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together

a national family magazine



we inter-are

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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 ever-expansive 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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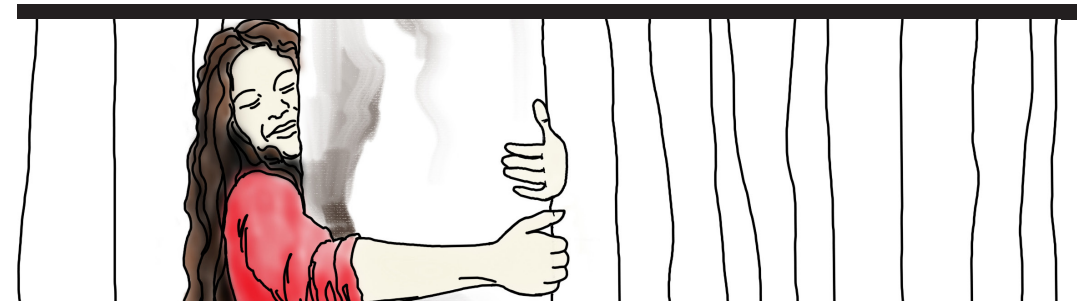
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Capitalist Boldness, Climate Change, And the Future of the Earth

The story of climate change is not a new one, yet on moral grounds one can't stop saying it again, and again, and yet again, like daily prayers.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

I've been trying to tell this story for a long time and I feel as if I've failed to get the message across", thus begins the 2006 award-winning documentary film on global warming by Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The story of climate change is not a new one, yet on moral grounds one can't stop saying it again, and again, and yet again; because merely understanding it is not equal to realising it.

Some Inconvenient Statistics

The global average atmospheric carbon dioxide in 2019 was 409.8 parts per million (ppm). Carbon dioxide levels today are higher than at any point in at least the past 800,000 years, reports www.climate.gov. In fact, the last time the atmospheric CO₂ amounts were this high was more than 3 million years ago, when temperature was 2°–3° C higher than during the pre-industrial era, and sea level was 15–25 meters (50–80 feet) higher than today. Experts say that if we continue on this trend of atmospheric carbon dioxide, in twenty to thirty years, the atmospheric carbon dioxide level would hit an irreversible level

of 450 ppm, which would cause sea level to rise in an unprecedented manner; and the oceans would submerge millions of human habitats. Such alarming statistics are known to the modern world on varied aspects of the future of our common home – the earth.

How does it happen? Perhaps the ruling capitalistic ideology and its idea of development need to be examined. A capitalistic economy thrives on exploiting the natural resources, fossil fuels like, coal, petroleum, etc. for industrial production. Use of these resources, on the one hand, emit gases and wastes that pollute; and on the other hand, would devour its sources, for these are not indefinite resources. Once upon a time, capitalism was limited to a few developed countries. But today many more developing countries, including India and China, are competing for their space in the world capitalistic order. In a world of limited resources we cannot aim at unlimited growth. The Club of Rome, consists of one hundred full members selected from current and former heads of state and government, UN adminis-

trators, high-level politicians and government officials, diplomats, scientists, economists, and business leaders from around the globe, published its first report on the state of environment, called, *The Limits to Growth*. It categorically suggested that economic growth could not continue indefinitely because of resource depletion.

Samir Amin, an Egyptian economist, demonstrates what the European revolutions of modern times demanded for, and where they have arrived, and why. Living up to the aspirations of the Age of Enlightenment, the motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (liberty, equality and fraternity) first appeared during the French Revolution. But when the revolution ended and the next generations had less or no idea of the price the fathers and mothers of revolution paid during the 10 year long revolution, they by now more affluent, moved towards the American motto; liberty and property. Samir Amin argues that unhindered liberty and property makes inequality seem legitimate. This passage from the 'high ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity' to 'the capitalistic ideal of liberty and property' was unchallenged because the powerful were already enjoying the privileges of liberty and property. It lead people to ignore the virtues of equality and fraternity and moved on to compe-

tition among individuals and among businesses; and for every human competition for power and wealth the earth pays a price.

The UN rightly names climate change as a human-made crisis; but what the UN perhaps is not doing is not taking the radical step of stating which human, and calling those to accountability. The UN infographics on Sustainable Development Goals highlights that material footprint has increased 70%, and each person puts out over 7 kilograms of electronic waste. Are the 80 plus percent of world's poor have the privilege of using 7 kilograms of electronic goods? Or are the poor only there in statistics while calculating the average electronic waste?

Acting like Masters

'Who owns the earth' was a question raised by the socialist thinker Karl Marx. His critical reaction was, "Individual private ownership of the earth (land) will appear just as much in bad taste as the ownership of one human being by another." Marx goes further to state that not even a collective society, state, or even humanity together can claim absolute ownership of the earth. Earth is prior to all these. Humans are only its occupants and beneficiaries, and not absolute owners. I hear people are already buying and selling properties on moon.

THE GLOBAL "MATERIAL FOOTPRINT"

INCREASED BY 70%

BETWEEN 2000 AND 2017



ELECTRONIC WASTE

CONTINUES TO PROLIFERATE

AND IS NOT DISPOSED OF RESPONSIBLY



'How old is too old' is a question that is in my mind after witnessing a recent discussion on cutting down a 60 odd year old healthy eucalyptus tree, not posing any specific danger to anybody, on our campus gave rise to a spontaneous discussion. One leading argument was that it has long outlived its purpose. Why should a healthy tree be named as old? The question is how old is too old, in any realm of life? 60 years may be a long period of time for us human beings. But the eucalyptus tree in question has 200-250 years long lifespan. Unscientific and illogical conclusions have been detrimental to the life of earth and earth's non-human inhabitants; and at times to the life of humans too.

Climate and Capitalism

Climate and capitalism can't go too far together. John Bellamy Foster in his essay contrasts the greatest environmentalist of 20th century, Barry Commoner's four laws of ecology with four laws of capitalism. The four laws of ecology are (1) Everything is connected to everything else: ecosystems are interconnected; and are complex. A change in one can affect the other.

(2) Everything must go somewhere: there is no final waste, the waste created in one ecological process is recycled in another. (3) Nature knows best: any major man-made change in a natural system is likely to be detrimental to that system. (4) Nothing comes from nothing: the exploitation of nature always carries an ecological cost.

The laws of capitalism are clearly counter-ecological. (1) The only lasting connection between things is the cash nexus. (2) It doesn't matter where something goes as long as it doesn't reenter the circuit of capital. (3) The self-regulating market knows best. (4) Nature's bounty is a free gift to the property owner. The kind of reductionism of commercial capitalism reduces the earth and its resources to things of use. For example, although it is possible to use rivers ecologically and sustainably in accordance with human needs, the giant river valley projects associated with the construction of today's dams work against, and not with, the logic of the river.

Living elsewhere is expensive; when that day comes the population would be divided into further economic classes; and we will see the next phase of capitalism. The profit-minded

capitalist, corporate system is inadequate to uphold the earth. The massive production plans and plants around the world are just for making 1 percent of the world rich. It is a systemic failure. A capitalistic system legitimizes the exploitation of the earth and its resources.

Time for a New Chipko Movement

When we exploit the earth and its resources we are exploiting our future and ourselves. Dr. Sunil P Ilayidom, in his long speech on ecology underlines that the sun/heat that the tree bears is the shade that we enjoy. We trust the earth. This predictability of the earth makes it inhabitable. "What is the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" asks Henry David Thoreau, an American naturalist.

The earth is everyone's responsibility. The only thing that would aid the earth is our direct engagement and involvement in the concerns of environment. According to Thomas Berry, the bomb has already gone off even without a nuclear war. He is referring to the chemicals that humans have already dumped into rivers, shot into the air, and pumped into the earth. At least we must stop its spread.

The 1970s Chipko *andolan* in Uttarakhand was a landmark movement to protect trees. The colonial rule had encouraged forest clearing to provide Himalayan teak for the English consumers. After independence, the new Indian government adopted Western-style industrial policy that continued clearing trees. As logging accelerated in the early 1970s, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, a Gandhian Social activist, proposed a strategy to fight tree cutting. He called it Chipko, meaning hug. The villagers physically blocked those came to cut down trees, by standing with the trees in embrace. In 1975, government officials conceived a plan to circumvent the activists in the village. They called the men of the villages for a meeting and in the lure of paying them old dues. Thus the day of cutting the trees, the men were not around. But that day would eventually become history. When they came to cut trees, the women fought back under the leadership of an elderly lady named Gauradevi, guarding the trees with their bodies and preventing the forest clearing.

Ultimately, the Chipko movement managed to preserve forests across the region. The news soon reached the state capital, where the then state Chief Minister, set up a committee to look into the matter, which eventually ruled in favour of the villagers. This became a turning point in the history of eco-development struggles in the region and around the world.

Participate in the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

The Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. A quick examination would reveal that every one of the goals (some very strongly) that are aimed at achieving would be negated without concern for the earth.

It is fashionable to be an advocate of environment, speak and write about it; but the solution is in getting engaged with it as equal partners. Our bodies have the natural possibility of survival only because they are on earth. Work against poverty, work for good health, education, gender equality, affordable and clean energy, employment for all, sustainable cities and communities, climate action, life on land and water, peace and justice, just to mention some. Ecological concerns may not get addressed in isolation.

The awareness of things ecological is yet to spread, and get the attention it needs. In the words of Cheryll Glotfelty, co-editor of *The Eco-criticism Reader*, we need an eco-critical reading of everything that is around. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism bring an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism must take an earth-centered approach in reading and reviewing the mad and massive activities and projects happening around. Or we may soon discover, in the words of Thomas Berry, the cultural historian, that we have lost the paradise a second time.





Ecofeminism: Women May Have the Answer

The term Mother Earth does not need to be qualified by inverted commas, because they regard the earth as a living being, which guarantees their own and all their fellow creatures' survival.

DR. SUSHEELA B.

The past few decades have witnessed an enormous interest in both the women's movement & the ecology (environmental) movement. Many feminists have argued that the goals of these two movements are mutually reinforcing; ultimately, they involve the development of worldviews and practices that are not based on male-biased models of domination. Since the early 1970's, many feminists, especially ecological feminists (ecofeminists) have defended Rose Mary's basic point in her 1975 book 'New Woman/New Earth'. Ecological feminism is the name given to a variety of positions that have roots in different feminist practices and philosophies. These different perspectives (e.g., liberal, traditional Marxist, radical, socialist black & the third world) reflect different understandings of the nature; and offer solutions to pressing environmental problems.

Women as primary caretakers of families are placed on the frontline of the environmental crisis. Women play a major role on how ecofeminism can be applied to the areas related to ecology to shed light on the connection between women and the natural environment. A large and growing body of literature on ecofeminism in the West relates gender and environment mainly in ideological terms. In India, however, growing protests against environmental destruction and struggles for survival and subsistence points to the fact that caste, class & gender issues are deeply interlinked. Today, we live in the world of inter-domain's oppression, ecological degradation and the exploitation of workers, race & class. In the midst of these troubles, a movement known as ecofeminism appears to be gaining recognition. Though, in theory, ecological feminism has been around for a number of years, it emerged as a political movement in the 1970's. Francois d' Eaubonne, a French feminist philosopher coined the term 'Ecofeminism' in 1974. Ecofeminism is a feminist approach to environmental ethics. Karen Warren, in her book, 'Ecofeminist Philosophy,' claims that feminist theorists question the source of the oppression. Ecofeminist consider the oppression of women (sexism) the oppression of other humans (racism, classism, ageism, colonialism) and the domination of nature (naturism).

Ecofeminism is 'a new term for an ancient wisdom' that grew out of various social movements — the feminist peace, and the ecology movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Though the term was first used by Francoise D'Eaubonne, it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked off initially by recurring ecological disasters. The meltdown at Three Mile Island prompted large numbers of women in the

Ecofeminism is 'a new term for an ancient wisdom' that grew out of various social movements — the feminist peace, and the ecology movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

USA to come together in the first ecofeminist conference- 'Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties'-in March 1980, at Amherst. At this conference, the connections between feminism, militarization, healing and ecology were explored. As Ynestra King, one of the Conference organizers wrote: "Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing. We are a woman-identified movement, and we believe we have special work to do in these imperiled times. We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors, as feminist concerns. It is the same masculine mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way".

The corporate and the military warriors' aggression against the environment was perceived almost as an aggression against female body. This is expressed by many women who participated in these movements. Thus, women in Switzerland demonstrated against the Seveso poisoning. On the night of 2nd December, 1984, 40 tons of toxic gases were released from Union

Carbide pesticides plant in Bhopal, India. 3000 people died during the disaster; and of the 40,000 others who were exposed, many have since died, and the suffering continues. Women have been most severely affected but also have been the most persistent in their demand for justice. The Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan, has continued to remind the Government of India, Union Carbide & the World that they still suffer, and no amount of money can restore the lives and health of the victims as pointed out by Hamidabai, a Muslim woman from one of the poor *bastis* which were the worst hit in the disaster.

Women in Sicily protested against the stationing of nuclear missiles in their country. They protested between nuclear escalation and the culture of the musclemen, between the violence of war and violence of rape. The historical memory that women had of war and their daily experience of 'peaceful times' encourages them and in this respect women are perpetually at war, in which the greater part of the masculine seems to delight -passes through the stages as the traditional sexual relationship, aggressive conquest, possession and control.

The women who were a driving force in movements against the construction of nuclear power plants in Germany, were not all committed feminists, but to them too, the connection between technology, war against nature, against women and future generation were clear. The peasant women who actively protested against the proposed construction of the nuclear power plant at Wyl in south-west Germany also saw the connection between technology, the profit-oriented growth mania of the industrial system and of the exploitation of the 'third World'. This connection was also most clearly spelt out by Russian women after the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986.

The Chernobyl disaster in particular provoked a spontaneous expression of women's outrage and resistance against this war technology and the general industrial warrior system. The illusion that atomic technology was malevolent when used in bombs but benevolent when used to generate electricity for the North's domestic appliances was dispelled. Many women too understood that their consumerist lifestyle was also very much part of this system of war against nature, women, foreigners and future generations.

The new development in biotechnology, genetic engineering and reproductive technology have made women acutely conscious of the gender bias of science and

**The new development
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technology and that science's whole paradigm is characteristically patriarchal, anti-nature and colonial and aims to dispossess women of their generative capacity as it does with the productive capacities of nature. The founding of the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Genetic and Reproductive Engineering (FINRRAGE) in 1984, was followed by a number of important congresses: 1985 in Sweden and in Bonn, 1988 in Bangladesh and in 1991 in Brazil. This movement reached far beyond the narrowly defined women's or feminist movement. In Germany women from trade unions, churches and universities, rural and urban women, workers and housewives, mobilized against these technologies, their ethical, economic, and health implications and they continue to be hotly debated issues. This movement was instrumental in preventing the establishment of a 'surrogate motherhood' agency in Frankfurt. The

ecofeminist principal of looking for connections where capitalist patriarchy and its warrior science are engaged in disconnecting and dissecting forms of living also informs this movement. Thus, those involved look not only at the implications of these technologies for women but also for animals, plants for agriculture in the Third World as well as in the industrialized North. They understand that the liberation of women cannot be achieved in isolation, but only as a part of the larger struggle for the preservation of life on this planet.

'Spiritual' or 'political' ecofeminism

As women in various movements-ecology, peace, feminism and especially health – they rediscovered the interdependence and connectedness of everything; they also rediscovered what was called as the spiritual dimension of life. The realization of this connectedness was itself sometimes called spirituality. The Capitalist and Marxist

materialism, which saw the achievement of human happiness as basically conditional and denigrated this dimension. Feminists also began to realize the significance of the 'witch hunts' at the beginning of our modern era in so far as patriarchal science and technology was developed only after these women (the witches) had been murdered and, concomitantly, their knowledge, wisdom, and close relationship with nature had been destroyed. The desire to recover, to regenerate this wisdom as a means to liberate women and nature from patriarchal destruction also motivated this turning towards spirituality.

Eco-Feminism in USA seemingly put greater emphasis on the 'spiritual' than those in Europe. For example, in Germany, particularly since the early 1980's this tendency has often been criticized as escapism, as signifying a withdrawal from the political sphere into some kind of a dream world, far removed from reality and thus leaving power in the hands of men. But the 'spiritual' feminists argue that theirs is the politics of everyday life, the transformation of fundamental relationships, even if that takes place only in small communities. They consider that this politics is much more effective than countering the power of games played by men. In Germany too, this debate has to be seen against the background of the emergence of the Greens, who participated in the parliamentary politics since 1978. Many feminists joined the Green Party, less out of ecological than feminist concerns. The Greens, however, were keen to integrate these concerns too into their programs and politics. The critique of the 'spiritual' stand within the ecofeminist movement is voiced by men and women from the left. Many women, particularly those who combine their critique of capitalism with a critique of patriarchy and still cling to some kind of 'materialist' concept of history, do not easily accept spiritual ecofeminism, because it is obvious, that capitalism can also co-opt the 'spiritual feminists' critique of materialism.

This indeed, is already happening. The New Age and esoteric movement have created a new market for esoterica, meditation, yoga, magic, alternative health practices, most of which are fragments taken out of the context

of oriental, particularly Chinese and Indian cultures. Now, after the material resources of the colonies have been looted, their spiritual and cultural resources are being transformed into commodities for the world market.

This interest in things spiritual is a manifestation of Western patriarchal capitalist civilization's deep crisis. While in the West, the spiritual aspects of life, have more and more been eroded, people now look towards the 'East', towards pre-industrial traditions in the search for what has been destroyed in their own culture. For the Third World women, who fight for their survival, base this spiritual icing-on-the cake, the divorce of the spiritual from the material is incomprehensible for them. The term Mother Earth does not need to be qualified by inverted commas, because they regard the earth as a living being which guarantees their own and all their fellow creatures' survival. They respect and celebrate Earth's sacredness and resist its transformation into the dead, raw material for industrialism and commodity production. It follows, therefore, that they also respect both the diversity and the limits of nature, which cannot be violated if they want to survive. It is this kind of materialism, this kind of immanence rooted in the everyday subsistence production of most of the world's women which is the basis of our ecofeminist position. This materialism is neither commoditized capitalism nor mechanical Marxist materialism, both of which are based on the same concept of humanity's relationship to nature. But the ecofeminist spirituality is not to be confused with a kind of other-worldly spirituality. That simply wants 'food without sweat', not caring where it comes from or whose sweat it involves. Women in the South working and living, fighting for their immediate survival are nearer to it than the urban, middle-class women and men in the North. We are faced with the want to preserve life on this planet: the issue of this concept of knowledge, the issue of poverty and development, the issue of industrialization of all life forms, the search for cultural identity and rootedness, the search for freedom and self-determination within a limited planet.

Composting: It Is Time to Welcome the Earthworms

Let us get it once and for all - we are what our bins are. If each of us tried to compost, our cities would benefit immeasurably from it.

MARIANNE DE NAZARETH

As children there was always a compost pit in Hayes Road, a property my grandfather bought in the 30's on his return from Nairobi, Africa and where we live today. I remember we would run out to throw the wet waste from the kitchen into it. It was just a deep hole in the ground in one part of the garden. Of course then we did not throw only veggie waste, quite often bits of plastic, meat bones, fish waste, empty medicine strips, bottle caps among others, found their way in.

During Dad's time he taught us to mix the soil put into pots with this black compost which he turned over in the pit with a pitchfork and wearing his gum boots. All the pots were re-potted in the rainy season by us kids and Dad, by chopping the ferns and other plants into several pieces and making new pots of them. The pots thrived and literally blossomed and grew with this black decomposed wet waste.

When we moved to our new home on Castle St, we carried bags of this compost and made a thick layer of it over the small rectangle garden we had there. Dad encouraged our sons to dig out earthworms for 25 paise each and those 'soil enrichers' were taken to Castle St and added to the soil. These were just little traditions we followed and so when Wet Waste compost-

ing became a fad in the recent past, we could truthfully say we were already doing it for two generations. I am sure people living in rural areas have done the same for millennia.

So why did Dad make the boys dig out earthworms to take all the way to Castle Street? Earthworms help in the process of decomposition and are quite essential to keep the soil aerated and healthy. Earthworms are both blind and deaf and sense their world through their fine and delicate skin. Noise does not bother them but touch and vibrations immediately do. Noiselessly they work through piles of waste burrowing and granulating it for us for free and ridding our living space of the waste we throw out. Their world may be dark and silent, but the colour and vibrant light they give us through their 'worm casts' or poop is what makes our compost so fertile and desirable. As

Dr. Sultan Ismail, India's foremost vermistechnologist, says, "An earthworm is the pulse of the soil and the healthier the pulse, the healthier the soil."

Today gardeners and Solid Waste Management experts encourage wet waste composting even if one lives in a flat. That is because the landfills in every city are becoming unmanageable with the tonnes of waste being spewed into them. They are no more 'landfills', instead they

have become mountains of stinking trash on the outskirts of our posh cities, which are polluting the soil and ground water under it. Sadly these landfills are located in villages where the unsuspecting residents fall ill due to the pollution caused by these landfills.

Begin Composting

If you have some spare space, dig a pit like we have - open to the soil at the bottom and with a firm and tough lid to keep the vermin out. Let the residents put in ONLY vegetarian waste and no meat or fish remains at all to help avoid the proliferation of rats. Once it breaks down, feed it to your garden and see the explosion of joy in your plants. It's worth all the effort making your own compost; just give it a try.

Recently we spent 10 days in Goa and even though the panchayat of our village has given each house two plastic bins for Wet Waste and Dry Waste and we pay a pretty steep fee for it, we decided to check how much actual trash the three of us made in those 10 days. The entire philosophy of our lives unfolded in what we saw expelled by us as trash. There were just two really small bags of dry waste, packets, plastic bottles and the like but the majority of our waste was wet waste from the kitchen. Onion peels, skins of veggies, prawn heads and skins,

fish heads and guts, fat and skin from chicken, custard apple and papaya skins along with golden yellow banana skins, tea leaves etc. The wet waste was ten times more than the dry waste.

We took the wet waste each time the container filled up and went out into the garden and 'buried' it at the roots of any tree. It could have been the new Alphonso grafts, or the chickoo tree, the scented pink Plumeria, the bougainvillea, the curry leaf tree and of course the St Anthony's gardenia. And, over each hole filled with the waste, we weighted it down with a brick or a stone.

Noted garbologist Rathje says "What we say about ourselves is never as honest or as revealing as what we throw away." Let us get it once and for all - we are what our bins are. Just forget the talk about saving the city, saving the environment and saving Bangalore. The majority of people are callous and do not want to care about where their wet waste is binned as long as they don't see it and have to hold their noses against its decomposing smell. If each of us tried to compost, our cities would benefit immeasurably from it.

Managing Garbage

Look at your waste this way: Life throws a lot of garbage at us every single day. With some



Curbing the Global Warming Amidst Growing Denialism and Pseudo Eco-Sentimentality

Conservation of ecology has to be promoted as a day-to-day lived behaviour, one that gradually transforms us to embrace a pro-environmental self-identity.

A FRANCIS

effort we can segregate it into three groups to handle it, like we need to segregate our waste. Soon that will change our way of thinking into being more cautious and caring of our Mother Earth and looking at trying to segregate and clean up our own surroundings. Then, layer the waste with an accelerator which can be bought off the net and in a few days the wet waste decomposes into a wonderful black compost, which can be used to nurture your plants. And for us Indians what is important is it's for FREE! You don't pay anything for it.

It is one thing to feed your plants with compost bought in bags from the store and quite another to make your own and see your plants and garden benefit from it. The pleasure of feeding your own home-made compost to your garden is quite distinct and inexplicable. Unfortunately people don't want to make that little extra effort. They just want to see the magic wrought with store bought compost, which is nowhere as nutritious as home-made, just like the food we cook at home. Stop buying that bag of compost, instead, try composting on your own with your own kitchen waste.

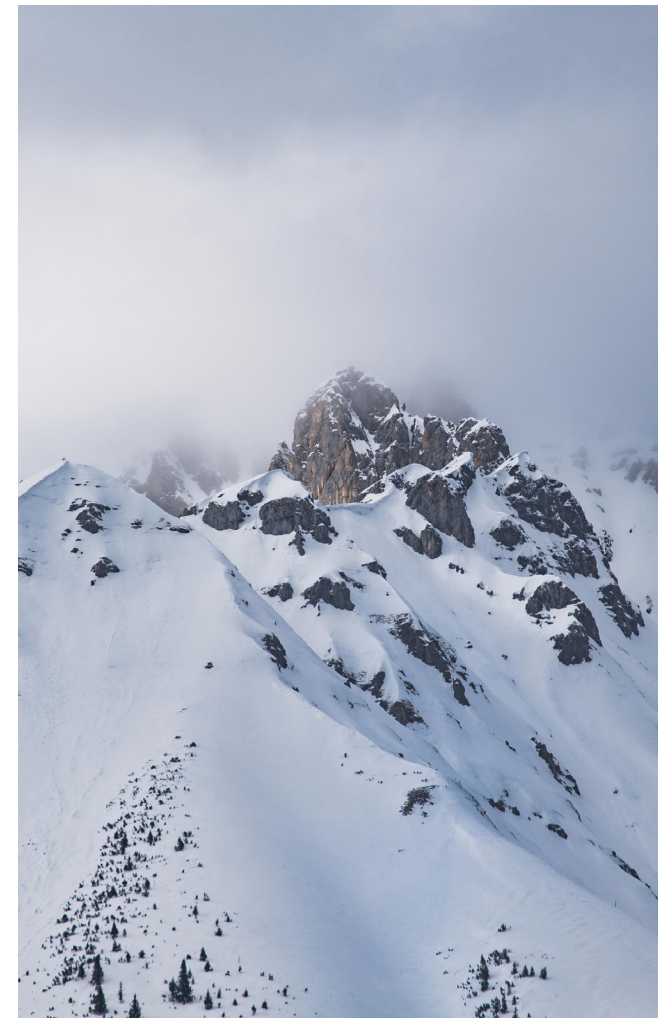
If we are to genuinely think about it, it is in composting, that mind blowing and life altering magic hides. If one could touch this feeling, it's like walking barefoot on the floor of the thick forests in the Western Ghats. You can literally feel life thrumming from the forest floor into your toes below from that leafy carpet of leaves. You get the same life affirming throb when handling the compost you have made in your own compost heap.

It is one thing to feed your plants with compost bought in bags from the store and quite another to make your own and see your plants and garden benefit from it.

You heap up your wet waste in a pit or a khambha. Then, inside it countless little maggots and other creatures help to break it down. They are tireless, indefatigable, invisible little miracles which constantly labour to make the 'black gold' that we treasure and our garden so loves. They all arrive when they have to, work towards a symphony of soundless harmony and never play out of turn. Mother Nature is the conductor of this symphony, quietly and generously ignoring any applauding crowd. She does not need one.

To shorten the cycle, and quicken the time required for decomposition, chop up the waste into smaller bits and add accelerators. For example the large leaves of the cauliflower and maize that you remove; chop them up with sharp scissors and only then throw them into the pit. And remember, dry leaves can ward off odour issues or a sprinkle of coco-peat if there are no leaves through the year to help you.

To understand the science behind composting, even if we care to understand it at all, we are acknowledging Mother Nature and her army of decomposers and their contribution to store bought or home-made compost. Bacteria, fungi, spiders, snails, beetles, earthworms and countless other beings perform the decomposing ritual to Nature's command. At that precise moment that she ordains it and precisely as she requires, the final gift to us is that beautiful, sweet smelling compost. It is made out of our own wet waste which we did not throw out onto the road, but carefully put into the composting pit or bin.



Unenviably, July 2021, now has the reputation for being the hottest month on record, while 2020 tying with 2016, recorded as the hottest year!

Are we scared about it?

The worldview of materialism that promotes unbridled corporate profits and mindless consumerism, endorses little or no concern to news like this. With a perfunctory 'business-as-usual' mentality, it spins its reductionist logic: 'One hot day, one hot month or one hot year shouldn't alarm us; the planet, after all, is resilient. Climate change skeptics' anchor themselves in this worldview for their blatant denial of global warming: 'A difference of 0.2 degrees Celsius is insignificant in climatology'. It's hard not to mention here about the outlandish Trump administration that aggressively applied the vantage point of the materialist logic for withdrawing their commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change. A new pandemic rhetoric is the latest in this series i.e., 'Pandemic lockdowns have drastically reduced the rate of pollution; so why worry about global warming?'

In contrast to this popular worldview is the pro-environmental position motivated by a deep human consciousness of the survival of all forms of life on the planet. Beyond the mere talk of 'cosmophilia,' (love for the entire cosmos) this worldview holds that the conservation of ecology is crucial to human survival and ecosystems have their intrinsic value (whether they serve humanity or not!). As hard-nosed as it sounds, this deep ecological worldview which affirms both human and multispecies justice equally, does not callously dismiss the unprecedented weather extremities as an isolated phenomenon, but as an 'ongoing climate trend'. Proving to the credibility of this worldview, NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies recently confirmed that the last seven years have been the warmest on record.

Shouldn't we be scared, for as much as the global warming is perceived as a trend, we are, too, exposed despondently to face the beast of global warming with record-breaking hot days, weeks, month and years, ahead?

Curbing the ongoing warming trend, irrefutably, is the only effective way to save the bounties of the planet that sustain life, both human and nonhuman. But it looks like an immovable mountain, an act easily said than done, particularly at this time in human history when more of us are attracted to ravenous materialism as our preferred choice of lifestyle, than a way of life that is rooted in biospheric values which despite its stoic resonances, promises us a green future and a pro-environmental self identity.

Climate Emergency

The ongoing global warming trend which affects every region of the earth, some regions more severely than others, casts a grave threat to the survival of the planet. Its devastating consequences impact the planet with irreversible damage on all fronts – air, sea and land. The glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising, oceans are acidifying, forests are burning, seagrass and coral reefs are dying and the biodiversity of the planet is diminishing, drastically! In the midst of such planetary horrors, the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit

was definitive about the mounting climate emergency that is pushing the planet to a tipping point, and unleashing the potential for creating more 'climate refugees' in the future.

While the climate emergency, accelerated by the emissions of greenhouse gases, is not limited to any geographical jurisdiction, the villainous role attributed to the creed of materialism, cannot be overlooked. The Oxfam International's report, 'Confronting Climate Inequality' reveals that the richest 10 percent in the world creates over half of the global emissions. Equally unpalatable is the fact that the G20 countries are responsible for 78 percent of the global emission of greenhouse gases. This is the core reason the pro-environmental folks believe that a war on global warming is a war on materialism, too.

Climate Action

The reduction of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is the most decisive climate action that scientists propose towards curbing the global warming. To many of us, this means nothing more than a default accusatory thinking about those whom we perceive as culprit for emissions of CO₂/greenhouse gases. Our finger of blame points as far as to transnational corporations, the G20 countries and as close as to our next-door neighbour who maintains a rich consumeristic lifestyle that spews out accumulation of plastic, fossil-fuel and electronic products driven wastes. Despite its moralistic tone, there may be some or more of truth to our nitpicking, and relevance to our demand for fairness that those who cause more emission should take greater responsibility in curbing it. We, however, cannot merely be satisfied with these, and ignore our role in the collective effort intended to make a change. This attitude equally reflects a pseudo eco-sentimentality, which activists associate with an 'implicit form of denialism': 'we are aware of the growing ecological destruction caused by unchecked human activity, and we are indignant about it, but we don't translate our awareness and indignation into transformative climate actions'. What good does our accusatory and moralistic criticism that lacks a genuine

pro-environmental commitment render to the current climate emergency? The transformative power of climate activism relies not on our willingness to talk but to act, just like in the moving example of a technocrat who left his highly paid corporate career to start growing a forest. Despite the intensity of the public derision which he faced initially over his decision, the small forest he created in his hometown stretching over one and half acres of land currently preserves a rich biodiversity with different species of plants, trees, birds and insects.

Conservation of ecology has to be promoted as a day-to-day lived behaviour, one that gradually transforms us to embrace a pro-environmental self-identity. Prof. John Miller, a renowned educator, author, and a proponent of holistic education in the North American academic context proposes many ways through which teachers could instil the value of conservation of ecology in their students. His vision of the whole child education advocates for the daily exposition of students to nature, to the extent that the nature becomes a living classroom and a profound teacher of life for them!

Commitment to Paris Agreement and 'Quiet Activism': Both Are Equally Important

Based on the best available scientific evidence, a temporary reduction of emissions cannot avert the growing climate emergency. An ongoing commitment to transformative change is required of everyone in achieving the carbon neutrality, an ambitious goal targeted by the historic Paris Agreement - be that from the proprietors of industries that spew out carbon pollution or the ordinary folk who burns dry leaves as part of tidying their backyard. Governments, businesses, civil societies and ordinary folks have to be partners in this most crucial human project that undeniably will determine the survival of the planet. Governments have to stay committed to the goal of the Paris Agreement which is to limit global warming preferably to 1.5 Celsius, compared to preindustrial levels. Businesses

and civil societies transform their operations by establishing stringent green standards and zero-carbon targets.

Ordinary people, too, could play a crucial role in this great mission of reducing the ongoing trend of global warming. 'Quiet activism' is a practice that is gaining strength around the globe as the world is searching for meaningful and creative behaviours to prevent the warming trend. The term refers to extraordinary initiatives taken by ordinary people like you and me, in addressing issues of climate warming in our personal and local community-oriented living context. These initiatives include: individuals choosing to walk and/or use bicycles instead of driving, accessing public transit or car-share programmes when driving is unavoidable, recycling resources, buying local products, using water and energy responsibly, leading a plastic-free life, etc. One very powerful expression of quiet activism that many individuals seriously participate today is the use of their purchasing power while they shop. By making conscientious choice to avoid buying products from manufacturers who contribute to ecological destruction is certainly powerful enough to demand appropriate ecological behaviours from the profit-oriented market forces. A friend of mine avoids buying petrol from certain providers on the ground that these providers are known for their manipulation of ecology in poor countries in the African continent.

Now, coming back to my initial question, 'are we scared about the unprecedented weather extremities?'. We certainly need to be scared. But with our small pro-environmental actions and habits, though they sound like a tiny drop in the vast ocean, we could definitely reduce our destructive ecological footprint that adds to the ongoing global warming trend. I am hopeful that with a right combination of our collective pro-environmental determinism and shared initiatives of climate actions for curbing the warming trend, we would probably leapfrog our fears over a dying planet into promises for creating a green, living and life-sustaining one.

The National Monetization Pipeline and the Paradigm of Development

Nation building is primarily making all citizens feel that this nation belongs to them; that they have a share in the wealth of the nation.

ALEX TUSCANO

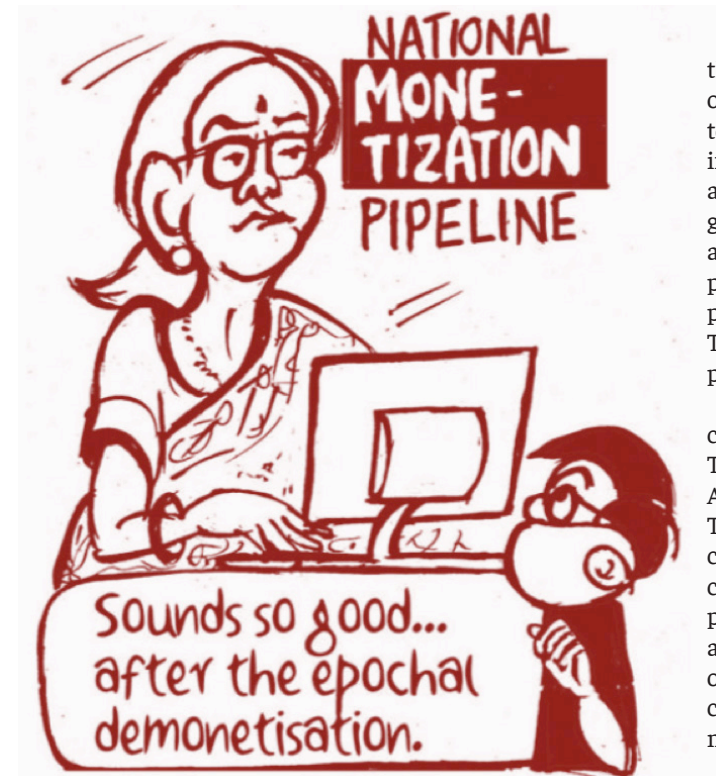
The government, and particularly, the finance ministry has announced that a list of public assets will be leased to the private investors for a period of time to raise Rs. 6 lakh crores over the next four years, a project called as National Monetization Pipeline.

Only those assets which are already operational, will be leased out to the private investors. 26,700 Kms highways worth Rs.1.6 Lakh (L) Crore (Cr); 400 Railway stations and 150 trains (Rs.1.5 L. Cr); 42,300 Circuit Kms of Power Transmission Lines (Rs.0.67 L. Cr); 5,000 MW Hydro, Solar and Wind Power Generation assets (Rs.0.32 L. Cr); 8,000 Kms of National Gas Pipelines (Rs.0.24 L. Cr); 4,000 Kms Pipelines of IOC and HPCL (Rs.0.22 L. Cr); BSNL and MTNL Towers (Rs.0.39 L. Cr); 21 Airports and 31 Ports (Rs.0.34 L. Cr); 160 Coal Mining projects (Rs.0.32 L. Cr); and 2 Sport Stadiums (Rs.0.11 L. Cr) etc. for various durations of lease. It is claimed that the funds so generated will be invested in expanding infrastructure.

The assets in creation, in the process of building up will not be included. These could be considered to be leased out only when the building of these assets is completed. The building up, completion of, or creation of assets has

to be done by the government. We have already assets which have been leased out, such as the airports. Adani has been given the Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji airport, Thiruvananthapuram airport for the purpose of operation, and Mundra port in Kutch which had in one of its containers massive quantities of drugs coming from Afghanistan.

The leasing out of the assets means that the ownership of the assets remains with the government but they will remain at the disposal of the investors during the period of the lease agreement. Once the lease period is over the assets will be handed over back to the Government. The investors will pay the government lease amount for each of these assets. This amount may not be the cost of the creation of the assets. This lease amount will become an income for the government. The government would like to earn about Rs. 5.96 lakh crore. As far as the investors are concerned, they will run the assets, e. g., the airport, and earn money for themselves. If the government was running these assets, they would also earn the money for the government. But the time the government would earn the money equivalent to the lease amount, it will take several years. Leasing the



assets will give the government immediately this amount and investors will recover their investment and their profit over a period of time.

The government says by leasing the assets to the investors they will free the capital (investment) stuck in these assets. The government will immediately get back about 14% of the total investment in these assets from the lease. The government can invest this lease amount to create new assets and infrastructure. In this manner the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) will boost the Indian economy. It will generate new employment and new infrastructure. Further the newly created infrastructure can be leased out to more investors by the private capital leading to government further earning and investing in creation of new assets and creating more employment leading to growth. This pipeline will be a continuous process.

What Are the Fault Lines of this NMP?

First of all, we must understand that the assets being offered for leasing have been created

through the contribution of the citizens, all of whom pay either direct or indirect taxes to the government. The citizens have stakes in the management and operation of these assets. They have elected a government to govern which means the government and their agencies should operate these assets for the public interest and not to be handed over to the private capital to generate profit for themselves. The assets offered over the private investors are performing assets which serve the people.

There is a big doubt if the private capital will come forward to take the public assets on lease. There is a standing offer to them of the sale of Air India. But there are no takers for this airline. The buyers have to abide by some stringent conditions which keep them away. Those who come forward to take the assets on lease will prefer to take most profit-making assets, like airports, harbour and ports. Finally, only two or three investors like Ambani and Adani will come forward. This will lead to formation of monopoly and oligarchs.

The governments in the past have tried other means to hand over the assets to the private capital through the schemes like "Disinvestments", "Public Private Partnership". These have not worked well. In the case of disinvestment, the government has sold the profit-making assets for a song, resulting in handing over tax payers' assets to the capitalists. The Centaur hotel of Mumbai was sold at a very lowest price. The buyer sold this hotel within a month making huge profits. The new buyer is making a roaring business out of it. Finally, it the public that have lost their wealth to the private capital.

The government will lease out to the private capital assets built by the government from the taxpayers' money. When these assets, like Airports, Railways, roads, ports and harbours go under the control of the private capital. They will try to get maximum profit out of it. When the private capital hands over these assets to the government after the stipulated time we will not be able to know the condition in which these assets will be returned.

"A farmer buys a young healthy, milk yielding cow. He leases it out to a milkman for three or four years. The milkman milks the cow and

feeds less to make maximum profit. After three or four years the farmer gets the cow back in a miserable condition, an under nourished and low milk yielding cow.”

If these assets are leased to the cronies of the government as it has happened in the case of airports it will result in monopoly. If the private players (monopolists) charge the consumers high consumer fees, then the consumer will suffer. Initially the consumers pay to build these assets through their tax money and the same assets land in the hands of the private capital who further exploits the consumer.

In the year 1991, Narasimha government along with Dr. Manmohan Singh liberalized the Indian Economy. The economy was liberalized, opened to the world market, for private investment. The National Monetization Pipeline is part of the same privatization programme. This reform has seen a sea change in the Indian economy. We have a lot of foreign investors in the country. There was indeed high growth. But on the other hand, we have seen a lot of petty producers pushed out of production. The industrial growth has led to the forcible displacement of peasants from their land. If we take an example of tribal population then we will see that their land holding which had been sustaining their families have been forcibly evacuated from their land and their lands have been taken over by Adani and Vedantas to explore minerals. From 1991 to 2011 the number of cultivators has fallen by 15 million. These people have been reduced to wage labourers or keep migrating to the cities in search of non-existing employment. Of course, the economy has seen tremendous growth. We have noticed that the GDP growth and growth in employment is inversely related. We can see the way auto industries are organized. The high automation has improved the quality of cars but it has not created proportionately equal employment. In many cases it has displaced the workers.

The reform in the labour laws have encouraged foreign and domestic investment leading to higher industrialization. But it has reduced the bargaining power of the workers. There is a widespread practice of contract labour. Usually the semiskilled workers, as and when needed by

the industries, were hired through the contractors. But now even the highly skilled workers are hired through contract labour.

The three farm laws which the Modi government has introduced will reduce the farmers to the condition of contract farmers. The procurement and farm market will be controlled by Ambani and Adani who have already built massive storehouses to store food grains. Farmers will become mere extensions of the corporates. These corporations can even create artificial famine by hoarding food grains, forcing the poor to starve.

The Paradigm of Development

The state wants to transfer the wealth of the society to the wealthy capital owners and reduce the rest of humanity into mere wage labourers who would have to rely on the wages, having no share in the wealth of the society. The society to be divided into a few oligarchs and the rest of the people into wage labourers having no stake in the society. By allowing these oligarchs to own the society's wealth these oligarchs will rule the state. This will make the government to rule the nation for these oligarchs. The wage labourers may have houses, three square meals, health care and education but they will have no share in the society and the capital created from their taxes. The meaning of their lives will be reduced to eternally wage labourers. The government is introducing a new type of citizenship, bereft of all rights of the citizens. In India, it is not only the pace of growth that will impress people, but also the pace of their inclusion in it. Those who are being left behind, including tribals, do not want to be mere passive beneficiaries of state handouts and corporate philanthropy. They want to be respected, earning their own incomes and growing their own wealth.

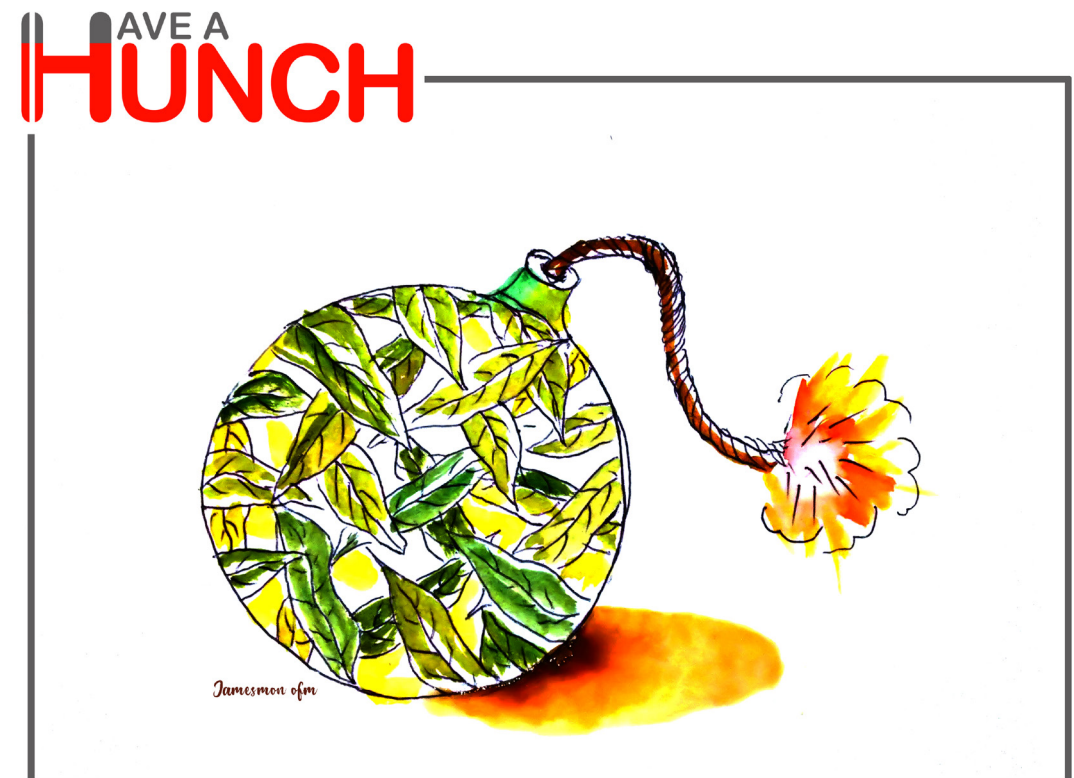
Citizenship as wage labourers for the capital: If after monetizing the national assets the government may invest the proceeds for creation of new assets. It will give rise to employment opportunities. But who will be the end beneficiary of this? This investment will be to create wealth for the private capital. The lives of the wage labourers always hang on the temporary strings. When the string becomes weak the life

becomes precarious and when the string breaks the labourers fall flat on the ground. We have experienced this during the pandemic. The labourers were the most affected population of the society. There were a huge number of people who lost their jobs; the miseries of the migrant labourers have remained on the TV screens long enough to be forgotten. While the working class was pushed into the depth of poverty and suffering the private capital owners' wealth grew in multiples.

The state as a repressive machinery: To prevent opposition or revolt from the toiling masses the state has assumed a greater repressive nature, abolishing the right to protest, frequently using draconian laws like UAPA, sedition that goes to deprive the rights of citizenship for people who

dare to think and express their opinion. Reform in the trade union laws which deprive the right of the workers to bargain, demand for fair wages, security of employment.

A farmer grazing his cattle in the land near the National highway no 7 says, “life has become hard for us because our space has been taken away from us. This highway, which came up right in front of our eyes has taken away so many of our cattle, sheep and goats. We used to be afraid of tigers which would sometimes take away our cattle. The tigers have gone, in its place these highways have come. Nowadays these highways have been fenced, preventing us from entering the highway roads. We cannot cross these roads. Our bullock cart cannot enter the road.”





IN PICTURES

Kites Observe Strong Family Practices

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

Kites, like their close relatives eagles, soar high, and frequently hover over our cities. Winter is their breeding season; they descend down from the skies and spend more time in the comfort of the earth, trees, and their mates. Visiting a camp of kites during this season is not an intelligent decision.

Winter has set in; and a pair of kites got busy doing the annual maintenance of their old nest. Their nest is a rough platform of twigs and rags placed in a tall tree fork. Both the male and female take part in nest building, incubation and care of chicks. I kept watch from distance. As they built their nest, they often mated. Slowly the mother settled down to lay eggs and hatch. I began to frequent this camp of kites at the far end of our campus in Bangalore, and watched them standing on the top of a tall building close by. They began to become hostile and protective about their space. It takes a little over 30 days to incubate. The male provides the female with food during incubation. She rarely leaves the eggs unattended for more than a few minutes at a time.

Finally the eggs hatched and there were three chicks. The mother and father birds guard them from other predator birds, snakes, intruding humans, and anything moving.

I kept watching. Chicks stayed at the nest for nearly two months. Siblings show aggression to each other and often the weaker chick is bullied. Here parent birds were found to take special care of the smaller chick. Body feathers began to appear after about 20-22 days. Chicks stood up on their legs after 17-20 days and began flapping their wings after about 30 days. After 50 days, they began to move to branches next to the nest. And it was only a matter of time they just merged with the rest of kite folks around.



HARITODHYAN ASHRAM, MP

An Attempt at Eco-Friendly Living

Relate to all things, animate and inanimate, as having their own intrinsic beauty and worth. Live a life as close to nature as possible — simple, clean, green, and serene.

SCARIA VARNATH OFM

The two great and inspiring encyclicals of Pope Francis — *Laudato Si'* (Cosmic fraternity) and *Fratelli Tutti* (Human fraternity) have been greatly appreciated by all those who have read them and studied them. Many articles and reflections have appeared in different periodicals and magazines as well as the electronic media, highlighting the relevance and importance of these encyclicals in our times. Let us hope, these encyclicals as well as the reflections and studies on them, will lead governments, leaders, decision-makers and all peoples to a process of conversion — a change in consciousness and lifestyle that will help to restore the right relationship of humans with mother earth and all creatures. As St. Francis of Assisi is remembered for his respectful dealings with all creation, expressed in his Cantic of Brother Sun, humans today must look upon all creatures as their brothers and sisters — with care, love and respect.

According to the Bible, all creatures are related to each other because all of them come into being through God's Word. In the Book of Genesis, we read that before creating anything, God said, "let there be". "God said, 'let there be light', and there was light; And God saw that the light was good". (Gen. 1,3-4). John's gospel expresses it clearly, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1,1-3). Nothing in this visible universe is created without the Word; and

therefore, all visible things contain the Word. All things are a *logophany*, a manifestation of the Word. All visible things contain the Invisible. The visible things are the sacraments of the Invisible. If we do not perceive the Invisible in the visible realities of life where else do we hope to perceive it? The visible is more than the visible; it embodies the Invisible. The Invisible is not totally invisible. It is hidden in the visible and in human hearts and consciousness! Every created thing contains the Word. And so, all things are related to each other at a deeper level in the Word.

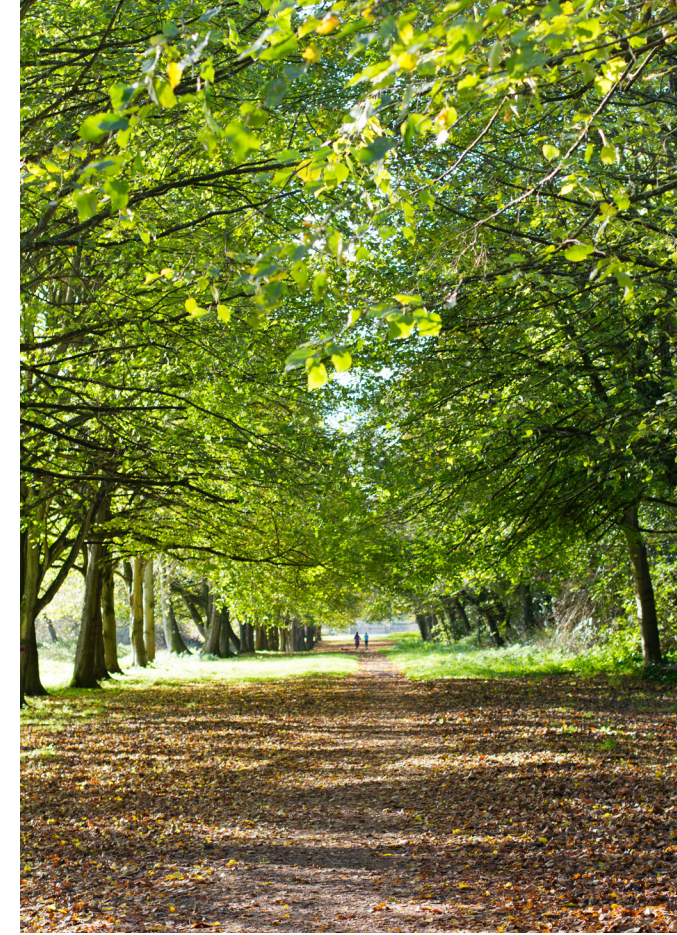
Laudato Si' invites us to look at all things sacramentally, poetically, mystically, and encounter the Divine Presence in them. None of the things of this earth are to be seen merely as objects to be used, exploited and abused for satisfying human wants and desires, and then to be thrown away. Human beings, created in God's image, are given dominion over all creatures (Cf. Gen 1, 26-31). Dominion is not to be understood or interpreted as domination, subjugation or exploitation! Just as the dominion of Yahweh protects and sustains all of us and all creatures, so also, we must protect, care, and sustain the earth and all creation. That is the responsibility the Creator has put on us (Cf. Gen 2,15). Every human being must be a caretaker of all creatures. The Risen Lord said to his apostles, "Proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Cf. Mk 16,15)

Our Indian spiritual tradition refers to creation as the overflow of the joy and bliss

(*ananda*) in the heart of God. Creation is said to be God's *lila* or the ecstatic dance of God. The creative activity of God is similar to the free, joyful and spontaneous play of little children. They play, not to achieve or accomplish anything, but for the sheer joy of playing. God's work of creation is not for achieving anything but for the joy of creation. You and me exist because God dances in ecstasy and joy. You and me are God's work of art (Cf. Eph. 2,10). Joy (bliss, love, *ananda*) is the inherent nature of creation. To live life in all its fullness and significance humans must discover this joy. We can perceive this joy in children and in all of creation. We can see it in the trees, flowers, birds, animals, sunrise and starry heavens. Adults tend to bury this joy in their pursuit of profit, money, wealth, power and other worldly concerns. A joyful, prosperous and peaceful world can be built up only when humans recognize the world as God's gift, to be received with gratitude, and become participants in the creative dance of God. The Bhagavad Gita tells us, 'How poor are those who work for a reward!' (2,49).

Our Indian Scriptures too make us aware of the sacredness of all things. God is the *antaryamin*, who dwells in the manifest world. The Ishavasya Upanishad says, '*Ishavasyam idam sarvam*', i.e. 'all this is the dwelling place of the Lord'. And the verse continues, 'Therefore, by renunciation support yourself, and do not covet the wealth of anyone'. The virtue emphasized is *ahimsa*, sensitivity to every form of life. The awareness that Divinity dwells in all creatures liberates us from greedy exploitation of them; and enables us to stand in awe and wonder of them with folded hands. Renunciation and Contemplation go together. Renunciation is taking a respectful distance from things, and allowing them to be! A contemplative seeks joy and fulfilment in renunciation in contrast to worldly people who seek it in pursuit of worldly desires and ambitions.

In another Upanishad we read, '*purnamadah purnamidam*' which could be translated as 'That is Fullness; This is Fullness'. Its meaning is, God the Source of all things is Fullness, and this visible, created world coming from God is also Fullness. Fullness comes from Fullness!



Therefore, encounter God in the world. To love God is to love all that He has made. The world is not a cold, neutral, unrelated, scientific object for analytical study and subjugation but a network of relationships. Everything helps us to experience (*anubhava*) the Divine. According to Dr. Raymond Panikkar, the Indian tradition from the Vedic times upheld a 'cosmotheandric vision' of life, i.e. every reality has a cosmic, human, and divine dimension. Nothing is neutral. Everything is a network of relationship with the human and the divine. The Divine is the depth dimension of life, beyond thoughts and words, the dimension of Mystery, Silence, Awe and Wonder.

Fratelli Tutti invites us to look upon all peoples as our brothers and sisters, transcending all barriers and borders. Imitate the Good Samaritan (Cf. FT 67). All are our brothers and sisters without exception, including our enemies and those who ill-treat us. Jesus says, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Cf. Mt. 5, 43-48). The Pope, in preparing this encyclical on universal fraternity, acknowledges that he was inspired not only by St. Francis of Assisi and Charles De Foucauld but also by many other brothers and sisters who come from beyond the borders. (Cf. FT 286 & 287). The 4th Chapter of FT speaks of 'a heart open to the whole world' because of the conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters.

The Sanskrit words for brother and sister are *sahodara* and *sahodari*. It is a combination of *saha* (with) and *udara* (womb), meaning 'we are with each other in the same womb' or 'born of the same womb'. The sky above and the earth beneath is the cosmic womb in which all exist, live and move; in it we experience oneness and interrelatedness with all of creation. All are interdependent, sharing the same resources of the earth. All need the same sunlight, air, fire, water and food grown from the earth. The One God, Maker of heaven and earth, is the Ultimate Womb, whom we may call Father or Mother. We are God's children, and therefore, *fratelli tutti* – brothers and sisters all!

St. Francis of Assisi composed the Cantic

of Brother Sun which spelt out a sort of cosmotheandric vision and experience of life that should be ours too. The things of the earth are not only objects to be used but also to be seen as gifts given to us by a loving God. All peoples, friends or enemies, are to be treated equally with love and respect. Friends and enemies change, but the unchanging truth is that they are our brothers and sisters for ever because God is the Father of all or Mother of all. Be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. Show no discrimination or partiality; transcend all borders.

At the Haritodhyan Ashram in Barul, Chhindwara Dist., M.P. the friars try to blend the three spiritual streams we have inherited - Indian, Christian, and Franciscan. All three traditions teach us to relate to all things, animate and inanimate, as having their own intrinsic beauty and worth. We wish to live a life as close to nature as possible. We try to make it a *harita udhyan ashram* — simple, clean, green, and serene. According to the mind of St. Francis, a friary is like an ashram - a simple dwelling place among the people and open to all. Here we celebrate the Cantic of Brother Sun, and live the thrust of the encyclicals, *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* as much as possible. And we welcome all to this eco-friendly living.

Coaching – Is It a Yay or a Nay?

ADITI SADHU

A coach is a mentor, a guide, a teacher who instills in you a sense of direction. One who provides you the strategy and technique to improve and help crack your exam. He is the one who can motivate you and believe in you when no one else does, the one you can look up to in times of self-doubt. He gives the right advice at the right time to help unleash your true potential.

Now I just painted an ideal picture: a rather too-good-to-be-true kind for school kids and pass-outs like me. Are such coaches really out there? And do coaching services for school students really do justice to its purpose and meaning?

Nowadays coaching services are solely businesses. With everyone endorsing the competition around by signing up for tutorials and endless coaching programmes; thronging at centres for mocks to perfect their test-taking skills; little do they know how they are to be trapped into a vicious cycle of anxiety, pressure, repeated failures, demotivation and what not. Coupled with the lack of a grounded mindset to face these challenges. Most coaching centres charge exorbitantly for their programmes and don't deliver upto the mark of what they portray themselves to be.

A coaching centre's reputation is not determined solely by the number of rank holders that it produces, but the supportive and diligent faculty, regular classes, doubt clarification, one-on-one mentorship sessions, and a consistent programme. There is a lack of dedicated faculty at many places – they join and leave regularly. With a Sporadic performance and no rigorous schedule, they hurry up during classes and don't pay heed to doubts and grievances leaving the children in a quagmire. Before selecting a coaching institute have a look at the general feedback, reviews, fee structure, frequency of tests and refund policy.

Online mode may have given these centres an advantage: They were able bring forward the best of their faculty, because space and time were no barriers. It to some extent improved their institutional image.

To Choose It or Not to Choose It Is the Question

It has pros and cons. Yes and no. I would like to propose a greater leaning towards no. For the following reasons

All kinds of wonderful resources are available online. From YouTube to mock test series to online short-term packages. What actually matters is what you do, execution –access the right tools on a timely basis, self-motivation, planning to suit your strengths and requirements, confidence, self-belief, and discipline.

Studying yourself reduces the hassle of travelling. Keep yourself updated on new strategies and techniques, and regularly discuss with your teachers and friends for resources and update.

My domain lies in law exams but I'm not a professional counselor- I convey this from personal experience of hardships and seeing other people struggle. Bear in mind the fact that this completely depends on the exam that you appear for. If you are dealing with stem exams such as JEE NEET KVPY or IISC entrances and SAT science subjects, which would require a 95%, it would be good to have coaching as they provide you with the exact level of subject knowledge needed. According to my observation, if one spends quality time understanding basic concepts first, then they easily pick up the competitive level well.

Dear reader as much as it is confusing it is also important to prepare yourself for the competitive world ahead. Instead of wrecking your nerves with stress, embrace the challenge at hand; your conscious efforts bear fruit.



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Frenzied Consumption

Alas! We are too quick to blame others for the current state of affairs. Let us look into our own lives and see where we are going wrong and how we can remedy the situation.

MONICA FERNANDES

Truly we are so obsessed in looking good, in keeping up appearances, that we make our lives complicated with constant striving to acquire more. I recall the words of a song, "Life was simple then. It will never come again..." Our lives are becoming increasingly more complicated and stressful and we have ourselves to blame for we are getting addicted to material goods. "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed" said Mahatma Gandhi. These words come to mind as we are faced with severe climatic changes due to global warming brought on by our obsession with more.

The Industrial Revolution in Europe (1760-1840), which spread throughout the world with

colonialism, was the first of seismic changes which shook the very foundations of society. With technology came economic progress which was good but also a population shift from rural to urban areas. The divide between the rich and the poor widened. Cities became the breeding ground of disease and crime. The entire social fabric of cooperation was jettisoned and replaced by the abrasive fabric of fierce competition. Ambition coupled with individualism is loosening the hold of restraining factors such as the family, and a value system based on the common good. We are obsessed with achievement at the cost of the well being of others.

Today, with continuous technological

changes bringing about mass production of goods and the spread of communication, our lives have benefitted but these changes have also brought social, economic, spiritual and ecological upheavals in their wake which are to our detriment.

The thinking now is, "I am not satisfied with what I have. I want more" – a better mobile phone, a faster computer, more clothes, designer shoes and bags, expensive holidays. The list is endless. As our increasing desires are fulfilled, our expectations likewise increase. Advertisements and the media are fooling us into believing that our desires are our needs. We are victims of fads. Easy loans which make easy money for lending institutions give us a feeling that we can live beyond our means provided our greed for consumer goods is satisfied immediately. We temporarily forget the stress we have to go through to repay our debt in monthly installments.

One such example is that of parents who have less time for their children because they are busy making money to buy a bigger house and a bigger car which they have been brainwashed into believing are needed for their survival. The pervasive culture of MORE translates into our gnawing into and destroying the very roots of our existence – our trees, our reserves of oil, our clean rivers and seas, our earth.

We have been sold the illusion that we can consume without restraint. But that is not really so. Earth's resources, which have taken centuries to accumulate, are not infinite. Secondly, they are not ours to deplete for they have been provided by a great and munificent God and we are trustees of His bounty for future generations. They are there for us to enjoy and use – not misuse.

Alas! We are too quick to blame others for the current state of affairs. Let us look into our own lives and see where we are going wrong and how we can remedy the situation. I judged a friend who daily uses her washing machine for even a few clothes, thereby using electricity which in turn affects the environment. And then I realized that her clothes were mainly made of natural fibers such as cotton, linen and silk whereas I do have a lot of clothes made of artificial fiber. I could

improve my consumption patterns in respect of my future buying of garments.

I once went for a workshop on the environment and discovered that there are many ways in which we could each do our bit. One family rarely uses their bathtub as it entails water wastage. There is this rich young mother who happily mouths the usual jargon about doing her bit for the environment. Yet she goes around in a huge SUV, has a designer wardrobe and lives in a huge five-bedroom house which is air-conditioned twenty four hours a day. She feels that these luxuries are her entitlement.

It is very easy to talk but what are we actually doing to be good trustees of shrinking resources? Do we really require such a huge wardrobe? Perhaps we could distribute to others who are in need. Are we recycling? Are we planting more trees or having potted plants in our balconies? Do we really need to subscribe to getting hard copies of newspapers and magazines when we could subscribe to getting them on line? What it boils down to is 'Do I believe that I am the center of my universe or do I remember that I belong to a society?'

Is it wrong to be rich and enjoy our money? Not at all if one has acquired one's riches through honest work or investments or inherited our money. However, as we belong to a society, we should use some of our wealth for the common good. We also should ensure that we do not indulge in wasteful expenditure that will adversely impact the environment or others. For instance, when Salman Khan allegedly shot two black bucks in 1998 in a village near Jodhpur, he was booked under the Wildlife Protection Act and later released on bail.

Revolutions such as the French revolution which resulted in so much bloodshed are a result of chasms between the rich and the poor. The wealthy went about their merry ways at the expense of the poor. Let us not forget that society, like the human body, is made up of many individuals and when some parts of society prosper while others languish, this causes the gradual breakdown of the society as a whole. Let us shed our complacency and do our bit for a better world today for at this rate, our tomorrow are numbered.

Challenge Our Mindset, Care for Creation

Our education without the 'in(nite' made us plunder the earth and produce items for consumption, unmindful of the poor and the earth.

JOY PRAKASH OFM



Laudato Si' – Pope Francis' ground-breaking encyclical – celebrates the presence of divine love in everything that exists. He knows that we must keep falling in love with all aspects of Creation, if we are ever to carry a devotion and reverence for its well-being. The encyclical inspires us to find the mysteries of God's beautiful countenance in a leaf, a trail, a face. This he is certain will lead humanity on the road to our wholesome wellbeing!

The Pope writes, "Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relation with nature. Otherwise the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance with the help of the media and highly effective workings of the market (LS 215).

Leo Tolstoy once said, "I cannot imagine what else a teacher would do except to remind people of their capacity for the 'infinite'". Our education without the 'infinite' made us plunder the earth and produce items for consumption, unmindful of the poor and the earth – our common home.

Pope Francis finds in St. Francis of Assisi the great protagonist of creation. St. Francis was born in 1181 with a pre-Copernican view of the world. (The pre-Copernican view imagined earth at the center of the universe and mankind at the center of everything. The post-Copernican

understanding made the earth part of the solar system.) Francis looked at the world God has created and found the invisible

God visible in every step of his journey. Like the Psalmist "When I consider the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you have made. What is man, that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you should care for him" (Psalm 8). Francis' biographers tell us, 'In beautiful things, Francis saw Beauty itself; in the works of the artist, he saw the Artist Himself.' The Pope says in the encyclical, "...by learning to see and appreciate beauty, we learn to reject *self-interested pragmatism*".

St. Francis' life is replete with this sort of rejection of self-interested pragmatism. One day when he was about to cross the lake of Trasimeno, a farmer gave him a water-bird (a duck) so that he may rejoice with his brothers. The blessed Francis received the bird with open hands, and gently invited it to fly away to its freedom. What he did not do with the bird is important. He didn't pluck its feathers, he did not send it to the brothers in the leper-house for a meal, he did not think of giving it to Clare and her sisters. He just allowed the bird to rest in his open hands, asking it to return to its original freedom.

Another day, when the brothers were together for their afternoon meal, the hut that St. Francis was living in caught fire. Brothers from other nearby huts rushed to put out the fire, but Francis did not want to help them; instead he took the hide that he used to cover himself at night and went into the forest.

After extinguishing the fire, the brothers sat down to eat. After the meal, Francis said to his companions, "From now on, I don't want this hide over me since, because of my avarice, I did not want Brother Fire to consume it." In other words, Francis felt Brother Fire wanted to eat

The Pope states very unequivocally, "If we want to bring about a deep change, we need to realise that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour....we must promote a new way of thinking."

such things, and he had prevented it from doing so. This is a different sort of mindset!

The saint (St.

Francis) would not handle lanterns and candles because he did not want to dim their brightness with his hands. He walked reverently on stones out of respect for him who was called Peter, which means rock. He lifted worms from the road for fear they might be trampled underfoot by passersby. Bees might perish in the cold of winter, so he had honey and fine wines set out for them. He called all animals brothers and sisters. When he looked at the sun, the moon, and the stars, he was filled with inexpressible joy by his love of the Creator and invited them all to love their Creator." (Jacobus de Voragine, "The Golden Legend: Readings on the saints")

The Pope states very unequivocally, "If we want to bring about a deep change, we need to realise that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour....we must promote a new way of thinking." (LS215)

The perceptive G. K. Chesterton, writing in 1923, in *The World St. Francis Found*, says, "Love returning is no longer what was once called platonic but what is still called chivalric love. The flowers and stars have recovered their first innocence. Fire and water are felt to be worthy to be brother and sister of a saint. The purge of paganism is complete at last." (Francis of Assisi, p. 41; Hodder and Stoughton, 1944)

According to Victorian poet Christina Rossetti, it is grace that teaches our hearts to see and to recognise:

Lord, purge our eyes to see
Within the seed a tree,
Within the glowing egg a bird,
Within the shroud, a butterfly.
Till taught by such, we see
Beyond all creatures Thee"
(*The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, p. 210)



The Earth Is a Miracle

The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.

JANET JAGADISH

The earth that we call home is a complex, interdependent, enormous yet fragile ecosystem. Ornithologists have researched and found that there are about 10,000 to 13,000 species of birds that exist in different continents including the ones around the poles. They are our feathered friends. Their beautiful plumage, melodious chirping and their ability to fly has never ceased to enthrall mankind. They are harbingers of joy and colour. The common sparrow (a rare find in our city), mynah, pigeon, sunbird, crow, kite, eagle, parrot, koel, coucal, barbet, bulbul, the barn owl and fruit bat are the birds that we see everyday around us. Venture around a water body and you get to see the moor hen, kingfisher, heron, stork tern, snipe, spotted billed duck, spoonbilled gull, cormorant, lap-wing egret, sandpiper and wagtail. More exotic species like the peacock, great Indian hornbill, Malabar parakeet, Himalayan quail can be seen in the Indian subcontinent. During the winter more migratory birds like the pelican, spot bill duck and purple moorhen pay a visit to the water bodies here. Birds are natural insect and rodent controllers besides being caretakers of forests through plant pollination and seed dispersal. As a child I remember watching swifts and swallows nesting in and around St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral. It was a sight to behold, the swifts flew like a moving cloud and there were rows of swallows perched on wires on the campus.

The earth is covered with an amazing carpet

of flora (Latin goddess of the flower) or plant kingdom and fauna (Roman goddess of fertility, Faunus meaning forest spirits) or animal kingdom. The two are quite important for our ecological system as they contribute to the environmental balance of our home, the earth. While flora produces oxygen during the process of photosynthesis and absorbs carbon dioxide, fauna consumes oxygen and produces carbon dioxide. Thus, the two rely on each other and form a complex natural cycle. There are over 100 million species of flora and fauna inhabiting the earth. Flora provides food and habitat for the fauna. Flora may be categorized as native, agriculture, horticulture and weed. Fauna on the other hand constitutes animals, birds, insects and fishes. According to the College of Agriculture and Natural resources at Michigan State University, bees, the tiny insects, are responsible for one out of every three bites of food we eat. They are found in every ecosystem, forests, deserts and grasslands. Bees are super pollinators, they help in the growth of trees, flowers, crops and other plant. They also provide honey and beeswax. In 2019 alone bees accounted for 157 million pounds of honey costing a little over \$339 million and \$15 billion in crop value. Nature never ceases to surprise our every step.

About 71% of the earth's surface is water. The ocean's hold about 96.5% of the earth's water and the rest is in the rivers, lakes, glaciers and ground water. The oceans are teeming with life. The coral reefs spread across the continents

constituting 1% of the ocean mass, accommodate and support 25% of marine life. They are made up of thousands of polyps, organisms with tentacles similar to the sea anemone and jellyfish. They attract algae of different types and hues to grow on them. With the stinging cells they catch little plants and animals that float by during the night, the algae then feed on the catch and use sunlight for photosynthesis and release oxygen and sugars that help the corals to survive. The algae provide nutrients and colour to the corals and the corals provide home and nutrients to the algae. Over 1 million aquatic species including commercially harvested fish species live in the coral reefs. It is a very delicate ecosystem that thrives at a temperature ranging between 23 to 29 degrees Celsius. A slight variation in temperature for a prolonged period can cause bleaching and death of the reefs that will endanger the life it supports. They also protect the coastal areas from flooding, soil erosion and tsunamis besides providing livelihood for the people living around. They are also a rich source of medicines used to treat various diseases.

Apathy, greed and ignorance on the part of man, the crown of creation, has endangered the very existence of life on planet earth. In his race to become rich and amass wealth, the frenzied, fast paced life led by humans, oblivious to the unmindful damage caused to the fragile ecosystem that sustains his very existence is indeed appalling! Deforestation for industrialization and cultivation has destroyed many species of flora and fauna. Emission of harmful gases from factories, vehicles and smoking has led to worsening air pollution, health hazards and 1.1 million premature deaths in India alone. The carbon dioxide and other heat trapping emissions released into the air act like a blanket holding heat in, absorbing infrared radiation and preventing it from escaping into outer space. This causes global warming, rising sea levels, increasing wildfires, extreme weather conditions, heat waves and severe droughts. Excessive use of plastics has resulted in generation of non-biodegradable waste. Burning of plastic causes air pollution and release of carcinogens into the atmosphere causing grave

health hazards. Improper disposal of electronic waste and batteries cause lead and mercury poisoning. Unplanned agriculture causes a deficiency in the nitrate replenishment of the soil causing several environmental issues including instability in global carbon balance. Over usage of pesticide deplete the soil of its natural nutrients, can contaminate air, soil, ground water and destroy many plant species. Growing genetically modified crops and tampering with the human genome, the DNA, the incredibly complex and long code said to consist of 3 billion letters placed in each cell of our bodies to carry out complex body functions can have disastrous repercussion on our environment. Our home, planet earth is in a race against time for survival!

Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything, so said G B Shaw. Planting trees, afforestation, conservation of waterbodies can restore the natural habitats of flora and fauna. Growing crops organically and using crop rotation can help replenish nutrients in soil. Using solar and renewable energy for heating, lighting, generation of electricity and powering vehicles can to a great extent reduce global warming. Judicious usage of water can help conserve this limited resource. Waste segregation and recycling, refraining from using plastics, proper disposal of electronic waste and batteries can go a long way in reducing pollution of air and water. Cultivating healthy eating habits, avoiding consumption of genetically modified food, fast foods, factory grown meat can help safeguard our health and environment. Adopting 'Reduce, Re cycle and Re-use' and say a firm no to the 'use and throw' adage to reduce waste generation and dumping at sea. Using plant extracts in place of the face wash can help many fish species survive as the microplastics used in them cannot be filtered during drain water treatment before it is let out into the sea.

The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it. It's time to act and make the world we call home a better place for us and for the generations to come. We are but pilgrims here on a journey home.

Francis of Assisi

A Man Who Conversed with 'People not Like Us'

Authoritarianism and a lack of open-minded deliberation have diminished dialogue and the expressing of opinions in our forums.

GERRY LOBO OFM

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) whom the world honours for his 'humanity' was not a romanticist or a sentimental pious one of history as often been painted by off-hand preachers and free-lance writers. Politician, he was not; an outstanding democrat, he was. His revolution, though not a party politician, consisted in "building institutions for citizens' participation in democratic governance" from "a darkening elected authoritarianism," as Arun Maira puts it (*The Hindu*, 1 September 2021, p. 6). He was a disturbing democrat during a corrupt form of democracy in his time.

Democracy in our country has been gradually waning during the past years. The fact that constant elections are held does not speak of democracy in its fullness. Authoritarianism and a lack of open-minded deliberation have diminished dialogue and the expressing of opinions in our forums. Because of a majoritarian government running the country, authoritarianism in every discourse has become inevitable. The citizens, even the educated, fear to voice themselves publicly. Even the journalists dread the consequences of their professional responsibility. This is a sad part of our democracy!

The elected mass of representatives being housed in a parliament hall does not speak of democracy. Democracy is not four walls. It is a human discourse for common good. Vomiting out written statements to an inattentive crowd within

the same chamber or hall is not decent form of democracy. Ingrained animosity towards the opposition benches and violent tendencies written large on the faces of legislators do not speak for a democratic parliament. Often the house of representatives gives the impression of a battle field for mighty conquerors to display their valour and prowess. If the wars are waged within that space, it cannot remain a "sacred space." Democracy is pained; its house is desecrated by money-changers and business sharks.

Democracy is not chaotic situation, neither a platform for off the cuff remarks and fierce inimical debates full of anger and resentment. Differing voices may certainly be voiced, firm stand may be pressed on and argumentative statements be put forth. If these are not directed towards purifying of objectives and framing of policies for the welfare of citizens, democracy will only be hypocrisy, nothing else. Our governments, both at the centre and in the states, have lost sight of a value. If the legislators do not possess the value of democracy within them, what they manifest to their citizens is only an anarchical malice and blatant lies.

Against this scenario of democracy prevailing in our country, Francis of Assisi, stands as an exemplary democrat, not belonging to any party but standing up for democratic principles and values, prophetically disturbing the consciences of authoritarian power-mongers of today.



Though illiterate regarding learned sciences and abstract philosophical ideologies, Francis outdoes any brains in integrating, professing and living honestly the fundamental human intuitions and by laying a path towards a transformative humanity.

Francis was born and raised up as the son of a successful textile merchant, Peter Bernadone, in an emerging democracy in the new cities of Europe, such as Assisi, which loudly proclaimed values such as fraternity, equality and liberty, but soon turned authoritarian and destroyed the sacred principles. Instead of building institutions for citizens' inclusion in governance, democracy turned into an autocracy, thus creating stratification of the society, classification of citizens, categorization of people into haves and have-nots, marginalization of the disadvantaged and hierarchical functioning just as we find today in our country. Hence the gap between the elite and non-elite was getting wider. The society maintained a non-egalitarian strategy both in terms of wealth and personal dignity and relationships. Being deeply aware of the divide among people, Francis returned to "You are all brothers" (Mt 23: 8) of Jesus' insistence. By making this reminder the foundation of inter-personal relationships, Francis and his companions brought back democratization and social friendship that had permeated the life of Jesus Christ. Francis had learned this from his encounter with the leper. Having learned 'from below' the fundamentals of human dealings, Francis formed a democratic movement in the civil society.

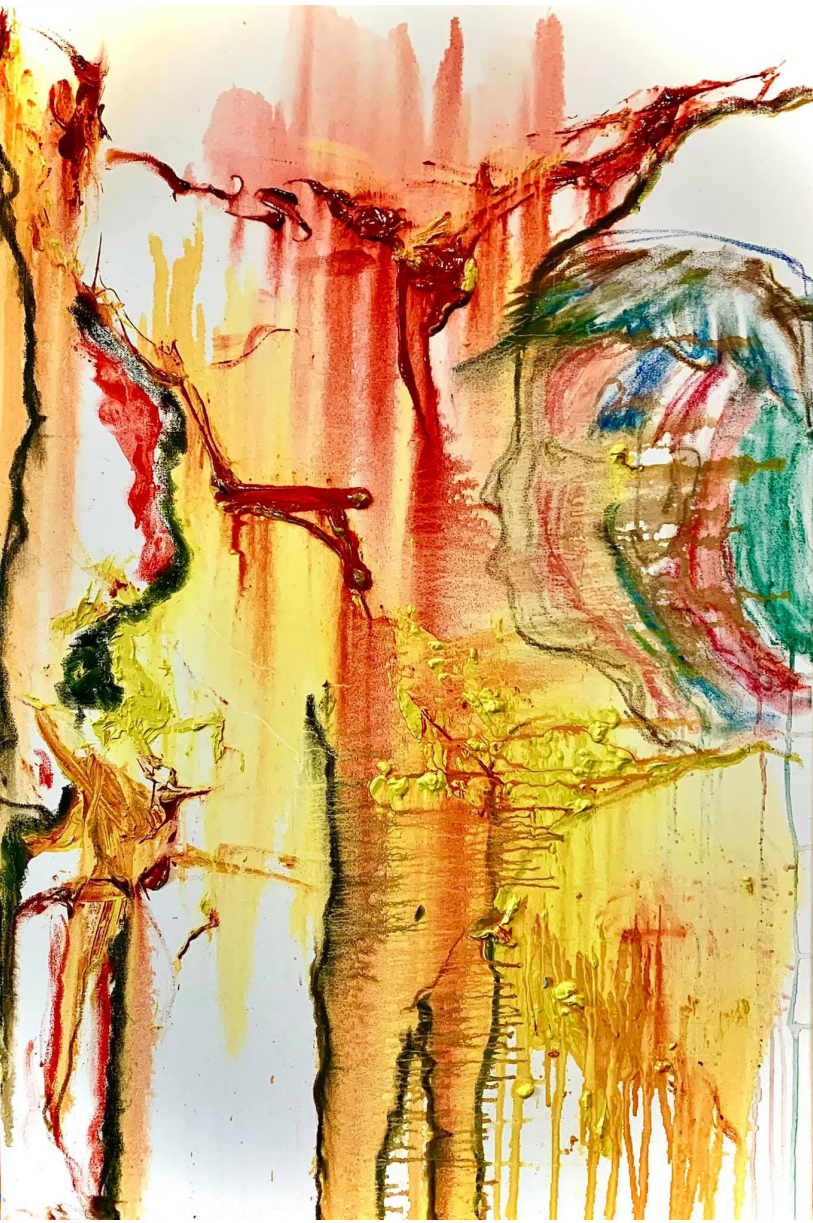
The movement around Francis, comprising of people from all classes in society, insisted on equality, fraternity and liberty by democratic deliberations based on the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Inclusion of all irrespective of their economic and social status, created conditions for thoughtful deliberations by avoiding monoculture of thought, as our ruling

dispensation tends to practice. The diversity in the composition of participants brought in the diversity of opinions and maintained the decorum of democracy with utmost respect. Francis permitted no corruption of any sort and prevented any kind of personal agenda to seep through because of the Gospel Constitution they all promised to live.

Democratic movement around Francis was enhanced also by the adherence to ethical principles of honesty, justice and truth enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus and by a definite life style consisting of a radical non-appropriation of material wealth, and of a presence among citizens in order to befriend them in their daily struggles. One privileging over another, taking advantage of another for material or even spiritual gain, excluding "people not like us" (A. Maira) was never tolerated by Francis who, with his personal example showed the fundamental equality of all. He was a democrat for respect and reverence for everyone and an enabler of participative voice. People and their human dignity was his concern. Hence citizens' inclusion in governance was a priority for him.

The early history of the Movement initiated by Francis indicates that governance was a service offered to others in order to create one world order, a democratic universe which is found in the first Book of the Bible, Genesis. Therefore in the initial years all the followers of Francis met together and discerned their forward journey. The offices were democratically shared and deliberations were never done in the locked chamber of power. Decisions arrived at were directed towards common human happiness, not self-oriented projects. A sensitive atmosphere prevailed among the participants of the inclusive government. In conclusion, Francis' sense of democracy, while it disturbed the members of the *status quo*, edified others because it consisted in *Listening for Well-being: Conversations with People Not Like Us* (A. Maira).

Friars for Future



I can tell from my experience and from the way I live my life, that I am an utter failure in protecting the environment because I am part of the system and I am a weak human being.

SANDESH MANUEL OFM

Brother fire

The topic of environment is close to every Franciscan heart. As I see the movement *Fridays for Future*, I always wondered if it is not our very own movement. Was it not started by Francis of Assisi back in the 12th century? And it dawned to me to call our Franciscans charism as Friars for Future. To work for the environment is a very sensitive issue, not just because of the intricacies of the problem but also for ones happiness inside. It could also be very risky to work for environment because it is very difficult to practice what you preach. I have not seen one person on earth who can match his words for his/her actions; everyone falls into the system that mankind has created, which we could say is evil. But for us human beings who are called to transcend its no wrong in trying to move in small steps towards holiness.

But me taking initiatives for environment by producing songs or pieces of artworks has made me to be aware and be conscious of the environment around me. It has made me to be thankful and grateful for what He has gifted me.

I always believe in the statement that you cannot change the world, but if you can change yourself, then at the end of the day there would be one less idiot in the world. Change will never come when one doesn't change oneself. I believe we cannot change anybody in this world because everyone is on his/ her journey. We cannot change the other because everyone is a culmination of experiences and childhood memories that make us think the way we think today and act how we act and react the way we do. It's not



Sister water

our duty to change the other. But one thing that I strongly believe in, is sharing one's convictions, which could help the other person and influence him to reconsider his thought process and heal his or her bundle of wounded ideas.

I myself have experienced this healing through many great people I have met in my life. They didn't change me but I gave them permission consciously or subconsciously to influence me. And that's the reason why I indulge myself in doing things which are related to environment.

As theology students we became aware of how important nature is to us. Education through books, listening and being open has made me aware of how important a mother nature is to us. We need to develop a deep rela-

tion to our mother earth not only because she feeds us but just the fact that she is our Mother. When the mother gives birth to a child, she doesn't become a physical being who reproduces a child, she gives birth to another person -an extension of her own self, an extension of her being. In the same way Mother Nature is not only there for us to feed our needs and necessities but also she invites us to develop a relationship with her.

Being part of the initiatives like Troubadours Trophy (a theatre event for social change), which was initiated by the theology students in Mysore, encouraged me to dive deep into the subject of environment. Making banners, designing cloth bags, printing bookmarks with quotations for environment, writing street plays, being the master of ceremonies for such initiatives, composing songs, making works of art helped me to deepen my faith and my relationship with God who is the creator of this beautiful Mother Earth.

Its no point in discussing about whether there could be another planet for us humans in the near future to move into but it is important to do the needful now for what we have. It's important to create the consciousness that 'we are standing on holy ground'. It is every persons right and responsibility to take care of Mother Nature. This could not only be done by joining hands with a movement but also practicing small little things in our day today life which could makes us more conscious.

The whole issue about environment is not just about cutting trees or using less paper it actually lies in our ego. It lies in the control of our thoughts. It is deep rooted in the way we look and view our relationship with mother earth. Present problems of environment have their origins in our ideals and convictions, which have no connection to transcendence. The reasons could be- greed, ego, money, a comfortable life, etc.

I can tell from my experience and the way I live my life, that I am an utter failure in protecting the environment because I am part of the system and I am a weak human being. But just becoming aware of the fact and voicing out loud that "I am a failure" is in itself for me a bond closer to develop a relationship with Mother Nature.



Sandesh Manuel OFM performing at one of his art exhibitions

Recently I did a Painting exhibition in Vienna on the topic brother Sun Sister Moon depicting my understanding of Francis' relationship with nature. Francis' love for nature was based on his love for God and on the grace he received from God. And through this grace he built a beautiful poetry around Mother Nature, explaining to humankind the privileges human beings have; that is, to be close to God by being close to nature.

In the last years, as a result of my YouTube mission I've also been actively involved with the JPIC Movement from the Franciscan General curia, Rome, They assigned me to compose songs for environment. I happily agreed, and as I worked for this cause I realised that it's such a burning issue that every human kind has to take a serious note of. As a matter of fact I don't know when I am going to die but one thing I know that if I could at least once day be aware of my relation to mother earth then I could peacefully sleep today.

Small things are big things. Very Franciscan.

You could check out Sandesh Manuel's videos on his YouTube channel: Sandesh Manuel. Website: www.sandeshmanuel.com

2 OCTOBER Gandhi Jayanti

Gandhi felt an irresistible attraction to a life of simplicity, manual labour, and austerity. In 1934 Gandhi resigned not only as the leader but also as a member of the Congress Party. He had come to believe that its leading members had adopted nonviolence as a political expedient and not as the fundamental creed. In place of political activity he then concentrated on his "constructive programme" of building the nation "from the bottom up"—educating rural India, which accounted for 85 percent of the population; continuing his fight against untouchability; promoting hand spinning, weaving, and other cottage industries to supplement the earnings of the underemployed peasantry. (*Encyclopædia Britannica*)

Mahatma in stamps from philatelist Tom John OFM



Gandhi was overcome by a terrifying stage fright whenever he stood up to read a speech at a social gathering or to defend a client in court.

BOOK

The Smell of Man As an Act of Poetry

KAPIL ARAMBAM

According to translation theorist James Holmes, all translation is an act of critical interpretation, but there are some translations of poetry which differ from all other interpretative forms in that they also have the aim of being acts of poetry. This description best captures the recently published *The Smell of Man, Selected Poems by Thangjam Ibopishak* and translated by bilingual poet Robin Ngangom.

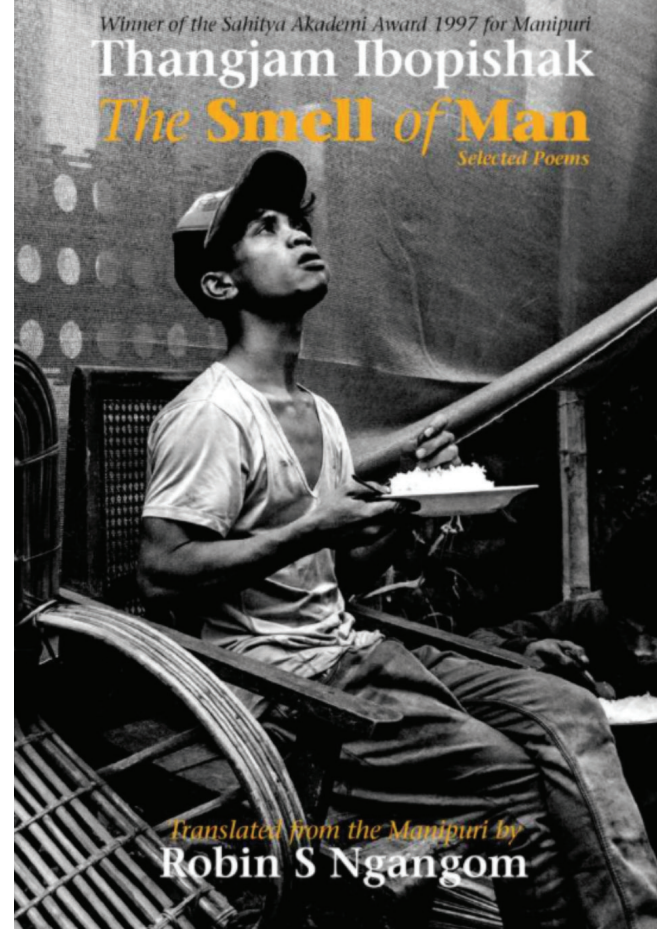
Comprising 47 poems originally written by acclaimed writer Thangjam Ibopishak who writes in Manipuri/Meiteilon, *The Smell of Man* as an act of poetry introduces the English-speaking world to his thematically wide-ranging poetry, which has been translated by Ngangom, who considers that Ibopishak writes about a city that dehumanises its dwellers.

In his foreword to the book, poet and cultural theorist Ranjit Hoskote wrote, '*The Smell of Man* is wonderfully timely and welcome book. The political is omnipresent in these poems, which are attuned to the everyday emergencies

of heavily militarised North-eastern India.'

Hoskote added, '(Ibopishak) refused to be constrained within a regional identity prescribed from the outside. His is an anchored and robust cosmopolitanism, which takes delight in plural artistic ancestries, finds rapture in the work of colleagues elsewhere...Ibopishak locates himself in a redemptive and replenishing multilingualism.'

An associate English professor at the North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, Ngangom has published individual poems by the same poet, and a few of them are in many undergraduate English lit syllabi across mainland India. Yet this book, which is his fourth, is the first full-fledged collection of translated poems that is, in his own words, 'mostly autobiographical, written with the hope of enthusing readers with my communal or carnal life — the life of a politically discriminated against, historically overlooked individual from the nook of a Third World country.'



We will need a context to understand his statement. Often misrepresented or underrepresented, not only the literature from India's Northeast has been so much stereotyped but also the very term 'Northeast' is under scrutiny for two reasons: one is the fact that it is a colonial construct, and two, the region has diverse ethnic groups and communities having no common history or heritage. Clubbing all the kinds of literature under one head called the Northeast writing, which people usually do, will be no different from putting various fruits in a basket and calling it just one name.

Both the poet and the translator hail from Manipur, where you can locate its literature. It was once a kingdom that became a part of British India in 1891 and further merged controversially into the union of India in 1949. This merger has been long considered to be the genesis of insurgency and the armed movements for the right to self-determination. The area also witnessed some of the fiercest battles during the Second World War

In the post-war period, when existentialism was gaining currency elsewhere, there was a group of poets in Manipur, who, according to Ngangom, 'began responding to the altered circumstances by breaking with their romantic predecessors and choosing a diction that will suit their times.' Ibopishak, who was born in 1948 and taught Manipuri literature at the prestigious GP Women's College in Imphal, belongs to this group of poets with newer lived experiences in a comparatively new socio-political system but fraught with violence, militarisation, underdevelopment, and identity crisis.

A decade or two before the war, Manipuri literature was influenced by romantic works with major contribution by the triumvirate of Khwairakpam Chaoba, Dr Lamabam Kamal and Hijam Anganghal.

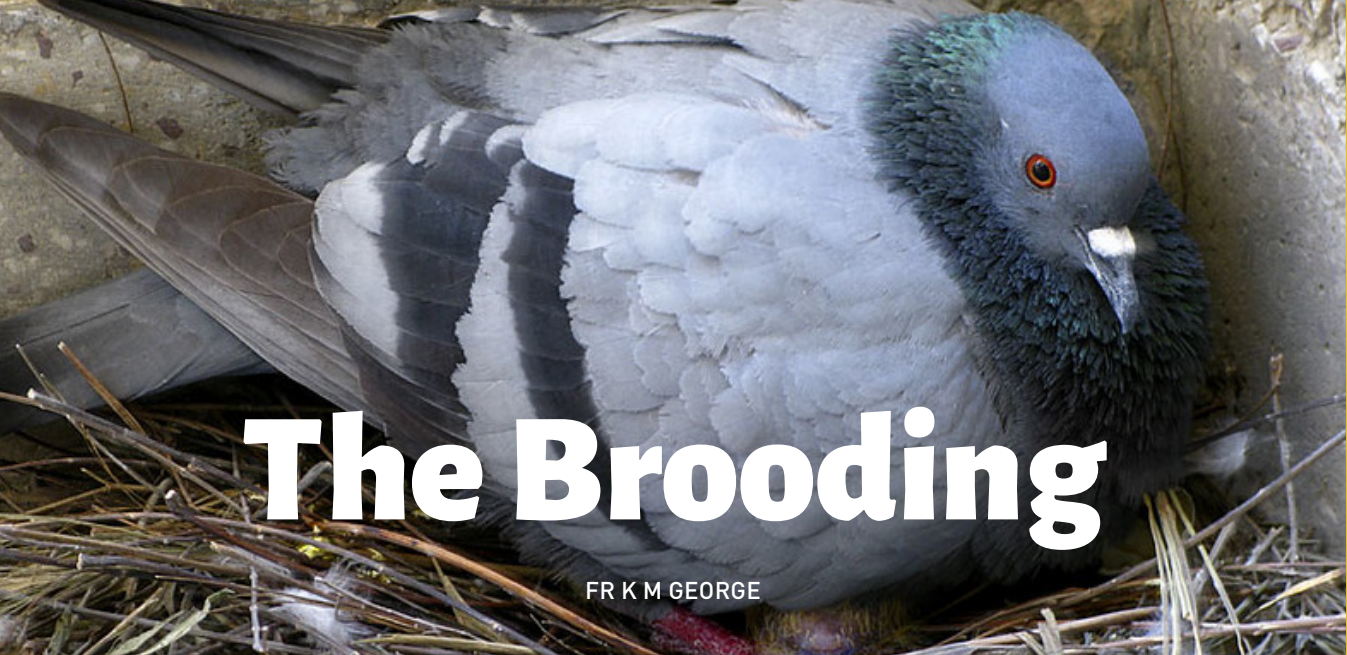
Then, one of the most prominent poets to emerge after the war is Thangjam Ibopishak. Here it is noteworthy that the translator is also an eminent writer in English to have occupied a spot in the list of writers who write in English that is completely different from the category of writing that many people refer to as Indian English Literature or Indian Writing in English.

According to the translator, the writer is a master of colloquial language and absurdist irony, and is as well the 'quintessential irreverent, self-professed non-believer, and expletive-loving non-conformist.'

One of the takeaways is that Ngangom has reproduced with such workmanship in this book and in a method that we can describe as direct-access-to-the-original style and is also syntactic and structural in nature. The translator has broken through the border of language without losing much in transcending a language fence, which is considered to be an original sin in translation.

American poet and translator Maia Evrona expresses that there are usually two kinds of readers when it comes to books in translation. The first type is the reader who never considers the existence of a translator, and who will heap all blame or praise upon the writer alone. The second type is the reader who will remain convinced—no matter how engaging a particular translated book may have been—that he or she has been cheated by the translator and by the very fact of reading in translation. For that matter, there is always a danger of translated poems becoming wooden and uninspiring but rest assured, with *The Smell of Man*, there will be a third type of readers, who will be interested in the relevance of both the writer and the translator.

The success of this book lies not only in the imaginative reproduction of wit and satire, as evident in poems such as 'I Want to be Killed by an Indian Bullet', 'Gandhi and Bullet', 'Blue-bottle Fly' and others, but also in the creatively parsimonious use of words and expressions that expresses so much meanings in so few words. The 'robust cosmopolitanism' in his poems implies that anybody interested in poetry will be able to relate to Ibopishak's works, even easier because it's written in a colloquial style. Above all, Robin Ngangom has done an admirable job, making the Manipuri works easily accessible. We can also safely conclude that all these translated work in *The Smell of Man* is an act of poetry. To complement, the book also includes an interview of the writer.



The Brooding

FR K M GEORGE

In early December I happened to occupy a Capuchin monastic cell for a few days at Nadukani, Idukki district of Kerala. Just outside my window overlooking misty mountains and an evergreen valley there was a large cage of pigeons and doves. On the third day I could spot three little white eggs in the dark dip of a pot filled with chaff and hay. Very soon a dove was brooding over the eggs.

Some of my friends from adjacent buildings came over to watch the brooding dove. In fact, we were a group of artists naming ourselves as “Company of Artists for Radiating Peace”. There in the cage were birds that are legendary symbols of peace. Remember Noah’s Ark, the peace pigeon and Picasso’s celebrated *Dove of Peace* (1949) carrying an olive leaf. With easel and canvas, brush and paint, each one of us was also brooding over one’s work of art yet to be born. We were struggling in labour pains, and we envied the deep meditative stillness of the brooding dove.

The word brooding is very evocative. There is no form of creativity without some degree of brooding. It is characterised by various levels of absorption, focussing, rumination, introspection and withdrawal from the world’s routine humdrum. There is an attendant anxiety too, as in the eyes of the bird, about possible threat to emerging life, about the uncertainty of future.

But all fear and anxiety are overcome by the hope of new life and the unwavering determination to wait and wait in silence and stillness.

Pregnancy and brooding are interlocked. It’s period varies in humans, animals, birds, fish and plants — about nine months for humans to 18–22 months for elephants. It is not only mammals but all forms of life have a certain gestation period. Just imagine the process of budding, blossoming and fruition of any little plant.

It seems only modern human beings alone can render pregnancy banal by depriving it of its profound mystery and holiness. The moment of conception and the brooding period of gestation are made too mundane today. The banality of birth seems to be a major threat to life in our age. The year-long and still continuing lockdown due to Corona virus has been a time of deep distress and angst for humanity. Yet many have taken it as a period of gestation for a new order of life.

In the biblical account of Genesis the Spirit of the Creator God is said to be “brooding” over the waters of chaotic void and formlessness to bring about form, name and meaning for creation. Our patient rumination and deep-rooted brooding in this uncertain time will certainly bear some life-giving fruit.

Joy and peace to all pregnant beings, male and female.

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 Cantalous, 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.

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

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

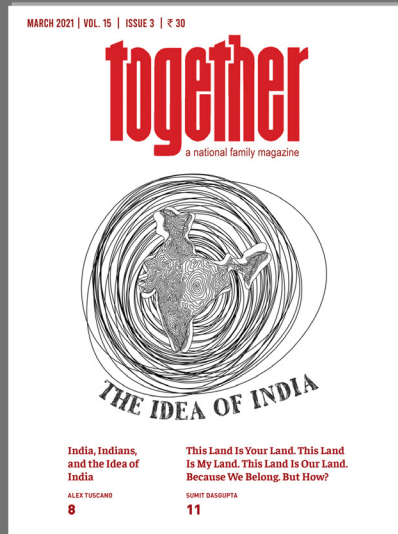
May they all be one.
JOHN 17:21



For Further Information

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