heart attacks and strokes. Now, it directly follows that



good cholesterol is to be increased and bad cholesterol, to be decreased. Maintaining healthy levels of cholesterol is important, in view of a healthy life, too.

Religion is like cholesterol. Religion is a matter that concerns the mind, heart and spirit of a person, whereas cholesterol is an element in the body. Nothing is 100 per cent and perfect in this world, neither elements of the body nor that of the mind, heart and spirit. Therefore, shortcoming as regards religion is as natural as imbalance in the level and ratio of cholesterol, by way of good and bad or useful and harmful.

It is often said that 'the Creator or God has created human beings and human beings have made religion'. It is the principle of nature that whatever is created cannot be hundred percent. If the creation of the perfect Creator is limited, it is absurd to expect religion to be perfect, which is the creation of limited human beings. No wonder, the system of religions, along with their theories, principles, ideals, laws, rituals and the like, are like a 'mix of sugar and sand', in the words of Ram Krishna Param Hans.

There is no denying the eternal fact that several 'seers, prophets and god-humans', along with their life and teachings, are at the source of the diverse springs of religions, in different parts of the world and at different times of the human history. The experiences of great men and women were pure and wholesome, like the water of the river that is pure at the place of origin. With the passage of time, dirty elements of the world got mixed with the great life style, values and teachings of the great visionaries and missionaries of religion. As of now, good and bad elements co-exist, just like good and bad cholesterol.

In the course of human history, the world over, religion has supplied a lot of meaning to human lives. It has motivated the humans and prevented people from being disappointed, even to suicidal points. It has constructed civilizations and gave direction to various societies, supplying hope in life, in spite of the odds. Religion will continue to be a 'great moti-





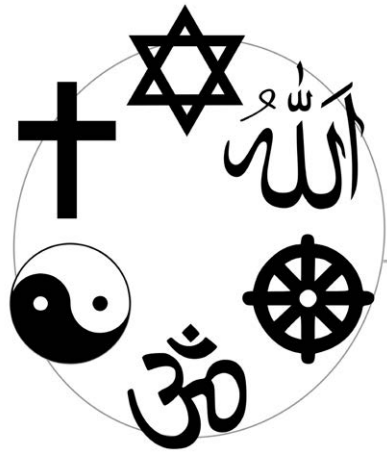
vating factor', as the world genius George Bernard Shaw observes. No doubt, leaving aside the details and side elements, the core factor of religion has always been a blessing to the humanity, like good cholesterol in the body.

On the other hand, it is no secret that religion has been behind almost all the major wars, terrors and tensions of the world, by way of an active agent, a full-time ally or a passive spectator. The untold misery religion has caused to the human society thus is beyond the scope of being measured. Even in the modern times, religion is the cause and context of the hate speeches, ill feeling, discrimination, division and murder. The biggest unsociability among people in the world is in the name of religion, as well. This is definitely a factor of bad cholesterol that calls for a major surgical procedure, on an urgent basis.

Religion is often like the 'truck that carries petrol and diesel', which is 'highly inflammable'. It is also like the bush 'touch me not'. Being 'inflammable and over-reactive' in the name of religion or by those who claim to have a certain religion is like bad cholesterol. It is the side effects of the bad religion. Hating or killing a person, whether in one's own religion or in that of another, is again bad cholesterol. This bad cholesterol in religion is a liability and requires being treated, obviously so.

All religions are full of imaginations, theological theories, superstitions, ceremonies, expensive rituals, pilgrimages, fasts and other stipulations. Most of it does not yield anything much towards spiritual thinking, ethical values, inclusive thinking, harmonious living and a fulfilling life, as far as the day-to-day life is concerned. Instead, it makes people addicted to certain pet ways that pay hardly anything in life. This is certainly like bad cholesterol and has to be seriously watched over.

Once Chandrababu Naidu, former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, while addressing civil officers, said, 'temples are becoming richer and richer. It is because sin and crime have increased in the society'. Places of worship are often the refuge of scoundrels and criminals, due to the 'prick of conscience' payable to their unethical and criminal life. Most major contributions in gold, silver and cash are shares of



the foul earnings, in view of propitiating the gods and goddesses for evading punishment. This is definitely bad cholesterol that is gravely deadly.

Religion, all religions for that matter, though in more or less degrees, has a Himalayan system of rituals that vouch to perform pooja or worship to millions and millions of gods and goddesses, along with a variety of other lower elements, like cow, river, snake, monkey, weapon, instruments, animals, sexual symbols and arti-

ficial or imaginary projections. Even though they are done in a symbolic way, it is an abomination to the supreme creative power. These aberrations are like bad cholesterol and they require being revisited with modifications in line with rationality and scientific temper.

However good religion may be, religionists have to maintain a reasonable distance from religion. It is like reading a book, which is not possible when one's eyes are too close to the book. A reasonable distance from religion will help the religionists assess the whereabouts of religion and the religion one is affiliated to. It is a limited world. There are certainly unworthy elements in religions, like bad cholesterol. That requires being eliminated or reduced. Good elements in religions have to be promoted, like good cholesterol. Such a rational approach will help religion from being a liability and in becoming a blessing.

Finally, all traditions of religions have lots of social and ethical values that are highly useful for sustaining human lives. They are indeed human and spiritual values, at the same time. Values are universal in character and they transcend all boundaries. The all-inclusive, inter-active, participatory, collaborative, democratic, secular and practical character of values of all religions, though in a more or less fashion, is the core of religion. These values are for people of all traditions alike. These values are good cholesterol in high content and they require being imbibed by one and all, across the traditions and communities. ©

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# Eight Billion and Counting

A Moment for Collective & Collaborative Action for Sustainability

BY J. PRASANT PALAKKAPPILLIL

“Eight Billion and Counting: How Sex, Death, and Migration Shape Our World” is the title of a book written by Jennifer Sciuba, political demography expert from Rhodes College, published early this year. And the world saw the birth of the eight billionth child on November 15, 2022. The phenomenon is much greater – overwhelming, mind-boggling!

It is another milestone in the Anthropocene, with the anthropos spreading over the planet hitting the startling number of 8 billion (8 followed by 9 zeroes). Venice Mabansag, born through normal delivery at Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital, Manila, at 1.29 am is reported to be the 8 billionth child. Is it a time to celebrate the indomitable human spirit or a time to lament, correct, or a time to assess, plan and collaborate for a stable, better and peaceful world?

In 11 to 12 years, the human species are able to add one more billion to their numbers, while simultaneously managing to displace millions of other species from the planet; it is not to create space to accommodate these added millions, but it is because a handful of the *homo sapiens* have been able to erect their own kingdoms of indulgence and luxury at the expense of these disappearing millions.

Sciuba is arguing for more and deeper research in the field, which I fully concur with. She says what is good about this field is that we definitely can foresee future to some extent, in the sense today's working youngsters would be the future aging group, and today's toddlers will be the future working group.

With that certainty in hand, and with the possible projections in the field of health care and longevity, much can be planned.

She also perceives that the vast divergence across continents and nations in population dynamics -- fertility, mortality and migration – tend to be converging; and gap is getting reduced. So, the doomsday predictions, especially relating to migration trends, needn't be all that realistic, and though migration on account of push factors (poverty, climate change etc.) will continue to happen, it wouldn't be to the extent of displacing or swallowing up populations altogether.

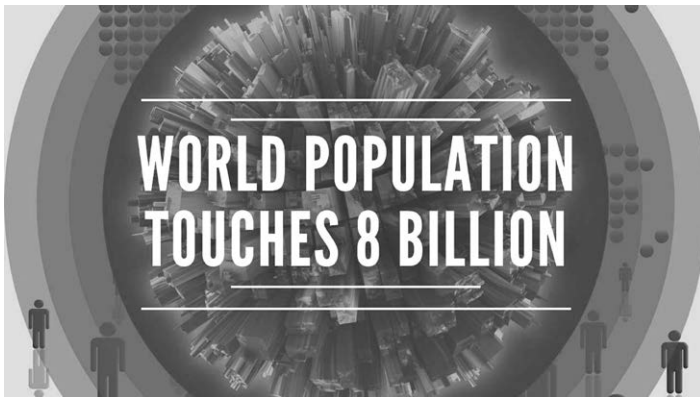
## India in Focus

Turning to the Indian sub-continent, the country is all set to overtake China in another year or so, to be the most populous nation of the world. People get worried less for themselves, more for the future and wellbeing of humanity. There are some who worry for life beyond the humans on the planet as well.

It would be interesting to trace the growth in world population. In 1850 it was 1.2 billion; another 50 years, into 20th century, it was still just 1.6 billion; and it was in 1927 that humanity crossed the 2-billion mark. Since then, there had been no turning back, initially slow -- reaching 3 billion by 1960, then picking up pace steadily 4 billion in 1974, 5 in 1987, 6 in 1999 and 7 in 2011. The projections see 10 billion people by 2058.

In the last 11 years, the world has added another billion.

The child from the neighbouring Bangladesh, who was selected as the 7 billionth child, Sadia Sultana Oishee, was on the BBC as the human population is said to have hit the 8-billion mark. Now 11 years old, she has a star status, though still leading an ordinary girl's life in the outskirts of Dhaka to make life more affordable against the price induced by the pandemic. She dreams big to be a doctor, and the family is supportive. But Sadia's country, Bangladesh has contributed 17 million of this one billion; where as its big brother around, India, has added 160 million. However, it showed a steady decline in



the rate of this increase from 1.37% in 2011 to 0.68% in 2022. Plan International gave the certificate of being the 7 billionth person on the planet to Nargis Kumar, UP, as a token of protest against the trend of sex-selective abortion in the state, with India having a boy-girl ratio of 914, while in the state of UP it remains a shocking 889.

Can the earth carry so many? The 6 billionth child, now 23-year-old Adnan Mevic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of the most rapidly declining populations, is also worried: 2 billion (increase) is a lot... I don't know how our beautiful planet will cope with. It is a worrying question before the few who are concerned. Pope Francis cited the extreme positions people tend to take in this regard in his encyclical *Laudato Si*: that of projecting unlimited progress potential and technological solutions for everything and that of a pessimistic view of the human role as the cause of all damage to the ecological balance, and hence their very presence on the planet to be reduced (LS 60).

India has to re-establish itself as a leader by creating a hunger and poverty-free world, beginning with itself. This is not at all impossible, but is only a matter of priority. Besides, it has to take along with it, the three neighbours in the LDC list -- Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal -- in its drive towards a world free of hunger and poverty.

### **Sustainability – Planet and People**

The UN population projections show a slower growth rate, but overall continued growth for more than a century from now. As per these trends, by 2100 the world is expected to be home for 11.2 billion of *homo sapiens*, and the axiom of 'responsible consumption and production' has to be an outcome of all sorts of education, viz., formal education, family and social education, religious education. There has to be a multi-pronged global endeavour to sustain the planet for future generations, where a dignified life for all (beings) would be possible.

The stark reality that earth's resources do not increase and are limited becomes clearer; but there is also the fact that of the food produced globally a third or more is lost or destroyed; whereas technology and a fairer distribution can still make the world's hungry poor satisfied, not in another world, but in this world itself (LS 60).

There is also the data that points to reduction in the rate of population growth as a nation advances



in literacy and technology, with quite a few nations having growth rate that goes below the required rate for replacement of successive generations (2.1 births per woman) -- Europe in general, and 10 of the most populous nations, including China come under this category. But this is countered by the trend in 47 of the least developed countries (LDC) maintaining a birth rate of 4.3 per woman. (However, there are some paradoxes as well – Senegal, one of the LDCs, is capable of fielding a team for the world cup 2022; Bhutan, another, is often referred to as the country with highest gross happiness index).

While population control measures are the most popular and perhaps effective initiatives so far, the stand of the Church has been of responsible parenthood (Pope Paul VI, 1968. *Humanae Vitae*), which would imply life-styles that promote life and respect it, and advocates these principles to guide natural and rightful human sexual and reproductive relations. I would consider it on parallel lines with the modern day secular sustainable development goal of 'responsible consumption and production'.

And, looking at trends, I am just being optimistic, that many parts of the world would require people from the rest of the world to keep them alive, working and producing. Signals in this direction are already seen from countries like Japan. So that is again an optimistic, perhaps, naive way of looking forward to 'where the whole world will become one nest' – *yatra sarva vishvam bhavati eka nidam.* ☺

# Justice, Not Jail, is the Norm

'Even if one Indian languishes in jail, being falsely accused by the powerful or in trivial matters, the entire conscience of this country is imprisoned'

BY **DR. PRAKASH LOUIS**

**Y**ou need to do something for these people. Who are these people in jail? They do not know the fundamental rights, preamble or the fundamental duties," the President, Droupadi Murmu, was quoted by PTI in its news report. President Murmu, in her valedictory address at the Constitution Day celebrations organised by none other than the Supreme Court in New Delhi, further said that it was everyone's responsibility to make the process of seeking justice affordable for all. This is an indictment of the central and state governments, the government officials and machineries, politicians and political parties who have violated the fundamental rights of common and ordinary citizens of this country.

The President reiterated the central and crucial aspects of Indian Constitution and its heritage. She declared, "The cornerstone of the Constitution is summed up in its Preamble. Its singular focus is on how to increase social good. Its entire edifice rests on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. I would like to note here that these four stellar values enshrined in our Constitution have been part of our own timeless heritage."

Digressing from her prepared speech, the President posed a question, "Are we going ahead or going back? We are thinking of building more jails. Why? What is the need of these jails? Who are the people who are there?" Thus, she posed one of the fundamental democratic questions that haunt this country.

It is reported that over 4,000 young men and women of Jharkhand alone are in jails. Their only crime is that they are Tribals who want to save their *jal, jungle aur zamine*,



that is, their water, forest and land. For the Tribals, these three are central and crucial, as well as integral aspects of their lives, culture, society and religion. The government-politician-official-corporate nexus wants to displace them and appropriate their resources. When they resist this sinister and anti-Constitutional plans, they are

called naxals and are put behind bars without trial for ages. It is to release these people Fr. Stan Swamy, along with civil society, lawyers' association, and Tribal leaders, relentlessly fought for.

The President went on to highlight the fact how she got drawn into the issue of those poor and exploited people in our prisons. She said, "As an MLA of Odisha Assembly, I was appointed as a member of the Standing Committee of Home Affairs. I visited all the jails in Odisha. I wanted to know who these prisoners are, how they are, what they are doing, what are they eating, why are they in jail, etc. I realised that they were ordinary people who were falsely accused of and put in jail. Their families cannot get them released due to huge money needed for this. If they have to release them, they will have to sell all their possession, even their utensils.

Hence, they languish in jails. As the Governor of another poor state, Jharkhand, in collaboration with judges and lawyers, I managed to get around 5,000 of them released." She further said, "There are those who are killers and criminals, rioters and rapists who are roaming around freely."

In the last 70 years of Republic of India, the nation has witnessed many Presidents who were mere 'rubber stamps' toeing the line of the establishment. Dr. K.R.Narayanan was



one who became the conscious keeper of the country.

For instance, when a delegation of Tribals met him in 2000 to express its reservation on the proposed 'National Policy on Tribals', he directed the government to withdraw the draft. The then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was magnanimous and withdrew the draft policy. For many of his pro-citizen stand, Dr. Narayanan was called 'conscious keeper of the country'.

When the name of Droupadi Murmu appeared as NDA's candidate for President of the country, conscious citizens were skeptical. But the President has proved us wrong and has taken a stand in favour of the 'weaker sections', that is, the Tribals, the Dalits, the most backward castes, the minorities and others whose rights are being trampled upon by the powerful of this country. These exploited and marginalized citizens constitute over 70% of the population. It is they who are denied constitutional protection at all levels.

From her speech one can gather more instances of her being and becoming the conscience keeper of the country, especially in favour of the vulnerable and the marginalized. She further stated, "The onus to make the process of seeking justice affordable is on all of us." Thus she laid the responsibility on the ruling elite of the country to discharge their responsibilities in a just manner. She went on to urge the executive, judiciary and legislature to provide an effective dispute resolution mechanism to mitigate people's plight.

It is heartening to see that the President has not forgotten her humble origin like some of the others. After being sworn in as the 15th President of the country, she stated that she started her life journey from a small tribal village in Odisha. She went on to say that it was like a dream even to get primary education. Coming from this background and now occupying the position of Head of the State of the Republic, Droupadi Murmu has shown clearly her option. That is, not to enjoy the power, position and privileges but to speak in favour of the citizens. Especially the most marginalized segments.

The President also highlighted the role of women in the framing of the Constitution. She appreciated the progress made with regard to women but cautioned that there is no place for complacency. This goes to state that she recognises the state of women in the country and society and would take

the lead to keep calling the rulers to work to ensure total and integral rights and dignity of women as enshrined in the Constitution.

The President did not limit herself to call the attention of the government to issues necessary to put the Constitution into practice. But pointed to the fact that the Constitution outlines a map for good governance. Good governance exists where there is accountability, transparency, equality and inclusiveness.

This goes far beyond the powers and functions of government. Governance calls for total responsibility of the various sectors of government to be answerable to its citizens through its pro-poor and pro-citizen policies and programs, rules and regulations, schemes and provisions. Also, the government should treat every citizen equal before law of the nation. But this is thrown to the winds by the rulers of the country.

It is reported that two days after the President's address, the Supreme Court directed the state jail authorities to submit details of the prisoners who have been languishing in jail even after obtaining bail. The jail authorities are directed to first send the details to the state governments, who will then forward the same to the National Legal Service Authority within 15 days. Thus, the President has set the ball rolling to provide justice to those who are languishing in jail.

Drawing inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar, it can be boldly affirmed that justice implies that all benefits and privileges in the society and polity should be shared by all its members. If there is any structural inequality towards any particular section, the government should, through positive action, do away with the inequality and injustice. But it appears that the political elite have become partisan in their discharge of democratic duties.

In conclusion, paraphrasing the Talisman of Mahatma Gandhiji in the background of the President's speech on the Constitutional Day it can be stated, 'Even if one Indian languishes in jail being falsely accused by the powerful or in trivial matters, the entire conscience of this country is imprisoned'. ©

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

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# Girl Child: Don't View Her as Burden

BY AARTI

*Good days give happiness and bad days give experience. Worst days give lessons and the best days give memories*

Watching one's baby growing up is emotionally exhausting. Be it talking, walking, jumping, running, throwing tantrums etc., the list is long. Nonetheless, every milestone of a child's development is unique and many parents consider it worthy of preserving such memories.

But a software engineer in Bengaluru, for reasons whatsoever, simply smothered his two-year-old toddler to death last week. His brutal, barbaric and diabolic act is too shocking for words. That he was so cruel towards own small child deserves the most unequivocal and strongest possible condemnation.

Well, whether it was premeditated or otherwise, the ongoing investigations is expected to unravel the real motive. But a life is gone, which wouldn't come back.

What we know so far from news reports is that he was debt-ridden, incurred a financial loss in his Bitcoin business and had no job for the last six



months. He pledged his wife's jewels, lodged a false police complaint thereof and when summoned to the police station for an inquiry, he disappeared along with his daughter. His mobile phone call records showed he had been receiving calls from his landlord, daughter's school, financial institutions etc., ostensibly, towards pending payments.

The toddler's lifeless body was found during the course of investigations, after his wife lodged a missing complaint. It was discovered afloat in a lake and his car found nearby. It was initially suspected that he too might have drowned but his body wasn't found. However, the telephone calls he made to his relatives after the incident, trying to project the disappearance of him and daughter as a kidnapping, helped the long arm of law catch up with him.

Filicide, the killing of a child by a parent or parent equivalent, is considered as one the most unfathomable of crimes. According to research, filicides happen because some mentally ill parents consider the offspring unwanted or when they perceive it to be in the child's best interest. It may be reality-based, that is the child suffers from a terminal illness or precedes the suicide of the parent. A filicide may also be due to an unintentional outcome of parental physical abuse. At times, it has been found that the parent has killed the child in an effort to exact revenge on the other parent. The parent sometimes kills the child on the belief that the child

**Filicide, the killing of a child by a parent or parent equivalent, is considered as one the most unfathomable of crimes. According to research, filicides happen because some mentally ill parents consider the offspring unwanted or when they perceive it to be in the child's best interest**

is possessed by the devil or the child is regarded as a hindrance.

A 2012 study found that a child in the United Kingdom is killed by his/her parents every ten days, whereas a baby is killed every two weeks. In two-thirds of cases where a child has been killed, the parent is the main suspect. In Australia, between 2000–01 and 2011–12, 238 incidents of filicide were reported involving the death of 284 children. In the US, an analysis of filicide cases between 1976 and 2007 found that they occurred about 500 times a year and almost 72 percent of those killed by their own parents were 6 years old or younger. Notably, about one-third of the victims were just babies under one year of age.

In the recent Bengaluru case, the man said he attempted suicide by drowning but the water was shallow. Further, he made a false police complaint about his wife's jewels. To top it all, his reported confession that he "didn't have money to feed his daughter" is hardly convincing.

Let's rewind and appreciate the challenges the poorest population in India faced during the two years of coronavirus pandemic. Even as many people lost their livelihood due to COVID, there are several inspiring real-life stories that depicted we are greater than the challenges and difficult times which may come our way.

It is motivating how unselfish people in a Tamil Nadu village, which lacked even minimal facilities, came together to ensure everyone was able to earn their living during the COVID lockdown. That to benefit everyone mutually, they all informally agreed as to when each of them must avail the MGNREGA scheme. Accordingly, each one got work for a couple of days and waited for their next turn for a couple of weeks.

A widow in Kanyakumari, who worked in hotels doing small jobs earning Rs 200 daily, was out of work due to COVID restrictions. However, local families lent a helping hand by employing her for household chores and she was able to tide over the situation.

A Delhi school teacher resorted to selling vegetables to maintain his family after his school shutdown due to COVID lockdown.

There are instances galore where educated young men who lost their jobs resorting to heavy manual labour to sustain their families. So, efforts never go waste.

## **There is an imperative need for parents to view their girl child as a gift of God unlike the Bengaluru techie who could own a car, yet consider his girl child as a burden**

Currently, post-COVID, with challengingly turbulent times prevailing, there is economic uncertainty across the globe. While several big top-notch organisations worldwide have announced job cuts, the medium and smaller ones are resorting to layoffs.

India is no exception where even reputed corporate companies are either downsizing or restricting hiring new employees. The case of three young men who had taken an adjacent house during their post-graduation is worthy of mention. After successfully completing their studies, despite lockdown disruptions due to COVID, two of them got job offers from reputed companies in campus recruitment with generous remuneration. Sadly enough, their training is yet to commence. The cause for worry is that only after training their formal engagement would take place. However, in the interim they have been keeping themselves busy with low paid private tuitions in the neighbourhood.

The third young man narrowly missed the opportunity as he was unwell during the campus recruitment drive. Nonetheless, he accepted whatever job came his way soon after exams. Gainfully employed with a start-up company, although on a "minimum wage" salary, he isn't disenchanted. He is investing his time and energy in developing specific skills apart from enrolling for unpaid internships to gain access to better opportunities. Simply put, it is the interest that motivates people to develop talent in the first place.

So, it is time to move on with a sense of purpose towards a life that one believes will be satisfying. What ultimately matters, as various studies have shown, is that people with a sense of purpose in life tend to be happier, resilient, healthier and are able to overcome challenges.

There is an imperative need for parents to view their girl child as a gift of God unlike the Bengaluru techie who could own a car, yet consider his girl child as a burden. ☺

# Dossier for Bribe

Bribery is still alive; it executes a job, sure and faster. Society at large doesn't object to it because it doesn't discriminate anyone

BY **F. I. CHOUDHURY**

**C**orruption undermines the values of democratic institutions and slows down economic growth. But the stressful experience of getting a job done in a government office paves the way for the bribe to creep in although bribery is a penal offence in India. According to a report published by Transparency International in 2020, India has the highest rate of bribery (39%) in Asia. It says, 50% of those involved in bribery are asked to bribe. Of the people surveyed 42% had paid bribes.

Every individual has a story of bribe to share and largely we are forced to pay bribe for a job which is legal but is not happening. My first experience of paying bribe was in my 12th grade when my National Merit scholarship money was not coming. I went to our college clerk who forced me to pay Rs. 50 to do the paper work. With the 'bill' in hand I made my first trip to the Capital city. At the Education Board office, the tobacco-chewing thin-looking clerk with unshaven face was not ready to unzip his conjoined lips. After a long wait in front of his desk, he looked up at me and rubbed his thumb and index finger. I nodded my head in affirmative. He stood up and led me to the smelly stinky toilet of the office complex. As asked, I pushed into his fist one hundred Fifty rupees notes. In no time the scholarship cheque was ready. I rushed to my home town to open my first ever bank account. This formula worked for the next five years. Receiving scholarship during student life is an indomitable joy.

But the ceremonious bribe-giving I had witnessed was during my school days when I accompanied one local 'uncle' to meet a government employee. The dhoti-wearing middle-aged clerk greeted us at the



gate of his house. We squatted on the mosaic floor. In a brief discussion the deal was done for few hundred bucks; a quite tempting amount in the 80's. The money was paid and before parting we were served with a vegetarian meal which we enjoyed together.

Long years later I had to upgrade my passport to my new address. Despite successful verification when my passport was not arriving, I got worried. Colleagues told me the amount that I had paid to the verification officer was actually half the amount which they demand. Now I could decode why had the officer left my home unhappy. But now I have the key to make him happy. Three days later the postman knocked my door with the "Blue Book" in his hand.

One of my foreign trips required a Govt. document. The approval was accorded but the shark at the window was adamant. Looking at my anxiety the clerk suggested that 'money' can quick fix. Sooner I agreed, she taught me how to push the cash money inside the file. I followed her instruction. A fortnight later I was on board.

The ancient legal document from Babylonian era "Code of Hammurabi" and the "Arthashastra" in India testify the fact that bribery existed since time immemorial particularly among officers of the state. Bribery is still alive; it executes a job, sure and faster. Society at large doesn't object to it because it doesn't discriminate anyone. It has no colour. It treats everyone at-par. ©

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According to a report published by Transparency International in 2020, India has the highest rate of bribery (39%) in Asia. It says, 50% of those involved in bribery are asked to bribe



# 25 Steps to Reach the Crib of Jesus

BY P.A. JOSEPH



1. Jesus was born in a cow shed. .... Joyful simplicity
2. Mary and Joseph were lost in contemplation, speaking no words. .... Adoring
3. He had no enjoyable childhood days and playmates. .... Love children
4. King Herod wanted to kill Jesus, as he was most insecure. .... Be for life
5. Wise men from the East offered gifts to Jesus. .... Surrender
6. Joseph and Mary were from the poorest sections. .... Option for poor
7. All through life Jesus opted for poor life situations. .... Bear burdens
8. Mary and Joseph were most attuned to the style of Jesus. .... Compliant
9. Before birth his name was told, Jesus, meaning Emmanuel, God with us. .... Breathe Jesus
10. His core teaching was to love God and love others. .... Compassion
11. He insisted that all his disciples should love enemies. .... Reconcile
12. His hardest teaching was to forgive others. .... Repentance
13. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, he was silent. .... Prayer in suffering
14. While dying, He prayed to the Father to forgive offenders. .... peaceful
15. Jesus, before completing his multiple works, was killed. .... Do Jesu's mission
16. Loved to spent time in the bosom of the Father. .... Contemplation
17. Mary accompanied Jesus in his ministry, suffering and even crucifixion. .... Follow Mary
18. Joseph took the best care for Jesus and Mary. .... Imitate Joseph
19. Life in Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth was of a migrant. .... Live exodus life
20. All the travels were on foot, physical hardships. .... Tough work
21. Work of a carpenter, hard and dust-filled situation. .... Bear dust and sweat
22. Jesus kept all together. .... Communion with all
23. Holy Spirit helping. .... Spirit to guide
24. Strengthened the disciples. .... All of one heart
25. Radiant, heavenly glory. .... Resurrected glorious life



# Bob's Banter » BY ROBERT CLEMENTS

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## Carry the People with You..!

Just a few weeks ago, Chinese Prime Minister Xi, managed to get unlimited powers from the members of the party he belonged to.

Today, he fights rage and anger, causing unprecedented riots all over China! Obviously, members of his party don't have the backing of the people, which means he is on a sticky wicket.

Most 'undisputed' leaders fall into this trap. At first, they carry the people with them, through dramatic rhetoric and equally forceful measures, which their people love, and it usually is a so-called 'strong' man who wins people this way, then Mr Strong Man turns into a bully.

would get in their banks?"

And Mr Strong Man carries on regardless, thinking that with the confidence he has got from the people over promises, or some muscular deeds he achieved, he can get away doing anything and everything his way.

Till the people react.

Sri Lanka's president found out, and voted in by a huge mandate was thrown out by the very ones who put him there.

Kings and queens of old, cruel and barbaric, were finally disposed of by the very subjects they were supposed to rule, and unlike those royal thrones or



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Bullies finally lose. Bullies tsunami on their own muscular achievements and slowly begin to think it's their strong arm tactics that have got results, not understanding that those tactics initially had the backing of the electorate, that it was not their muscle but 'people muscle' that gave them power to get results.

Then the 'people' are suddenly dropped, and Mr Strong Man begins to do things on his own, quite often making moves against some of the very ones who gave him strength.

Therein comes the beginning of his downfall.

"Sir, the people are protesting!"

"But don't they remember the surgical strikes I made on the border, when we killed enemy troops?"

"Sir, they are sitting on the roads and blocking the entrance to the capital! They feel those laws you passed, took away their equal rights!"

"Have they forgotten the money I promised they

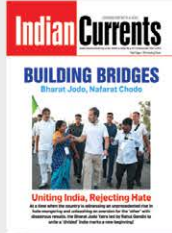
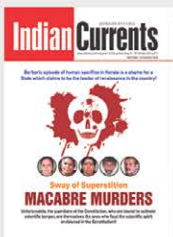
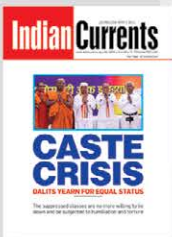
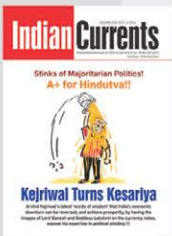
Chinese autocracy, democracy is made up of even more 'fickle' people who cannot be fed on religion all the time, but on substance that nourishes their bellies, and jobs that provide shelter.

And people want peace! Yes, people long for peace. You can rile them up for votes, using hate and anger, but what they want is calm and the secure knowledge that anger bred in 'others' will not have backlashes which will disrupt their daily lives.

In short, carry the people with you, and that means all the people, is a must in any form of government. Or, like all powerful Xi is finding out, carrying only some people with him, just doesn't work..! ©

### 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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