a national family magazine



The Pain of
Afghanistan
JAMESMON PC OFM

4

The Pegasus Protocol

KAPIL ARAMBAM

8

Grief and Grieving in Covid-19 Times

A FRANCIS OFM

12

Uyghurs in China

AYESHA ALI

20



Together is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine **Together** is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. **Together** is a journey, an everexpansive journey—from me to us, from us to

all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together. **Together** is an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups, that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity, are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to editor@togethermagazine.in before the 15th of every month.

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CONTENTS

September 2021 | Volume 15 Issue 9



Editorial: The Pain of Afghanistan JAMESMON PC OFM

08 Cover Story: The Pegasus Protocol KAPIL ARAMBAM

12 Cover Story: Loss, Grief and Grieving in the Covid-19 Times A FRANCIS OFM

16 Cover Story: Everybody Grieves RICHARD ROHR OFM

20 Uyghurs in China: Subjugation, Human Rights Violation, and Genocide AYESHA ALI

24 The Ad World Beckons MONICA FERNANDES

26 Nudity Is Not Inherently Sexual PARVATHY MENON

28 How Do You want to Die? KRITHIKA NAIR

30 Cleansing the Polluted Stream of Politics GERRY LOBO OFM

32 Tribute: Danish Siddiqui Made this Decade Visible to Us SAJI P MATHEW OFM

35 The Ancestral Dance FR KM GEORGE

38 Even the Sun Needs a Holiday ALWED EKKA

The Return BOBBY JOSE KATTIKAD OFM CAP

In Pictures



22

Battlefield Flower heaps

SIDDHI DAS ADHIKARI

Cinema



4'

8 September Literacy Day

TOM JOHN OFM

Book



40

A Thousand Splendid Suns

DR SUSHEELA B

Cinema



41

Garth Davis' Mary Magdalene SUSANNA CORREYA **EDITORIAL**

The Pain of Afghanistan



We should not be surprised at the outcome of a war fought on lies and unbridled group ego. It was bound to fail. Unfortunately, victims are created on both sides. Who pays for ego rides and blatant lies? Who will protect the people of Afghanistan from the Taliban who have captured power once again?

JAMESMON PC OFM

The visuals are terrifying. People clamber onto a US aircraft, clinging on to it like kids to their mother, chasing it and trying to grab the wheel, and as it takes off, we see them fall. It looks as though the aircraft is shedding tears of pain. You would think such sights are the norm only in films like Mission Impossible, but not anymore. Out of desperation and fear, the Afghans were attempting the unthinkable and humanly impossible. We shudder in disbelief, but this is what we have come to. What can we make out of this whole spectacle of human misery? We have been witnessing the whole spectrum of American involvement in "nation building" which is a far cry from what began as a global war on terror. The original intention of George W. Bush was to respond to the stunned US population who sought military retribution following the 9/11 tragedy.

As I write this, the final contingent of the US army is leaving Kabul Airport, adhering to the decision of the US President to end the war by 31 August this year. What has been achieved is anybody's guess. The civilians of Afghanistan, especially women and children, have borne the brunt of the atrocities. The US army has, for almost 20 years, been burning their candle at both ends, fighting war, training and creating an Afghan army, building infrastructure for human development, pouring in millions of US dollars into the project. But the quick withdrawal of the Americans and the flight of the new Afghan army at the advancing Taliban was not very encouraging. The whole nation has fallen into the conundrum of the failed American dream project that collapsed like a house of cards. The loss of human lives is unprecedented; around 200,000 Afghans and 2,000 US soldiers have

lost their lives. The Afghans are steeped in poverty, and their Government lasted two weeks! The only visible achievement was the inflation of the American economy, thanks to unethical arms deals.

Living a Lie

Is this how America wishes to respond to the 9/11 attacks? How many of them even remember what the American army has been doing over the past 20 years? In his book called *The Afghanistan Papers (A Secret History of the War)*, Craig Whitlock says, "Distracted by the war in Iraq, the US military became mired in an unwinnable guerilla conflict in a country it did not understand. But no president wanted to admit failure, especially in a war that began as a just cause. Instead, the Bush, Obama, and Trump administration sent more and more troops to Afghanistan and repeatedly said they were making progress, even though they knew there was no realistic prospect for an outright victory."

Rulers often create an illusion of being guardians and caretakers of citizens by engaging in ghost wars at the borders, or with other weak nations, especially when they are not doing well in their own country. It is important for them to maintain the image of being the guardians of world peace. For this, they might lie to their citizens repeatedly. It becomes all the more dangerous when there is an attack from the outsiders on the collective pride of the entire nation. The American pride has been sustained from the time they achieved the status of a global power. Every president who has been elected makes the promise of keeping America great. You cannot miss the individual as well as the group narcissistic overtones in

5



September 2021



the statements they make. In M. Scott Peck's The People of the Lie, he reflects on the American psyche that created havoc in Vietnam in 1967. He says. "It is practically an axiom that cornered or wounded animals are particularly vicious or dangerous. America was neither seriously cornered nor threatened in Vietnam in early 1968, but its pride had definitely been struck to the quick, and the pride of the military in particular was badly wounded. Again, and again we have noted the birth of evil from a condition of threatened narcissism. For the military the conditions were ripe for evil. Just as the highly narcissistic (evil) individual will strike out to destroy whoever challenges his or her self-image of perfection, so by late 1967 the American military organization—highly narcissistic, as all groups tend to be—began to strike out with uncharacteristic viciousness and deceit against the Vietnamese people, who were wreaking such havoc on its self-esteem. Suspected spies were tortured. Viet Cong bodies, dead or perhaps still alive, were dragged in the dirt behind armoured personnel carriers."

If one audits the acts of three American presidents in Afghanistan, you will see the stark reality of how far wounded narcissistic individuals and groups can go in pursuit of revenge. All along, there is an accompanying lie about serving the American pride, keeping the people at home (mis)informed and happy. The Afghanistan Papers says, "Documents unearthed by the Washington Post reveal that President

Bush didn't know the name of his Afghanistan war commander-and didn't want to make time to meet with him. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld admitted he had 'no visibility into who the bad guys are'. His successor, Robert Gates, said, 'We don't know jack shit about al-Oaeda.' We should not be surprised at the outcome of a war fought on lies and unbridled group ego. It was bound to fail. Unfortunately, victims are created on both sides. The perpetrators of these wars, beginning with George W. Bush, are no longer in charge. So who pays for ego rides and blatant lies? Who will protect the people of Afghanistan from the Taliban who have captured power once again? Who will protect the women and children?

Homegrown Talibans

The meaning of Taliban is "students" or "seekers". So who would have the basic aptitude to be members of such groups? Undoubtedly, kids from madrasas or seminaries run by extremist and/or fundamentalist outfits. The training in such schools force-feeds distorted views on Islam and creates in young minds an aversion towards other belief systems. Are other religions free from such fanatic schooling of youngsters? The present atmosphere in India is a case in point. We are witnessing Taliban-like acts from other groups as well. Mob lynching and hate speech are the order of the day. We misguide youth from all mainstream religions in India: Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Recently, the Christians in Kerala were up in arms against a film called *Isho* that is yet to be released. There were threats from certain "Christian" outfits against the release of this film. Sadly, certain young priests got involved in this drama. It is disheartening to see them egging on Christians to protest against an art form. It looks as though Jesus needs to be protected from these art forms. What has happened despite The Last Temptation of Christ (a fine humane novel and film) or The DaVinci Code? Christ still stands tall! Christianity had in the past its own version of extremism (the Crusades). The Crusaders were the Christian Taliban—only without guns. So, what do we teach our youngsters in our seminaries, madrasas and shakhas? There is a growing sense of intolerance towards other religions among youngsters who graduate from these schools. Christians have the added burden of a few misguided preachers in the garb of charismatic leaders who spit nothing but venom and hatred. Do we want our youngsters toting guns and summarily executing anyone who disagrees with them?

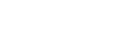
Snoopers and Hackers

Intolerance is accompanied by a growing suspicion of the "other". We are familiar with Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, and Edward Snowden, who leaked highly classified information from NASA. They did it in the best interest of humanity all over the world. They felt that elected rulers were accountable to the people. The papers revealed what went on behind closed doors and in the shadowy corridors of power. The commissions and omissions were laid bare for all to see.

Today, surveillance cameras and apps are turned towards the common citizen as well as people who are a threat to autocratic powers. The Israel firm NSO group that created the spy ware Pegasus seems to have buyers in India, who simply can't trust anyone any more. So, snoopers and hackers are galore in India.

This issue of Together has articles that are from a variety of spaces and happenings. The magazine brings them together to give the readers a kaleidoscopic view of issues that really matter. There is a growing sense of unrest across the globe as news reaches our homes fast and easy. Keeping abreast of things matters to all of us because we are all in it together.





September 2021 UUUUUU September 2021



fter a brief hiatus, the issue of privacy and surveillance has hit the headlines all over again, thanks to the Pegasus Report. What's more, it involves several people in the media industry. The report is going to be another turning point in the history of Internet and information technology, while the topic will remain one of the global issues.

To introduce the latest development, the Pegasus Report is an investigation involving alleged cases of the government surveillance of citizens in more than 50 countries. The report mentions the use of Pegasus spyware to spy on more than 50,000 people that include among others, journalists, politicians belonging to opposition parties, and rights activists.

Behind the investigations are the Amnesty International, the Forbidden Stories, and a group of 17 media organisations from all over the world. From India, The Wire is the sole organisation that is part of the global investigation. And at the centre of the crisis is a private Israeli technology firm, the NSO Group that has a tagline that screams: Developing technology to prevent and investigate crime and terror. You can check their website. In a press release that reeks of its

frustration, recently (last week of July 2021) they clarified:

"In light of the recent planned and well-orchestrated media campaign lead by (the) Forbidden Stories and pushed by special interest groups, and due to the complete disregard of the facts, NSO is announcing it will no longer be responding to media inquiries on this matter and it will not play along with the vicious and slanderous campaign."

But according to the BBC: "The group, an Israeli-based but American-owned company, specialises in creating what it calls tools against crime and terrorism. But the security researchers call them something else: a cyber arms dealer."

Now we know the case involves a private technology firm that has gone rogue and media organisations whose sole objective is gathering information and distributing them to the public.

As it turns out, most of the governments, including that of India, are denying the allegations or any involvement. Albeit: (a) it is clear that the NSO Group sells their products only to law enforcement and intelligence agencies of 'vetted governments'; and (b) forensic examination revealed traces of Pegasus on the phones of several

people; for example, in India there are reportedly more than 1,000 people out of which 30 of them are journalists.

This is not the first time the NSO Group has been in the spotlight. Back in 2019, Facebook had filed a case against them for intercepting WhatsApp messages. Back then, there were only 17 people in India, and though the government had also refused to acknowledge its involvement, officials have been resorting to two legal protections: one, Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and two, Section 5 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.

The aforementioned Section 69 'empowers the Central Government or a State Government to intercept, monitor or decrypt or cause to be intercepted or monitored or decrypted any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource in the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India', while the Section 5 'authorises specific individuals to view messages in the case of a public emergency or in the interest of public safety'.

In other words, it is completely legal for the government to pursue surveillance programmes but this does not address the ethical and political implications. Do not surprised if it is insisted that these are for our benefits. Perhaps, just as it has been already done in many parts of the world, most programmes are ostensibly for the benefits of the individuals and the society. But is that really the case?

In terms of legality, the government of India has also enacted the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, against which Facebook-owned WhatsApp had recently filed a case. Under the new legislation, many of the service providers have to remove encryption as well as trace the source of a message if compelled by government authorities. This has a direct consequence on, among other things, mass surveillance, end-to-end encryption, privacy, and censorship. (PS: The IT Rules came into effect from 26 May 2021.)

Just before the Pegasus hit the news stand, the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 had got the ball rolling as it addresses the questions on mass government surveillance but there has been no consensus. In fact, some of the intermediaries have gone to court against the government.

Daily Records

Reports have suggested that the configuration of Pegasus is quite expensive as well. In Cost of putting Pegasus in phones runs into crores.

Every day there have been newer disclosures from the report by the Forbidden Stories, Amnesty International and their media partners. Some of the latest findings include the fact that this spyware can snoop on three levels: initial data extraction, passive monitoring, and active collection.

The headlines related to the Pegasus Report are going to hog the limelight for a few weeks then it will, as always, fade away from the pubic memory. Regardless of the lies the governments are telling the citizens and the short public memory, we cannot ignore some of the serious issues relating to privacy and surveillance.

Orwell's 1984 illustrated that mass surveillance is the hallmark of a totalitarian regime. Now, what is even more worrying is the fact that some of the biggest democracies in the world are endorsing it, albeit in clandestine manners.

Privacy Concerns with Technology

We have several landmarks in history. In the last couple of decades, the Internet has definitely occupied the top spot; and very closely on the list are the items of the world wide web. Smartphones, social media, emails, ecommerce sites, and the revolution in work processes will be prominent chapters in future history books for schoolchildren while cat pics, TikTok videos, and YouTube comments will find favourable mentions.

Technology and innovation go hand in hand. It is unanimous that technology has been enhancing civic and social innovation. Take machine learning, artificial intelligence, data journalism in media studies, besides the obvious Internet, and we can see how much things have changed for the benefit of humanity. Briefly, we are using technology to solve problems while creating opportunities for collective growth.





But, on the flip side, we have a few issues that are already critical in our daily lives today. Out of the numbers of problems, we are grappling with two of them that are directly related to the Pegasus Report: one, privacy and two, surveillance.

If we have to loosely apply Habermas' concept, a public sphere is where we can form and discuss opinions. In the digital world, it is difficult to draw the line but we can still say the space where we have given access to others can be considered a part of the public sphere. Social media is an example, but we do have a password to access it, implying it is not completely free for all. Besides, on any social media sites, there are several privacy settings that give us control to some extent. Emails are easier to define what is personal and private. If we have to define it: Privacy is the right to maintain information to ourselves.

Why privacy is essential

Privacy is the right to maintain information to ourselves. It is ridiculous for the State to take it away in the name of a frivolous reason like that of 'saving' a nation. Most of the time what a country needs to be saved from are the politicians. For everything that they lack in governance and administration, they always make it up by misusing power. They know the mass is gullible.

The number of people who have been arrested under archaic sedition laws and the notorious National Security Act in India is an indication that the State would go to any extent to not only impose its power, but also to remind the people who the boss is.

As far as privacy is concerned, the Forbidden Stories have provided sufficient evidences to show how the governments in 50 countries have snooped on its citizens. Meantime this was the same reason why the American whistleblower Edward Snowden had leaked the documents on surveillance programmes of the National Security Agency (intelligence agency of the United States Department of Defense). Howsoever he is a polarising figure, we can say that privacy and security are exclusive terms. Privacy ensures we have choice as well. It enhances our autonomy and self-determination.

10

In the wake of the Pegasus Report, those who favour the government have been making two arguments: one, if I don't have anything to hide, why worry? and two: we have no issues when we give away our information to American corporations (read Facebook, Twitter and others), but we are nitpicking when it comes to the government.

Well, their first argument, as Snowden puts it, is just the same as saying I don't care about the right to speech because I don't have anything to say. It is a slippery slope at its best. We know privacy is important for several reasons. Regarding their second argument, there is a thing called consent that the bhakts are clearly unfamiliar with.

If given a chance, everyone from the right, centre and the left will opt out of a surveillance state. For those who are conceding now because of the government, a change of political party in New Delhi will make them change their decision. Perhaps, megalomaniacs or people with similar tendencies would have no qualms about it, but they will be the only individuals.

Privacy and surveillance

The issue of surveillance has been a thing for quite some time, but never in the history has it been so sophisticated and at such a 'mass' level.

The Pegasus Report has revealed, besides illustrating the devious and dominant nature of the State, how it has become dangerous to live in a surveillance state, in which our right to privacy is undermined for purported common benefits.

Just a few decades ago, it used to be an element of fiction. People saw it coming and now it's not going to go soon. Orwell's 1984 / Nineteen Eighty-Four illustrated that mass surveillance is the hallmark of a totalitarian regime. Now, what is even more worrying is the fact that some of the biggest democracies in the world are endorsing it, albeit in clandestine manners.

The ideas behind surveillance are completely against the principles of democracy that require transparency. It is not only the invasion on individual privacy but also about the misuse of power by the State. When Orwell wrote 1984, he would not have imagined the extent to which it can become a reality.

In an essay, Inside the Whale, which was partly a review of Henry Miller's Tropic of Can-

cer, Orwell gave us a very bleak picture:

Almost certainly we are moving into an age of totalitarian dictatorships – an age in which freedom of thought will be at first a deadly sin and later on a meaningless abstraction. The autonomous individual is going to be stamped out of existence.

For us, it is one thing to get absorbed in a dystopia where the Big Brother is watching you. And it is totally another to live in a real dystopian world, in which we are told that there are no surveillance programmes yet the State has all the powers to do so; journalists are routinely arrested on frivolous charges (Manipur Has Jailed an Activist, a Journalist for Two Months Now for Saying Cow Dung Can't Cure COVID, The Wire)

"The ACLU has prepared a map (illustrating how the NSA has gained direct access to the telecommunications infrastructure through some of America's largest companies). It shows how the military spying agency has extended its tentacles into much of the U.S. civilian communications infrastructure, including, it appears, the switches through which international and some domestic communications are routed, Internet exchange points, individual telephone company central facilities, and Internet Service Providers (ISP)." (Source: American Civil Liberties Union: Eavesdropping 101: What can the NSA do?)

Once upon a time, iPhones were promoted to have a foolproof security system, and so was WhatsApp with its encrypted message facility. Earlier in January 2021, remember how so many people switched to Signal and Telegram after the in-app notification about the change in its privacy settings. Well, here is a simple fact: as long as we are using technology, we are always prone to privacy and security issues.

Let's take an example. Vehicles have been an extension of our foot, if we have to take McLuhan's concept of technology. We can go faster and farther. But there is also a chance of accident if we drive a vehicle. This is out of the question if we walk instead. This means: first, we cannot stop using it just because it is correlated to accidents; and second, we have to improve the safety levels. This goes as well for the information technology, under which we have the Internet, our smartphones, PC, laptops and all

sorts of devices.

Surveillance capitalism is an economic system centered around the commodification of personal data with the core purpose of profit-making. The concept of surveillance capitalism arose as advertising companies, led by Google's AdWords, saw the possibilities of using personal data to target consumers more precisely.

Consent does not mean Google and Facebook should be given a free hand. They have been spared because the focus is on Pegasus Report and mass government surveillance today.

We know how surveillance has been prioritised in many parts of the world on the ground that existing laws have not been able to keep up with technology. We should also remember that more than a little more than one hundred thousand people were picked up and detained in the US in the post 9/11 days using surveillance methods. As it turned out, not a single person, that is zero, was found to be a terrorist.

It also raises the question of sovereignty because, obviously you are dealing with sensitive data and information, but the company, the NSO Group is based in Israel and a private entity. How secure are the information source and destination systems when ordinary organisations (ordinary, in the sense normal and not intelligence based) can have access to them? How solid is the foundation of national intelligence and security? Enough is said and as far as the use of the Pegasus is concerned, we have more questions than answers.

Conclusion

It is ironic at times that an activity such as surveillance, which is supposed to be secretive, is out in the open for the whole world to look into it. In most cases, it is related to terms such as intelligence and security, yet the revelation of the Pegasus Report make the privacy and surveillance ecosystem so contradictory. This is no different from the security in the National Security Act. It has been applied more in political vendetta than in safeguarding the security of a State. Besides, it gives no sense of security or whatsoever to a citizen.



September 2



Loss, Grief and Grieving in the COVID-19 Times

Our identities have been changed to 'mourners' and 'grief-stricken' living with trauma of losing loved ones, and with the feeling of 'survivor-guilt, 'many good people died, we still hang around' or 'i was the one first infected among my household that led to the death of my ...!'

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A grief-stricken world with multiple losses

t was well-timed that just at the threshold of the COVID-19 pandemic when the world L had no clue of what lay ahead, David Kessler published an addendum to the iconic work on the stages of grief which he had previously coauthored with Kubler Ross. Their book, "On grief and Grieving", is still considered to be a classic, and continues to support countless grieving folks by navigating them through five distinct stages of grief - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. As a follow up to this phenomenal work, just prior to the harrowing time of the pandemic, Kessler published his new book proposing a sixth stage to grieving process: Finding meaning after the loss. The timing of this publication seemed like a silver-lining in the dark clouds to many, particularly, those millions of people who have lost and still continue to lose loved ones to the coronavirus!

Casting an overwhelming shadow of loss, the pandemic has struck us with a 'tsunami of grief'. We were, and are still not prepared for this unprecedented mortality shock that has been sweeping across the globe! The so-called "new normal" which was projected back in the beginning of the pandemic as the new reality, did not then warn us that the world would soon

turn out to be a mass grave for the victims of COVID-19. Our identities have been changed to 'mourners' and 'grief-stricken' living with trauma of losing loved ones, and with the feeling of 'survivor-guilt, 'many good people died, we still hang around' or 'I was the one first infected among my household that led to the death of my ...!'

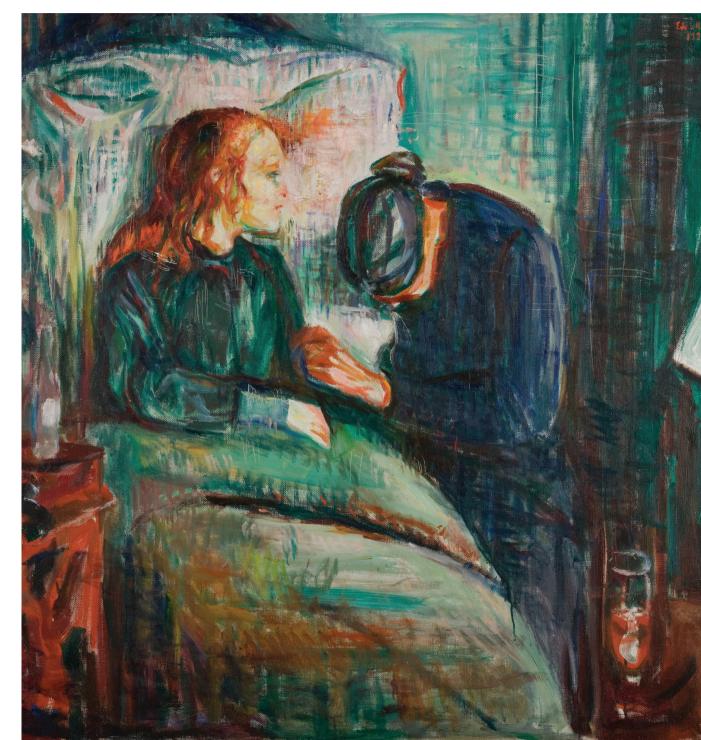
Grief is not limited to death alone. All losses generate grief. In the COVID era we are exposed to the burden of bearing multiple losses! Besides deaths, the pandemic has spawned an inexhaustible list of losses - loss of job, loss of a livelihood, loss of social relationships, loss of friends, loss of familiar surroundings, loss of health, loss of immunity, loss of freedom, loss of security, loss of dreams, loss of hope, loss of meaning, loss of faith, loss of belief in the transcendence, etc. Well, the list is interminable!

Challenges to grieving during the pandemic

Understandably, with the ongoing 'social distancing and stay-at-home orders, coping with losses has become precariously hard for many. Some scholars, justifiably, project the possibility of a significant number of COVID-19 pandemic losses ending up in complicated grief which sometimes called, persistent complex bereavement disorder. Different factors are highlighted as contributing to this distressing

possibility which poses a heavy toll on people's mental health. Two common factors that many bereaving families highlight as adding to their emotional hardships are the suddenness of their loss and the experience of lack of support from people around. The hospitalizations of acute

patients are so sudden and unexpected, and their loved ones are left in a traumatized state with a roller-coaster of emotions. Feeling lost in emotions of intense sadness, fear, anger, anxiety and helplessness they experience no friends and neighbours reaching out to them to commiser-





12 Septem

ate their loss, as in the pre-COVID days! They lack the soothing presence and comraderies of friends and families which could envelop them with an emotional island of refuge and safety. The combination of the verbal and non-verbal empathy they receive could communicate to them that they are genuinely heard and cared for. A friend, after losing her spouse to coronavirus wrote, "I am left alone in a world that is hollow and empty. Even the milkman and the paperboy don't enter my gate for fear of contracting the virus."

What has become more painful in coping with the loss of loved ones, today, is that the pandemic has taken away the space of traditional rituals in funeral services that give survivors a sacred opportunity to bid a fitting goodbye to their deceased; it is in the comfort of this meaning-making space, we commend our loved ones to a promising life-hereafter, befitting our beliefs, faiths and spiritual traditions.

These challenges that we face around our losses during the pandemic are triggers potential to derail the course of our grief journey, making it infested, messy and complicated, and consequently, detouring it from the phase of what Kessler calls 'finding meaning'.

Grief versus pathological denial

Grief as a natural response to loss, affects us on all facets of our day-today functioning - physical, emotional, psychological, social, cultural and behavioural. Depending on the intensity as well as the ability of the individual to handle loss, one's grief takes its nature and shape of manifestation, in a healthy or unhealthy manner. The healthy expression is when one is able to be open to emotions related to grief on a continuum of 'acknowledge to accept' attitude. In this healthy grieving process, people experience a period of sadness, sorrow, numbness anger, guilt and some degree of depression, hopelessness and meaninglessness. But gradually, they learn to enlarge their 'inner self' to accept their loss and reclaim normalcy of life.

Unhealthy expression, on the other hand, restricts individuals on the grief continuum with a 'complicated to pathological' experience, demonstrating even psychological symptoms. Individuals are exposed to prolonged emotions

that include ongoing loneliness and depression. The worst form of the unhealthy adaption is to live in denial; that is, living in a kind of "it doesn't matter to me despite the loss (of my brother, sister, spouse, child, parent)" or "They are not dead" attitude. In this case, they undergo intrusive thoughts, and severe longing for the deceased; at times, even forgetting the reality, they start searching for the deceased in a crowd.

A collective expression of a systemic denial we are exposed to, during the pandemic, is when the official numbers of deaths are projected with a misrepresentation of the reality, and when countries bragging that they beat coronavirus meanwhile many are left to die in the crushing attack of the devastating virus!

Personal and systemic levels of actions

Grieving our losses during the pandemic cannot be an easy task, and it does not happen on an autopilot or reflexive mode. We need to be intentional about it.

It is important to be mindful that there isn't any one pathway to grieving. In perceiving and processing a healthy grief journey, grief experts emphasize the importance of various components, such as accepting the reality of loss, embracing the pain associated with loss, adapting to one's personal environment in which the deceased is not present and finally, making an appropriate emotional space for memories of the deceased that allows the individual to invest in other relationships. These components are to be considered only as an outline or a scaffold, and not as a map. They don't have to be forced upon oneself, if they don't make much sense to one's subjective grief journey. Everyone copes with losses differently, and grieves differently, too.

On a personal or micro level of grieving, there are however, some important selfcare attitudes which we cannot overlook while we suffer loss and wallow in grief. They are:

- Validating our emotions, whatever they are.
- Being vigilant against thoughts that are unhelpful to our wellbeing
- Staying relationally connected
- Reaching out for professional help when needed



Being self-compassionate

The satisfactory integration of our losses to coronavirus cannot be restricted exclusively to the personal or the micro level of grieving, since these losses are experienced and shared on a collective level in the pandemic era. We need to address both our loss and grief from the public, systemic or macro angle, too.

Among grief researchers there is an emerging discussion about the importance of developing a national grief strategy, which is gaining appropriate momentum. Exploring healing actions that equip survivors in handling their loss and grief, a Canadian researcher, Susan Cadell, adds an important breakdown to this discussion. Emphasizing the need for grief literacy, she contends that State should develop a national grief strategy which includes public awareness campaigns, educational initiatives and increased funding for grief related research.

Cadell adds that during the pandemic, deaths are being counted globally and nationally,

minute by minute, hour by hour and day by day! We, but seldom take into account the numbers of people who are grief-stricken by these deaths. The empirical field of research on grieving indicates that for every death, at least an average of nine people grieve. That makes it a world full of grieving individuals out there!

In this regard, the politics of denial which some countries exercise of lowering the actual numbers of deaths, has to be addressed, too. Not including the deceased is actually forgetting them, which causes an added trauma on the living.

Ultimately, going through grief is the only way out of it, towards finding meaning! And when the personal and systemic (public) pathways do not butt up against each other, but go hand in hand, there is more hope that we are geared to creating an appropriate grieving process during this pandemic and further towards our transition into a post-pandemic time and world!



September 2021 WWWW September 2021 September 2021 15

EVERYBODY GRIEVES

You cannot succeed in mourning your loved ones. You cannot fail. You will not get over it. You will only come to integrate your loss. The death of a beloved is an amputation. You find a new center of gravity, but the limb does not grow back.

RICHARD ROHR OFM



Then someone you love very much dies, the sky falls. And so you walk around under a fallen sky -Mirabai Starr, Caravan of No Despair. My dear friend Mirabai Starr has suffered many losses in her life, including that of her fourteen-year-old daughter Jenny, which Mirabai writes about with profound vulnerability and wisdom.

There is no map for the landscape of loss, no established itinerary, no cosmic checklist, where each item ticked off gets you closer to success. You cannot succeed in mourning your loved ones. You cannot fail. Nor is grief a malady, like the flu. You will not get over it. You will only come to integrate your loss. The death of a beloved is an amputation. You find a new center of gravity, but the limb does not grow back.

Death cannot be dealt with through quick answers, religious platitudes, or a stiff upper lip. Grief is not a process that can be rushed but must be allowed to happen over time and in its own time. Every individual has their own journey through grief and loss. Mirabai is an example of how we can courageously face and feel our grief in a way that honors the gift of life we have been given.

The Devastation of Grief

In the Hebrew Scriptures, we find Job moving through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's well-known stages of grief and dying: denial, anger, bargaining, resignation, and acceptance. The first seven days of Job's time on the "dung heap" of pain are spent in silence, the immediate response matching the first stage—denial. Then he reaches the anger stage, verses in the Bible in which Job shouts and curses at God. He says, in effect, "This so-called life I have is not really life, God, it's death. So why should I be happy?"

Perhaps some of us have been there—so hurt and betrayed, so devastated by our losses that we echo Job's cry about the day he was born.

Job insists "Let there be darkness." The day of uncreation, of anti-creation. We probably have to have experienced true depression or betrayal to understand such a feeling.

W. H. Auden expressed his grief in much the same way in his poem "Funeral Blues," which ends with these lines:

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one, Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun, Pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods; For nothing now can ever come to any good.

There's a part of each of us that feels and speaks that sadness. Not every day, thank goodness. But if we're willing to feel and participate in the pain of the world, part of us will suffer that kind of despair.

Many people learn the hard way—by getting ulcers, by all kinds of internal diseases, depression, addictions, irritability, and misdirected anger—because they refuse to let their emotions run their course or to find some appropriate place to share them. I am convinced that people who do not feel deeply finally do not know deeply either. It is only because Job is willing to feel his emotions that he is able to come to grips with the mystery in his head and heart and gut. He understands holistically and therefore his experience of grief becomes both whole and holy.

The Gift of Tears

The human instinct is to block suffering and pain. This is especially true in the West where we have been influenced by the "rationalism" of the Enlightenment. As anyone who has experienced grief can attest, it isn't rational. We really don't know how to hurt! We simply do not know what to do with our pain.

The great wisdom traditions are trying to teach us that grief isn't something from which to run. It's a liminal space, a time of



September 2021

transformation. In fact, we can't risk getting rid of the pain until we've learned what it has to teach us and it—grief, suffering, loss, pain—always has something to teach us! Unfortunately, most of us, men especially, have been taught that grief and sadness are something to repress, deny, or avoid. We would much rather be angry than sad.

Perhaps the simplest and most inclusive definition of grief is "unfinished hurt." It feels like a demon spinning around inside of us and it hurts too much, so we immediately look for someone else to blame. We have to learn to remain open to our grief, to wait in patient expectation for what it has to teach us. When we close in too tightly around our sadness or our grief, when we try to fix it, control it, or understand it, we only deny ourselves its lessons.

An Accumulation of Losses

Psychotherapist and author Francis Weller has studied grief for decades and has developed many rituals and methods to help individuals and communities heal from their losses. Here he explores how we often attempt to keep grief separate from our lives, and how welcoming our grief can open us to compassion. Weller writes: No one escapes suffering in this life. None of us is exempt from loss, pain, illness, and death. How is it that we have so little understanding of these essential experiences? How is it that we have attempted to keep grief separated from our lives and only begrudgingly acknowledge its presence at the most obvious of times, such as a funeral? "If sequestered pain made a sound," Stephen Levine says, "the atmosphere would be humming all the time"

It is the accumulated losses of a lifetime that slowly weigh us down—the times of rejection, the moments of isolation when we felt cut off from the sustaining touch of comfort and love. It is an ache that resides in the heart, the faint

echo calling us back to the times of loss. We are called back, not so much to make things right, but to acknowledge what happened to us. Grief asks that we honor the loss and, in doing so, deepen our capacity for compassion. When grief remains unexpressed, however, it hardens, becomes as solid as a stone. We, in turn, become rigid and stop moving in rhythm with the soul. When our grief stagnates, we become fixed in place, unable to move and dance with the flow of life. Grief is part of the dance.

Vulnerability: A Divine Condition

We live in a finite world where everything is dying, shedding its strength. This is hard to accept, and all our lives we look for exceptions to it. We look for something certain, strong, undying, and infinite.

Vulnerability forces us beyond ourselves. Whenever we see true pain, most of us are drawn out of our own preoccupations and want to take away the pain. My friend the Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis talks about the gift of this two-fold path:

I think grief puts us in touch with our vulnerabilities. I think the feeling of grief lets us know the power of wounds to shape our stories. I think it lets us know how capable we are of having our hearts broken and our feelings hurt. I think it lets us know the link that we each have because we're human. Because we're human. we hurt. Because we're human, we have tears to cry. Because we're human, our hearts are broken. Because we're human, we understand that loss is a universal language. Everybody grieves. All of humanity grieves. All of us have setbacks, broken dreams. All of us have broken relationships or unrealized possibilities. All of us have bodies that just don't do what they used to do. Though grief is personal, every person grieves.

Feeling Our Pain

We all have preferred styles of attention and

ways that we perceive what is happening to us. It takes lifelong practice of what I call "mirrorwiping" to see things as they are, instead of as we are! "I" am always my first problem, and if I deal with "me," then I can deal with other problems much more effectively. Similarly, grief work begins with cleansing the lens of my perception, and simply being "here" to what is. Buddhist teacher Cuong Lu is a student of Thich Nhat Hanh, and here he describes a practical way to be present to our pain.

Do you want to put an end to the dark thoughts racing through your mind, the pressures you feel every day, the many ways you don't feel seen or heard? What do you really want? What do you really want to end? Your thoughts bombarding you 24/7? Your loneliness? Your despair?

Instead of acting on these impulses—stop, wait, and study the details of your life: the skin

on your hands, the despair in your throat, the searing currents running through your veins. Study these things as if your life depended on it. When you stay fully present with your feelings, your sensations, and the world around you, even when it seems dark and cold, joy will arise. The way to free yourself from pain is to feel it, not to run away, as difficult as that may be. Be a mountain and be porous at the same time. Become interested in yourself, your thoughts, your emotions, your sensations.

Don't try to kill your pain. Share it with another, communicate it. If the first person you talk to isn't the right one, find someone else. Somebody somewhere wants to listen to your pain, to connect with you and understand you. When you find them, when you lighten your burden and discover the jewels and joy that are alive beneath the pain, later you'll be present for others who are suffering.



18 September 20

Uyghurs in China:Subjugation, Human Rights Violation, and Genocide

Only a few, if any, come to the level of agony that Uyghur stories provide, especially considering how neglected their cause has been. For every Uyghur you meet, there is a story of being kept under decades of oppression, pain, and systematic genocide.

AYESHA ALI

"You are the yellowed leaf of the poplar, The tears the moon spilled to the desert sands, Your limitless grief is a tale with no ending, Desert dreams no interpreter could understand." -Almikhan's Tears by Abduqadir Jume

t a rather important place on the silk road, sits a city named Urumqi. It is without doubt a beautiful city, nestled in a valley of verdant pastures, glistening water bodies, picturesque mountain steppes and fairytale waterfalls. The pearly white glacier of the Tienshan mountains shines gloriously under the sun, and the 'Heavenly Lake' sits like a majestic mirror at the foot of the valley. Travel guides to this mystic land boast of lively marketplaces, vibrant parks, and exquisite cuisines.

Urumqi, as the capital of the Uyghur region, has earned much talk and media coverage over the past few years. And throughout the global standstill that came with the pandemic, the people of the Uyghur region too have had their share of lockdowns and restrictions. They have faced the now all-too-familiar difficulties that the virus brought with it, of the dearth of proper aid and assistance at the right time, of the difficulty in being cut off from friends and family - but at a much different scale than we have. As an already persecuted minority under the Chinese Communist Party, the Uyghurs experienced the pandemic as another trial in a long list of horrors that they have been grappling with.

Known today by the name 'Xinjiang' - meaning 'New Frontier' in Mandarin - the land was previously called 'East Turkestan' prior to its annexation. Although officially the province still holds an 'autonomous' title, the position remains

merely titular, because instead of truly getting to choose what to do for themselves, the Uyghur region is constantly under the restrictions and subjugation of the Chinese government.

The Uyghurs are predominantly Muslims, with cultural and linguistic routes that are closer to Turkic history than Chinese. Official Chinese government records state that the current population of Uyghurs number around 12 million - around 3 million of which are reported to be detained in China's network of camps.

There are reportedly over 500 concentration camps across the country, which China desperately tries to cover up as 're-education' centers. But despite their repeated denial of claims of human rights abuse, it has only become increasingly clear that what China calls a 're-education' program, is really a facade for torture and persecution. First hand reports from surviving Uyghurs have emerged, revealing accounts of forced labour, torture, rape, and organ harvesting. Further accounts also reveal forced sterilization programs intended to curb the Uyghur population and change the regional demography.

In the months following the outbreak, neighbourhoods in the Uyghur regions were sealed to ensure a complete lockdown, and people were entirely forbidden from stepping out of their homes. This was not a 'benign' lockdown like the ones most of us went through. Here, they were forbidden from stepping outside even when they pleaded for a trip to get food and feed their starving families. Additionally, those in internment centers have had to survive with a complete lack of proper sanitation, and cramped, overcrowded spaces with poor medical facilities that become a nightmare during the outbreak of disease.



As part of measures to erase Uyghur religious and cultural identity, China sends Han Chinese men to forcibly marry Uyghur women, bans any religious activity including greetings and dress codes, bans Islamic names, and forces them to consume religiously taboo foods like alcohol and pork. Many Uyghurs have been detained in camps simply for traveling abroad or going for the Hajj pilgrimage because that is deemed to be a potential threat for 'radicalization'.

When we speak of the suffering of a community like the Uyghurs, it is easy to think of it as distant and far away - as though we were reading tales out of a book. But these are not tales out of a book, and if there is anything that the past few years have taught us, it should be to understand the pain and grief of others. Since the anxiety and stress that came with the pandemic we have perhaps felt a fraction of what it is like to be trapped and helpless, making it even more necessary that we acknowledge and empathize better with the ordeal of people who have been through much worse than us. It is hoped that perhaps an international crisis like the pandemic, if nothing else, would help the international community realize the magnitude of one of the most dire humanitarian crises of our time.

There are a great many heart wrenching tales that one can hear concerning the pandemic. But few, if any, come to the level of agony that Uyghur stories provide, especially considering how neglected their cause has been. Very few countries have strongly condemned and tried to take measures to stop the humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding there. Barely any public figures have openly spoken against the crimes of the Chinese Communist Party, or shown solidarity with the grief and suffering of the Uyghurs.

As a means to whitewash their crimes, the Chinese government loves to promote tourism to the Uyghur region. They love to boast of the beauty of the land, and send foreign people to places like Urumqi so they can see the carefully constructed image of peace and prosperity that they've set up. So while the sights are lovely and the locals perfectly obliging, the ugly truth that their state sponsored travel guides don't mention, is that there are hundreds of torture centers dotting this region. That for every Uyghur you meet, there is a story holding decades of oppression, pain, and systematic genocide.

And that while East Turkestan is beautiful, it has stories to tell, if only the world would listen.



Battlefield to Flower Heaps

SIDDHI DAS ADHIKARI

R Flower Market is the largest and the leading flower market of the Garden city of India, Bengaluru. It was on this street the first electric street lamp in Asia was installed in 1905. The history of this place before this giant feet is even more interesting.

The place where today's KR market stands was a battlefield a couple of centuries ago. In the late 18th century, Tipu Sultan's army, was defeated by the British colonisers on this battlefield. The well laid out place with multiple access roads then became an important juncture for merchants from every town to set up stalls and make a livelihood. The space gradually became KR Market, and KR Flower market.

Today flower farmers from different parts of the state like Tumkur, Chikkaballapura, Nelamangala, etc. and from different states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu travel to this market to sell their flowers every day. They arrive at the market as early as 2 am, and the transactions are on up to 10 am. More than 100 trucks of flowers come to this market everyday with 800 -1200 kgs of flowers each on every truck.

If you go early enough, you can catch a glimpse of a whole market, bustling with business; vendors plying their trade, displaying their fresh flowers with pride, competing with each other to catch the attention of the shoppers and bargaining battles that are as intense as any other sport you know; there's not a single silent and stagnant moment as the energy is infectious. All this activity is packed away before 9 am, and the market and the city puts on another face.







The Ad World Beckons

Repeated exposure to the same ads enslaves us. The pied piper of consumerism beckons and we unwittingly follow.

MONICA FERNANDES

dvertisements are sometimes an eye opener. They inform us about new products which simplify our lives. We come across new technology and better products for the same price. However, advertising is big business for the advertising agencies and companies manufacturing the goods or providing the service.

The advertisers ensure that the ads are attractive, contemporary and sometimes amusing to catch the eye of the target market segment (children, youth, old folks, villagers, city population). The visual images are carefully worked out, after studying the psychology of the target group. Good qualities of a product may be exaggerated and negative features are omitted. They also tempt us to upgrade our devices. If we discard our old devices, we are increasing electronic pollution -something the earth does not need.

We are inundated with advertisements from the TV, radio, bill boards and direct selling. Repeated exposure to the same ads enslaves us. The pied piper of consumerism beckons and we unwittingly follow. The use of psychology is evident from the following example. Years ago there were a series of expensive ads in top US magazines, showing a rugged man smoking a cigarette in an outdoor setting. The message implied was that tough guys smoke. When cigarettes for women were introduced, the ads displayed sophisticated women in gowns elegantly puffing a slender cigarette. Here the message was that liberated women smoke. The reader was tempted to join the ranks of the macho man or high society woman by aping them, despite the statutory warning.

Ads must catch the eye. That's why a skimpi-

ly dressed model is shown with an air conditioner. Logically if the air conditioner is efficient, she will feel too cold in her skimpy attire. So the air conditioner is perhaps not so great after all! There was an ad for a car tyre where the good-looking model drew my attention from the object being advertised. I thought to myself, "This girl does not have a single spare tyre. They should have chosen me instead. I have plenty of spare tyres."

And then there is a young lovely lady in a washroom fitted with taps, sinks, the mirror and the entire paraphernalia found in a washroom, stroking every fitting lovingly, naturally all of a particular brand. Poor thing! Perhaps the washroom is her favourite joint as many hang out places are closed on account of the pandemic.

Have you ever noticed how television commercials zero in on children? They tempt them with visuals of happy children guzzling colas, or visiting fancy department stores for clothes with the 'Frozen' theme and expensive 'Star War' toys. This is because parents want the best for their children, even if it means that they have to deprive themselves. Also children have an amazing pester quotient. Parents eventually give in to their constant badgering.

Soft drink manufacturing companies, clothing companies and fast food outlets focus on attracting the youth. Liquor manufacturers also target young people with their surrogate advertising, showing happy youth chilling with a soda. A young person hooked is a customer booked for life.

I was watching a noodle ad on TV where the beautiful movie queen ate just four noodles to go into ecstasy. I said to my daughter Minal, "Boy! These noodles are a super energy booster. Should I boil four noodles?" Pat came her reply, "Better boil twenty five. After all, the actress must have had many takes of the same ad to get her to this level of pure joy."

No matter what the ads imply, we cannot live on a daily diet of junk food or pizzas. A balanced diet is what the doctor recommends, which reminds me, I must look out for a doctor who thinks that junk food is the best invention on the planet.

Ads sometimes make tall claims. If you believe them, you would think that handsome men are only attracted to girls who become fairer by the day after using a fairness cream. How come black is beautiful when it comes to that Little Black Dress (LBD) but not when it comes to a dark skinned person? Do we have two different standards?

Ads would have you believe that a girl's beauty relies almost solely on the

particular cream she uses. Or again the eligible bachelor may be drawn by her lustrous locks which, in turn, are dependent to a particular brand of shampoo. I guess girls who do not have access to these cosmetics will be left high and dry, as also those jobless unfortunates who cannot afford the expensive jewelry flashing on the TV screen.

Soap A, which is heavily advertised and shows a film star using it, may not necessarily be better than Soap B, which is not touted as the best soap around. Besides, Soap A may be more expensive because of the hidden cost of advertising. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and of a soap, in bathing.

Some ads give us a warped message. There is this ad on TV for a group of schools for young children. They show a boy playing the fool with his sleeping grandfather. The message the ad is trying to convey is that children who go to these schools are bright, smart and precocious. Educate me, please. Since when did disrespect for one's elders qualify for precocity?

Commercials for credit cards show young couples and their happy, smiling children, spending as if there is no tomorrow. They supposedly splurge on high value items such as expensive holidays. Unfortunately, however people are going bonkers today, what with the loss of jobs, and find it difficult to fork out the EMIs on their fancy car or music system. Do we really need to spend on things we do not need? Janice Joplin summed it up when she sang, "Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz? My friends all have Porches. I must make amends."





Nudity Is Not Inherently Sexual

As fat people, we're often told – actively or passively – that our bodies are not meant to be seen, that being fat and being naked is unattractive, is embarrassing, is unacceptable.

PARVATHY MENON

We are taught to hide our bodies.

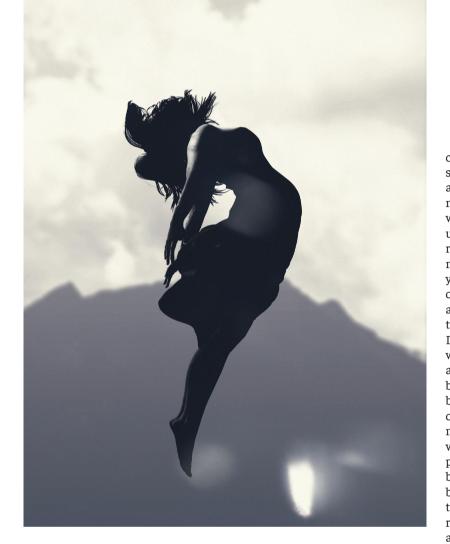
From a very young age, we are taught that there are certain parts of our body that we do not touch, we do not look at, that we do not explore; we are taught obscure words to refer to these parts and told that they're dirty, that it's shameful to pay too much attention to them. We are taught that private parts are private, even to ourselves, and we are stopped from learning more about our own bodies; children taught to be aversive to their body parts grow up to become teenagers, and then adults, who feel like strangers in their body.

We are taught over and over again that nudity is sexual, sexual is dirty, dirty is less.

When you force someone to censor their body, their entitlement over their own body, their autonomy and their right to feel comfortable in their own body is taken away.

Clothing, much like labels, have the power to be either confining or liberating; the moment we realize that our body does not exist to cater to others, the moment we realize that our body belongs to us and only us, then we shall see how farce the statement that nudity is inherently sexual is. You decide how your body is to be seen, you choose whether nudity is empowering for you, or whether modesty is empowering for you.

As fat people, we're often told – actively or passively – that our bodies are not meant to be seen, that being fat and being naked is unattractive, is embarrassing, is unacceptable. We are given two options, to be infantilized or be fetishized – which is precisely why reclaiming my body and owning



nudity has been a huge step in making me feel empowered and at home in and with myself. But this is in no way sexual, will in no way be sexual, until and unless it is clearly stated so. Wearing something revealing is not an invitation for anything other than feeling good about yourself; staring at your naked body in the mirror is as vain or shameful as staring into the mirror to comb your hair is. Nudity does not make you any more of a disrespectable person as modesty makes you a respectable one.

For years, nudity has been used as a form of protest – people stripped naked in front of the Parliament during the protests against the CAA, additionally the Prime Minister was met with nude protesters when he went to visit Assam; Manipuri women led a protest against the army for violation of human rights, naked; the #FreeTheNipple campaign protested against the

censorship of female nipples and the absolute senselessness of such a thing since people of all genders had nipples; during Pride marches, many queer people walk half naked because when your body has been called wrong and unnatural, when your identity is sexualized and rated PG-13, when you are seen as inappropriate, nudity becomes a weapon of choice that allows you to own your body and your identity without shame; for asexual people, going naked is a statement in itself, further proving the point that bodies aren't meant to be simply sexual; Diana Niepce is a Portuguese, disabled dancer who uses nudity in her performance as a form of artistic expression, a form of de-stigmatizing the belief and prejudice that disabled people cannot be exposed in such a way, and mostly, as a form of self love: for disabled people, nudity often means vulnerability and the warped perspective with which how abled people view disabled people's naked body - here, nudity once again becomes a way of owning and reclaiming your body; breastfeeding in public without covering the breasts became another form of protest since redundant morality principles deemed that to be a form of impropriety.

Bodies are not temples, you are not sacrilegious for doing what you want with it; bodies are not idols, you are not in any way obliged to keep it pure and covered; bodies are museums, bodies are messy art with scars, ragged lines, discolorations and imperfections, bodies are mosaic art which do not fit into the societally acceptable archetype of an attractive person – and you have every right to exhibit your art piece.

Nudity is not inherently sexual, bodies are not inherently sexual; sexual isn't inherently dirty, wrong, sinful, perverted or shameful; dirty is not a concept that correlates with our body: we do not need to love our body first to reclaim it, our body is ours no matter how we view it and nobody can take that away from us, nobody can define your body using terms you do not allow them to use.

Let us learn to see our bodies.

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How Would You Like to Die?

I wish there was a way to die, where I wouldn't be a burden. Where they cry. but bury their sorrows with me, never to think of it again.

KRITHIKA NAIR



nder the shower's calming stream, I have many thoughts. Every day without fail, one of them is how I'd hate to die in here-exposed, wet; in a locked room, with running water. More than the fear of not being heard in death, I am afraid of being found in that mortifying state.

Initially, I wished to make it as painless as it could be. I quickly ruled out fire, reserving the burning for the afterlife. Guns weren't accessible. but it was plausible to die at a protest. The police are easy. They don't even need a trigger.

A lot of movies had convinced me that falling off a height always meant instant death. A good rush of adrenaline- a last adventure sport of sorts. The dull thud of your head on the concrete: and blood pooling beneath a cheek. Then my ma introduced

me to a worse fate – vegetative state in a country without euthanasia.

It's a good thing it's not legal yet. The will to live is quite low among us. We'd clamber for it. The courts are slow. There's a ten-year waiting list. We ask our rich and influential contacts to bump us up on the list. The high demand makes them curious. They sign themselves up, for the experience. We'd still be alive, because we wouldn't be deserving enough to die.

Dying in sleep always sounded lovely, but we don't know if it is. Not everything quiet is peaceful. During an intense, stupid phase, I was afraid I'd be forgotten. I'd told myself a gruesome one would be worth the memory it'll keep alive.

Then I opened the newspaper and read hor-

rors beyond my imagination, only to promptly forget them for a new one on the next page.

Then there was disease. Sudden, Terminal. Fancy. Rare. It set you apart. It made your flaws a little less annoying. It could excuse you from many things. Sometimes being sick is a full-time job. I believe I don't have the patience for it.

In the end, I know it won't matter. Death is always embarassing. The people outside still consider you a person, begging you, beating on your chest. Wake up. Listen to me. Don't leave me. I don't know if you can hear them, but you're

> letting them down. Everything thereafter, is designed to hurt them. The rituals. The pleasantries. The whispers.

> No matter how you die, you're going to be a burden for someone to carry. Maybe it'll be on their shoulders, to a pyre. Maybe it'll be in their

head, scrambling for a last memory, a relic to hold on to.

Of all the ways to die, I wish there was one where I wouldn't be a burden. Where they cry, but bury their sorrows with me, never to think of it again. Where they could mourn my life without the last memory of it being this shell. Where they could just go on and be honest, about how my death is nothing but an inconvenience to everyone I loved.

I wish there was a kinder way to go. Where I could tidy myself up, save them the sad sight. Clean up the traces they don't need to see. Dig my own grave, climb into the coffin. Watch them mourn without the worry of what is to be done.

If only death could be easier on the living.



29

I wish

there was a kinder way to go.

Where I could tidy myself up,

save them the sad sight.

Cleansing the Polluted Stream of Politics

During the last few months our Judiciary at its Apex level has rightly sensed the anguish and impatience of a free nation longing for truth and justice, wellbeing and harmony, a peaceful environment and a contented living.

GERRY LOBO OFM

In the event of the judicial order of the Supreme Court of India on August 10, 2021, asking the criminal records of politicians is put out within 48 hours, the honourable Bench of Justices of the Apex Court, Rohinton F. Nariman and B. R. Govai, being disgusted by the current political scenario, told the lawmakers: "The nation continues to wait, and losing patience. Cleansing the polluted stream of politics is obviously not one of the immediate pressing concerns of the legislative branch of the government" (The Hindu, August 11, 2021).

Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti states: "The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of people and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good. Sadly, politics today often takes forms that hinder progress towards a different world" (FT 154).

The aforementioned statements lay bare the gospel truth that there is a stream of politics polluted by responsible leaders, most of whom belong to the political class, and it is a glaring phenomenon in our land which hinders prog-

ress towards a different world. Beginning with the Parliament, the so called "sacred sanctuary" where unfortunately are housed hypocrite representatives of the people, down to any of our social, economic, religious and bureaucratic and educational institutions, polluted stream of politics is visibly experienced causing distress and painful frustration in the society. Hence, Swatch Bharat, though a laudable project, is only an eye wash without Shuddh Rajnetas, the ones who are in reality, polluting the stream of politics. The polluted environment necessarily requires cleansing, but polluted politicians require being of upright integrity even more in order to cleanse the polluted stream of politics. The stream of politics will remain polluted as long as the responsible ones will continue to drown themselves in the filth of corruption, conspiracy, cunningness, blatant lies and an insensitive conscience.

As the Judges rightly remarked, it does not seem to be "one of the pressing concerns of the legislative branch of the government" to cleanse the polluted stream of politics in our country. Indeed, since those supposed to be mirroring

the face of millions and voicing their voices are themselves mired in their own petty interests. cleansing will not be their priority, or rather, cleansing would hurt them, in fact, They would prefer not to prick their skin, leave alone their consciences. Today, with the exception of a few honest political representatives, many conveniently forget the day they entered the "sacred precincts" of the legislature preferring to take the path of revenge politics with aggressive and violent speech tones. Private gain by masking public shame goes well with the elected. After all elections are fought with money mite whereby the fabric of politics is already burnt, creating polluted stream of politics and thus discriminating the voiceless and the marginalized ones.

During the last few months our Judiciary at its Apex level has rightly sensed the anguish and impatience of a free nation longing for truth and justice, wellbeing and harmony, a peaceful environment and a contented living. Thanks to their sensible judgement! The stream of politics is so polluted in a nation of sacred, Divine-human values that the god one worships is but power and tainted wealth, procured by means of baseless speeches containing blatant lies. Our learned judges, having taken cognizance of the deplorable situation of the common citizens, have the heart to confess their part in the sufferings of their brothers and sisters.

The polluted stream of politics ruling our nation is in absolute contra-distinction with "politics" arising from polis, which is a concern about the affairs of the citizens: their human development, their joys and sorrows, hopes and anxieties. Every person is political, meaning, that as long as one lives on our planet, he or she is inter-personally related and responsible for each other. Unfortunately such an understanding of politics is transformed into an ideological stream brushing aside all meaning giving strains to suit ones monetary and physical benefits. Parliament sessions, these days, are a cacophony of self-interested interventions and a clear manifestation of a polluted stream of politics running through the sacred space, imparting no value to the voters and belittling the dignity of persons. The nation observes this with disgust and is certainly ashamed of such a panorama of

politics played out by the actor representatives on the stage of legislature.

Politics, far from being a process of human discourse towards the creation of a harmonious existence of the citizens of a nation, is gradually becoming a mockery and a disgrace. Elimination of dissent, smudging differing opinions, offering an enlightened path is considered a threat for the aggrandizement of the self. If people do not fall in line with the form of politics which has even entered the religious spaces of our lives, a dignified existence may be in question. Fearing the onslaught of such a form of polluted politics, there is a greater tendency among our citizens to follow that mantra and tread the path less travelled by consuming the false propaganda during electioneering, instead of a critical mind leading to the path of integrity and justice which our Constitution proclaims.

"For many people today, politics is a distasteful word, often due to the mistakes, corruption and inefficiency of some politicians," writes Pope Francis (FT 176). The reason is simple: politics is polluted by "posturing, marketing and media spin," sowing nothing but "division, conflict and a bleak cynicism incapable of mobilizing people to pursue a common goal" (FT 196). Politics for political leaders is nothing more than hate speeches against the opponents of self-interest, a way of usurping power unethically and a means of amassing wealth by "populism." More and more politicians conveniently forget that they are "doers and builders" of a human society by "looking beyond their own boarders." Sadly, their concern is solely about a "drop in the polls," not about "finding efficient solutions to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion" of human people (FT 188). When the exercise of political love that integrates and unites people and makes them a community is absent, polluted stream of politics will flow through the nation, inundating with hate, indifference, fanaticism, cultural fragmentation and violence.

"Home in the World" (Amartya Sen) is possible when a legislative branch of the government is determined to bring about "authentic political life, built upon respect for law and frank dialogue between individuals" (FT 196) and with which it cleanses the stream of politics!



September 2021 Wull September 2021 September 2021



He saw an awful lot of things. What happens to a person committed to seeing realities, and helps others to see the same. Danish Siddiqui is a case study.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

e began not knowing that he was beginning. He began with a borrowed camera, and black and white rolls bought with his pocket money; he just captured images around him, clicked pictures during his school trips. He was unaware of what was coming; but he definitely had an eye for seeing. He wanted to tell stories. He enrolled in a film school, made good use of the photography classes. Worked as a television journalist with a news television network. He saw his calling in photojournalism. Apart from the initial inputs in college, he was mostly self-taught. He took risks, kept experimenting; and finally he had arrived. He kept going places with the best of photographers in the field. World journalism got a brave, fearless son – Danish Siddiqui.

Every child does not have the same undeterred path to destiny, 'I was more fortunate', he seems to suggest with his images of Rubina. It was an assignment that has left the biggest mark on him. Rubina, the child star of the film "Slumdog Millionaire", had her shanty in a slum colony gutted by fire. May be the English idiom, 'from frying pan to fire' was coined for her. Danish photographed her literally on the streets. She had sunk from her shanty to the street. Danish highlighted the little girl's courage and grit. She had lost everything in one night, including the precious photographs from the Academy Award's evening in Los Angeles, where she had walked the red carpet with her co-actors. She still had her hope and determination intact. Perhaps the face of that little girl must have sustained Danish even through terrains of fierce battle. Having two children himself, he also knew the pain of seeing children ending up on streets.

Siddiqui the Sensitive Storyteller

For Siddiqui every picture was a story unfolding. He said, "As Photojournalists you want to just take that picture which tells the whole story, because you just have one frame to tell the whole story." He admits in his Ted talk, "As a photojournalist I have the privilege to witness humanity at its best and at its worst and everything in between. My role is as a mirror; and I want to expose you to the raw truth and make you a witness to it. You can look away, or stand up for change." While Siddiqui enjoyed covering news stories from business to politics to sports, what he enjoyed most is capturing the human face of a breaking story. He said, "I really like covering issues that affect people as the result of different kind of conflicts."

Siddiqui respects his subjects. They inspire him. In telling these stories though photographs, Siddiqui faced technical challenges and emotional challenges. Technical challenge is to showcase the story in a dignified way. In the context of covering Pandemic in India he says, "We don't go too close so that the dignity of the family and victim is maintained. But there is the challenge of showing the scale of devastation of this pandemic happening in the heart of the country.

Rohingyas and the Pulitzer

In 2017 more than 7,00,000 Rohingya Muslims had to take on a dangerous journey to escape persecution in their homeland Myanmar. Thousands died in their pursuit to Bangladesh. Some survived only to face worse treatments in refugee camps. Siddiqui was part of the Reuters photography team for documenting the Rohingya refugee crisis. He received the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography, as part of the Reuters team, for documenting the Rohingya Refugee Crisis. The judging committee described the series as "shocking photographs that exposed the world to the violence Rohingya refugees faced in fleeing Myanmar".

Commending on the Pulitzer Prize, Siddiqui said, Photographs really helped highlight the plight (of Rohingya refugees), as a photojournalist you need to capture everything in one frame. In that picture you can see the plume of smoke, the boat, the refugees. All the elements were there to tell the story.



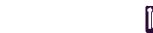
Rubina, by Danish Siddiqui

They were afraid of us seeing

Danish Siddiqui hurried across distances through terrains made difficult by conflict, political apathy, and partisan agenda. He travelled across borders and barbed wires. He reached every place of happening. He saw an awful lot of things.

He walked through the cities of India before and after the Acha Din promises. He saw slums. He saw people in the grips of poverty. He saw the Kumbh Mela. He saw sponsored religious celebrations that furthered the partisan agenda. He saw Oueer Azaadi. He saw the hapless pile of Rohingya refugees drifting along the unwelcome Bangladeshi shores. He saw protests and suppression in Kashmir following the scrapping of its special constitutional status by Indian government in 2019. He saw power actions in North Korea in 2018. He saw wars and conflicts from Iraq to Afghanistan. He saw protests in Hong Kong, and earthquake in Nepal. He saw the CAA protests. He saw political apathy during the waves of Coronavirus Pandemic in India.

He not only saw them; his camera captured them and the media brought it alive to our living rooms though media online and offline. In the words of Danish Siddiqui, "While I enjoy covering news stories -from business to politics to sports - what I enjoy most is capturing the human face of a breaking story, I shoot for the common man who wants to see and feel a story from a place where he can't be present himself."



32 September 2021 UUUUU September 2021 September 2021



Rohingya Crisis 01, by Danish Siddigui

People who wield power and guns weren't happy. They could not stand the uncomfortable truths the photographs were shouting aloud. Danish Siddiqui, the 38 year old photojournalist. was killed in July this year while covering a clash between Afghan security forces and Taliban forces near a border crossing with Pakistan. Siddiqui was embedded with Afghan special forces in Kandahar, when he was killed in a Taliban crossfire. He died doing what he loved most, shooting for the common man.

According to the reports of the United Nations, Thirty-three journalists were killed in Afghanistan between 2018 and 2021. Over 50 journalists are killed from countries across the globe in 2020. It is a wakeup call to India too. Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) and Commit-



Beaten and Lynched in Delhi, by Danish Siddigui



Rohingya Crisis 02, by Danish Siddigui

tee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), both indicate that India is one of the five most dangerous countries for journalists. Since 2010, RSF has registered up to five journalist deaths here each year. Scroll.in reported of a study on attacks on journalists in India. There were nearly 200 serious instances of attacks on journalists, and 40 killings since 2014. The attacks were allegedly committed by government agencies, security forces, members of political parties, religious sects, student groups, criminal gangs and local mafias. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), says that Indian journalists face harassment and intimidation from criminals and state officials alike. It is not surprising that the Indian Government shied away from condemning the killing of Danish Siddiqui.



A man using a gun against the CAA protesters, by Danish Siddigui



The Ancestral Dance

The English proverb "A rolling stone gathers no moss" seems to have an ironically opposite ring today.

FR. KM GEORGE

When I showed the attached picture to some of my friends one of them said it looked like the satellite picture of a dense green forest. That exactly was the comment I wanted to hear. Watching the frenzy of forest destruction all over the globe, environmentalists, climate scientists and nature lovers would wish to see one third of our planet earth (the rest is ocean) cosily covered under a beautiful green blanket.

However, it so turns out that the picture I took during a monsoon morning walk is a cropped portion of green moss that grows on a wayside wall. In fact, the mosses are miniature plants that produce chlorophyll, communicate and reproduce like many other plants. They are an ecosystem by themselves and provide home for innumerable micro-organisms. Universally found in damp and shady surfaces, the moss family is far older than our human species and our tropical rainforests.

Ever since the global emergence of the Corona virus disease we have become more sensitive to the micro world. We realise that the subtle world of mosses, fungi, bacteria and viruses is infinitely more complex than the macro world that we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. The small is not only beautiful but is staggering and breath-taking in its sheer magnitude, suggests E F Schumacher.

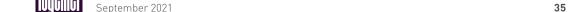
If you visit the Sahya hill ranges, the Kerala part of the 1600 km stretch of the Western Ghats running parallel to the western coastline of India across the southern states, you see enormous stumps of felled trees covered by moss and fungi. They seem to put a green bandage of solace over the deep wounds on Mother Nature perpetrated by greedy humans.

The English proverb "A rolling stone gathers



no moss" seems to have an ironically opposite ring today. Our overarching but erroneous idea of progress and development expressed in incessant human activity tampering with the planet earth eliminates all greenery and consequently kills all life. The cessation of activity in the deep stillness "triple lockdown" across many regions of the world gave breathing space for all humble creatures like the moss and fungi.

We hate to see them anywhere in our human habitation. We spray insecticides over them, scratch them off, and paint them over. Yet they will still be there, as our hoary ancestors reminding us of the grand cosmic scheme and the impending desolation of the earth. Even when we, the whole race of Homo Sapiens are razed to ground to become dust of the earth in a viral pandemic or environmental catastrophe, the exuberant moss and fungus will dance over us triumphantly in the power of life that the human species simply ignored.



8 September

International Literacy Day

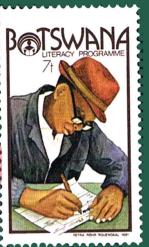
Since 1967, International Literacy Day celebrations have taken place annually around the world to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society.

International Literacy Day provides an opportunity to reflect on and discuss how innovative and effective pedagogies and teaching methodologies can be used in youth and adult literacy programmes to face the pandemic and beyond. The Day also gives an opportunity to analyse the role of educators, as well as formulate effective policies, systems, governance and measures that can support educators and learning.

From the collection of philatelist, TOM JOHN OFM.





















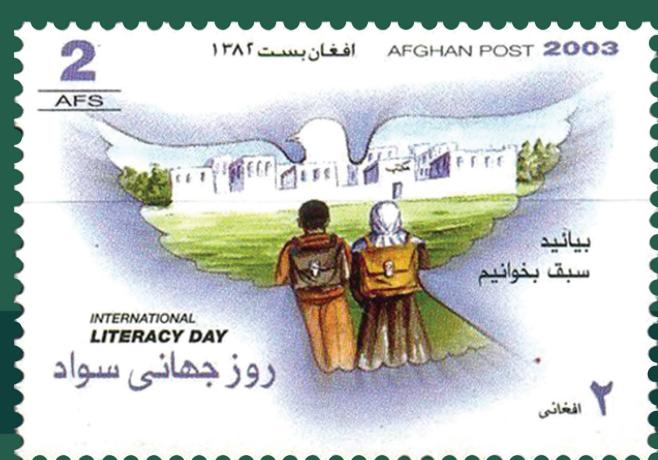
































Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world -Nelson Mandela.

Even the Sun Needs a Holiday

ALWED EKKA

ne day, the sun felt very tired, that he wanted to go for a holiday. But he had one big problem, who should shine in his place. It was Monday! It was a morning time.

All the kids were awake, and they were getting ready for school. Some kids were brushing their teeth, polishing their shoes, blowing their noses, doing potty, and wearing their school uniforms. A few of them were having their warm & vummy breakfast.

The morning was a busy time. The school bus hadn't arrived yet. Suddenly the sun thought, "If I go for a holiday, how will children go to school? "The sun was lost in a deep thought. The sun thought, and thought, and thought. The Sun thought in the morning, through the afternoon, and again in the evening but still he couldn't decide when to go for a holiday.

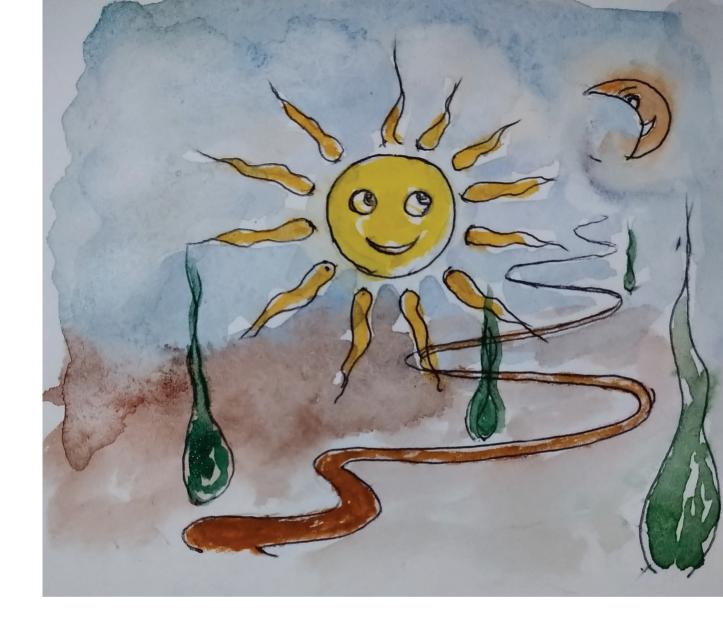
By this time, the children were already back home from their schools. Just as the sun was thinking, a fly went into his left eye. As he blinked his eyes, the day became night. The sun couldn't see anything. So he slept off rubbing his eyes. The next day, the rooster woke him up. The sun opened his eyes wide, and what a bright Tuesday morning it was!

Still the sun couldn't decide. So the sun thought during the breakfast, it thought again at lunch, and it thought again after the children had returned home from schools. Yet he couldn't make up his mind.

While the sun was lost in thinking, the full moon came from behind and closed his eyes quietly. The sun said, "Please moon let me see!" The moon replied, "No, you can't open your eyes. The children are sleeping now." The sun said, "Ok, pinky promise! I will not open my eyes but you have to help me." The moon said, "Yes, of course, how can I help you?" The sun replied, "See, all day I am sunny and hot. I think I need a break. I want to go for a holiday just like anybody."

The moon laughed loudly and woke up the owl. The owl stared at the moon and asked, "Who are you talking to?" The moon answered, "I am talking to my friend, the sun. He wants to go for a holiday." The owl said, "I think, he is right. He needs a break. So sad!" The moon hesitated and said, "But I can't stay long in the dark, if sun goes for a holiday. How can I help him?" The Owl replied, "Why don't you ask the clouds to hide him for a day or two?" The moon thought and replied, "Hmmm, wow, it is indeed a great idea. Thank you!" The owl said, "you're welcome!" and he flew away to catch some mice for dinner.

The moon asked the clouds and they said, "You have to ask the wind to help us." Then the moon requested the wind to blow the dark clouds everywhere and cover the sky. Next day,



the rooster woke up the sun. And the moon said, "Enjoy your holiday!"

He went for a holiday on Wednesday morning when it was too cloudy. The children couldn't see the sun, yet they all went to school. The Sun had a wonderful time. He climbed up the Mt. Everest, walked through the amazon rain forest, went for a safari in Africa; he even made a big snowman, and swam in the ocean. And once again he swam in the night when it was a full moon.

The sun loved his holiday. He was thrilled and said to the moon, "Thank you for the help! Tomorrow morning, I will be back before all children wake up." The next day, early in the morning, after the rooster had said, 'cook-a- noodle doo for breakfast.' The sun, with a big smile, rose and wished all the kids Good Morning! The sun felt happy when children wished Good Morning.

And what a bright morning it was!



A Thousand Splendid Suns

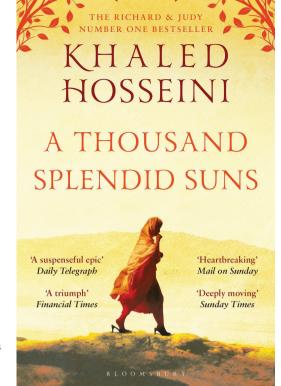
DR SUSHEEL A B

Thousand Splendid Suns' is a wellknown book by Afghan-American Novelist Khaled Hosseini, who is popular for writing fiction based on the war of Afghanistan. I have heard many rave reviews on Hosseini's first novel 'The Kite Runner' and came across his second novel 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'.

The novel is designed in a way in which the narrative throughout the story switches between Mariam and Laila in order to provide readers a closer look towards their feelings and emotions all throughout the book. The main plot seemed to engage me. Set in Afghanistan from the 1960's to the 1990's, spanning from Soviet occupation to the Taliban control, following the lives of two Afghan women Mariam & Laila in their marriages and in their war-torn country. The purpose of this book is to explore the multifaceted difficulties Afghan women tend to face in their everyday lives such their lack of rights, their suffering from domestic violence and their endurance of patriarchal issues and covers much more than the aforementioned.

The novel is split in a dual narrative, the first being Mariam when she is nine, living on the outskirts of Herat with her bitter mother, anxiously in wait for the once-a-week visits from her wealthy father. Branded as harami, an illegitimate. Mariam faces many prejudices and blames not only from the family of her father, but also from her own mother. Hosseini introduces a naïve and pitiful child. Mariam discovers the emptiness in her father's love and after her mother' suicide, is forced to marry a man more than 20 years her senior, her being only 15. Her husband Rasheed is a kind man, a 40ish shoemaker in Kabul, hundreds of miles away. He is a deeply conventional man who insists that Mariam wear a burga. Mariam lives in fear of him, especially after numerous miscarriages.

Hosseini does something new, you pity the



husband, for his past is one with sorrow much like Marian's, it does not justify his actions-but you feel sympathy for his situation too. Then comes the second narrative, Laila. An innocent young child with a best friend who is a boy, a family torn by the war that steals her brothers away from her and in turn her mother's affection. Orphaned, torn from her love, Laila agrees to marry Rasheed. The stories of these two wives will make you awe with gaze at the sheer strength of love in desperate times.

The novel weaves about the situation in Afghanistan. Presumably, Hosseini has a deep emotional connection with Afghanistan & its social issues because he had experienced some aspects of the potential economic and social distress of his country during his childhood, as the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan by the 1980's.

Hosseini's writings are simple, a welcoming contrast to Mariam and Laila's complex situation. A Thousand Splendid Suns involves everything and is very interesting to read. In the end you are not only left with a fire lit within. It is above all, a story of Hope and of Life, the heroism that comes with love and inevitable strife that comes with living.

Inspirational, outstanding, every man & woman must read!

CINEMA

Garth Davis' Mary Magdalene (2018)

SUSANNA CORREYA

f the supporting characters of the Gospels, Mary Magdalene has left a checkered legacy. She has been the centerpiece of identity disputes, conspiracy theories (that culminated in a bestseller and a blockbuster). and historical speculation. Understandably so, because one person's religious figures are another person's mythical, historical, or cultural figures, and are not beyond inquiry.

The fact that Mary Magdalene was singled out by name in the Gospels is a nod to her pivotal role in the life and ministry of Jesus. She was. crucially, the first witness of the Resurrection. the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Set in Judaea in 33 CE, Garth Davis' Mary Magdalene (2018) broadens the field of view of the biblical narrative to accommodate feminist concerns. The evident lacunae in her story render her an enigma, and therefore a worthy subject of an eponymous movie.

Throughout the movie, Mary (Rooney Mara) writhes out of the suffocating grip of male authority. In an unorthodox move, she resists marriage to pursue the up-and-coming Messiah (Joaquin Phoenix). Where is the liberation in rejecting one man to follow another, you may ask. Liberation lies in her choice to do exactly that.

The wardrobe is remarkable because it challenges the notions of a rigid dress code by featuring short-sleeved, gauzy dresses for women and veiled heads for both sexes in the synagogue. Exposed braids are prominent. Without confronting the morality embedded into certain feminine dress codes head on, the costumes successfully rupture the idea that loose and uncovered hair is not synonymous with a loose



character. (In visual arts, it is common to see the Virgin Mary depicted with a veil, and "temptresses" with flowing hair, voluptuous bodies, and suggestive clothing.)

Taking its cue from the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, the struggle to accept female authority and autonomy is presented through Peter's (Chiwetel Ejiofor) conflict with Mary (Rooney Mara). Interestingly, Peter is portrayed by a black man. This exemplifies the competitive struggle between marginalized groups to carve out their niche in the world.

Whether Davis' movie achieves the delicate balance between going with the flow and against it is debatable. Mary Magdalene is shown to have an affinity with water. In the opening scene, she sinks into the depths of a water body. In a subsequent scene, she is exorcised (read: tortured) by manual dunking because her independence comes across to her male family members as "unnatural". It makes you wonder: will she always be a drop in the mighty ocean? A fleeting character lost somewhere deep in the middle of someone else's story?







ne daughter recalls the death of her great father: He called us to him, held our little hands together and asked our mother to read the story of the prodigal son. The father closed his eyes and completely immersed himself in it. Then, very softly he began to say, "Never forget what you have heard. Have complete faith in God, and do not doubt His patience. Of course I love you: but I know that it is nothing compared to His love. Do not despair of God for any reason, even if you are so unhappy that you fall into deadly guilt. You are his children. Always be humble before Him as you are before me. Seek His forgiveness, and He will rejoice over your repentance; As the father in the story rejoices over his returning son" Dostoevsky passed away a few moments later. "I have witnessed many deaths, none of which were as bright as our father's."

The daughter's name is Lyubov. Fyodor Dostoevsky must have thought he had something to say in that story. When he concludes by telling

the story from a single book he read during a long Siberian captivity, he may have thought it contained the essence and summary of his life. What other consolation do you intend to pass on to loved ones?

Najeeb was talking about his mother in 'Ila' in Kuttipuram. In a momentary emotion, a girl came looking for a boy with whom she had a brief encounter. She intended to stay with him. He made her sad, saying that it was not so. Najeeb brought the troubled girl to his mother. His mother kept watch over her all night, keeping her in a close embrace without a blink of an eye. She was afraid that if she slept the girl might do something wrong. When the family came looking for the child, she insisted that she would not go without her new found mother. The old woman gave in to that too.

There is no need to always kill a fat calf for the returnees. It is enough to give a nice bath or make a favourite dish of their choice. The foundation of the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph's of Tarbes was in France.

On 15 August 1843, God gave six young peasant girls of Cantaous, Diocese of Tarbes in France an experience of His Trinitarian Communion. Each of the girls relished this experience, discerned it, and was spontaneously drawn to share it with one another in simple faith.

In a world torn by child abuse, violence, rape, war, discrimination, division, destruction, hate and anger, a Sister of St Joseph is called to be a God's agent of Unity, Harmony and Communion in the strength and power of the Trinity and with the motto: God Alone.

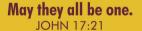
We serve:

- The church The aged Orphans
- Women in distress The poor and the needy The young in schools and colleges In hospitals/clinics for the sick and the rehabilitation of leprosy and HIV/AIDS patients.



CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH'S OF TARBES

The Lord is inviting you, dear friend, to be part of our family.











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UNCOVERING OUR SHARED HUMANITY BY LETTING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN

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