

# together

a national family magazine



**Hate Speech: A  
Case of Moral  
Disengagement**

TOMY PALACKAL OFM

**10**

**Where Is the  
Freedom of  
Speech?**

NASHAFA FIRDIOUS

**12**



**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](mailto:editor@togethermagazine.in) before the 15th of every month.

#### EDITOR

Saji P Mathew ofm  
[editor@togethermagazine.in](mailto:editor@togethermagazine.in)

#### ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Jamesmon PC ofm  
Tony Marshall ofm

#### COPY EDITORS

Shaji Nicholas ofm  
Augustine Pinto ofm  
Joy Prakash ofm

#### LAYOUT

Kapil Arambam

PLEASE NOTE: The views of writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the publisher.

#### DIRECTOR

Praveen Henry D'Souza ofm

#### PUBLISHER

Basil Lobo ofm

#### MANAGER

Jamesmon PC ofm

#### PUBLICATION OFFICE

Franciscan Publications  
St. Anthony's Friary  
#85, Hosur Road, Bengaluru - 560095  
Karnataka, India  
[manager@togethermagazine.in](mailto:manager@togethermagazine.in)  
[info@togethermagazine.in](mailto:info@togethermagazine.in)  
Mob: +91-77366 64528 / 74834 67013

#### SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe to the magazine or to contribute to the running of **Together** please log on to [www.togethermagazine.in](http://www.togethermagazine.in)

Pay online (NEFT) Transaction:

Franciscan Publications – Together, South Indian Bank, Branch: Christ University, A/c. No. 0396053000005736, IFSC: SIBL0000396, MICR: 560059010

Pay by Cheque or Demand Draft in favour of 'Franciscan Publications – Together'

#### PLEASE NOTE

When you subscribe/renew or contribute to **Together**, please inform the publication office about the same, mentioning your name and details.

#### ADVERTISING IN TOGETHER (PER ISSUE)

Back cover	₹13,000
Inside back cover	₹8,000
Inner full page	₹5,000
Inner half page	₹2,000
Inner quarter page	₹1,000

#### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	1 year	3 years
India	₹350	₹1,000
Other Countries	US \$55	US\$160

# CONTENTS

February 2022 | Volume 16 Issue 02

**04**..... **Editorial:** Free Speech Is the Answer to Hate Speech **SAJI P MATHEW OFM**

**07**..... Power Games with the Idea of India **ALEX TUSCANO**

**10**..... **Cover Story:** Hate Speech: A Case of Moral Disengagement **TOMY PALACKAL OFM**

**12**..... **Cover Story:** Where Is the Freedom of Speech? **NASHAFA FIRDIOUS**

**14**..... **Cover Story:** Connectedness Is Our Biological Baseline **A FRANCIS**

**16**..... **Tribute:** *Thich Nhat Hanh* Master of Mindfulness **JAMESMON OFM**

**18**..... **Tribute:** *Desmond Tutu* South Africa's Moral Conscience **SAJI P MATHEW OFM**

**20**..... Evasion of Truth and Lying Down of Lies **GERRY LOBO OFM**

**24**..... Spiritual Apathy: Acedia **JOY PRAKASH OFM**

**26**..... Am I a Fraud? **SANJANA PRASAD**

**28**..... Rajasthan: In Search of My Roots **ADITI JAIN**

**30**..... Nothing Stands Alone **RICHARD ROHR OFM**

**33**..... The Crossing **FR KM GEORGE**

**36**..... Positive Psychology: A Coping Mechanism for 2022 **MONICA FERNANDES**

**42**..... Be a Voice in the Wilderness **BOBBY JOSE KATTIKAD OFM CAP**

## In Pictures



**22**

Meeting Points

**SUSHMITA BHARADWAJ**

## Short Story



**38**

The Orange Delight

**SONU FAKIHA**

## In Stamp

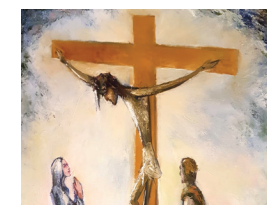


**34**

4 February  
World Cancer Day

**TOM JOHN OFM**

## Art



**40**

Why I Painted  
the Cross?

**MURIEL NATHAN**



# Free Speech Is the Answer to Hate Speech

In a democracy there is something more dangerous than absence of free speech: hate speech.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

**S**peeches have built the world. Speeches have destroyed the world. Speeches have initiated people killing people; speeches have put a stop to people killing people. Speech is a double-edged sword. Those wielding it have power. In democracy there is something more dangerous than absence of free speech: hate speech.

What is free speech? In a democracy it is not necessary that everyone should sing the same song, said, S Rangarajan. Our constitution loudly and clearly declares that all citizens shall have right to freedom of speech and expression. Free speech is the right of every citizen under Article 19.1a. Free speech is once right to speak his or her mind, right to express one's opinion, without negating the required reasonable restrictions.

I would believe that free speech takes us a little further, it is also one's inner opportunity and prospect to speak out when another is vulnerable and in risk. Desmond Tutu, called as the 'Conscience of South Africa' articulated it

unambiguously, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

What is hate speech? Indian books of law do not define hate speech, but the meaning of the term can be arrived at from many other offences such as sedition, promotion of enmity between different groups, deliberate and malicious act based on religion, sex, race, place of birth etc.

In a formal religious conclave at Haridwar, many speakers, with the ease of a well-planned program, voiced inflammatory and provocative speeches. They called for organized violence against Muslims and a 'cleansing campaign'. The government just looked the other way. Most media establishments, either having sold out, or has been co-opted by the ruling government, did not care to cover sufficiently Haridwar hate speech episode; that too in a country which boasts about its 400 plus twenty four bar seven news channels. Where free speech withers hate speech sprouts.

## The Thin Line Between Religious Speech and Hate Speech

The reading for the morning worship was the story of David and Goliath from the Bible. The description of how David overpowered Goliath and thus fought the Philistines was vivid and hair-raising. The preacher added more descriptions and intensity to the scene; narrating how we fought wars and won wars in the name of the Lord, forgetting what we are glorifying is war and brutality. The preacher, in well-meaning manner, repeated words like, fight and defeat, umpteen times in a 5 minutes long homily. Every side of a war vilifies the other race and people. It is easy to call the Philistines as barbarians; and say in the same breath that the Lord is with us. The Philistines, as a recognized race, is no more on the face of the earth. Does the Lord wipe a race out of the face of the earth?

The winners write history; that our ancestors happen to be the winners is no reason that those battles become just and pure. No war was just and pure. I am of the opinion that every violent text and imagery of the past and present must be removed from the present liturgy and worship. No images of violence bring about peace of mind and nation; it might fan our ego for a while.

Violent images, be it in the churches, temples, street corners, and as part of worship has an adverse effect on people, especially the young. What does the glorified figure of St. George with a spear, Lord Ram with bow and arrows, and the descriptive brutal battle scenes do to the psyche of a people? It is time religious practices get rid of violence even if it is passive, and integrally so close to a said religion. When such spirituality, gets coupled with 'them against us' ideology, religious speeches become or border on hate speech.

May be it is an extreme position, but I gather courage to say, that the world still has peace and sanity because a good number of people do not go to churches, temples, and mosques to hear the extreme religious leaders preach, and to protect their gods. Institutional religious leaders are vulnerable and easily get charged when speaking about the battles we have won in the name of god.

Here is a curious appendix. The Philistines

were portrayed in the Bible as a crude and warlike race. Later they were portrayed in literature as disdainful of intellectual or artistic values, and one uninformed in a special area of knowledge; in short, people unaffected by modernity, and are anti-intellectual. I have my apprehensions: are the tables changing? Are those who won wars in the name of God against the Philistines, and other religions who have similar claims, turning out to be Philistines themselves: people who are unaffected by knowledge and modernity.

## Speechless Solutions

The solution is including the other with us. Considering our religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity we live in a country of 'others'. Hardly 10% of the population is homogenous. We differ on multiple fronts. That places on us an added responsibility. Talk, and act as if the other is able to hear you and see you. Should there be deeds and conversations that are not comfortable to the other? Open up our religiously and socially exclusive conversations and literature to groups who do not belong with us on various grounds. Let everyone has the possibility of hearing it, reading it, and ask intelligent questions aloud. Folks who parade their superiorities, and border on hate speech in their condescending discourses will be compelled to maintain reasonable and intelligible constrain. People who hide behind human made exclusivities and sectarian ideologies for monitory, political, and other gains would have to lose their ground. Nothing changes us as fast and radically as failures.

One of the gifts of modernity is its many subcultures. One may traditionally and inescapably be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Indian, Pakistani, American, or high caste, low caste, outcaste; and all these groupings, as researchers observe, perhaps being trapped by the ghost of the undoable past, have a strong inclination to be violently and exploitatively exclusive. Humans being social animals cannot live in isolation; they need society and organisational existence for their survival and wellbeing. Sensible, genuine, and well-meaning people are turning their back on deep-rooted,

despotic, and exclusive religious affinities, cultural similarities, and social kinships; not for an individualistic and isolated life far in the uninhabited parts of the world, but for less exclusive and less exploitative, subcultures. Broad human groupings evolved and are ever evolving around one's, hobbies, profession, age, art, political and social freedoms, intellectual and philanthropic pursuits.

A couple of months back, during the interval between second and third Covid-19 wave, I had gone with a Hindu friend of mine to a café in Bangalore. As we entered the cafe there already was a large group of Gen Z people playing some game, chattering loudly in Gen Z lingo. They unambiguously were not people from a single religious or linguistic group. We ordered coffees, and then some Italian pasta. My friend and I got engrossed in talking about how the young writers' club, that he was part of, booming, and how they spend their weekends in meaningful discussions and interactions. They even had a Covid outreach WhatsApp group to care for people who may need help. Interrupting our discussions, the warm pastas arrived. As the waiter departed, wishing us *buon appetito*, to my surprise, my friend bowed his head in silence for a few seconds, I kept the fork I had hurriedly gathered back on the table, and as I sat looking at him, I too thought of God the provider, farmers who have toiled behind the vegetables and grains that has become my food, and a passing remembrance of thousands who can't afford a meal today. As we were leaving the café, there arrived a dozen or more of loud motorbikes, carrying riders clad in biker's jackets. Obviously they were a bikers' group, come to plan for their upcoming adventure, or perhaps to discuss their next outreach programme. I said bye to my friend, and as I waited for an auto rickshaw, I was reminiscing the slice of contemporary humanity I had encountered in the café.

These subcultures are motivated by greater and more genuine purposes. They are fluid, they are not brutally exclusive of any caste, class or gender; people are born into it or introduced into it, and grow out of it. Most importantly they do

not have to pitch themselves against the other. They need not thrive on the 'us against them' creed. Thus definitely less room for hate speech.

Dominant and institutional religious and cultural structures and configurations, in which we have lived historically, with perhaps a few exceptions, are neck deep in caste, class, power and gender equations and discriminations. Perhaps these structures must go, but I know not how. Our kids must go to schools and colleges, not to gather with their exclusive kind, or to hear only about their religion and cultural dominance and importance; but to discover the other, perhaps to be part of new socially meaningful groups. Some institutions nobly claim that we welcome all groups of people to the portals of our institution, but do we ever seriously and genuinely meet them? Or they meet our needs of having numbers on our campus? One day a lady came to meet and learn from Jiddu Krishnamurti, an Indian philosopher and writer. Being preoccupied with his work Jiddu refused to meet her. But she insisted to meet Jiddu. Finally, Jiddu accepted. She came in. She began talking, and she went on talking about herself and her ideas. Jiddu found no gap to contribute anything. Finally, again, when she got up to leave for she was running late, she said, "I am glad to have met you". Jiddu smiled. Did she really meet Jiddu? Institutions must not be one-way talking grounds, but must become fluid and nonthreatening meeting grounds. Remember schools having green, red, blue, yellow houses for student activities, that is a great initiative because that value neutral groups give them a chance to think out of the ghettos they are born into. New wine needs new wine skins, said the Palestinian wanderer over two thousand years ago.

Free speech holds a key. If our religions, institutions, and families are struggling to be meaningful, just and noble, I challenge you to check, they would have long lost appreciation and possibility for free speech. One of the keys to get back on track is to have the possibility of one of the fundamental constitutional rights – free speech. That perhaps will also save us from debasing ourselves to the realm of hate speech.

# Power Games with the Idea of India

We see our politicians changing their coats from red to white to saffron; and with it changes their idea of India too.

ALEX TUSCANO



Our defense minister, Rajnath Singh had courted a controversy. He made a statement that Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was advised by Mahatma Gandhiji to file a mercy petition to the British government. Savarkar had filed his first mercy petition in 1911. By this the defense minister wanted to white wash Vinayak D. Savarkar of all his dubious role in the freedom struggle.

In 1911 Gandhiji was in South Africa. Our defense minister Rajnath Singh was not only peddling falsehood but he also got history wrong. His statement was far from the truth. Mahatma Gandhi would have been glad to support the release of Savarkar from the Cellular jail but he would not have suggested Savarkar to ask mercy from the British government. Savarkar assured that he would not do anything against the British Empire and that he would cooperate with the British Empire. This assurance by Savarkar would go dead against the conviction of Mahatma Gandhi.

The significance of the statement of our defense minister is very clear. There is an attempt on the part of the present ruling dispensation to rewrite the history of India. This is similar to none other than the British Empire's policy who divided the Indian society along with the lines of religion to ensure that the Indians do not unite and fight against the British Empire. "Teaching of Indian history in schools and colleges from a basically communal point of view made a major contribution to the rise and growth



**There is an attempt on the part of the present ruling dispensation to rewrite the history of India. This is similar to none other than the British Empire's policy who divided the Indian society along with the lines of religion.**

of communalism. For generations, almost from the beginning of modern school system, communal interpretation of history of various degree of virulence were propagated, first by the imperialist writers and then by others. So deep and widespread was the penetration of the communal view of history that even sturdy nationalists unconsciously accepted some of its basic tenets." (Bhipan Chandra and Mukharjees, Indian Struggle for Independence)

It was a struggle before adopting the constitution. There were two ideas of India put forward by two opposing political persuasion. One was the idea of "One Nation" and another was "Two Nation Theory". The idea of two-nation theory was promoted by Mohamad Jinnah and by Vinayak Damodar, Golwalkar, Hedgewar, the leaders of Hindu Mahasabha. Both Mohamad Jinnah and the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha held that in India there were two nations, one, the Hindu and the other, Muslim. Their idea of India was based on religion, Hindu Rashtra and Islamic state. The idea of Nation was identified with the religion of the majority of the people (majoritarianism).

From 1906 Jinnah propagated the theme of National Unity. Sarojini Naidu gave him the title 'Ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity'. But Mohamad Jinnah went away from the Indian National Congress to the Muslim league and formed the Islamic republic. One must remember that Mohamad Jinnah was not a devout Muslim. In his life style he was the most secular person. He did not believe in the Muslim customs and religious practices. He even smoked and ate pork. His Islamic State was a political move to become the prime minister of Pakistan.

The idea of India of the Hindu Mahasabha will become clear to us if we read the instruction Golwalkar gave to the Muslims and to other religious minorities. He said, "The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age long traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead – in one word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's right." (Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur 1947)

But the Indian National Congress held that India is 'One Nation', one secular nation. The identity of India is not defined by the religion but by secularism. The idea of Secularism holds that all religions and all people are equal before the constitution of India. People can follow whatever religion they want. The religion should be a private practice of the citizens.

India's struggle for the idea of India has been completed by drafting and adopting the "Constitution of India". Generally, we would like to point fingers at the right-wing political parties and Politicians. As Mahatma Gandhi had pointed out the malaise of communalism has penetrated deep in the minds of people, but worst in the minds of politicians. We have seen how many politicians have changed their coats from red to white to saffron. The Congress party that stood for the idea of India as a secular, democratic and socialist country

has only handful leaders who are really committed to the secular, democratic idea of India. Host of Congress legislators in Karnataka left the congress party and went over to the BJP. Similar and even worse cross over from Congress to BJP happened in Madhya Pradesh. Jyotiraditya Scindia was known to be a staunch Congressman. He had inherited his political conviction from his father, Madhav Rao Scindia, who was a staunch secular person of the Congress party. But since he did not get power in the congress government formed under Kamal Nath, he left Congress along with his supporters and went over to BJP. Tom Vaddakan was a Congress spokesperson. But he crossed over to the BJP and appears on and off on TV as a spokesperson of the BJP.

The spirit of Golwalkar is expressed in the attempt of the Government of Karnataka in conducting a survey of Christian churches in Karnataka to keep in check the activities of the Christians. There have been attacks on the Christian prayer gatherings. The basic Christian community and their gatherings for prayer has been a common practice. The RSS and Bajrang Dal have been attacking these gatherings in the name of prevention of conversion. Christians have been accused of converting by allurements. Conversion by allurements has become a catch phrase for the Bajrang Dal and RSS. But there is no talk of converting MLAs and MPs by offering allurements amounting to crores of rupees. Converting the members of the opposition parties to pull down the democratically elected governments is seen as Chanakya's intelligence. Christians have been a peace-loving people and their contribution to education and health care is unparalleled. But now they are suspect in the eyes of the rulers.

Therefore, Gandhiji wrote, "Communal harmony could not be permanently established in our country so long as highly distorted versions of history were being taught in her schools and colleges through the history text books." (A N Vidyalkar, *National Integration and Teaching of History*) Even today, we have innumerable attempts to distort the historical

facts and undermine the role of the freedom fighters like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and even Mahatma Gandhi. The Indian Council of Historical research published a poster on freedom fighters. But this poster did not include Jawaharlal Nehru though it was Nehru along with Vallabhai Patel, Mahatma Gandhi and many others who fought for 30 years for freedom. Nehru spent ten years in jail during the freedom struggle. Mahatma Gandhi called Nehru the jewel of India. The present dispensation blames Nehru for all the ills of the society. The people who believed in two-nation theory like Mohamed Jinnah blame Nehru for the partition of India. Nathuram Godse, who killed Mahatma Gandhi is portrayed by some as a hero and his statues are being installed. Vinayak Savarkar was one of the accused in plotting to kill Mahatma Gandhi. Now he has been portrayed very differently.

We have moved away from the past to the 21st century. Imperial rulers who divided us to rule for their benefit have gone. We must recognize that the most serious challenge our country is facing is that of communalism. It has assumed menacing proportion, threatening the very unity of the country and the basic character of Indian culture and civilization. When our constitution declares our republic as secular, we need to separate religion from politics, economics and large areas of culture. We need to treat religion as a private and personal affair of the citizens. In a multi-religious society, like ours, secularism means the state being equidistant from or showing equal respect for all religions, including atheism. Political parties have used religion to gain political power. There should be an all-out effort to prevent communalisation of politics and abuse of religious symbols by politicians.

We have a huge task to extricate our youth from this climate of communalism and hate campaign. All the school and particularly the families have a task of placing before our youth the facts of history of freedom struggle and the greatness of a democratic, secular and socialist idea of India.

# Hate Speech: A Case of Moral Disengagement

TOMY PALACKAL OFM

**H**ate speech has always been a live debate in India. The issue has been raised time and again before the legislature, court as well as the public. The 267<sup>th</sup> report of the law commission of India on “hate speech” brings clarity to the reflection on this topic. The same document borrows the definition from the recommendation of the council of Europe’s committee of ministers to member states on ‘hate speech’ as: ... the term “hate speech” shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination...’

However, in the recent times one may notice a flood of occurrences where a protagonist engages in it with great impunity and even been justified by supporters of the views or ideologies expressed in such articulations. And sad to say that every avenue or opportunity is exploited to the hilt in airing expressions that indicate the ailing moral fabric of our society. The current scenario in our society raises serious concerns for a person who believes in freedom of expression, religious freedom, right to equality, social justice and community values which are the main tenets of the Indian Constitution.

It is important to say that freedom of expression is founded on the concept of liberty that views free speech as an intrinsic aspect of autonomous individual. In the words of John Stuart Mill, a British political philosopher and parliamentarian, “if all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person,

than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”

This is the area where a sensible citizen of a country must apply his discretion to understand the difference between free speech and hate speech and do not reduce freedom of expression to be an unbridled license to expression devoid of any moral integrity and accountability. Freedom of expression founded on the value of liberty guarantees every citizen the right to free speech which has to be understood as the moral right to freedom of expression, a fundamental moral requirement that agents be free to express themselves and communicate with others. This right to free speech evokes duties on other agents from curtailing or limiting another’s freedom in any form and the positive duty of the state to guarantee that right to every citizen by needed legislation.

The arguments that moral rights to freedom of expression which seems to permit every form of expression even the controversial category of speech does not qualify for protection from the considerations of listener autonomy, speaker autonomy, democratic arguments and thinker based arguments. The above four arguments are often cited to justify hate speech. But a careful examination reveals that they don’t provide ‘hate speech’ the needed impunity from ethical implications to be accepted as a moral right. As a result, anyone who aims to justify hate speech will have to employ mechanisms that silence his/her moral agency.

Since the values that justify free speech do not count in favour of protecting hate speech, the case for criminalising or otherwise restricting hate speech can proceed. Having said that one must also examine the values that underlie

the moral right to free speech. They are: the duty not to threaten, the duty not to harass, the duty not to offend, the duty not to defame, the duty not to incite wrongdoing. It is worth contrasting the definition of hate speech presented above against these values.

The moral right to free speech is enshrined in the constitution; however when it comes to addressing the evil of hate speech that perpetuate inhumanity, the moral agents in a society seems to resort to mechanisms that justify their moral disengagement. In the book, *Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live with Themselves*, by Albert Bandura, examines eight mechanism of moral disengagement that one resort to when confronted by life’s predicaments.

In a brief analysis of hate speech one may notice that the imagery, metaphors and nuances employed has a definite purposes. They are employed to vilify or dehumanize the victim of hate speech. The hate speakers carefully select images that convey the subhuman stature of the victim to other members of the society using various mediums. Once the individuals are stripped of their dignity and humanity that resembles the hate speaker, the whole society is just one tiny leap away from activating ‘the final solution to the Jewish question’ of the sort that the Nazis hatched against the Jews.

Let us look at two example to illustrate the point. In the final solution to the Jewish question, Hitler had activated a complex network and modalities of propaganda against the Jews. In the days after the Nazi electoral victories of July 1932, Adolf Hitler informed Joseph Goebbels that he intended to make Goebbels the director of new propaganda ministry when the Nazis took over the reins of national government. Goebbels soon envisioned an empire that would control schools, universities, film, radio, and propaganda. “The national education of the German people,” he wrote “will be placed in my hand.” This ministry headed and fully exploited the mechanisms available to them in every form to dehumanize the Jewish victims. They stripped the Jewish community of any resemblance to the Germans. The caricatures, cartoons and hate speech evoked a national

sentiment that the Jews are less than human beings and the Germans saw the Jews as disgrace meant to be erased from the face of the earth. Rest is story.

A second, yet meaningful insight comes from the following snippet that is taken from history. Here the situation is slightly different, but the victims are considered to be less in dignity and respect to the hate speakers. It is the sermon that appeared in Lisbon in 1705 and refers to an auto da fé ceremony that took place on September 6<sup>th</sup> of the same year, where 66 individuals were sentenced and punished. This sermon was given by the Archbishop of Cranganore, which is situated in Portuguese India, and it opens with the following call against the sentenced individuals who were unable to speak: “Oh! The humiliated remains of Judaism! The last remains of Judah! Indecent Catholics, disgusting figures even amongst the Jews themselves!... You are disgusting, for you are ignorant! Even the law by which you live, you are unable to uphold!”. The Archbishop ended the sermon with a call to Jesus: “For 1,705 years you have wished with open arms to ask your sons (=the Jews) to come to you, and they, ungratefully, turn from you and refuse to acknowledge you as their saviour...”

I am sure one would immediately recognise the language and the nuances. The Portuguese saw themselves vested with the divine responsibility of saving the locals from ignorance and final damnation. The articulations clearly indicate the values and mechanisms that is engaged by the reverent Bishop, dehumanising the victims of dignity and humanity, which provides legitimacy for the cruelties that were perpetuated, and the perpetrator goes on with the clear conscience over his/her actions. A careful examination of moral decisions of every moral agent of a society will prove that we make convenient compromises and disengage with our moral agency when confronted by difficult predicament in life. And when we consider hate speech, it is amply clear that the mechanism of dehumanisation of the victim is a convenient and powerful devise we activate. And these phenomena can be well understood and analysed from a moral disengagement perspective.



# Where Is the Freedom of Speech? Why Don't I See It, Feel It, Know It?

## The Cry of a Kashmiri Soul

My Facebook status is empty for last many months because I don't want to end up in any trouble.

NASHAFA FIRDOUS

Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India states that, "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression". The philosophy behind this article lies in the Preamble of the Constitution, where a solemn resolve is made to secure to all its citizen, liberty of thought and expression. But when I look at the practical side of it what I see is entirely different. In Kashmir, my homeland, this fundamental right to speech and expression is getting increasingly suspended

day in and day out. I feel we live in the stone-age era where we cannot post, express, speak the reality to the world, because if we do, it becomes a propaganda or part of propaganda. My Facebook status is empty for last many months because I don't want to end up in any trouble. I know there are a lot of vultures keeping an eye. On the other hand, I feel like there are millions of voices echoing in my head and I want to put it down, pour it out; but I fail. I fail miserably due to the lack of freedom to speak, express,

Maybe I should just wake up, write about it, post it up and not think about the consequences I will have to face. But, I fail, my pen fails, the paper I try to write on remains blank, the ink is in the pen but my courage shakes and makes me feel unsure and pathetic.

voice out. The inner voices try to come out but then somehow I stop them and this leads to a great pain inside my chest.

I remember how much I wanted to pursue journalism, mass communication as my mainstream field of study and work, but then thousands of negative thoughts trapped in my mind woke up. What for? When I know I won't be able to put my thoughts, the realities around me into words, for the fear of being banned, put behind the bars, PSA being slammed on me, and I would be called as an anti-national. But I know I just want freedom, to speak, to breathe, to express my reality. But what if, I would be killed, Hundreds of bullets would pierce my chest and my family would be in a deep trouble. Shall I give up? Or maybe, I am giving up already. When I watch the news channels I see things different than ground realities. They make us believe that what we know of Kashmir isn't true at all. Lies are propagated in the name of facts and realities. The truth is being kept under the bed-sheets, behind the curtains. How do I say it loud from the rooftops? Who do I tell this to? Who will listen to me? So many Kashmiri journalist, males and females have been booked under PSA for speaking out, for following the Article 19, freedom of speech and expression. And this keeps on going.

Every day I open my phone, I see the flash news, so and so has been booked for writing about... Then I question myself about my whole existence. What are we going to do now? Maybe, nobody wants us, needs us, wants to listen to the real miseries of a common Kashmiri person. Even if I write something apolitical, I know it is going to backfire on me. I see the fourth pillar of the democracy falling apart when it comes to Kashmir; and it breaks my heart.

Our basic principle of freedom of press,

speech, expression is being taken away from us. And I clearly see that in Kamran Yousuf, Qazi Shibli, Fahad Shah, Peerzada Ashiq, Asif Sultan, and the list goes on, who were called Anti-India and it was reported that they are not the "real-journalists". But why? They wrote and captured the truth; and thus were bought down from their duties. Where is the freedom of speech then? Why don't I see it, feel it, know it? Every other day all the budding journalists are being summoned by the government and it feels awful. Sometimes they are charged away with various allegations that aren't even true but no one opens up about it. And if anyone does, then the consequence is dire. This attack on the journalist fraternity is just increasing day by day and I as someone who has so much to say and express, become a coward with mouth shut for I don't want to see my family searching for me in different jails. I feel sorry for myself, I feel sorry to my own conscience knowing that I am not doing what is right. Maybe I should just get up, write about it, post it up and not think about the consequences I will have to face. But, I fail, my pen fails, the paper I try to write on remains blank, the ink is in the pen but my courage shakes and makes me feel unsure and pathetic.

But I hope, that one day I would get up and write, speak, talk aloud; and my country listens. The ink of my pen would run smoothly and I would write, and that would rewrite the history of Freedom of speech and expression in Kashmir. That day would be the day I kill the demons residing in my mind with my pen. Someday, one day, soon.

I strongly stand by the words of Noam Chomsky, "If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all." So, even if they despise us, LET US SPEAK, PLEASE.

# Connectedness Is Our Biological Baseline, But We Could Easily Become Hateful

A FRANCIS

Humans are biologically wired to connect with each other. Disconnection and isolation are not motivators to human growth and wellbeing. Medical journals today provide ample scientific evidence to implicate that disconnection, isolation, loneliness, etc., are associated with multiple health risks that we can think of, including, cognitive decline to emotional and psychological imbalances, personality disorders, memory related issues, cardiovascular complications and early mortality.

While social connectedness is our 'default mode' of being humans, enjoying longer span of life and health, some show a penchant for questionable social behaviours that promote a form of selective social disconnection. That is, we choose to cut off, disconnect with and even hate individuals who are not members of our 'in-group', the so-called 'our-tribe'. The growing hate campaigns, the stereotypes of biases and prejudices we harbour along the lines of race, culture and religion are just a few examples of our selective preference for social disconnection and isolation. At this particular juncture of human history, when health sciences make breakthrough revelations on the developmental benefits of improving our social connectedness and expanding our ability for embracing diversity, it is absolutely pathological, that we continue to engage in pernicious and ugly social discourses that trigger us merely to galvanize our psyche with the divisive thinking of 'us' and 'them', 'in-group and out-group', 'our tribe and their tribe' classifications.

## The 'Cognitive Hurdle'

Neuroscience has been making giant leaps in the study of human brains, their functioning, and how they control and fashion individuals with their unique personal preferences in the distinct make up of their personhood. In mapping human brains, neuroscientists made a substantive discovery that even when our brains are resting between cognitive activities, they are oriented to social connection, of trying to reach out to others. This default mode of connection is the core of our being as humans, about which Martin Buber, a very renowned twentieth century philosopher, wrote so long ago: "Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity."

The striking discovery about the deep-seated human disposition for interconnectedness is certainly a very promising piece of information as it could serve us with a lofty vantage point in accelerating global collaboration in the areas of conflict resolution, settlements of wars, environmental protection and establishment of peace.

There is however, a huge challenge, a 'cognitive hurdle' in understanding humans as innately connection seeking. If the default mode of humans is irrefutably social connectedness, how could we account for the disconnection and isolation we create, particularly, with individuals who are different from us culturally, racially, and religiously? How could connection seeking beings openly tout for the extermination of the so-called 'out-group' through hate campaigns and hate speeches? Where and when does the shift from connection to disconnection and isolation

take place along their developmental journey?

Perhaps two important hypotheses of psychology, could be of great value in addressing these questions: the 'Other-Race Effect' and the psychology of hate.

## The Other-Race Effect

The real-life phenomenon of people relating easily with those who are like them and not so naturally with those who are different, has been a topic of study in social psychology for decades, which gradually led to the birth and construction of the Other-Race Effect hypothesis. In a study conducted in infants as old as three to nine months indicated that infants of nine months old displayed a preference for faces of the people of an in-group who resembled them, over an out-group who were different. Significantly, the infants of three months and six months old did not show this preference. This selective instinctual preference, which scientists call as the 'Other-Race Effect' sometimes also called the 'Own-Race Bias', point to the fact that though we are basically connection seeking people, but our continuous exposure to homogeneity and the lack of exposure to diversity at home stifles us with a psychological shortcoming, namely, we feel threatened by and defensive towards those who are different. This is to say, nurture eclipses nature! The scientific explanation neuroscience provides to support this view is that when we think the same thoughts again and again, the brain creates neural pathways of these thoughts that they become a habitual behaviour. It, simply, means that our lack of exposure to diversity, makes us feel connected to those who are similar to us and hostile to those who are different from us.

## The Psychology of Hate

Hate is a searing emotion and its nature and dynamics cannot easily be understood. We are not referring to hate here in a simplistic and plain sense, as we would say, "I hate that dress", "I hate that snooty guy who thinks great of himself", etc. Everyone gives into this kind, sometime or another.

Hate is applied here in a broader and complicated sense, particularly, in the in-group

out-group context. From this perspective, psychologists argue that hate is stronger than other negative emotions like anger and contempt. A distinguishing characteristic is that hate transmits itself faster, even from one generation to another.

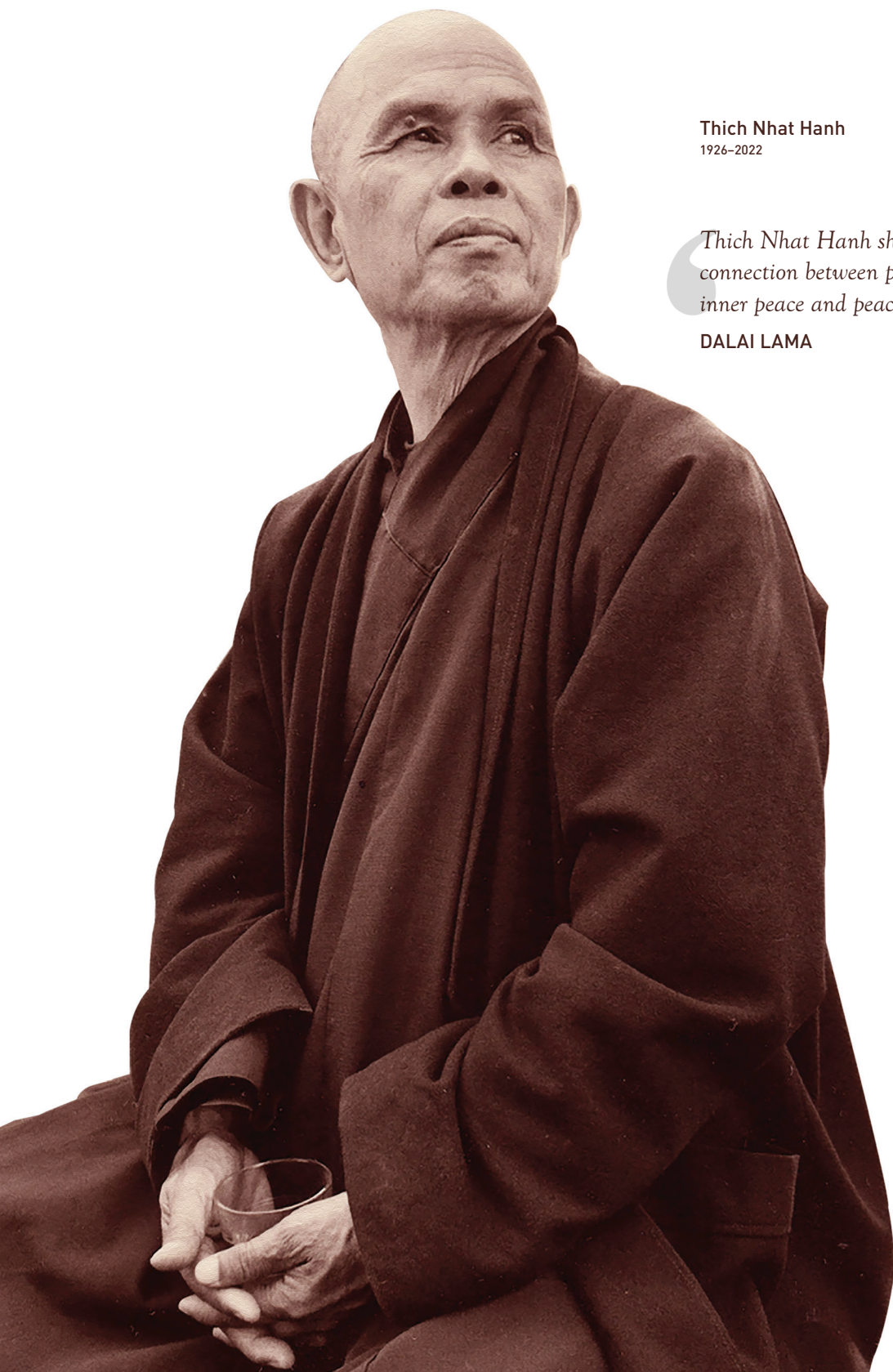
Exploring the psychology of hate, Allison Abram, a New York based psychotherapist, contends fear as a major underlying component. In her analysis, both 'fear of the other' (others are different from us and they are opponents to us) and 'fear of the self' (there are things about ourselves which we don't like in us) take the form of what Freud called the mechanism of projection onto others. Bringing in culture as an added component to this discussion, she quotes Silvia Dutchevici, a fellow-psychotherapist, "We live in a war culture that promotes violence in which competition is the way of life. We fear connecting because it requires us to reveal something about ourselves. We are taught to hate the enemy -meaning anyone different than us..."

People who hate those who are not members of their in-group, in fact, are struggling with serious personality issues. Perhaps the one who understood it well was the great Martin Luther King Jr. who experienced so much of racial hate directed to him throughout the American Civil Rights Movement, yet he took a radical personal stance of connection and love, as he famously wrote: "I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

## The Psychology of Connection: Adapting Diversity at Home

In this time and age, as science is stretching its wings for the sky of optimal human growth and life satisfaction, it is not fitting for us to keep living blindly with our biases and prejudices that leave us as captives to the old misunderstanding. We tend to carry forward the same experiences for the rest of our lives, unless we are confronted with a different life defining experience that challenges our biases and prejudices. The impact of this new experience could broaden the horizon of our cognition, shed light on the underlying psychological shortcoming that is limiting our ability to live fully, freely and satisfactorily.





Thich Nhat Hanh  
1926–2022

*Thich Nhat Hanh shows us the connection between personal, inner peace and peace on earth.*

DALAI LAMA

# Thich Nhat Hanh

## Master of Mindfulness

JAMESMON OFM

Thich Nhat Hanh, known to his followers as ‘Thay’, died on 22 January this year at the age of 95. His was a life dedicated to mindful living. He was also an author of many bestselling books. He had taught the art of mindful living for over seventy years. He had become a household name for people all over the world, who took Zen teachings seriously. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had once said that ‘Thich Nhat Hanh shows us the connection between personal, inner peace and peace on earth’. He was a real master, who taught mostly by his own practice of what he believed. He literally walked the talk as many of his disciples would vouch for. He would often take them out for mindful walking, and they could simply walk along, basking in the light and depth of his awareness.

He had been revolutionary in being one of the monks in Vietnam to ride a bicycle...to bring much greater gender equity in the Buddhist Sangha... as one of his followers would say, ‘The basis of Thay’s practice was to water the seeds of mindfulness, thereby becoming aware of our mental formations as they arise’ (from a foreword by Shantum Seth in ‘Thich Nhat Hanh-Answers From the Heart’). Thay was a poet too, who would put the precepts of mindfulness into poetry:

*The mind can go in a thousand directions.  
But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.  
With each step, a gentle wind blows.  
With each step, a flower blooms.*

And in a chapter on mindful walking, Thay says, ‘When you walk, you might like to take the hand of a child. She will receive your concentration and stability, and you will receive her freshness and innocence. From time to time, she may want to run ahead and then wait for you to catch up. A child is a bell of mindfulness, reminding us how wonderful life is. At Plum Village, I teach the people a simple verse to practice while walking: ‘Yes, yes, yes,’ as they breathe in, and ‘Thanks, thanks, thanks,’ as they breathe out. I want them to respond to life, to society, and to the Earth in a positive way. They enjoy it very much’ (Excerpts taken from Answers from the Heart- Thich Nhat Hanh)

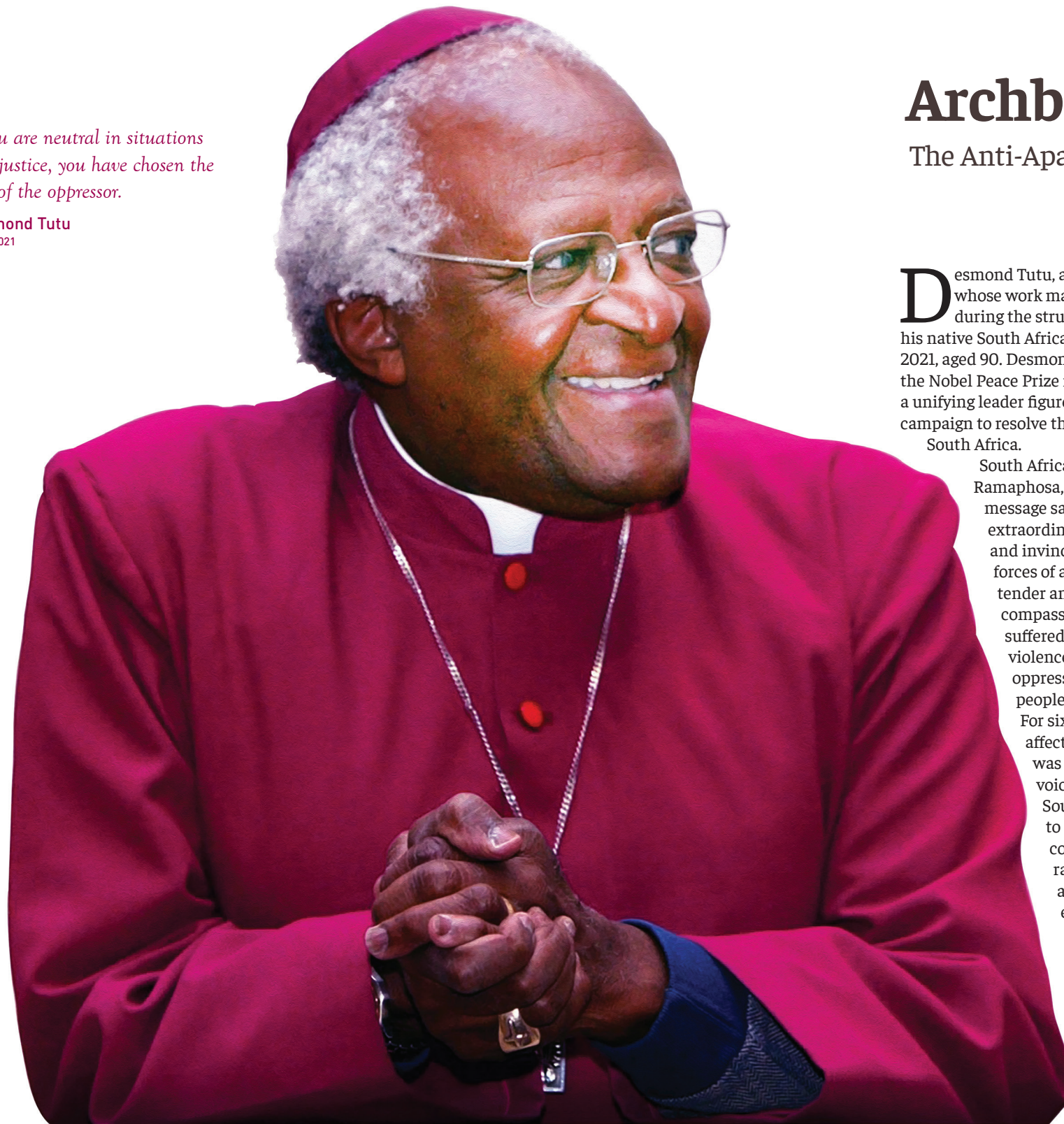
He had stood against the Vietnam war. And he had influenced Martin Luther King Jr. to come out against the war in Thay’s homeland, Vietnam. He was unique in many ways. Once Richard Baker Roshi, another Zen master, said, ‘Thay is a cross between a cloud, a snail, and a piece of heavy machinery’.

Maybe the biggest contribution that Thay made to the contemporary world is making the 2,600-year-old Buddha teachings relevant and practical for our times. With him passes a giant in mindful living.



*If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.*

**Desmond Tutu**  
1931–2021



# Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The Anti-Apartheid Hero, South Africa's Moral Conscience

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

**D**esmond Tutu, an Anglican Archbishop, whose work made him a revered leader during the struggle to end apartheid in his native South Africa, died on 26 December 2021, aged 90. Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his role as a unifying leader figure in the non-violent campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa.

South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, in his condolence message said, "Tutu was a man of extraordinary intellect, integrity and invincibility against the forces of apartheid, he was also tender and vulnerable in his compassion for those who had suffered oppression, injustice and violence under apartheid, and oppressed and downtrodden people around the world."

For six decades Tutu, known affectionately as "the Arch", was one of the primary voices in exhorting the South African government to end apartheid, the country's official policy of racial segregation. After apartheid ended in the early 1990s and the long-

imprisoned Nelson Mandela became president of the country, Tutu was named chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He was to investigate apartheid-era crimes. The model he established was based on truth as a foundation for forgiveness and reconciliation. Archbishop Tutu's ability to convey difficult messages with clarity, compassion and conviviality make him one of the most loved and respected activists of our time. As his great friend Nelson Mandela said of Tutu, he is "sometimes strident, often tender, never afraid and seldom without humour."

Desmond Tutu talking about the role of forgiveness in healing wounds says, "Forgiveness is not just an altruistic act, but one born of self-interest. Forgiveness helps give people the resilience to survive and remain human in the face of all efforts to dehumanise them." One mourner at the funeral service, Papi Mzizi, said, "He was the moral compass of the country. On a human level Tutu never took himself seriously, he was always joking, always bubbling, always laughing, always telling the truth. He never took himself higher than anyone else. He loved the people; he always supported the people."

Desmond Tutu, at a difficult juncture of history gave South Africa what it needed the most, the courage to walk into a more meaningful future.



# Evasion of Truth and Lying Down of Lies

GERRY LOBO OFM

John of the Cross in the 17<sup>th</sup> century articulated in a volume his mystical experience of life as “Dark night of the soul.” The citizens of this ancient land are journeying through the “dark days,” existentially, passing through the tunnel of uncertainty and ambiguity even though externally ‘shining’ signs of spectacular advancement in science and technology visibly rob the eyes of the ordinary who delights in the plenty but languishes in all forms of poverty. Pope Francis speaks of the “dark clouds over a closed world” in *Fratelli Tutti*. The empty promises trumpeted as election manifesto and the announcement of Fairy Tale goodies during the initial stage of the majoritarian government at the national level have all been discarded into a garbage dump, while new *yojanas* have been continuously being announced.

The election results clearly reveal the insensible, unquestioned, unconcerned and haphazard manner in which franchise is exercised by the enlightened and the ignorant ones. Responsibility towards a nation’s well-being does not seem to be the priority for a large number of voters today. Lack of critical thinking on national issues, and voicing out in order to disturb the consciences of men and women in the forefront of governance, have provided a golden opportunity for the political leaders to find advantage over the populace and easily trample over their weakness or benumb them. What is also shocking to observe is that the educated, intelligent and dynamic youth of our nation have not emerged as the critique of the prevailing scenario on different levels. Only the vibrant young generation can lead forward this

country towards democratic freedom, to “where the mind is without fear and the head is held high” (R. Tagore).

Passive spectacle will no longer liberate our free nation from the many oppressions surfacing day by day. Involved commitment of students at the varied levels of education, the young work force in entrepreneurs and establishments and the intellectual force behind the desk and before the knowledge sources require rising up to face the demons of destruction and desolation. The powers insidiously opposing the creative energy and the open colloquy of the concerned minds and hearts will definitely try to eliminate the spirit crying out for justice and fairness, harmony and integrity. The one-year-long Farmers’ Protest speaks volumes. The farmers of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh dared to die. Liberation of the oppressed has been always possible in history only by constant pressure, until the Pharaohs of the world melt down at the flame of fire created by those who position themselves in the forefront of a revolution.

Those within the institutional security often remain comfortable. Their food, clothing and shelter is secured; whereas the man on the hunt for a job, a mother on the run for the education of her child and an aged longing for companionship have only the sun shining over them and the cold freezing them to death. Not only do the elected to political high offices often deliberately numb themselves to human realities of degradation socially and economically, but also do those who elect them enclose themselves with whatever benefit they can derive from sources outside of themselves. What surprises one is

that our high quality education births scientists and philosophers but without sensibility and neighbourliness towards humans. The privileged always have their ploys to preserve their interests, whereas others perennially remain victims of inimical forces. There is too much of an inward seeking among us, fretting about what to eat and what to wear, forgetting that we are born of a common mother, the earth which bears us and sustains us.

Human beings are existentially political beings, or else they should be on the moon! A right understanding of religion would certainly welcome the participation of all humans on earth in political issues because polis is the space where they interact. If religion is relegated to and reserved for rituals, customs, prayers and ascetical practices, as it is observed in our country, and such a kind of religion interferes in the public matters, then what is “political” turns into “religion” and vice versa. Such is the phenomenon our nation which has birthed, and is now homing the “multi-religious” is undergoing presently. One wonders if the agenda of the present ruling religion-oriented dispensation is to “saffronise secularism” (*Indian Currents*, December 2021) during their tenure however long it might last. The educated of our nation have not voiced out their experiences which only enhances religion meddling with politics for profit. Hence elections are easily fought on religious lines and the ordinary voter is attracted by sentimentality, not reason, boosting the tainted moral of political parties. This trend will only destroy at its root what a nation such as ours has stood for ages.

With a right understanding and practice of religion, religions should involve themselves in the political sphere, if their intent is justice and integrity, humanity and harmony of all as the children of one God. Religions are for binding together with all and for bonding oneself with another where Divinity is manifested visibly. Therefore, India with a religious face need to open itself to human concerns in the political arena and not isolate religion for mere emotional and psychological satisfaction or for the false fear of God.

The Indian Constitution provides for the

free practice of religion across several faiths. Sadly enough the recent history of the nation speaks loudly of the polarisation found everywhere in the name of religion. Hate speeches have become a common event, an exercise fed into a system of political and social discrimination which directly has an effect on the dignity of a community of people. Incitement to violence is a daily ploy done in the name of a religion one practices. Is this adherence of the basic *dharma* of any religion? No, but a mockery of God who professes no religion, and a mockery of people who are loved by the same God. Adding to this vicious act, disruption of worship events and destruction of worship structures have become a licensed devotion of certain adherents of religions who, perhaps are instigated by others from their positions to perform such “holy” deeds! If one is a religion lover, then these demonic acts need to be condemned and perpetrators brought to account for it. Not only the political weights are maintaining silence about these atrocities but even the enlightened educated stalwarts are watching the scene from a distance. Perhaps, the anger for just cause has vanished from our people for fear of negative consequences on their life and positions. But can we afford it? Where is the India shining?

The eerie silence and the indifference of the privileged have brought about a “haze” over the secular nation particularly during the present regime, if not a “dark night” of a tunnelled existence for the citizens of a free society. “I will not be bullied into silence,” Mahua Moitra MP, roared in one of her interventions in the Parliament some time ago. She is right. The haze might turn into the dark night for our fellow men and women if silence is not broken and justice and right are not demanded by conscientious and responsible leaders. “Opposite of love is not hate but indifference,” stated Elie Wiesel. The indifference of the rulers towards the well-being of people has become the standard truth today. But the indifference among citizens towards the haze covering a free nation cannot be maintained any longer. The evasion of truth and the lying down of lies does not go well with those who have publicly and solemnly professed the oath to our sacred Constitution.



# Meeting Points

SUSHMITA BHARADWAJ

Walking through the crowded Delhi streets, watching people of different religions walk shoulder to shoulder, I tried to forget last evening's news about religious intolerance and consequent brutalities. As I walked along I arrived at a cross-section of a mosque and a temple standing side by side. People moved in and out of the mosque and the temple without mistrust and insecurities. Moving a little closer to the temple and mosque I was taken aback by this image of a Hindu Sadhu and Muslim man, in their traditional attire, openly engaged in friendly conversations. Secularism is not yet dead in India.

As I curiously captured the differences in their religious attires, they looked very similar in their attitude of brotherhood. I visited the temple as per routine, and in that temple people from any religion could pray and offer meals. How good it would be if people stop categorising and targeting others in the name of religion but see one another as fellow human beings!

How good it would be if people stop categorising and targeting others in the name of religion but see one another as fellow human beings!





# Spiritual Apathy: Acedia

The symptoms of the disease are restlessness, drifting and indifference, a deep feeling of “disconnectedness” with everything.

JOY PRAKASH OFM

The inevitable and recurring lockdowns keep us indoors. Our socialising has taken a swipe. Practically no physical meeting is possible. Churches are closed. No Masses. No pilgrimages. No picnics or excursions. We have a monk-like existence imposed upon us from the outside due to the pandemic.

We who are naturally prone to activity and work away from home, now being imprisoned within the four walls of a familiar home becomes intolerable. Though much life of the Spirit can happen in isolation and in silence, the opposite is also true. The sort of spiritual exhaustion which normally haunts monks, anchorites, religious and priests, now affects the majority of us.

The voice speaking inside us says that all this spiritual work is a sham, that God is not interested, and that if we were honest with ourselves, we would just give it up. The end question is “Is this spiritual enterprise worthwhile?”

Getting unused to going to church, and attending Masses online instead drives us into a spiritual lethargy of sorts. The sacrament of confession which would have reawakened self-examination and self-realisation, has taken a backseat and now become too much of an effort.

Reading anything has become a burden, especially the Word of God – something that only the highly disciplined lot do today. When all avenues of getting out of the house or apartment are closed, there is an inertia to do anything or involve ourselves in anything, let alone matters of the spirit.

## Symptoms of Acedia

This “spiritual listlessness” the Greeks called *akedia*, and the Church father John Cassian

(fifth century) called *acedia*. Acedia, or sloth/apathy, is usually associated with monastics, especially the desert monks and nuns. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia defines it, “The loneliness of the hermitage in the barren desert, a body worn out by fasting, and a mind fatigued by long prayers were conditions calculated to bring on the ennui and restlessness that was called *acedia*.”

The symptoms of the disease are restlessness, drifting and indifference, a deep feeling of “disconnectedness” with everything. But it is actually the shadow side of every commitment. In it the potentialities are negated by the yes that made one a Christian, a husband, a wife, a priest, a monk, a nun, a religious or a celibate person.

Acedia brings with it, therefore, the torture of second thoughts, daydreams of what might have been, and complaints about what is.

There are similarities with the experience of couples who have been married for a number of years. The all too common story of a long-established marriage where a spouse leaves home for somebody else often has overtones of *acedia*. The husband or wife becomes “disdainful” of their spouse who is seen as “careless and unspiritual”. So they must leave for somebody better. The *acedia* can be a very real trial for the couple, and to name it as such may be a helpful starting point to enable the relationship to grow beyond it.

This spiritual malaise has these inevitable symptoms: laziness, sleepiness, melancholy, nausea, sadness and lack of enthusiasm and motivation. Acedia is a sort of asphyxiation or suffocation of the spirit that leads us to suffer unhappiness that causes so much discontentment emotionally, socially and work-related.

“Experience proves that an onslaught of *acedia* must not be avoided by flight but overcome through resistance.”

In our restless search for meaning, we resort to celebrity magazines like *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Man's World*, *Femina*, *Verve*, *Vanity Fair* and Bollywood productions of no consequence. These magazines cause no external harm but they destroy our interior world, take up our time and provide an escape route for evading the spiritual longing.

## Remedy for Acedia

An eminent scholar of the Desert Fathers and Mothers says, “This (*acedia*) is a phenomenon common to all humanity; in fact, it is the price of being human.” If we are going to be happy, we will need to learn to face up to *acedia* rather than avoiding it.

The solution that the desert fathers suggest also is to contradict sloth head-on. This is a hard teaching, but a universal one: if we give way to sloth in order to ease its pressure on us, if we allow ourselves to behave according to the feelings of inner spiritual deadness, it will only get worse.

This is experiential wisdom coming to us directly from those great *ammas* and *abbas* of the Egyptian desert who lived their whole lives out in that harsh solitude. It is advice confirmed in the experience of thousands of spiritual practitioners since then. If we leave our spiritual practice to find someone to chat with in order to ease the burden of sloth, or if we indulge in fantasies about all the good works we could be doing elsewhere, or if we indulge in obsessive, negative thoughts about the community we are in, our families, or our

particular life situations – if we idealise states of life other than our own, or if we give in to physical torpor – these will only get worse, and drive us into deeper irritation and laziness, and cause us to be busybodies. Eventually we will lose our zeal and commitment to the contemplative journey.

Cassian says, “Experience proves that an onslaught of *acedia* must not be avoided by flight but overcome through resistance.” In one of the teachings of the Desert Fathers, the instruction given to a disciple is “to sit in your cell and the cell would teach you.” At all costs one must not give way to the desire to leave the cell. The temptation to recoil into the self must be answered by a determined push outward. Because the temptation to indifference, to disconnectedness will appear to be an easy solution to the kind of vacuum one experiences in *acedia*. This is the time one to be rooted in God.

Abbot Christopher Jamison says, spiritual reading and prayer help us to recognise our demons while also helping us to contain them. As we spend time persevering in prayer and meditation, we become aware of the interior movements of the whole self, body, mind and soul. Our culture implies that indulging in more food, more things and more sex, combined with personal aggression and vanity, are the way to happiness. This is the message hitting us day by day. The good news is that most people in their heart of hearts know this message is a lie, but many lack the means to live out an alternative.

# Am I a Fraud?

A little self-doubt now and then wouldn't hurt. After all, unchecked confidence does more harm than good.

SANJANA PRASAD

Life as we know it is ever-changing. Society expects us to play various roles tirelessly, no matter what life throws at us; and amid this chaos, we continue to progress and grow as students, professionals, partners, siblings or simply human beings. But in all this, it is often hard for many of us to recognise this progress and all the triumphs as our own, especially for people who struggle with Imposter Syndrome.

Impostor syndrome, also known as the impostor phenomenon, is characterised by an inability to internalise one's achievements or abilities, which leads to feelings of doubt and fear of being exposed as a "fraud." One may feel like they don't belong, are undeserving, or simply lucky or don't actually have the skills that match their achievements.

According to research, it affects 25 to 30 percent of high achievers and approximately 70 percent of adults may experience this at least once in their lifetime, making this a fairly common experience. Surely a little self-doubt now and then couldn't hurt. After all, unchecked confidence does more harm than good. However, feelings of impostorism are a form of intellectual self-doubt that can be all-encompassing; how constructive can they really be?

## Source of These Thoughts and Feelings

Feelings of impostorism can stem from a variety of sources. They are frequently the result of personality traits such as perfectionism, neuroticism, and self-reliance, as well as unwelcoming or highly competitive environments. Dr. Valerie

Young, a subject matter expert, divided competence types into five categories: the Perfectionist, the Superwoman/man, the Natural Genius, the Soloist, and the Expert. Setting impossibly high standards for themselves, how long it takes to achieve something or master a skill, and how much of it is a result of their own actions and efforts are all characteristics shared by all of these categories.

It should be noted that this is also prevalent in people subjected to negative stereotypes, subjected to excessive pressure to perform or come from a background of adversity. One may feel the need to do everything on their own because they cannot rely on others, or they may constantly compare themselves to everyone else. As a result, they may feel isolated and disconnected from their peers, and for those of us who have experienced these feelings, they aren't exactly a whale of a time, are they?

## My Experience

In sync with Erik Erikson's work, my teenage years came with an intensive time of self-exploration and analysis, a process I believe to be never-ending. However, at times questions like, "Who am I?" "What do I want from life?" and "What defines me?" transitioned to "Am I good enough?", "Have I made the progress I'm supposed to?", and "Is this all I'm capable of?". Your typical identity crisis marked with a lot of introspection somewhere led to feelings of self-doubt. I'd frequently tune out conversations, wondering if I possessed the intellect and skills

of my peers, sometimes even comparing myself to people with far more experience than I. Admittedly, times like these are not very constructive or good for your mental health.

As of today, I'm learning to believe that every day is a new opportunity to unlearn the things that hold me back and to be inspired by those around me. Accepting failures or criticism positively, in my opinion, is a learned behaviour. Are there days when I falter? Yes. If I said there weren't, I'd be lying. But, little by little, I'm learning new ways to cope and to fully believe in myself. Continue reading to explore some things that come in handy during my time of need.

## How Do You Deal with Impostorism?

Self-doubting thoughts and sentiments are common in almost everyone; the only difference is how people with impostor syndrome react to them. If you ever have these thoughts, ask yourself, "Is this hurting me or helping me?" Confront them. It is critical to developing the ability to distinguish between constructive and destructive thoughts. This can happen if a person observes their thought first, rather than immediately engaging with it. While this may appear to be a simple task, it requires a great deal of practice.

Reflect on all of your tangible accomplishments and track your growth. Take satisfaction in your effort rather than your innate ability to do anything. All of your intrusive thoughts can sometimes cloud your capacity to see how far you've come objectively.

Talking to people you trust can be incredibly beneficial; however, this is extremely difficult to do when you are afraid of how it will affect their perception of you. However, keep in mind that those who truly love you will accept you regardless of your circumstances. When you doubt your own abilities, it can also be beneficial to speak with a mentor who can provide you with a more objective perspective on your abilities. This will not only help you grow as a professional but will also provide an unbiased answer to your concerns.

Finally, it's critical for all of us to remember that we're all a little flawed in our own way. That social media page that encourages you to "hustle," yes, the one with pictures of people in expensive suits who appear flawless, is not reality. We make mistakes from time to time, recognise them and understand that they are a part of the process. An imperfect process. This very imperfection does not make you a fraud.

Remember, to err is human.



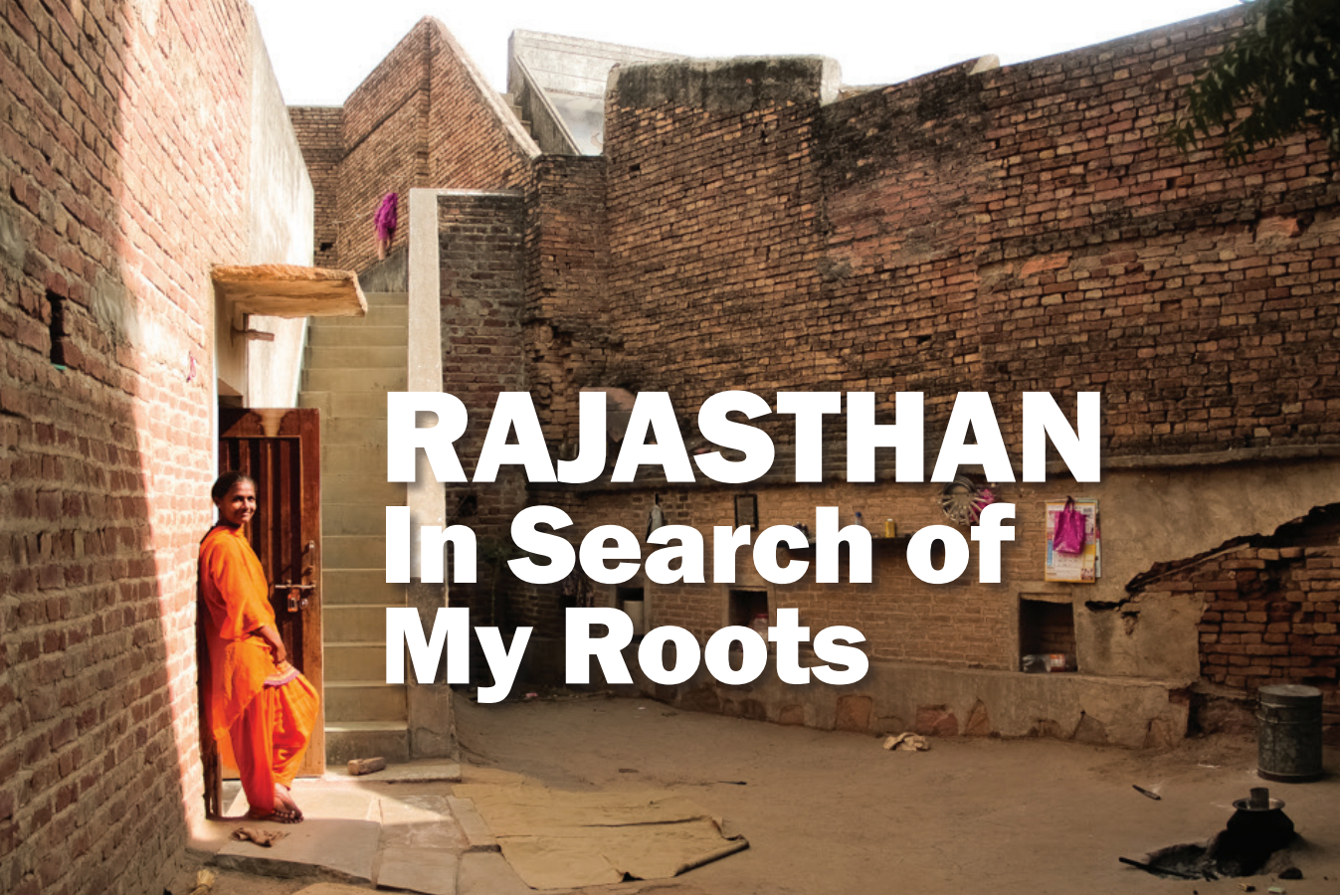
**SHALOM HOME STAY**  
Majorda Beach, Goa.

# TAKE TIME OFF

*Relax*  
*Enjoy Goan Hospitality*

Phone: +91-9822586596 | shalome80@gmail.com | www.rainbowsendgoa.com





# RAJASTHAN

## In Search of My Roots

I get intrigued about the things that belong to my grandparents and great grandparents.

ADITI JAIN

I have always been a curious child, which is the case with me even as an adult. Having brought up with stories about our ancestors and their lives, I developed an interest for the same. So naturally, when we travel to our ancestral home, I get intrigued about the things that belong to my grandparents and great grandparents. Every time we visit our home in Rajasthan, I am excited to find something novel and different. And every time, I discover something that connects me more to my family and defines my roots I get thrilled.

With this excitement comes a sense of loss. While migrating from our village Badanwadi to Mumbai and Bangalore, my ancestors had to make tons of sacrifices. They had to leave their families back in the village, look for new means to earn for their living. And the only source of communication was a call from our village, that too once in a while because every coin had to be saved meticulously. With these personal sacrifices, they also had to sacrifice their familiarity and comfort. The food they consumed was much different from what they were used to eating. Their attire was perceived as orthodox, and they had to change their appearance as well. Learning a new



I capture bits and pieces of our root through photographs and I finally feel like I belong here with them, in spite of the different lives we live.

language to survive in a new city and learning to change their lifestyle was demanding and challenging.

When I visit Rajasthan, I see a massive gap in our lifestyles. Having brought up in a starkly different lifestyle from my ancestors, I find it hard to live in their culture and lifestyle. The architecture of the house is very different from our houses and apartments. They had to work tremendously hard even for basic necessities that are available to us easily.

I try to get to know them better by listening to stories they have to share. I also try reminiscing and slowing down, and absorbing every minute detail I can get from looking at all things left behind by them. Those cooking dishes with their names inscribed on them, the colourful tiny threads used to embroider their clothes, the glasses that my grandmother wore, and the sand clock she used to meditate.

The house's architecture, the old practices of using cow dung to level the ground, the cooking vessels they used and the way they used to cook. The food that they would consume with lingering aroma. Their clothing, the turbans they wrapped on their head, the ornaments they wore, the colours they were attracted to and chose to wear, the last rites for the dead and the way they wish them goodbyes.

We try and imbibe the culture and traditions passed down to us, but a lot of that is filtered out. While I am in awe of the facilities and the luxury we are provided, I also feel some pain imagining the big decisions they had to make. They had to sacrifice what they were comfortable with for the future generations to come, for us. I capture bits and pieces of our root through photographs and I finally feel like I belong here with them, in spite of the different lives we live.



# Nothing Stands Alone

**It is group narcissism to say that our group is the only one that has the Spirit or the Truth. Every group at less mature levels will try to put God in their own pocket.**

RICHARD ROHR OFM

God is our word for the ultimate ecosystem that holds all things in positive relationship. As long as we're in honest and loving relationship with what is right in front of us, the Spirit can keep working in us and through us and for us.

Look at the incarnation. Jesus comes as a naked, vulnerable baby, totally dependent upon relationship with others. Naked vulnerability means that we are going to let otherness influence and change us. When we don't give other people any power over our lives, when we block them by thinking we can stand alone, or that otherness can't change us or teach us anything, we are spiritually dead.

Jesus says the Spirit is always the hardest to describe, because "the Spirit blows where it will" (see John 3:8). Jesus' message to us is clear: don't ever try to control the Spirit and say where it comes from, where it goes, or who has it. It's called group narcissism whenever we say our group is the only one that has the Spirit or the Truth. Every group at less mature levels will try to put God in their own pocket and say God only loves their group. Such a belief has nothing to do with the love of God. It isn't a search for Truth or Holy Mystery, but a search for control. It's the search for the small self, the search to make myself feel superior and to stand alone. I'm not in control or in charge of this Holy Mystery. I don't presume to understand. All I know is I'm forever being drawn—through everything—each manifestation calling for surrender, communion, and intimacy.

## A Mutually Loving Gaze

I believe that we do not have real access to who we fully are except in God. Only when we rest in God can we find the safety, the spaciousness, and the scary freedom to be who we are, all that we are, and much more than we think we are, "warts and all." It's only when we find ourselves in God, and live and see through God's eyes that "everything belongs." All other systems exclude, expel, punish, and protect to find identity for their members in some kind of ideological perfection or separate superiority. Most think "the contaminating element" must be searched out, isolated, and often punished. This wasted effort keeps us from the centrally important task of love and union.

To have naked interface with the Ultimate Other is to know one's self in one's truest and deepest being. When we allow ourselves to be perfectly received, totally gazed upon by the One who knows everything and receives everything, we are indestructible.

If we can learn how to receive the perfect gaze of the Other, and to be mirrored by the Other, then the voices of the human crowd, even negative ones, have little power to hurt us. Best of all, as Meister Eckhart (1260–1327) has been quoted, "The eye with which you will look back at God will be the same eye with which God first looked at you."

Standing humbly before God's gaze not only unites the psyche but it does the very thing that I know when I teach contemplative prayer. It unifies desire. It frees us from what Henri de Lubac (1896–1991) called the "vertigo of the imagination." It's the whirlpool of imagination, looking

here, there, and everywhere. Standing before one, accepting God literally allows us to be composed and gathered in one place. We can be in one place; we can be here, now. We can stop always looking over there for tomorrow's happiness. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Now is the favorable time, today is the day of salvation".

It doesn't have to do with being perfect. It has to do with being in relationship, holding onto union as tightly as God holds onto us, staying in there. The one who knows all and receives all, as a mirror does, has no trouble forgiving all. It's not a matter of being correct, but of being connected.

## It Can't Be Carried Alone

I am no masochist, and I surely have no martyr complex, but I do believe that the only way out of deep sadness is to go with it and through it. I wonder if the only way to spiritually hold suffering—and not let it destroy us—is to recognize that we cannot do it alone. When I try to heroically do it alone, I slip into distractions, denials, and pretending—and I do not learn suffering's softening lessons. But when I can find a shared meaning for something, especially if it allows me to love God and others in the same action, God can get me through it. I begin to trust the ambiguous process of life.

When we carry our small suffering in solidarity with the one universal longing of all humanity, it helps keep us from self-pity or self-preoccupation. We know that we are all in this together, and it is just as hard for everybody else. Almost all people are carrying a great and secret hurt, even when they don't know it. When we can make the shift to realize this, it softens the space around our overly defended hearts. It makes it hard to be cruel to anyone. Shared struggle somehow makes us one—in a way that easy comfort and entertainment never can.

If suffering, even unjust suffering (and all suffering is unjust on some level), is part of one Great Mystery, then I am willing—and even happy, sometimes—to carry my little portion. But I must trust that it is somehow helping someone or something, and that it matters in the great scheme of things. Etty Hillesum (1914–1943), a young Jewish woman who died at Auschwitz, truly believed her suffering was also the suffering of God. She even expressed a deep desire to "help

God" carry some of it. Such freedom and such generosity of spirit are almost unimaginable to me. What creates such larger-than-life people? Their altruism is hard to understand by almost any psychological definition of the human person. I believe such people have built their lives on the reality of union with God, Reality, or What Finally Is.

## A Solid Foundation

Theologian and author Kate Bowler counters our cultural desire to proclaim we are "self-made" with a reminder of our foundational communal reality. I am self-made. Didn't anyone tell you? I brought myself into the world when I decided to be born on a bright Monday morning. Then I figured out how cells replicate to grow my own arms and legs and head to a reasonable height and size. Then I filled my own mind from kindergarten to graduation with information I gleaned from the great works of literature...

I'm joking, but sometimes it feels like the pressure we are under. An entire self-help and wellness industry made sure that we got the memo: we are supposed to articulate our lives as a solitary story of realization and progress. Work. Learn. Fix. Change. Every exciting action sounds like it is designed for an individual who needs to learn how to conquer a world of their own making.

It's hard to remember a deeper, comforting truth: we are built on a foundation not our own. We were born because two other people created a combination of biological matter. We went to schools where dozens and dozens of people crafted ideas and activities to construct categories in our minds. We learned skills honed by generations of craftspeople. We pray and worship with spiritual ideas refined by centuries of tradition. Almost nothing about us is original. Thank God.

## Love Crosses Boundaries

Rabbi Jesus is talking to a religious leader—a lawyer—about what it means to be faithful. Together, they review the Jewish scriptures: The way to live right is to love God with everything you have and love your neighbour as yourself. Looking for a loophole, the lawyer wants to know who qualifies as a neighbour. Jesus answers by telling a story about a man who was robbed,



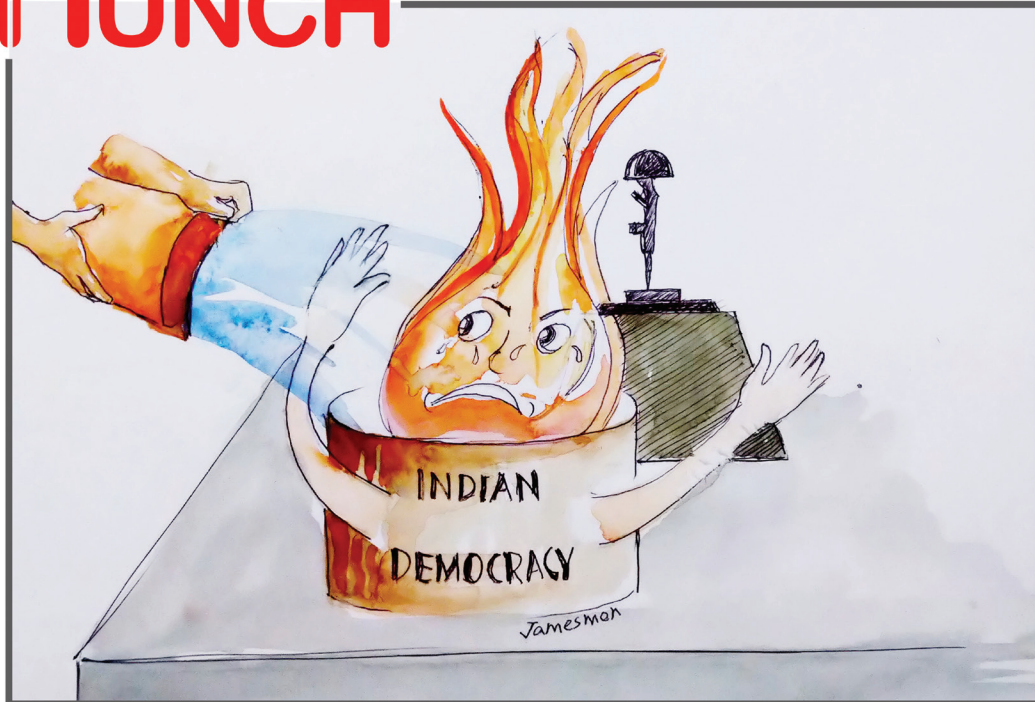
beaten, and left for dead by a marauding gang. A priest and another religious man walked by and, seeing the man on the ground, they did nothing. But a Samaritan—a mixed-race person considered in ancient times to be an impure enemy of the Jewish people—did not cross the street. Instead, he tended to the wounded man. The moral of Jesus's story is that the despised Samaritan is the good neighbour.

In using this story to answer his companion's question about the definition of neighbour, Rabbi Jesus was getting to what he considered to be the essential laws—love God with all you have and love your neighbor as yourself. He tells the story to make the point: What you think is outside, God has put inside. The Samaritan is more inside the boundaries of what is good/pure/loving than the passersby (religious leaders no less!) who did not stop to help the bleeding, beaten man on the street. In telling this story about a hated, mixed-race Samaritan doing a good deed, Jesus is disrupting the idea of borders and boundaries. If you want to know what love

looks like, Rabbi Jesus is saying, here it is: Love crosses borders and boundaries; it makes new cultural rules; it cares for the stranger. Love turns strangers into friends. Fierce love is rule-breaking, border-crossing, ferocious, and extravagant kindness that increases our tribe.

In any relationship, fierce love causes us to cross boundaries and borders to discover one another, to support one another, to heal one another. When we do this, when we go crazy with affection, and offer wild kindness to our neighbor across the street or across the globe, we make a new kind of space between us. We make space for discovery and curiosity, for learning and growing. We make space for sharing stories and being changed by what we share. We can learn to see the world not only through our own stories, through our own eyes, but also through the stories and worldview of the so-called other. We simply must open our eyes, look across the room, the street, the division, the border—and reach out to that neighbour, offering our hand, our compassion, and our heart.

## HAVE A HUNCH



# THE CROSSING

FR KM GEORGE

The sight of a country boat with an oar might evoke a deep longing in spiritually sensitive people in many cultures. In India we are steeped in imageries of *theerthadana* (pilgrimage). Theertha is crossing—crossing the ocean and any water body like lakes and rivers. (The picture shows a little boat on the Kodoor as the river swelled). In most Indian languages we are familiar with the expression *Samsara Sagara*, the world-ocean. That is what we should cross to accomplish the pilgrimage of life. The huge risks involved in launching out to tumultuous seas are obvious. Yet the vast ocean, seemingly infinite and uncharted, serves as the metaphor for our world of daily existence, of deceptions and contradictions. Raging waves of most religious establishments and political structures hinder the path of sincere seekers. They are, therefore, expected to brace the challenge of the world and cross over it. Great spiritual figures have undertaken journeys and crossings that marked their lives. Jesus, for instance, seems to have enjoyed crossing the sea of Galilee. He often tells his fishermen friends to take him across to the other side, and he could relax and sleep comfortably in a storm-tossed boat.

In fact, the idea of pilgrimage constitutes a common ground for all religions though the form and content are different in each. In all religious traditions the pilgrims, unsure of eventual return, leave behind their homes and all their belongings and homely comforts even if it is only for a short while. They enter a transitional state. They are on the way. The keynote of all pilgrimages is that we are wayfarers. By tradition in all religions, we literally walk the way, even barefooted, sometimes carrying with us a small, light bundle of very essential things. Suddenly all the rest becomes non-essential, a burden devoid of meaning. But we are clearly oriented to the sacred spot, our destination. Still 'we returned to our places, these Kingdoms', wrote T S Eliot in the



*Journey of the Magi*, 'but no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation.'

Reminiscing about the many journeys I was led to, two of them may be mentioned because of their arduousness - the one to the Mount Kailash and the other to the Mount Sinai. In the one, we crossed the legendary lake, touching and bathing in the pristine water of Mansarovar fed by the snow-clad mountains in Tibet. In the other we crossed the arid desert of Sinai in Egypt, and reached the summit of the stern, rocky Mt Sinai, crossing a dark night, partly on foot and partly on camel-back.

Desert and ocean, mountain chains and deep forests, day and night, space and time are all crossings for the pilgrim. We never cease to wonder at that far-off transcendent glow that drives them on and on??

The invisible virus has now closed all grand routes for any visible, external journey. But our inner ocean space is infinite and so far not blocked by any power whatsoever. Our own will, however, may block it by not willing to travel deeper and deeper, farther and farther in search of the Theertha. Challenge our unwilling will.



4 FEBRUARY

## WORLD CANCER DAY

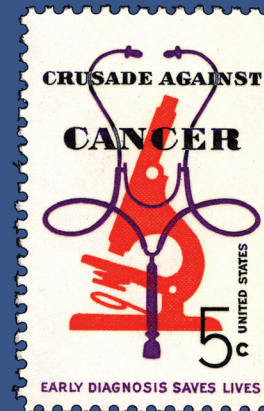
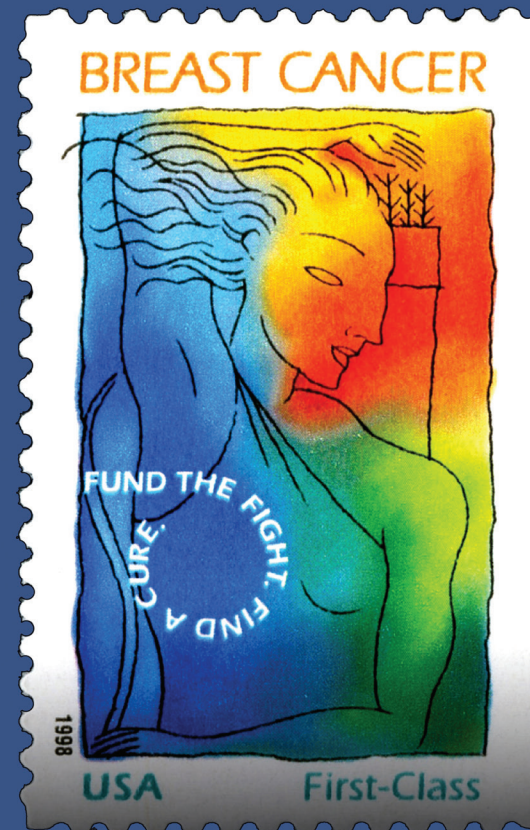
World Cancer Day is a global initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.

The three-year World Cancer Day campaign 2022–2024, starting this year has the theme, “Close the Care Gap”. It is about identifying and addressing the barriers that exist for many

people around the world to access the cancer care they need.

The World Cancer Declaration calls upon government leaders and policymakers to significantly reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity in the access to cancer services, and integrate cancer control into the global health and development agenda.

TOM JOHN OFM



There are 28 million cancer survivors worldwide. Although the incidence of cancer is increasing, in many countries more people are surviving cancer than ever before.



# Positive Psychology

## *A Coping Mechanism for 2022*

Proponents don't try to eradicate negative emotions such as fight and flight as these are necessary for our very survival. What they emphasize is building up our emotional bank reserve.

MONICA FERNANDES



The last couple of years have left us bruised and battered, thanks to the deadly Covid pandemic. We have all lost someone we know to the virus. Businesses have been hit and consequently a lot of people have lost their jobs. School and college going kids are forced to study online and miss the camaraderie of their classmates. We all feel cooped up. The games many venal politicians play for votes is also discomfoting. To top it all, we hoped that the virus would go for good but now we have to contend with fast spreading Omicron. When will it end? Such a scenario is bound to foster despondency. Using Positive Psychology is a good way of coping.

The term 'positive psychology' was coined by Dr Martin EP Seligman who studied mental illness. Hitherto psychology was concentrated on enabling patients to get over negative emotions such as despondency, self-doubt, self-hate triggered by traumatic experiences. One of the reasons why the emphasis was on negative emotions was because they were clinically easier to read than positive emotions such as joy, love, empathy and gratitude. Positive psychology was a paradigm shift from a negative focus to a

positive one. Proponents don't try to eradicate negative emotions such as fight and flight as these are necessary for our very survival. What they emphasize is building up our emotional bank reserve.

Using the principles of positive psychology, Dr Barbara L Fredrickson propounded the 'Broaden-and-Build' theory. She advises us to consciously and consistently build up our reserve of positive emotions such as gratitude, resilience, love, optimism, altruism and others, even momentary ones. By following her advice we could definitely shift our perspective for 2022 from negativity to positivity.

Dr Fredrickson conducted several experiments in support of her theory. Participants were shown happy film clips of penguins enjoying themselves and nature clips. The results were that the participants were calm and serene seeing these clips. They were then shown clips of deaths and funerals. There was a distinct mood change in the participants.

In an article, Dr Fredrickson narrates an interesting study of a group of nuns in the 1930s. The nuns were asked to write personal essays about their lives. These articles were reviewed

more than sixty years later. It was discovered that the nuns who were more positive lived ten years longer than those who had a negative outlook.

The primary objective of children playing in a park is to enjoy themselves. But in the process of self-gratification, the kids are building up their physical, psychological and social bank balances as they interact with each other. Dr Fredrickson further states that altruistic acts strengthen social ties and gives an individual a sense of satisfaction. A 2008 study found that 'loving kindness meditation' helps in the individual reaching out to others in need and this in turn, increases the positivity emotional reserve. Expressing gratitude and love also increase our Broaden-and-Build resources. Furthermore, positive emotions help to lessen the effects of negative emotions on the body and the mind. They enable people to have a broader perspective instead of a narrow one, thus leading to problem solving. In a study conducted by scientists, it was found that heart disease increased and prolonged in patients who had recurrent negative emotions.

Dr Alice Isen conducted two decades of

experiments on positive psychology. One such experiment was on medical doctors. Creative thinking tests showed those with positive emotions fared better and faster in giving the correct medical diagnosis and treatment of a patient with liver disease.

Dr Fredrickson opines that entire communities would benefit from practicing Broaden-and-Build in daily living and could bounce back from traumatic events beyond their control.

By following positive psychology, we could fight those pandemic blues by watching a comic clip or laughing at a silly joke, reach out with others through emails and phone calls, try to find solutions to problems. Psychologists suggest that keeping a gratitude journal, finding humour when we goof up on a simple task, making the drudgery of chopping vegetables lighter by listening to music while doing so, help us positively. Prayer does more wonders than the world is aware of. It gives us peace of mind. No doubt there are some unpleasant situations that we just cannot change but we can change our attitude towards them and not permit them to get the better of us.

# The Orange Delight

SONU FAKIHA



Priya crawled her fingers over the grey walls of the schools. She had a blue plain school bag and a green lunch bag in her left hand. Her sweaty right hand glossed over the walls, then a dusty table in the waiting room. Priya waited for her mother to pick her up from school. She dreamt of an orange Lays packet as she waited. She knew her wait would end with an orange potato delight. She went ahead and sat on the chair next to the dusty table. She looked over the watch lady that stood near the gate. The watch lady glared at Priya as if she had done a murder by choosing to sit on the chair. The steel chair did not comfort the anxious Priya but the only thing that soothed her anxiety was the orange Lays packet. Priya couldn't stop tapping her feet on the ground. She found herself chipping her nails off with the aid of her teeth, such was her excitement. Excitement to go home, to grab the orange delight on her way back home. All this was dependent on her mother. Her mother was the harbinger of her dreams. The dream, which might not be a great one for y'all but it was to a ten-year-old Priya. The black leather shoes she wore added rhythms to her excitement. The constant floor tapping didn't stop until she heard the watch lady call "Priya"

"Yes Ma'am", howled Priya. Her eyes were gleaming with joy. She ran towards the gate. A lady wearing yellow salwar and pink Kurti with red dupatta stood a little further from the school gate.

"Maa, you are here finally, you promised a Lays packet in the morning, hope you did not forget that?" excitedly asked Priya.

"Oh, Priya! Stop demanding things every day. Do not create havoc near the school. Let us keep moving. I have tons of work left," grumbled the mother.

Shattered, Priya held her mother's hand and started walking with a sulky face, watching the ground, matching her footsteps with her mothers, jumping over potholes filled with rainwater.

"Priya, stop jumping over and act like a decent girl, if you fall I have to answer your dad," scolded her mother.

Miserably Priya looked at her mother grumpily. They passed by the local stores, Priya could see the orange delights hanging in front of the store. She kept looking at them as she passed by. She fixed her gaze over her dream, which was now unattainable. She turned around and looked at what she dreamt about the whole day. She stopped in the middle of the road and started crying loudly, demanding her dream.

"Priya, stop creating a mess. I won't buy you that," said the mother as she dragged crying Priya and walked swiftly. Priya had no choice but to cry her way back home. Priya and her mother reached home. Crying Priya put her bags down and ran towards the bathroom. The mother did not budge and make up to Priya. Upset Priya was her least concern. All the mother cared about was her TV show which was to be aired when the clock struck one. She sat on the chair, watched her show, She laughed at the slapstick humour, she giggled at the sloppy romance that was aired on the show. She was filled with joy as she watched the show. Priya watched how joyful her mother was, the joy which she denied her and did not realise. Priya was developing a cold eye towards her mother. To her, she was a monster, a barrier and an obstacle that did not let her unite with her orange delight. After completing the show, her mother left the five years old in the house, instructing her to sit by the window and watch people as she had to go to the local markets to buy something. This rekindled hope for little Priya. Priya thought her mother would surprise her with orange Lays. She agreed to sit by the window. She saw her mother pass the lane with a bag. She only imagined her mother returning with packets of orange Lays. The dream was alive again but minutes later she saw her mother carry bangles of a different kind. The bangles which her mother was speaking, rather dreaming of for a month now. The happiness in her mother's face shattered Priya. The dreams were dusted again. Priya's dream of orange delight went in vain. The mother returned, unpacked the bangles, wore them, three on each hand, "Wow, this suits me." She kept adoring herself while Priya looked on.



# Why I Painted The Cross?

I was impelled to paint it and capture the cry that still rings out through the ages.

MURIEL NATHAN

Like everyone else, an artist is bombarded by visual images, sounds, impulses, impressions of all that goes on around oneself, right from early childhood. An artist, perhaps, would tend to file away some of these images, that affect one's deepest self in the inner recesses of one's mind, heart and soul and draw upon them at the opportune moment.

One such image to me, as an artist, has been that of the Cross. As a seven years old, when I was preparing to receive my First Holy Communion, I recall that the story of the Passion of Jesus Christ, left a deep impression on me. An aunt of mine had presented me with an illustrated copy of the New Testament for my First Communion. I read that book with avid interest. As young as I was, I recall my complete identification, particularly with the account of the Passion of Jesus, and as I looked at the pictures, the whole scene came so alive to me, that I wept, inconsolably. Around this time, we travelled as a family on holiday from Calcutta to Mangalore in South India, where we come from, and my Dad took us to visit the beautiful Catholic Church of St. Aloysius, famous for its frescoes, in that part of the world. As I gazed at those frescoes in wonder, depicting the life of Christ, I remember distinctly telling the Lord

that one day I was going to paint Him. I do not know what prompted me to say that, but I do know that the Lord took me seriously and years later, while I was going through a trial of faith, I actually felt called to paint the Holy Face of the Shroud of Turin. It was that painting that did more for me than anything I could have given to it, every stroke of the brush, helped me realize more deeply than ever before that "by His wounds we are healed".

The image of the Cross towers above us all, the source of our life, our strength and protection. The Cross speaks to us of God's infinite love for us and the offer of His Divine mercy as it stretches down vertically from heaven to earth and horizontally to embrace all of mankind, all of creation. I was impelled to paint it and capture the cry that still rings out through the ages "...and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself". As we behold the Cross, we can recall the words of St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men".

As young as I was, I recall my complete identification, particularly with the account of the Passion of Jesus, and as I looked at the pictures, the whole scene came so alive to me, that I wept, inconsolably.







# Be a Voice in the Wilderness

BOBBY JOSE KATTIKAD OFM CAP

**W**hy do we get stuck with certain words for a long time, unable to forget it or move forward? The word 'sorry' is that kind of a word. It is a remedial measure for a world that is captured by violence and anger. It is equally important that one should hear it and use it again and again to heal the wounds humanity carries.

To those enquired about his identity, this prophet in the desert says, he is just a voice in the desert. That desert is a space where very few travel—road less travelled. Therefore, he had to stay alert and watchful all the time, denying himself some sleep and rest. He had to speak without a break about the One who would cross that desert and travel by at any time of the day or night.

From all kinds of spaces and directions people need to speak about beautiful words like “forgiveness” all the time and that is the need of the hour.

The scriptures propose about His laws and decrees, “Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates”. The wrists or hands are where one is

accustomed to look at constant intervals. The foreheads are easily visible to people who come across to you and the door frames and gates are easily visible to visitors. In short, one should help oneself and others to be in constant awareness. That memory and awareness will help in crossing the terrains of evil forces. Nietzsche would speak about certain allegations that should be engraved on the walls that even the blind could read them.

In these days of locking oneself in I recall the days of travelling with much love in my heart. Visiting temples and spending quiet moments, especially in Jain temples, sitting within those cold interiors, is something that touched me deeply. The Jain temples are particularly created with white Makrana Rajasthan marbles. There are no dark colors at all. It is quite a daunting task to keep these white structures clean and unstained. I was happy to note that this choice of colour was on purpose, it seems, as I read recently in an article. It is to represent our soul that needs constant attention, to keep it clean and orderly. Temples are incomplete structures like human lives, as the article says in its title—a Jain temple is a process.



## The Foundation of the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph's of Tarbes (SJT) is in France.

On 15 August 1843, God gave six young peasant girls of Cantaus, 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.

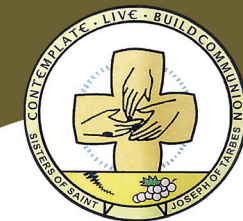
**A Sister of St. Joseph of Tarbes (SJT) is called to:**  
Gather the scattered; Unite the divided with the motto: 'GOD ALONE'

In and through: Prayer, through her service to the young—in schools and colleges; to the sick—in hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation of leprosy and HIV/AIDS patients; to the aged, orphans, women in distress, the poor and the needy—in and through the social-service ministries.

Dear friend, do you hear this call to reach out?

The Lord Jesus is calling you dear friend, to be part of the SJT family.

Do you hear the call of Jesus? COME AND SEE!



## 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



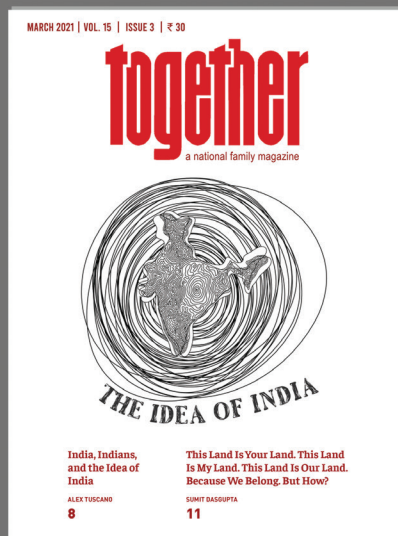
Printed and published by Basil Lobo on behalf of Franciscan Publications and printed at Matha Printers & Publishers, 2nd Main Road, 8/7, 5th Cross Rd, Chikkadugodi, Brindavan Nagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560029 and published at Franciscan Publications, 85, Hosur Road, Bengaluru 560095, Karnataka Editor: Saji P Mathew OFM

### For Further Information

Sr Catherine Charles | Sr Nathalia D'Souza  
St Joseph's Convent | Fraser Town, Bengaluru 560005 |  
cathy.jc@hotmail.com +91-98800 05944 | nathaliadsouza.sjt@gmail.com +91 97405 35498

Visit our website at <http://sjtbangalore.in>





# UNCOVERING OUR SHARED HUMANITY BY LETTING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN

Subscribe • Read • Promote

