

JUNE 2022 | VOL. 16 | ISSUE 06 | ₹ 30

# together

a national family magazine



**GIVE US  
BACK OUR  
CHILDHOOD**

**Child Rights**  
**Environment**

**06-15**

**22-27**

**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

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## 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

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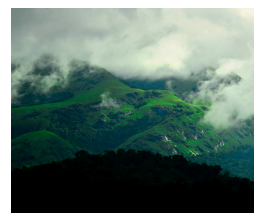
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# Child Labour Is No Solution for Poverty

Equity and justice are the sure ways to see India's 10.1 million children get back to school, continue studying, and allow the next generation to do the same.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

The stories of child labourers are not untold stories, they are unheeded stories. They have been told, we have heard of them, we have seen them, but have not paid heed to them. Governments and institutions have conveniently ignored the evidence. Inside of homes, factories, in mines, and out in the fields India exploits and maltreats, as of 2011 figures, 10.1 million child labourers; of which 5.6 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. A total of 152 million children—64 million girls and 88 million boys—are estimated to be in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide. They have no voice, no rights, and no privileges. They are too young to vote but old enough to toil for 14–18 hours a day, sometimes even without sufficient food and other basic necessities. We see it but stand by passively. The adults have reasons, and make it sound so normal.

Two wrongs don't make a right. People connect children working to lack of means to live and poverty. Adults and families at times claim that unless these kids work they would die in poverty. Grace Abbott, an American social worker who specifically worked in improving the rights of immigrants and child labourers, categorically says, "Child labour and poverty are inevitably bound together and if you continue to use the labour of children as the treatment for the social disease of poverty, you will have both poverty and child labour to the end of time."

## What Is Child Labour?

The International Labor Organisation (ILO), a subsidiary of the United Nations, defines child labor as "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development." Child labour comes in many shapes and forms: slave labour, forced labour, bonded

labour, or even casual labour; the result is the same—it steals the children of their childhood.

Child labour is the result of many factors, including poverty, social norms condoning them, lack of decent work opportunities for adults, migration, wars and conflicts. Across India child labourers are found in a variety of industries: in brick kilns, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services, agriculture, fisheries and mining. They provide cheap or unpaid labour. It has severe negative short and long-term consequences for children, such as denial of education and undermining physical and mental health. Child labourers face all forms of abuse—physical, mental, sexual and emotional.

## Child Labour Is Preventable

Looking at the numbers, the nexus in which child labour happens, and economic and social situation that perpetuate child labour, it would seem an impossible task to put an end to it; but it is doable if we take them, the children, as priority over cheap income and massive profit. Thus, as in the case of caste atrocities, gender bias, etc., a change initiated by the beneficiaries is next to impossible.

Listening to children is vital in achieving success in the fight against child labour, says the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children have a right to voice their views on matters affecting them; and they often do it to parents

and teachers but we ignore them because their voices are not loud enough and they are too tiny to pose a threat. Teachers and others in the education system can be frontline supporters to protect children and can alert others such as social workers to situations where children display signs of forced labour.

## Informed Buying Can Challenge Child Labour

Many products, from computer appliances, gold products to tea, chocolates, and seafood, which we proudly consume, have the fingerprints of child labourers mostly from developing countries or even from a developed country. Around 15 percent of gold that we consume comes from the small mines, which are traditional and non-mechanised, in Indonesia and in other parts of the world; and most of it is mined by tiny hands and tiny bodies that are actually only big enough to hold just pencils and chocolates. It is true of many products.

The decisions of what you buy have the potential to challenge child labour. Boycott products that are made by forced child labour. Some products we can easily identify, but others, produced and distributed by global corporations, with so complex network and supply chains, may not be easy. But we can demand information. If information is not given, write to them as unsatisfied customers, create bad press, and make them accountable. In this era of the Internet and social media they can't afford the risk of bad press. Successful boycotting will put pressure on the producers to check and assure that the products they sell are not made by child labourers.

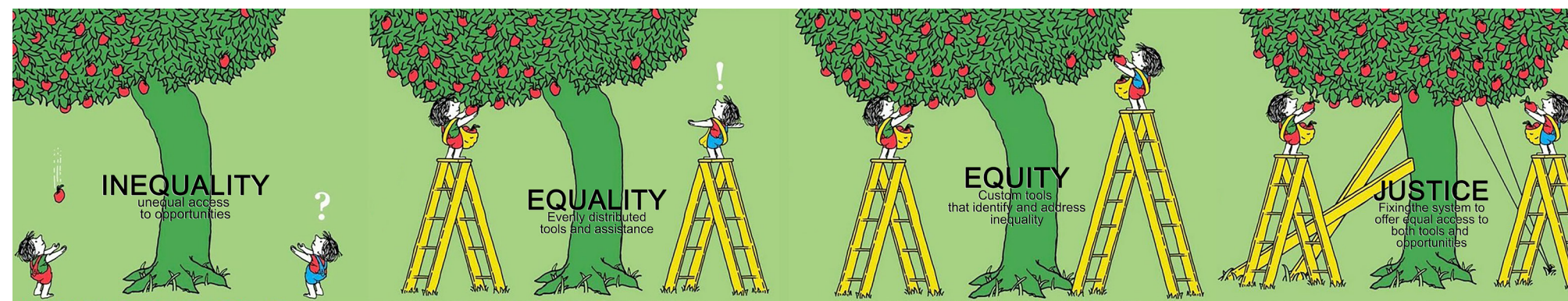
It is a bit of work; but if we care, we have no many options. Let us not look good and impressive at the expense of helpless children's lives. If we can help they will no more be helpless.

## Equity and Justice Are the Lasting Solution

Getting children out of work and into school requires broader changes in public policy to empower families to choose education over exploitative labour. Often families living in abject poverty can't see the damage they are doing to the children and their future. Therefore those in power must empower them with actions of equity and justice.

Equality may be a big word but often it is not enough. Given the socio economic situation, equality may not solve the problem of child labour. Just giving all children equal opportunity is not enough; they must be given equal opportunities of arriving at success, for their starting points are so varied. Considering the backwardness of these children, they must be given more than mere equality at the starting point, because others are far ahead in many other aspects like opportunities, intellectual and social acumen, etc. These children and families caught up in the rut of child labour should be given big enough incentives to push them out of it and begin to enjoy the benefits of education and a quality life. Or even if children are freed from child labour and put on record it would be only matter of time that they would have returned to fields, shops, factories, and mines to be exploited and maltreated. As it often happens, we would finally have only the records of rescued children but the children are back to the rat hole of child labour.

For a lasting effect we must fix the system and make it more just. If equity is treating everyone according to his or her circumstances, justice is long-term equity. It brings about sustainable change and progress. Equity and justice are the sure ways to see India's 10.1 million children get back to school, continue studying, and allow the next generation to do the same. ■





12 JUNE

## WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

Almost one in ten of all children worldwide are in child labour. The number of children in child labour has declined by 94 million since 2000; but much more needs to happen.

According to UN figures Africa ranks highest among regions both in the percentage of children in child labour—one fifth—and the absolute number of children in child labour -72 million. Asia and the Pacific ranks second highest in both these measures: 7% of all children; and 62 million in absolute terms.

TOM JOHN OFM



The UN Sustainable Development Goals calls for an end to child labour in all its forms by 2025.



# Let Them Go to School

Education aids in the prevention of crime, the empowerment of women, the eradication of poverty, the prevention of war and terrorism, and the maintenance of peace and order.

GAYATHRI SP

Photo by Nikhita S on Unsplash

Some of the greatest achievements in human history have been the result of education. From the invention of the lightbulb to the discovery of cures for deadly diseases, education has played a vital role in shaping the world we live in today. Children's education is possibly the most significant component of education in general. It can help shape their lives in a positive way and set them on a path toward a bright future.

Education is incredibly important in human existence since it increases knowledge and fosters critical thinking. Educating youngsters will assist them in thinking clearly, interacting with others, increasing creativity, improving time management, and making good decisions in life and for society. It allows individuals to find suitable jobs and maintain a fair level of living. It not only benefits a person's personal life, but

it also benefits the nation by establishing industries, contemporary thinking, nation-building, and eradicating old ways of thinking such as superstitions, caste systems, gender discrimination, and so on. Education also aids in the prevention of crime, the empowerment of women, the eradication of poverty, the prevention of war and terrorism, and the maintenance of peace and order.

Every child is born with the right to an education. It enables children to be self-sufficient and self-assured in their daily lives. It is essential in the development of one's personality and in being a good citizen of the country. It is critical to educate a youngster since children are our country's future. Children should be instilled with good values and morals, which will enable them to make sound judgments in the future and contribute to the betterment of the country.

Education is critical to achieving a respectable standing in society through obtaining decent jobs. If children get educated, social evils such as poverty could be reduced.

Education can be obtained through a variety of sources. Schools are one of the most important places to get an education. It lays the groundwork for the development of abilities, with a focus on primary education. School assists children in gaining stability in their lives. It enables youngsters of the same age to interact with one another while also expanding their vocabulary and learning abilities. School aids in the provision of knowledge that we will require in our daily lives. School is where youngsters first socialise and develop friends. School also aids in a child's physical development.

According to research, a kid is better equipped to deal with sudden spurts of energy in a familiar context and learns to be at his/her best behaviour only when exposed to other youngsters his/her age. Children are the cornerstones of our nation, so it is critical for a country to have a solid foundation. Reading novels and autobiographies of our country's leaders helps children mature and learn about humanity. They will have an understanding of our founding fathers' fight to make India independent if they learn about history. Geography teaches youngsters about the length, width, climate, vegetation, seasons, mountains, different countries, oceans, and so on. Economics teaches people about our economy and how to spend money more wisely. Societal science will teach children about the social problems that existed throughout ancestral times and the people who battled against them.

Quality education, special provisions for special cases, teacher quality, zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment, ensuring all-round development of children, improving learning outcomes to reduce detentions, monitoring compliance with RTE norms, and creating inclusive spaces for all are all mandated by the Right to Education Act.

**A kid is better equipped to deal with sudden spurts of energy in a familiar context and learns to be at his/her best behaviour only when exposed to other youngsters his/her age.**

## Steps Taken by the Indian Government to Ensure Children's Education

The right of children to free and compulsory education (RTE) act of 2009 entitles every kid aged 6 to 14 years to free and compulsory education.

- Samagra Shiksha is an initiative that ensures that every child receives quality education without prejudice.
- The Navodaya Vidyalaya scheme calls for the establishment of one Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in each district of the country in order to cultivate the best rural talent.
- Padhna Likhna Abhiyan (PLA): In 2020-21, a centrally financed Adult Education effort termed Padhna Likhna Abhiyan was carried out with a stated aim of imparting functional literacy to 57 lakh adult illiterates aged 15 and above under the basic literacy programme. The programme has been extended through July 31, 2021.
- RUSA stands for Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan. It is a centrally sponsored scheme (CSS) that provides funding to State Government Universities and Colleges in order to achieve fairness, access, and excellence goals. The funding is being distributed to states based on a critical evaluation of their State Higher Education Plans, which explain each state's approach for addressing issues of fairness, access, and excellence in higher education.

As any parent knows, raising children is hard work. From the moment they're born, children challenge us, test our limits and make us better people. They also test our understanding of the world around them, often asking questions that older and wiser people would rather not think about. But one thing never changes as children grow older: their need for education. ■



# Prevention of Child Labour and Economic Growth

NIKITA S BYALI

A child is a God-given gift that represents the future generation and the prospect of a nation. Children should be guided in the proper direction so that they can make their lives count for something inconceivable. Child labour is an issue, particularly in developing nations, that reduces literacy rates. It is the process by which parents or any responsible guardian forbid their children from attending school and instead, force them to work as labourers and earn daily wages. Even when the government established many free amenities for impoverished children who could not afford to pay tuition, some of them were left behind due to their guardians' fear of earning. As per recent rules revised by the government of India, a child losing their educational period is deemed a crime.

Child labour can take several forms, including intimidating the youngster physically or mentally, forcing the child to work, and so on. Child labour is imposed by outsiders when a kid begins to think or is influenced to support the family, or when a youngster is emotionally blackmailed to give up schooling and stand as a backbone for their family. Child labour is forced for a number of reasons, including poverty, bare minimum earnings to support the family, illiteracy, unemployment, social unrest, health concerns, and so on. There is no sufficient knowledge reaching the impoverished sector, which leads to unemployment and forces entire families and children to work as labourers. Developing nations require background support, which includes knowledge, hard work, financial stability, and young minds, among other things. The government must analyse the solution as strict laws to be implemented in order to change people's minds, protect children from hazards, and provide them with a better life.

A few acts that have been legally implemented are:

- The Factories Act of 1948, which prohibits

the employment of children under the age of 14 in any factory,

- The Mines Act of 1952 prohibits the employment of any kid under the age of 18 in any mine.
- The Child Labor Act of 1986 states that children under the age of 14 cannot be employed, and anyone who violates it faces imprisonment for a minimum of three months to one year, as well as a fine of ₹10,000, which can be increased to ₹20,000.

According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, every child up to the age of 14 is entitled to free education, and disadvantaged families should receive 25% of reserved seats in private schools.

Child labour is an abuse of young minds and a hindrance to the nation's economic development. We can observe some excellent results as a result of the steps taken over the last decades, since child labour rates are down. After the implementation and slow economic growth, many parents in poverty don't want to send their children to labour work anymore. This shift is due to increased educational awareness, which encourages them to pursue educational opportunities that benefit society and their families.

When younger generations are employed, they are unable to attend school. During the continuing working period, a child is compelled to choose between education and labour, as post-standards and poverty line a youngster tends to pick labour to support their family.

Because of the intergenerational poverty persistence cycle, child labour is both a cause and a result of a lack of economic development. Economic growth will eliminate child labour, while child labour discourages economic development. Another way to break the intergenerational cycle of young people working, being illiterate, and living in poverty is to educate them. ■

# Ways to Prevent Child Trafficking

NIDHI OINAM

Human trafficking is one of the most horrific crimes in our world today. One of the most common forms of human trafficking is child trafficking. Child trafficking is the exploitation and forced labour of children for someone else's profit. Children are often forced into sex, domestic servitude, or other forms of labour such as forced begging or the selling of drugs.

Human trafficking of children is a problem that can be addressed. Prevention efforts for child trafficking are most effective when implemented as part of a multi-sectoral approach. Some of the ways in which we can prevent child trafficking are as follows:

Children should be taught the risks of talking with strangers on the internet. Because human traffickers are aware of the possibility for surveillance and monitoring while utilising technology, they may first contact potential victims via open social media groups before transferring to encrypted or anonymous services like WhatsApp messaging on mobile phones. Many human trafficking victims are at risk because they are lonely, sad, and isolated, which can be mitigated by strong parental relationships. Parents should make an effort to develop and maintain positive relationships with their children. They should spend quality time with each other and keep in touch frequently.

To combat the rising trend of child trafficking, government authorities should implement measures such as border limitations, security at all ports of entry and exit, movement monitoring in and out of countries, and other appropriate measures.

All countries' legal frameworks for dealing with child trafficking should be vigorously

enforced. The rate of child trafficking will decrease if these laws are effectively implemented, perpetrators are punished, and harsh penalties are imposed. Because of the dimensional shift in the world's perception, providing work opportunities is a crucial solution to the problem of child trafficking. You can't do anything these days without money, but how will you acquire it if you're unemployed? Many people have turned to child trafficking as a source of income and employment as a result of this situation. All individuals should have access to profitable and legal work possibilities in order to abolish child trafficking.

The government should take efforts to ensure that all children are educated and have access to critical information. Free and obligatory basic and secondary education will suffice to reduce the number of illiterates and hence the prevalence of child trafficking in a country. Raising children's awareness and providing them with the knowledge and abilities they need to recognise and defend themselves. Good quality health care and education services, as well as a functioning child protection system that detects and assists at-risk children, are critical in both preventative and response efforts.

Not a Number is an interactive child trafficking and exploitation prevention curriculum that aims to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to make safe decisions. We can inform people at schools, child welfare and juvenile justice agencies about Not a Number and ask them to become licenced.

There is no single industry that can deliver the complete package of activities, and no single government can fix this problem on its own. If we all work together, child trafficking will be eradicated within this generation. ■



# Child Poverty

A poor child growing up in a developing nation endures greater suffering than most poor children in a rich country.

ANNA ROSE

Child poverty affects children from low-income families as well as orphans who are raised with little or no assistance from the state. According to UNICEF, 356 million children are living in extreme poverty. One billion children are estimated to be without at least one basic need, such as housing, regular food, or clean water. Children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in poverty, and the poorest children are twice as likely as their wealthier peers to die before reaching the age of five. Children living in poverty are those who are deprived of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to stay alive, develop, and thrive, leaving them unable to exercise their rights, reach their full potential, and participate as full and equal members of society.

Setting an absolute or relative monetary threshold is the simplest way to quantify child poverty. If a family's income does not exceed that threshold, the children in that family are considered to be poor. Absolute poverty standards are set and only updated

for price changes, but relative poverty thresholds are determined using the population's real income and consider changes in consumption. The absolute poverty threshold is the amount of money required to buy a specific amount of goods and services, and each threshold reflects the minimum income required to acquire basic necessities of life. However, a family earning more than a certain amount of money may still choose not to spend on a need for their children.

There are numerous theories as to why children are poor. The majority of children born into poverty have poor parents. The presence of child poverty is influenced by adult poverty; the causes could be government policies, lack of education, unemployment, social services, disabilities, and discrimination. Children's opportunities are limited due to a lack of parental economic resources, such as disposable income. Deindustrialisation, globalisation, residential segregation, labour market segmentation, and the migration of middle-class residents from inner cities limit economic opportunities and choices across generations, isolating inner city children. The breakdown of the nuclear family, illegitimacy, teen pregnancy, and the rise in single mothers are all cited as major contributors to poverty and welfare dependency among women and their children.

Children born of unintended pregnancies are more likely to be poor. Raising a child necessitates a significant investment of time and money, so each additional child places a greater strain on parental resources. Families with a single parent are generally poorer than families with two parents.

The impact of child poverty varies depending on social, economic, and geographic factors. Poor physical condition, mental development, and mental health (such as low self-esteem), a chance to work in skilled labour is extremely unlikely and at a young age, living in a deprived and isolated environment. Many studies have found strong links between childhood poverty and adult outcomes in education, health and socialisation, fertility, labour market participation, and income. Strong

evidence suggests that children of low-income parents are more likely to have problems with their intellectual and behavioural development. Many studies have consistently found large negative associations between early childhood poverty and academic outcomes. Furthermore, children from low-income families are more likely to demonstrate behavioural and emotional difficulties such as impulsivity and trouble getting along with classmates. Family poverty is also associated with an increased risk of teen pregnancy, bad peer connections, and low self-esteem. Children who grew up in poverty are more likely to stay in poverty. A poor child growing up in a developing nation endures greater suffering than most poor children in a rich country, according to a relative measure of poverty. In these countries, poverty is usually defined as a severe deprivation of basic human needs. One-third of all children in developing countries live in poverty. Many of these countries are plagued by war, disease, corruption, lack of resources, and harsh environmental conditions, all of which contribute to their poverty. These factors are a leading cause of death, resulting in an increase in single parents and orphaned children.

UNICEF advocates for increased national social protection investments; and supports government efforts to track and monitor poverty reduction progress. The problem stems from a combination of factors, including failure to prioritise social protection programmes that benefit children the most; limited budgets and human resources; bureaucratic processes and a lack of information about entitlements and programmes; and discrimination against the most vulnerable, including those who receive social protection. As a result, the region's most vulnerable children are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled.

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 of halving child poverty by 2030 and strengthening social protection systems to reduce the impact of poverty on children's lives, UNICEF is collaborating with governments and other partners across the world. ■

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# Mid-day Meal Programme

**This programme achieved a number of beneficial outcomes, including more underprivileged children enrolling and attending school on a regular basis.**

RENU GUPTA

**T**he government of India's mid-day meal programme aims to enhance the nutritional status of school-aged children across the country. On working days, this programme provides free lunches to children in upper elementary and primary classes at government-aided, education guarantee scheme, local body, and alternate innovative Abhiyan and national child labour project schools run by the Ministry of Labour. In the early 1960s, Tamil Nadu's former chief minister, K Kamaraj, pioneered the first mid-day meal. Under the instructions of the Supreme Court of India, the system was implemented in all states by 2002.

Education and learning require good nutrition and health. Nutrition continues to be a serious issue in India. Since India's independence, despite enormous increases in food production and scientific progress, the country has remained static. The national and state governments have been implementing a variety of poverty alleviation programmes for the community's overall social and economic development, as well as numerous nutrition programmes to help a significant number of individuals who are at risk.

Variations in dietary diversity are significantly connected to changes in micronutrient

consumption. Children's nutritional intake changed as a result of increased eating of fruits, daily foods, green vegetables, and animal foods following the intervention programme.

The five main outcomes of school feeding are:

- **Nutrition:** Improved micronutrient and macronutrient intake leads to improved nutrition and child health, as well as higher learning and lower morbidity for students.
- **Education:** School feeding can help students get into and stay in school by increasing enrolment and decreasing absenteeism. Alleviating short-term hunger among children at school may contribute to improved performance in school tests and promote normal progression from grade to grade in completing their basic education.
- **Gender:** It has been proven that school feeding contributes to gender equality by increasing access to education for orphans and disadvantaged children. This is particularly useful in boosting girls' enrollment where their access to education is limited.
- **Value transfer:** School feeding assures that students are not taken out of school during financial crunch. During periods of poverty and reduced purchasing power, families



The mid-day meal programme achieved a number of beneficial outcomes, including more underprivileged children enrolling and attending school on a regular basis.

often resort to negative coping mechanisms, including taking children out of school to save on school fees and related expenses.

- **Local development:** School meals are often linked to health and nutrition, as well as important package initiatives. When food is sourced from disadvantaged, small-holding farms, school feeding has positive consequences for community development and local production.

This programme achieved a number of beneficial outcomes, including more underprivileged children enrolling and attending school on a regular basis. Teachers observed that before the

mid-day meal was supplied in school, students would frequently go home for lunch and then not return to school. However, now that the mid-day meal is provided in school, students' attendance has improved. Their mothers, who used to have to interrupt their work in order to feed their children at home throughout the day, no longer have to. Because both lower and upper caste pupils in the school eat this lunch together, and Dalit women have been employed to cook the meal in a few places, this initiative has also helped to decrease caste preconceptions. School feeding is a powerful and effective intervention that can help fight chronic hunger while reducing poverty and inequality. ■



# Reformation (Im)possible; on the New Law for the Roman Curia

MICHAEL ANAND OFM

**R**oma locuta, causa finita est. This age old Latin phrase powerfully conveys the notion that the jurisdiction of the Pope and the Roman Curia who have the ultimate authority over the universal Catholic Church in matters regarding spirituality and Ecclesiastical disciplines. The Code of Canon Law states that the Pope 'has supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, and he can always freely exercise his power' (Can. 331). However, the Pope, the supreme authority of the Church, 'usually conducts the business of the universal Church through the Roman Curia, which acts in his name and with his authority for the good and for the service of the Churches' (Can. 360). The word Curia means the place of various offices of group of persons who compose the offices. The Roman Curia is the complex of department and institutes which assist the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his supreme pastoral function and the Pope uses this office to implement his judicial, legislative, and executive office as head of the Church. Although it exists and acts only insofar as he wishes it to, its specific powers are set out in the Code of Canon Law and special laws enacted and approved by the Roman Pontiff. By force of tradition and practice, moreover, it has assumed a powerful position in day-to-day Church operations.

The Roman Curia has been in existence right from the first century in different forms. On June 28, 1988, Pope John Paul II promulgated the apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus*, to take effect on March 1, 1989, modifying the organization and competencies of the Roman Curia which had been regulated by the norms of the

Aug. 15, 1967, apostolic constitution *Regimini ecclesiae universae* issued by Pope Paul VI. Though this apostolic constitution of Pope John Paul II is much appreciated, the new millennium and the changing society required an updated special law to govern the Roman Curia. It's because the Catholic Church believes in *Ecclesia semper reformanda* – a continually reformed Church.

Francis was elected Pope in 2013 with a mandate to reform the huge and inefficient Vatican bureaucracy. As a first step to revitalize the top most organization of the Catholic Church, soon after taking charge as the head of the Church, Pope Francis appointed a cabinet of cardinal advisors who have met regularly since then to draft a new law to regulate the Roman Curia. Finally, the long awaited document, apostolic constitution, *Praedicate evangelium* (Preach the Gospel), that implements the reform of the organization and structure of the Roman Curia was released on March 19, 2022 on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on the ninth anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope Francis. This new constitution regulating the Roman Curia will come into full effect from the 5th of this month of June, on the Solemnity of Pentecost. Some of the significant changes that are brought forth in this new constitution express the ardent desire of Pope Francis to take the Church forward in the modern times.

## From 'Congregations' to 'Dicasteries'

So far the Roman Curia consisted of the Secretariat of State, Papal Secretariat, and the Councils, the Congregations, the Tribunals and other

institutes. Under the new constitution, all the Vatican's main departments are now known as 'dicasteries.' The powerful Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for example, will now be called the 'Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.' Along with removing the title 'congregation' from Vatican departments, the new constitution renames pontifical councils as 'Dicasteries.' The constitution says: 'The Roman Curia is composed of the Secretariat of State, the Dicasteries and other bodies, all juridically equal to each other.'

With a new total of 16 departments, in addition to the various secretariats, tribunals, offices, and commissions, the number of Vatican offices has been reduced. The 16 Dicasteries of the Curia as per the new constitution are: Dicastery for Evangelization; Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith; Dicastery for the Service of Charity; Dicastery for the Eastern Churches; Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; Dicastery for the Causes of Saints; Dicastery for Bishops; Dicastery for the Clergy; Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life; Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity; Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue; Dicastery for Culture and Education; Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Dicastery for Legislative Texts; Dicastery for Communication.

## Goodbye, 'Red Pope'

Founded in 1622, the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, later called the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (the Congregation that so far addressed the issues pertinent to mission countries such as India), had substantial autonomy, also from a financial point of view. So much so that its prefect was nicknamed 'the Red Pope'. But in *Praedicate Evangelium* 'the Red Pope' has disappeared. Article 55 of the constitution makes this significant change by merging the Pontifical Council for promoting the New Evangelization and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples into one Dicastery as 'the Dicastery for Evangelization', directly chaired by the Roman Pontiff. This is a notable change because it is the first time ever

the Pope will directly oversee a Curial department. Placing Evangelization at the centre, this Dicastery for Evangelization is listed first among the Dicasteries in the document, indicating its centrality in the new structure of the Roman Curia. The Dicastery for Evangelization will have two sections, one for 'fundamental questions of evangelization in the world' and another 'for the first evangelization and the new particular Churches in the territories of its competence'.

## Lay Leaders to Vatican Departments

'It is no longer automatic that the head of a Vatican dicastery is a cardinal,' said Bishop Marco Mellino, secretary of the Council of Cardinals that has advised Pope Francis in the drafting of the new constitution of the Roman curia, *Praedicate Evangelium*, addressing the media, on the 21st of March, after the release of the new document. This is seen as the biggest change in the new documents. The only exceptions are the Vatican's tribunals and the Council for the Economy. The latter because in the event of a sede vacante at the death or resignation of a pope, the head of this office will be one of three who assist the camarlengo, who leads the Vatican in the absence of a pope. Therefore, the constitution states that 'the pope, the bishops, and other ordained ministers are not the only evangelizers in the Church,' and because of this, the curial reform 'must provide for the involvement of lay people, even in roles of government and responsibility.' Stressing on the role of laity in the Church, the document further states that the contribution of lay people is 'essential', and 'any member of the faithful can head a department or organism', if the Pope decides that they are qualified and appoints them. Explaining the significance of Pope Francis's reform of the curia, which allows the laity to lead Vatican departments, Jesuit canonist, and emeritus professor of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Gianfranco Ghirlanda stressed that the 'power of governance in the Church does not come from the sacrament of Orders' that happens at priestly ordination, but from 'canonical mission,' meaning, the faculty granted by the Roman pontiff on any given issue.



### End to Careerism

Another daring move by the Pope through *Praedicate Evangelium* is to shun careerism in the Roman Curia by limiting the term of office to five years. The new constitution establishes, 'As a rule, after five years, clerical Officials and members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who have served in curial institutions and offices return to pastoral care in their diocese/parish, or in the Institutes or Societies to which they belong.' It also makes further provision stating that, 'Should the Superiors of the Roman Curia deem it opportune, the service may be extended for another period of five years.' This bold law by Pope Francis is seen as a blow to careerism and paves way for the fresh blood and new thinking in the top most institution of the Catholic Church.

### Synodal Church

In the year 2021, Pope Francis launched the process the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held in 2023 with the theme, 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission'. Maintaining the same thought process, *Praedicate Evangelium* envisions a Curia close and connected to local bishops by maintaining an 'organic relationship' with national and regional bishops' conferences, stating that, 'The Roman Curia does not place itself between the Pope and the Bishops, rather it places itself at the service of both in the manner that is proper to the nature of each.' The importance of this aspect is seen as the document highlights the role of local bishops' conferences, mentioning them 52 times. By contrast, the 1988 document *Pastor bonus*, the previous Vatican constitution, mentioned them just twice. Hence, the National Bishops' Conferences will be empowered under the new reform, in the sense that the Roman Curia will undertake greater consultation with them before making major decisions that affect them. The method for accomplishing this vision, for Pope Francis, is 'synodality,' allowing the curia, and

the Church as a whole, to become one of mutual listening and learning from each other.

### Way Forward

The Document titled 'Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia and its Service to the Church in the World' is rich in content. It introduces new thinking, paving way for innovations and reformations in the Catholic Church. At the same time, *Praedicate Evangelium* poses lots of challenges to the Universal as well as local churches around the world. Considering the Church in India, for instance, one wonders if we are ready to accept the innovative Church, when we are still struggling to convince the faithful to accept girls on the altar, to receive communion from the women Eucharistic ministers, to permit women to have their feet washed on Maundy Thursdays, etc. The notion of clericalism and patriarchy are strongly inbuilt in the minds of the people that there is hardly any place for the existence of subsidiarity at the parish and the diocesan levels.

The growth and development of any organism involves changes, challenges and some internal churnings and it would necessarily involve a tension between giving up something old and outdated and taking up something new and innovative. Whether the reformation is possible or impossible depends not solely on the authorities and the laws that are enacted and implemented but on the convictions and openness of every individual member. As Pope Francis has often repeated, the document insists that true reform is based above all on an 'internal reform,' meaning personal conversion. Hence, at this stage it is too early to presume, if the reformations brought forth by *Praedicate Evangelium* are possible or impossible, but what can be predicted in confidence is that in the near future reformation is on the cards and the Roman Curia will never be the same as before. ■

**Michael Anand OFM** is a practising civil lawyer and a qualified canon lawyer.

## Trends in Conservative Christianity

SUSANNA VAS

With over 2.3 billion members, Christianity is the largest religion in the world. What we portray as a single religion actually comprises around 45,000 denominations with various theological, moral, social, political, and ethical views. Even within denominations, there are individuals and groups who—on account of their stances on matters in the aforementioned categories—fall under the umbrellas of conservatism, conservative liberalism, liberal conservatism, or liberalism.

Some wear these labels as a badge of honor and others resist them altogether. Both choices are understandable. In our times when usernames on social media are judge and jury, identifying as conservative or liberal will invite unpredictable reactions and responses. You may attract a warm, like-minded following or a belligerent bunch of hostiles.

Casual research on gender in the Bible led me down a rabbit hole of conservative Christian social media. Perusing these accounts, I identified some recurrent views and themes which I have enumerated below.

### Pro-patriarchy

Conservatives like Larry Solomon of Biblical Gender Roles (BGR) and Biblical Sexology acclaim patriarchy as a virtue, deeming it God's design for humanity. They summarily reject feminism, humanism, egalitarianism, and complementarianism. They advocate traditional gender roles and encourage demeaning perceptions of women. The woman's foremost purpose is to submit her body, mind, and will to her male head. Therefore, it is acceptable to view women as 'doormats'. Most concerning is Solomon's justification of child marriage for girls because they are fertile, fit, and moldable.

BGR and Christian Domestic Discipline (CDD) regard the Bible as a sex manual rather than sacred scripture. Instead of conforming

their views to the scriptures, they contort scriptures to conform to crude, carnal interpretations. Therefore, they have handy exonerations—drawn abundantly from the Old Testament and the Pauline corpus—for objectification, disempowerment, marital rape, and domestic corporal punishment.

Solomon has expanded and monetized his 'ministry' through paid podcasts and matchmaking services. BGR, CDD, The Traditional Mother (Paulina Prieto), and the now-defunct YogiOabs (Avinash Saha) are arguably misleading their followers by using the Bible to rationalize fetishes and fantasies of dominance and submission.

### Traditional Latin Mass Apologism

This subject is particular to Roman Catholic Christianity. In a historic move, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) legitimized the Novus Ordo (NO), an abbreviated and vernacularized Traditional Latin (TLM) or Tridentine rite. For the most part, the NO moves with the currents of modernity, allowing contemporary worship music, relaxed dress codes, female altar servers, and increased laity participation. Critics of the NO regret the watering down of the majestic TLM rite and the vulgarization of the mass. Fr. Casey Cole OFM delicately reminded Catholics that they shouldn't be worshipping the liturgy, but rather what it signifies.

The Religious Hippie (Amber Rose Schneider) argues that altar service should be reserved for boys who want to discern their vocation to the priesthood. According to her, the presence of girls—who 'will never become priests'—on the altar is distracting to young, hormonal boys. The Gospels expose the fallacy of this argument. Before it was socially acceptable, the unmarried Jesus kept company with women. His male apostles were present during the symbolic sacrifice (The Last Supper), but women—the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene,



Veronica, the women of Jerusalem, and Mary the wife of Clopas—notably accompanied Him during the actual sacrifice (the Passion).

The critics also invoke the merits of Latin. Although a dead language, it is immortal and incorruptible. As living languages are constantly in flux, words and their meanings multiply, and not always gracefully. Moreover, discontinuing the TLM supposedly disconnects us from our heritage and perfect communion with the saints who attended it. None of these are airtight arguments as Christ did not institute a sacred language nor did he speak to people in foreign words. Even when the apostles received the gift of tongues, the crowds heard their message in their own languages.

I'll reluctantly admit that very few contemporary hymns can hold a candle to the pre-recording-industry classics (*Abide With Me*, *Amazing Grace*, *Lead, Kindly Light*, etc.), let alone the Gregorian chants (*Miserere Mei*, *Pange, Lingua Gloriosi*, *Dies Irae*, etc.). Musical, vocal, and lyrical virtuosity has arguably been replaced with four-chord melodies, mundane lyrics, and juvenile rhymes. Although deemed irreverent, commercial, and disposable, modern gospel music combats elitism by encouraging personal expression, engagement with the spiritual, and community participation, especially among youth.

### Modesty

Modesty is a slippery concept because there's no one-size-fits-all definition.

Most conservative Christians address modesty in terms of gender appropriateness and body coverage. TLM Catholics consider their mass more reverent because of the dress code where sloppy, sleazy, and desirable dressing is discouraged. Women wear dresses or skirts with veils while men wear crisp formals or casuals.

BGR reckons women should curate their wardrobes and customize their appearances according to their husbands' preferences. Larry Solomon asserts that modesty is about 'appropriateness' rather than coverage. By this logic, a swimsuit is immodest inside a church but modest at a beach.

Conservatives encourage veiling following 1 Corinthians 11, but for different reasons. The Religious Hippie, Megan McKinney, and A Catholic Wife (Deena Barca) veil out of reverence for the Eucharist, in imitation of Marian modesty, and because sacred religious objects like the monstrance and the altar are, in a sense, veiled. Lindsay Kirkland from *Tiny Notes of Home* veils out of respect for herself and her husband. Larry Solomon and *A Traditional Mother* believe women should veil to remind themselves that, unlike men, they have a human head (their father or husband) above them.

Christianity is the only Abrahamic/major religion to impose head-coverings on women but not men. Jewish men wear the kippah, Muslim men wear the taqiyah, Zoroastrian men wear the topee, and Sikh men wear the dastar.

Instead of spelling out dress codes, dietary laws, and language rules, Christ made room for believers to exercise their moderation and discretion with regard to these matters. Whether the Pauline corpus is dogma or commentary will remain a central conflict between conservatives and liberals.

### Quiverfull Family Modeling

This philosophy is inspired by Psalm 127:3–5. These verses compare an abundance of children in the home to a quiver full of arrows. Even so, not every large Christian household espouses Quiverfull beliefs.

Quiverfull adherents are archaic patriarchal cultists who take 'Be fruitful and multiply' to extremes. The parents shun birth control and family planning and produce more children than they can reasonably provide and care for. Unsustainable living conditions could put such families in the crosshairs of social services. The parents usually live remotely in conservative communities to keep their families intact. They practice homeschooling as they distrust the public school system and its 'immoral' indoctrinations. Instead of warding off the evils of schools and society, their domestic milieu ends up breeding them.

Poor socialization, zealous religious conditioning, and puritanic sexual repression

in the family culminate in guilt, bodily shame, and inappropriate sexual conduct. The Duggar family—who ineffectively claim they are not Quiverfulls—went from beloved to notorious when Josh, the oldest child, was accused of molesting four of his sisters and five other girls. Quiverfull fundamentalists blame the female victims instead of holding the male abusers accountable.

### Republicanism

In the USA, Republicanism is the B-side of Christian conservatism. Conservative Republican Christians are notable for their jingoism.

Camille and Haley Harris uploaded an election campaign song called 'That's Why America Loves President Trump' in November 2020. The lyrics commend Trump for supporting 'religion, speech, and guns' and 'building that wall' at the US-Mexico border. Guns complete the machismo ideal: the hunter, the protector, the defender.

There is a lack of remorse for historical atrocities like attempted indigenous genocide and slave trading. Larry Solomon, in his side project, Biblicist Nationalist, urges white Americans to be proud of their ancestors for Christianizing the country, albeit through political violence. To paraphrase him, wars happen all the time in the Bible. Someone wins and someone loses. The loser lives under the sway of the victor.

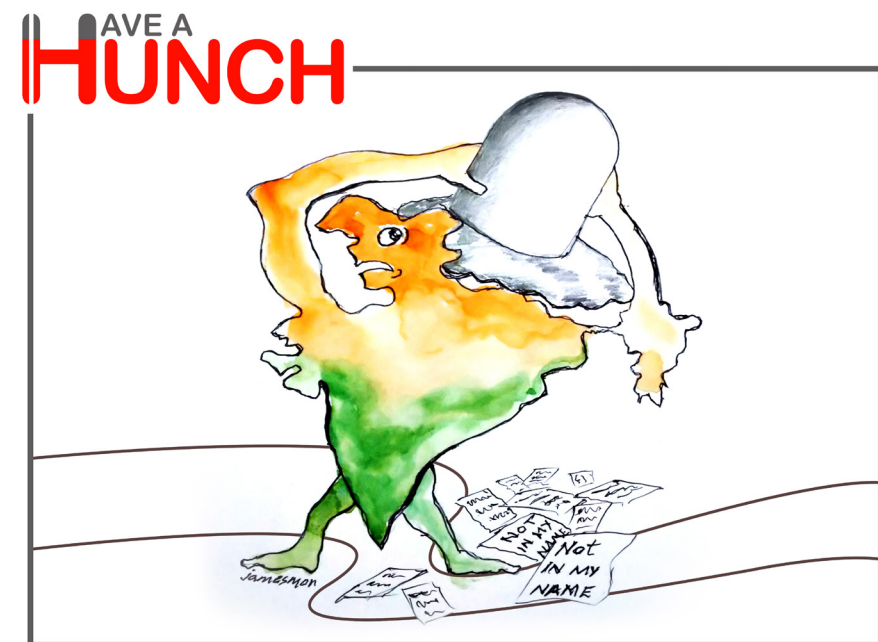
Republican Christian social media also evinced resistance to pandemic protocols and trivialization of Covid-19 through anti-vax propaganda, conspiracy theories on microchip implantation, and unfounded accusations against Biden and the Democrats for fear-mongering and brainwashing.

Their modus operandi is to ruffle the liberals by condemning what they support and supporting what they condemn. If a liberal says black lives matter, a conservative retorts that all lives matter. If a liberal supports Palestine, a conservative supports Israel because Israel was Yahweh's pet. If a liberal is pro-choice, a conservative is pro-life. If a liberal supports sexual freedom, a conservative endorses purity culture. If a liberal accepts non-heteronormativity, a conservative unleashes fire-and-brimstone posts and hashtags.

### Conclusion

No two believers believe alike, yet on Sundays, we (Catholics) say, 'I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.' Sometimes with conviction, sometimes with skepticism, sometimes with amusement, sometimes out of habit. ■

**Susanna Vas** is a 23-year-old Literature postgraduate with a restless curiosity about all things Christian.





# Western Ghats Are Older than the Himalayas

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

India's Western Ghats, also called the Sahyadri, is a north-south chain of mountains or hills that mark the western edge of the Deccan plateau region. It runs parallel to India's western coast, approximately 30–50 km inland, the Ghats traverse the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and it ranks among the top eight biodiversity hotspots in the world. It is home for some 139 mammal species, 508 bird species, 179 amphibian species and 250 reptile species.

It is well known for its majestic beauty. It holds a range of peaks, valleys, waterfalls, and wild life reserves; some celebrated ones are,

Munnar, Vagaman, and Thekkady Wildlife Reserve in Kerala, Nilgiri hill stations (Ooty, Coonoor etc.) in Tamil Nadu; Dandeli, Coorg, and Chikmangalur in Karnataka; Mollem National Park in Goa; and Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra. The highest peak in this range is Anaimalai hills in Kerala, which has an elevation of 2,695 metres.

Though the Western Ghats are older than the Himalayas, it is not the oldest mountain range in India. The entire mountain range is blessed with plenty of rain fall. Most mountains have many streams and numerous waterfalls. Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri are the main rivers originating from the Western Ghats. ■

**5 June:**  
**World Environment Day**  
Western Ghats photographed  
at Wayanad, Kerala





# Environmental Correctness

More and more people in the recent years are conscious of resorting to mindful eco-choices and 'green habits' as an alternative way of life.

A FRANCIS OFM



If we are in sync with the eco-thinking of the day, we probably deem like many trenchant environmentalists who live in an age of environmental guilt and shame. Try conversing with someone on the topic of planetary meltdown; It is no surprise that we soon end up speaking about the human culpability that seeds as well as breeds all sorts of 'environmental crimes', a term that is gaining traction, these days.

In our conversation, perhaps, we may not go to the extreme of calling ourselves, 'environmental criminals', a view proposed by professor Richard Maxwell and social scientist Toby Miller in their article, 'Are We Environmental Criminals?' But we would certainly insinuate an array of behaviours we habituate, both in terms of omissions and commissions which are perversely counterintuitive to the survival of the environment.

Our perspective of omission in all likelihood, may include a list of acts pointing to our complacency of not processing the household waste, not segregating it as organic (biodegradable such as kitchen waste) and inorganic (recyclable such as bottles, papers etc.), not being committed to recycling, etc. In the category of commission, we would hastily enlist anything that triggers environmental destruction, such as war-related ecocides, pernicious chemical/gas spills (remember Bhopal chemical disaster), use of plastics, dumping e-waste in landfills, disposing plastic waste into the sea, hunting protected species etc.

## A Silver Lining

On a brighter side of the spectrum, beyond the enumeration of the environmental accusations and confessions over the green felonies we are responsible for, there is a small degree of relief, a 'silver lining' which we could genuinely subscribe to our credit: that is, more people in the recent years are conscious of resorting to mindful eco-choices and 'green habits' as an alternative way of life.

Undeniably, there are the 'daily environmental heroes' scattered in every nook and crannies of the world, who are committed to buying green gadgets for their personal use, opting out from unnecessary travels, shopping for locally manufactured products, walking to places which do not require the comfort of a vehicle propelled by fossil fuel, promoting circular economy, etc. Like every drop of water converges in perfect synchronicity to form a mighty ocean, our daily eco-practices and green habits do contribute to the protection of the environment. These, indubitably, minimize the carbon footprint on the environment.

## Aligning Ourselves with 'Environmental Correctness'

The green initiatives of a portion of the global population, by far and wide, are commendable, but not enough to rid us of the environmental guilt and shame for which we are justifiably held to beat our breast in public. Environment cannot rightly be saved by the selective eco-friendly, caring and conscious effort of a small group of people. It has to be an inclusive project in which everyone contributes their share of commitment, effort and expertise.

Galvanizing everyone with an effective eco-perspective is not easy because it requires education, encouragement and motivation as to why they need to integrate such a perspective into their lives. More than that, it requires adapting an attitudinal change and life transition in support of the environment. This fundamentally demands from us a new pattern of thinking, acting and living, which scholars call as an ethic of 'environmental correctness'.

This means that we live our lives with an 'ecological worldview' as authors Dominique Hes and Chrisna du Plessis suggest.

On a practical level this would imply that we regularly assess and analyze our behaviours, choices and actions whether they promote the health and wellbeing of the environment. In planning and implementing any action, project etc., we first make a reality test as to how they impact our environment.

This is easily said than done. But had we implemented environmental correctness as the measuring standard, the yardstick of our daily living, our oceans and seas would not have piled up so much of the throwaway plastic into their surface; they would not have accumulated the staggering level of acidity which is irreversibly changing the water chemistry, to the extent, that the survival of the marine species is highly endangered. Reports from the Convention of Biological Diversity released in 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, indicated that ocean acidification is happening 100 times faster than it ever did in the last 20 million years. The report predicted that by 2050, the level of acidity will increase by 150%.

With the adaptation of a practical ethic of environmental correctness, we would probably have prevented the megafires and devastating floods that are taking place in different parts of the world; presumably, we would not have had the series of (garbage) dumpsite fire reported in our country amidst the scorching heat of the summer months. In April alone, the country's capital reported four of those incidents of fire, two of which were considered as megafires.

Likewise, if we had integrated the ethic of environmental correctness, we would not have caused the rapid melting of world's glaciers; and we would definitely have prevented the severe consequences of the increasing global warming and the rapid change of climate which are pushing the world into being in-a-pressure cooker like situation!

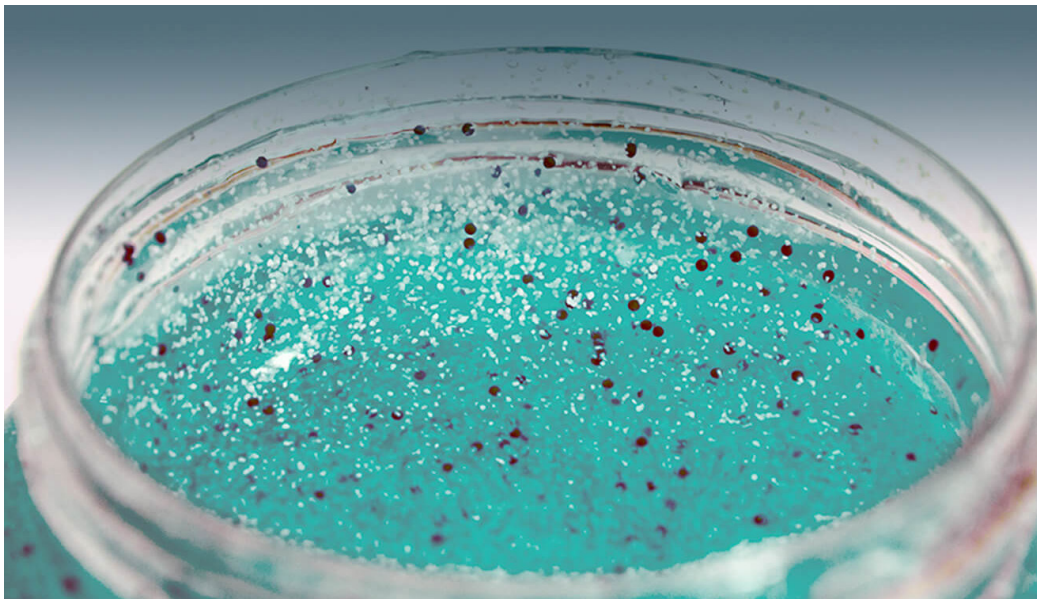
What is bygone is bygone. But it is still not too late to start using environmental correctness as the yardstick of our thinking, acting and living! ■



# STOP POLLUTION OF OCEANS BY MICROBEADS IN COSMETIC PRODUCTS IN INDIA

There is a dark side to the beauty business which hits our water bodies and our marine ecosystems, posing a serious threat to all life in them.

Dr MARIANNE de NAZARETH



Lecturing in several colleges in the city as a professor of media studies I realise that beauty and beauty products are big 'must-haves' among my students, both girls and boys. The importance of looking good is imperative in today's plastic culture, where beauty is a much sought-after aspiration among youngsters.

But there is a dark side to the beauty business which hits our water bodies and our marine ecosystems, posing a serious threat to all life in them. In a new study titled *Dirty*

*Cleanser: Assessment of Microplastics in Cosmetics*, released by Delhi-based NGO Toxics Link, shows that shockingly large number of personal care cosmetic products (PCCPs) in India—including some of the leading brands—contain harmful microplastics. The 52-page study, based on the assessment of 35 PCCPs, underscores the disturbing fact that microbeads released from items of daily use, pose a serious threat to the environment, particularly the marine ecosystem.

There is a need for responsible consumer behaviour and ethical buying, which brings us back to the question of manufacturers' responsibility in correct product labelling and also the push for use of environment-friendly alternatives

A total of 19 face washes, seven facial scrubs and nine body washes were tested under this study and out of 35 samples, 20 were detected with presence of polymers. Among the 20 samples with polymers, 14 have microplastics beads. Among all types of PCCPs tested, the highest number of microplastics beads were detected in Neutrogena Deep Clean Scrub with 17,250 microbeads per 20g, followed by VLCC Natural Sciences Rose Face Scrub with 5,510 beads per 20g and Fiamma Shower Gel with 4,727 microbeads per 20g. 70% of scrubs, 55% of body washes and 21% of face washes were found to have microbeads.

For the study, 20g of each of the 35 samples was taken for analysis, and FTIR was used for the identification of plastic particles in PCCPs. 'It is shocking to find plastic microbeads in products from such large national and international brands. Many of these brands have stopped putting microbeads in their products in other countries but continue to use in India as we do not have outright ban on its usage', said Priti Mahesh, Chief Coordinator at Toxics Link.

Toxics Link is an Indian environmental research and advocacy organization set up in 1996, engaged in disseminating information to help strengthen the campaign against toxics pollution, provide cleaner alternatives and bring together groups and people affected by this problem.

So what are microplastics and what is the environmental pollution they cause? Microplastic pollution is one of the most crucial environmental issues in recent times. Microbeads are solid primary microplastics with a diameter of less than 5 mm that are used in cosmetics products as 'rinse-off' or 'leave-on', for skin exfoliation etc. They are flushed down the drain after use and end up in Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs), where they can escape into bodies of water. There is no efficient

way of recovery once it has been disposed of, and because of them being non-biodegradable, they continue to affect the environment. Microbeads used in cosmetics are responsible for a significant proportion of the human-made solid waste in aquatic environments and impacts all marine life.

The size of microbeads detected in the products, tested in this study, was in the range of 32.55–130.92 µm. 'These small-sized microbeads can easily pass-through sewage treatment systems and swim to the ocean,' said Dr. Amit Programme coordinator, Toxics Link. The report indicates that 60–4312 microbeads could be released from an exfoliant in a single use (5 ml per use). According to the UN, there are as many as 51 trillion microplastics in the ocean, which is 500 times more than stars in our galaxy. The testing was done at National Institute of Oceanography, Goa.

The primary aim of the study, is to push stakeholders into reducing the use of microbeads. It also seeks to promote awareness on the devastating effect of microplastics in the marine environment. The study also stresses the need for safer substitutes that can replace these environmentally hazardous constituents. 'Natural exfoliating materials', it says, 'including oatmeal, walnut husks, salt, whole oats, almond shell, may be the potential materials to replace non-biodegradable microbeads'.

'There is a need for responsible consumer behaviour and ethical buying, which brings us back to the question of manufacturers' responsibility in correct product labelling and also the push for use of environment-friendly alternatives', said Satish Sinha, Associate Director, Toxics Link.

So think twice before you purchase these products which promise beauty to the user, with no ethical thought to their ingredients and the effect it has on our environment. ■

# Anti-Conversion Laws in India The Doom of Secularism?

No one should be forced to hold on to a particular religious belief that he or she does not value any more. No one should be forced to stop the spiritual benefits of other religion, just because someone is born in a particular religious community.

MICHAEL ANAND OFM

Karnataka is yet another state that has vehemently pushed through the much debated, opposed and ill-intended law on anti-conversion. Prior to the state of Karnataka, that joined the undesirable list on 17 May, 2022, there have been state-level 'freedom of religion' statutes, known as 'Anti-conversion laws', in nine states—Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. Odisha was the first state to enact such a law in 1967, followed by Madhya Pradesh in 1968. The law in Arunachal Pradesh has not been implemented due to lack of subsidiary rules; while Rajasthan has passed an anti-conversion bill that has not yet received the President's assent. Some other states, such as Manipur, are considering similar laws. The state of Tamil Nadu previously brought about such a law in 2002 and subsequently repealed the same in 2006 due to continuous protests by the religious minorities.

The state of Karnataka has implemented the law through an ordinance, called 'The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Ordinance', (No. 2 of 2022). The official notification states that it is 'An Ordinance to provide for the protection of the right to freedom of religion and prohibition of unlawful conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement, or by any fraudulent means. Whereas the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and the Karnataka Legislative Council are not in session and the Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka is satisfied that the circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action to promulgate the Ordinance. . . ' It was pro-

mulgated by Sri Thawar Chand Gehlot in his capacity as the Governor of the state and by the authority vested on him under Article 213 of the Indian Constitution. According to the Indian Constitution, an ordinance can be brought for six months when the legislature is not in session. It has to be converted into law within six weeks of the start of a session, or else it will lapse. However, in a significant judgment passed by a seven-judge bench of the supreme court in Krishna Kumar Singh & Anr. v. State of Bihar and Ors. in 2017, the court held that enactment by ordinances isn't a conventional source of law-making. Ordinances must be promulgated in emergent or exceptional circumstances, and just while the legislature isn't in session. Further, the Constitution requires that ordinances must be necessarily presented before the legislature. In the case of this Ordinance of Karnataka, the civil society is left with bewilderment as to what is the emergent and exceptional circumstance that forced the legislators of the state to fast-forward the process of implementing the law through an Ordinance in a hurry. Is it a law through the back door entry, just because the ruling party does not have the required majority in the upper house or a pre-poll strategy of the political party to appease the majority vote bank? Whatever the reasons may be, this controversial law, just like its counterparts in other states, poses a kind of anxiety and fear in the lives of citizens, particularly the religious minorities.

Section 3 of the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Ordinance penalises anyone who 'converts or attempts to convert, either directly or otherwise, any other person from one

religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by any of these means or by the promise of marriage', and also 'those abetting or conspiring for such conversions will also be penalized'. The Ordinance defines the term 'allurement' as means and includes offer of any temptation in form of (i) any gift, gratification, easy money or material benefit either in cash or kind; (ii) employment, free education in school or college run by any religious body; or (iii) promise to marry; or (iv) better lifestyle, divine displeasure or otherwise; or (v) portraying practice, rituals and ceremonies or any integral part of a religion in a detrimental way vis-à-vis another religion; or (vi) glorifying one religion against another religion. This ambiguous definition appears to be a trap aimed at the minority run institutions, through which the complainant can conveniently interpret the law to falsely charge someone with the act of forced conversion.

This law emulates its counterparts of like-minded states by making mandatory the grant of notice to a district magistrate from a person who is desirous of converting his/her religion. The magistrate will then publish this proposal and call for objections. This demand for publication, by itself, is anathema to the right to privacy that is now regarded as fundamental. In Evangelical Fellowship of India v. Himachal Pradesh (CWP No. 438 of 2011), justice J. Deepak Gupta struck down a similar provision mandating public intimidation of conversion in Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2006, holding that a person possessed not only a right of conscience but also a right to keep his beliefs secret.

Through this Ordinance, the government of Karnataka intends to proscribe altogether conversions made for the purpose of marriage. Section 6 stipulates, 'Marriage done for sole purpose of unlawful conversion or vice-versa to be declared null and void'. This is a similar provision already enacted in the anti-conversion laws of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. But in hearing on a challenge to the validity of an analogous provision of Section 3 of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003, (as amended in 2021), the high court of Gujarat

stayed this provision holding that, 'Prima-facie inter-faith marriages between two consenting adults by operation of the provisions of Section 3 of the 2003 Act interferes with the intricacies of marriage including the right to the choice of an individual, thereby infringing Article 21 of the Constitution of India.' A division bench comprising Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav passed this interim order to protect the parties of inter-faith marriage from being unnecessarily harassed by government and various organisations. But the Ordinance of Karnataka heeded deaf ear to this judgment.

Under the similar laws of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, only family members and relatives (parents, brother, sister or any other person related by blood, marriage or adoption) can file a police complaint alleging the forced conversion. Whereas, Section 4 of the Ordinance of Karnataka illustrates, 'Any converted person, his parents, brother, sister or any other person who is related to him by blood, marriage or adoption or in any form associated or colleague may lodge a complaint of such conversion which contravenes the provisions of section 3'. This provision obviously paves way for anyone to drag a particular institution or individual persons to legal disputes in the name of alleged forced conversion.

The Karnataka's Ordinance also makes the matter more complicated through the legislation in its Section 12, by imposing on the person seeking to convert, a burden to establish the negative that conversion has not taken place through one or the other of the prohibited categories. This notion is totally arbitrary in its nature and also disproportionate as a burden such as this type can almost never be discharged. This provision is modeled after the law of Uttar Pradesh and it is worth recalling that such similar provision was also stayed by the high court of Gujarat earlier last year, stating that such provision puts 'parties validly entering into an interfaith marriage in great jeopardy'.

Severe punishment is also prescribed under the Ordinance of Karnataka, leading a person found guilty of conversion to face a jail term of three to five years and also a fine of ₹25,000. It is ridiculous to note that this legislation makes



a discriminatory point even on the faith aspect between an ordinary man, woman and a SC/ST person by stipulating higher form of punishment for converting a woman or a person from the community of SC/ST. This is discriminatory and unconstitutional. Compared to the anti-conversion law of Uttar Pradesh, the punishments enshrined in the Karnataka law is more and severe.

These anti-conversion laws, as claimed by the legislators, ostensibly seek to end conversion through unlawful means, to put an end to type of conversion solely for the sake of marriage and to ensure protection of religious faith from the religious fundamentalists. The question is whose fear it is that pushes the legislators to frame such laws. India is a multi religious country, which is so rich in spirituality, a country that gave birth to new religions, and a country where people of different religious beliefs have lived in harmony for centuries. By guaranteeing to its citizens, freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion, in Article 25, the constitution of India envisions a country that is secular in its nature not imposing upon anyone a particular religious faith. In *Rev Stanislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (1977), the Supreme Court reiterated that the provision of Article 25, 'propagate', does not mean anyone can be forced to be converted. But it should also be of the view that no one should be forced to hold on to a particular religious belief that he or she does

not value any more. No one should be forced to stop the spiritual benefits of other religion, just because someone is born in a particular religious community.

The Law Commission of India, that was chaired by Justice P V Reddy, in report no. 235, dated December 27, 2010, pertinently advised the Government of India stating that, 'Religious conversions may appear to many in Indian mindset to be unnecessary, puerile and negation of the very concept of respect for both religions as also the followers of such religion. But certainly, the freedom of faith guaranteed the Constitution may not justify the negation of the right to pursue the chosen faith, by conversion where necessary'. Interestingly, the Law Commission of the state of Karnataka too, that was chaired by Justice V S Malimath, in its proposal to the Government of Karnataka on 21st September, 2013, to enact a suitable law for the protection of freedom of religion, positively proposes that the focus of such law should be 'equally protecting the right to freely practice ones religion as well as on the right to freely understand the other religions to make an informed decision to convert to the other religion or not...'. Considering all these, if the existing anti-conversion laws of India are not appropriately interpreted, adopted and implemented, or made use to target the minority religious communities, the secularism that is envisioned by the Constitution of India, will surely be at stake. ■



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# THE FISH-BODY

FR KM GEORGE

For some decades now we have been exposed to the 'grand narrative' of globalisation. There are pros and cons. It seems what is missing in the whole rhetoric is the perception of the unity of humankind, rather metaphorically as one body.

The much-vaunted economic and cultural globalisation has been criticised as having created inequalities and hierarchies that subtly tear apart this deeply instinctive knowledge of our human oneness. It is also known to have suppressed, often in a highly sophisticated manner, the authentically diverse identities and self-esteem of many a people on earth in favour of the power wielders.

It may not be unfair to say that it is now when the Corona virus in its various incarnations has penetrated every nook and corner of the globe that we have become global. It is bitterly ironic that the virulence of the virus that respects no social, political or racial borders has united our world by frightening surprise.

A closely allied buzzword word is 'corporate'. The global and the corporate go hand in hand in our present-day understanding. We know the word 'corporate' comes from the Latin 'corpus' which means 'body'. The verb 'corporare' means 'to form into a body'. Again the metaphor of the body underlies most of our global business terms though we seem to have completely ignored it. Instead of 'in-corporating' or making all humans part of the living body, we have fragmented the one body in view of higher profit, pitted nation against nation, humans against nature, making weapons, war and desolation.

The pandemonium unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly awakened us, however rudely, to the primordial truth that we, all humanity, are one body. The global therapeutic response to this pandemic, therefore, must necessarily include the whole human race as one body in its compassionate solidarity, mutuality, sharing of resources and the common vision of a sustainable future.

We are all familiar with the quote from Aristotle that human being is a social animal. The primordial herd instinct is implied here. We know that the Herd Instinct is a powerful driving force in the life of animals, birds and fish. The human species is also endowed with this gift. Notwithstanding the many theories in social anthropology, evolutionary biology and business psychology that seek to explain it in terms of self-protection and profit, one may also assume in a simple manner that the herd instinct is a left-over from the primal biological experience of one body.

Meanwhile, a recent lockdown painting titled 'The Fish-Body', (acrylic 4'x3') seeks to represent a large school of fish streaming into the shape of one single fish rising from the depths and moving to the source of light and air. From a distance it is one single fish, but as you zoom in, it contains innumerable individuals who constitute the one body.

As tens of thousands of our sisters and brothers gasp for breath we need to rise as one body beyond religion, region and race, and share our resources and protect each other in a one-body act of 'in-corporating' and rising together to the source of air, light and life. ■

# Country or Religion?

The glamorous speeches delivered from the high stations of the country which put the country first is dubious.

GERRY LOBO OFM

While the dark cloud of Covid-19 and its variants over the Indian sub-continent is gradually diminishing, the dark cloud of hatred among people of one religion against another by inciting passions has risen quite conspicuously over this nation as never before in history so fiercely disturbing basic peace which all long for. The 'Hijab' controversy from the classroom context has strong ripples throughout our country, even giving rise to reactions from leaders and organizations across the globe. The question raised by the Madras High Court recently is pertinent for all times: 'What is paramount, country or religion?' Obviously for some in our country religion is paramount at the cost of one nation. These are a dominant minority who hold the world under their iron powered feet and are determined to destroy it.

The protectors of the Constitution, head to toe, seem to be bent on executing one agenda, namely, the elimination of all religions to retain only one in order to establish one nation. From the statue-erection pandemic that has engulfed certain political as well as religious spear heads in the country, one gets the impression that icons have the power to liberate the common citizen from the drudgery of his or her every-day life, from the slavery of dependence, from the curse of marginalization, from the dread of social-stratification, from the exclusion from participation in the economic and political process; and that the statues can feed the hungry poor and provide employment for the distressed youth. Should a Prime Minister, holding such a prime office in the country, be promoting projects that display religious glamour and scandalous pomp and develop a culture of statue-erection while neighborliness has become a suspicious plot against a neighbor-in-service in

our society or while unemployment is sky-rocketing and the farmers are sacrificing their lives in utter frustration?

Deliberate attempts seem to be made by a handful of self-styled religionists who, presumably supported by religion-leaning political parties, or who feel assured they would not be brought to books for whatever crime they perpetrate towards the innocent, to destabilize harmony between people and establish chaos in the society. It is quite clear that politicians swimming in the 'religion tank' prefer turbulence of the disturbed waters causing chaos, disruption in human commerce, violence and distrust to prevail in the society rather than the unity of communities of varied religious origins and colours to flourish. These notorious goons obviously endorse the prevalence of dark cloud of bloodshed to cover the earth for whatever ulterior gain that drives them to reign supreme and rule the destiny of millions. For these peace is a threat and harmony is discomfort.

Our constitutional leaders sell themselves for the cheap price of popularity and monetary treasure by disregarding humans and their sentiments, letting the rule of lions and tigers to devastate peace and integrity that a nation so proudly upholds. Religious tolerance and the will to co-exist irrespective of differing perspectives, philosophies and belief systems in a world such as ours which has progressed in human psychology are relegated to what benefits the ego and the ego-bound communities of people at the cost of those who struggle to fructify their existence by good will and sacrifice. Who dares to believe that during the long and prolonging Covid pandemic that continues to engulf human life, Russia declares war on the neighbor, Ukraine? Why go far? When the same pandemic is continually causing death toll in our country,

the electioneering process obviously exhibits ugly campaign strategies by various political stalwarts, hurting and damning, ruining and provoking hate feelings among people. What philosopher Hobbes stated years ago, 'Man is a wolf to man,' still remains the truth. Country or religion is paramount?

Religion is not decimated by upholding the value of the country, the home in which citizens strive to create communion of life. Instead, it is concretely manifested in the very act of establishing a free space for all to live and where human dignity is honoured; and country becomes of diverse capacities and varied religions. Religion definitely has a place in a country because it provides a soul for the citizen to appreciate and embrace the good found anywhere and everywhere. Even the religious practices and customs have the power to create goodness, mercy and justice provided they are not used for alienating oneself from another, as the case is. Universal openness and democratization of life which includes every dimension of human life in a society can be gathered from religion because it is a means of binding oneself to the Divine-human reality. A country which houses many ancient religions such as ours could best provide possibilities for harmonious existence by respecting the differences in the practice of each of these religions. Hence one's religion and its beliefs could enrich a country with wealth other than the material abundance.

What is obvious from the present religiously tainted government is that it is more concerned about establishing one religion-based rule by eliminating systematically anyone who does not adore the lords who stubbornly hold all powers even though those powers are not vested upon them by the common man who decides to vote. The glamorous speeches delivered from the high stations of the country which put the country first is dubious. Perhaps it is an attempt at nationalism with prominence for one dominant religion, one colour, one attire style and one religious Constitution. One can question the glaring prevalence of religious attire of leaders who govern, such as Members of Parliament and Chief Ministers of states in our country, when

one is so obsessed by the hijab worn by Muslim children while attending school over their school uniform. If it is a secular country, one must refrain from attacking one another over the dress code. Does the dress code of certain public figures not speak loud enough about the intention behind such attire? Hence, what comes first, country or one's religion? All talk about the country by prominent leaders, then, is only a sham!

That the country be placed before any other interest is certainly paramount. Country is more than a geographical territory. It is a home for mortals where they find warmth in interpersonal dynamic relationships and where their physical body is sustained by food, clothing and shelter, where they can breathe existence, manifest it by activity, thinking and expressing it freely. Hence the country needs to be protected from all adversities, for it is a home. Religion is not secondary if religion is understood as one's bond with the Divine. Every human being expresses his or her bond with the Divine in manifold ways realizing a sense of dependence on a Being who holds all things, who breathes life and who sustains. The country as well as religion, both deal with human persons. Hence both are paramount. However, when religion and religious feelings are reduced to physical practices, dress codes and customs without a heart of human kindness, then one only belittles the Divine Reality, God, and gives prominence to the externals or to the mere emotional responses. In every age there have been eruptions in religions when religion is manipulated for political mileage. Vote bank policy in our country has grossly disturbed harmony among diverse religions, creating disruption, violence and ultimately hurting the country as a whole. On account of such an attitude among political and religious leaders, one's country does not seem to be of a paramount reality for some.

Educated, illumined and insightful citizens in the contemporary context of a radical movement towards a better world will think rightly if they honour themselves and befriend others. The good found anywhere belongs to no one, but to the One who is Good! Country is certainly paramount, so also one's religion! ■





# Rainbow Reign

The days of only black or white are over; let there be colours everywhere.  
Let the Rainbow Reign.

SNEHA BALAKRISHNAN

We all love to see a rainbow. So beautiful and pure. But we seem to forget the fact that it is more amazing to see rainbows in people. Being unique is spoken well of; yet it took centuries for the LGBTQ community to come out into society just to be partially accepted. It isn't difficult to explain or understand the science and biology of human beings. Yet the perception on the Queer community seems unchanged. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer – LGBTQ gained more voice in recent times when it finally got unmuted in society. We always teach our children to be unique, but what is uniqueness?

We are all bound by atoms. A small misplacement or change can alter the entire structure of atoms. Speaking in terms of biology, every human being has 23 pairs of chromosomes out of which one is sex chromosome. Sexual orientations are decided by these chromosomes. So technically speaking, a person's sexual orientation is never their choice. Analyzing the starting point of this problem, it is evident that we are all polished with certain norms and beliefs that are so rooted deep inside of us, even if we are ready to change or accept them, something always holds us back. Our mind is molded to see normal and perfection in all aspects, but imperfections

Every human being has 23 pairs of chromosomes out of which one is sex chromosome. Sexual orientations are decided by these chromosomes. So technically speaking, a person's sexual orientation is never their choice.

too have their reasons. Just because two types of genders are more prominent and majority doesn't mean that other gender identifications don't stand a chance. The world of today is here because of its varied diversity and differences. Here, people who belong to a community are fighting for their rights even when they didn't choose this lifestyle. The world teaches children to be in uniformity from childhood itself. Pink for girls, blue for boys, barbies for girls, cars for boys and so on. These things may seem so little but the impact they create mould their perception as well as personality.

When the minds of children are cemented to these kind of baseline, it will be really difficult to think and act otherwise. It will also create commotion in one's own life when it comes to understand their own gender identity. Maintaining an identity is not easy in this world. There are many factors that affect its process. Taking today's scenario, the mass media is on the lead. Media may not tell you what to think, but it can tell you what to think about. Media is busy getting all facts 'straight' rather than providing a platform to listen to other perspectives. The condition of LGBTQ community is improving slowly. Homosexual people are no longer diagnosed as mental illness. Some of the drastic changes and movements started in recent years. Voices are getting stronger than ever.

What is our role here as individuals? We must accept the flow of life first. We feel, see and hear things the way we are taught to perceive them. Break that barrier. Hear from all sides of the story, Don't try to invade into someone's privacy and boundaries. Let there be equity rather than equality. There is enough discrimination faced by various people, don't add more to it. Just as everyone's genetics is different, different identities will bring new

things to this world through their diversity. Embrace it rather than discriminating or harassing those who are different. Abolish 'conversion therapy', which tries to diminish one's personality into a so called 'normal version', which in fact will make them more susceptible to volatile behavior. Provide equity in the workplace and in other fields. Keep national and international competitions open to everyone including the queer community. Article 15 of our Indian Constitution upholds 'Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.' Let's make sure that this right is available to every citizen of this country. Taking even a small step will have great results.

Teaching children to verbalize their identity without any hesitation and shame, allocating provisions to mention one's gender other than just male or female in forms and applications, counseling should be available to both children and parents to cope up with the changes. There should be awareness sessions and other programmes to educate societies and country to treat the individuals from LGBTQ community with human respect. The support from society can change the situation a lot, opening up new paths for a better tomorrow.

It's difficult to find an easy closure to such a topic; but we must keep trying harder; perhaps it is not impossible. We are now in the 21st century. Ideologies and mannerisms are more advanced and are moving towards different horizons. Discrimination and harassments against LGBTQ community should go; as we accept flaws and imperfections in oneself, format our mind to the setting where you treat each and every human being with justice and equity. Let there be no choices that are imposed. The days of only black or white are over; let there be colours everywhere. Let the Rainbow Reign. ■



A photograph of a koala mother with her joey on a tree branch. The mother koala is large and grey, clinging to a thick, brown tree branch. A small, fluffy joey is visible on her chest, also clinging to the branch. The background is filled with green leaves and branches, creating a natural, forest-like setting.

# Nature vs Nurture

**Just like how a seed does not randomly develop based on sunlight, water, and soil, environmental factors do not determine an individual's personality but it only has a role to play in their life.**

LEKHA RAMYAA R

Photo by Joseph Pérez on Unsplash

Psychologists throughout the world have been conducting incessant research in the area of behavioural sciences, striving towards the goal of understanding whether it is an individual's nature or environmental factors that play an instrumental role in shaping one's behaviour and personality. According to American Psychological Association, personality has been defined as 'the individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving.' The debate in describing and defining the personality of an individual has been quite evident through the works of renowned Psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Albert Bandura, and Carl Jung, who have given various perspectives to personality from the psychoanalytic, individual psychology, behavioural and humanistic schools of thought respectively. Having said that, there still lies a juxtaposition of nature and nurture.

An interview regarding the same was carried out with Karthekeyan ATS who has completed

his BTech in textile engineering, additionally holds a PDM degree and is an MBA (HR and marketing) graduate from a renowned university at Chennai. His expertise lies in the area of human resources and is currently pursuing a job and research at Wellington, New Zealand. It was very interesting to note that he strongly affirms that nature and biological predisposition determines an individual's personality. On posing various perspectives to him in the form of questions, he gave an insightful thought and was able to suggest convincing evidence to validate his statements.

The first question was 'How do you believe that nature determines behaviour and personality keeping Bandura's Bobo doll experiment in context?' His response followed, 'Bandura's experiment was solely based on children, and as a developmental milestone it is quite natural for children to imitate behaviour and execute them based on the reinforcements or punishments they receive. The same will not be observed in adults.'

Every individual is like a seed, which chooses to grow in an environment that is conducive for his/her growth.

The second question was 'our attitudes and beliefs are based on what we are exposed to in life, isn't that an environmental factor that determines our personality?' He gave a fascinating response saying, 'Each individual uses his/her discretion to learn or unlearn and pick behaviours that are appropriate to him/her, so now, isn't this one's nature again?' He also gave an instance from his own life where he as an individual decided to opt out of a behaviour although he was exposed to it at a large extent.

The third question was based on a hypothetical situation, 'What if an innocent is put behind bars, he is exposed to criminals to a great extent so will that not affect his behaviour and attitude?' He said, 'It's not the situation where he is in, it is who he is. As he is not a criminal himself, the probability of him picking up bad qualities has a very slim chance, almost negligible.' He also cited the example of Dr A P J Abdul Kalam who stood tall among his peers

despite the tough situations and hardships that he faced in his life. Mr Karthekeyan stated that this was purely based on his persona and nothing else.

Finally he concluded his case by stating that every individual is like a seed, which has its unique characteristics and chooses to grow in an environment that is conducive for his/her growth. Just like how a seed does not randomly develop based on sunlight, water, and soil, environmental factors do not determine an individual's personality but it only has a role to play in their life.

This interview had eye-opening ideas which has immense potential in research. An experience based talk given by Mr. Karthekeyan has made it possible for commoners to understand what the nature/nurture debate is all about and would definitely pave way for more research into this field for academicians and researchers. ■



# Making Marriages Work

We are, after all, social animals. Compliments, small gifts, humour, treating your partner as if he or she was your best friend and love are ingredients for a continuously evolving relationship.

MONICA FERNANDES

**D**rs John and Julie Gottman are founders of the Gottman Institute, a research based institute and are experts on relationships. They have studied over 3,000 couples for several years to analyse which marriages succeed and which will end in divorce within six and eight years with 90% accuracy. What are the ingredients of a successful marriage?

Those with successful, intimate, flourishing

and positive relationships are called Masters while those in relationships that are negative with the partners hurting each other's feelings are doomed for divorce and are termed Disasters by the Gottmans. Somewhere in the middle of the scale are those trapped in loveless marriages who stay married either to avoid criticism or for economic reasons.

A Master is kind, compliments his/her partner and is willing to make the relationship

Photo by Foto Pettine on Unsplash



work. If perchance he has made a hurtful comment, he should make up with five times more positive outputs (a ratio of 5:1). After making up, the couple are drawn closer. It's a courtship that ends only with death. A Disaster in contrast expresses anger and hostility. With Dr John Gottman's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, he is able to predict breakdown of relationships. Incidentally the apocalypse in this case is the destruction of marriage. What are these four horsemen?

**Criticism:** This suggests that your partner is defective. Let's suppose that the husband comes home tired and keeps on talking about his tough day without asking his wife how her day went. Disaster (the wife) will respond, 'So only you had a tough day? What about my day? You are a self centered idiot.' Not exactly words that are likely to foster a relationship. Master may say, 'I do realize that your day was tough but so was mine with the kids creating a racket and damaging my ear drums. I feel hurt that you didn't ask about my day.' Disaster focuses on attack while Master expresses herself in a matter of fact manner.

**Defensiveness:** When Disaster is tactfully criticized, he tries to ward off what he perceives is an attack either by expressing righteous indignation or acting like the innocent victim and whining. Master in contrast responds, 'Yes you made a good point. The song really didn't suit my voice. The next time I sing at a party I'll try to avoid same mistake. Thanks for your constructive criticism'. He accepts criticism gracefully.

**Disrespect and Contempt:** Disaster feels superior to her partner. Her response to his talking at length about his tough day could be, 'What a jerk you are. The way you talk one would imagine the Company would collapse without you. You just keep talking about yourself all the time.'

Master creates a culture of appreciation by action or words. 'You poor dear', while gently tousling her partner's hair, 'You really had a tough day. Let me make you a cooling drink.'

**Stonewalling and emotional withdrawal from the conversation:** Disaster ignores her partner as though he does not exist. This

attitude is very hurtful and the husband comes out with all guns blazing to make an impact on his stone cold partner. He shouts and shakes her but she couldn't care less. This attitude of course is not great for his ego.

What are the alternatives for a successful relationship as suggested by the Gottmans?

**Enhance your 'Love Maps':** Love maps are a person's inner psychological self, his or her internal world consisting of fears and aspirations. What are his or her stressors, hobbies, dreams. The partner asks open ended questions and thus enhances his or her love maps. 'What is bothering you about your work today? Do share with me.' 'What was life like when your father was posted in a small town?'

**Inculcate fondness and admiration:** Convey your appreciation in small ways. 'Thank you for doing the dishes today.' 'You sang so well at the function today. I am proud of you.' You are thereby increasing your emotional bank balance and that of your partner as well.

**Make bids for emotional connect:** Imagine you are looking out from your balcony and you see a fancy red car parked on the road. You say, 'Jasmine, come and see this car.' But Jasmine continues her work and doesn't bother to share your enthusiasm. In contrast you are watching football on TV. Jasmine is not interested in sports. But she comes and sits by your side, trying to understand the match and share your enthusiasm. She has made a bid for emotional connect. This is a 'positive sentiment over ride' in contrast to the 'negative sentiment over ride' of Disaster who is over enthusiastic about putting down her partner.

**Masters bring repair to a relationship when the going is not good.** They don't get defensive when attacked. Instead they step back, allow things to cool down and contritely say, 'I am sorry for what I said. Can we talk about it?' The approach is rational.

We are, after all, social animals. Compliments, small gifts, humour, treating your partner as if he or she was your best friend and love—all these are ingredients for a continuously evolving relationship. This type of relationship sustains, energises and motivates both partners. It is the basis of a happy family. ■



# India Art Festival

## An Eclectic Celebration of Art

**India Art Festival is a contemporary art fair that serves a cultural bridge between Indian artists, art galleries, art collectors, connoisseurs and art lovers.**

Dr RUPA PETER

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a human's ultimate need or desire in life is to live to his highest potential; to actualize or to become everything that one is capable of becoming. And one of the most potent ways that man can come close to this elusive self-actualization is through artistic expression. As John Lubbock once said, 'Art is unquestionably one of the purest and highest elements in human happiness. It trains the mind through the eye, and the eye through the mind. As the

sun colours flowers, so does art colour life.' Art elevates us mere mortals beyond the cares of everyday life into a realm of beauty and wonder. Art captures moments and emotions that are frozen fresh on canvas for centuries. Reason why, Frida Kahlo once said, 'I paint flowers so they will not die.' Art is not just the creative expression of the artist's soul, it is also an aphrodisiac for the art lover who gets to live and relive the experiences created by the artist, time and again. And that is exactly what happened at the

first edition of the India Art Festival that was held between 5 May and 8 May 2022 at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Bengaluru.

India Art Festival is a contemporary art fair that serves a cultural bridge between Indian artists, art galleries, art collectors, connoisseurs and art lovers. This year's festival featured over 3,000 artworks including paintings, sculptures, drawings, installations, photographs and editions as well as video and digital art by 25 art galleries and 400 artists in 80 booths. And what an eclectic collection of artworks, it was! Be it impressionist landscapes on canvas or abstract art installations or exquisite ceramic engraving on wood, or charcoal on paper, you name it and you saw it all, in their unbridled splendour. For one, Ranjit Sarkar's Ghoomer series, acrylic on canvas was a visual treat with bright celebratory colours and revelled in the joie de vivre of traditional Rajasthani dancers. Hyderabad based artist, Vimala Devi Maraju's pseudo-modernist representation of women in pensive and introspective moods was offbeat yet inviting.

Upasana Goenka Kedia's *Nature* simply took one's breath away with its abstract array of vivid colours and patterns that seamlessly blended together. Krishnaprakash V Martand's intricate line art mixed with traditional surpur art was mesmerizing with its detailed tapestry of

ornamental Gods and Goddesses. Manoj Aher's *Radha* has the charm of mythology intricately woven into the contemporary. Deepali Kayal's colourful depiction of Lord Krishna's life and times is yet another noteworthy mention. Lord Ganesha's versatile form seemed to be favourite with several artists creating myriad inspired versions of the elephant God.

Zentangle artist, Suparna Sen's *Intuition* was stunning in its artistic vocabulary and conveyed a wide range of emotions through its well-defined layers. The exhibition also featured ceramic art, metal art and even cross-stitch art. The creativity, the details and the free flow of imagination in each of these artworks was simply spellbinding.

Of course, a festival like this would require one to visit time and again and relish the intoxicating array of creativity on display, lest art fatigue sets in. With the festival held in the city for only four days, this was not feasible for most art lovers and this was one big drawback for this one-of-its-kind event. However, the India Art Festival did manage to democratize the process of art viewing by bringing it from the confines of unapproachable art spaces to the reach of the common man on the street. The festival was an amazing opportunity to delight in some truly alluring art and delve deeper into the richness and fullness of life. ■





# The Past

JAYNEE JOSEPH

**B**hoothakalm is a horror thriller. The word *Bhootha* in Malayalam means ghost and *Bhoothakalam* aptly explores the ghosts from the past.

Revathy and Shane Nigam, who were missing from screens for a while, carry the film forward all through. Asha (Revathy) and Vinu (Shane Nigam) live with Revathy's mother. Revathy's mother dies, which first seemed to be because of the obvious reasons of old age; but later the audience are exposed to see the existence of an ominous life-force. The movie as it explores a parallel psychological dynamics first seems to be a normal stereotypical film; but the climax terrorizes the audience with a realistic approach and breaks the stereotype. *Bhoothakalam* shifts between a psychological thriller and a horror thriller.

The film shows a haunted house with ghosts from the past haunting each and every member who lives there and thereby they all end up dead. The sinister happenings in the house remain unexplored though one gets a glimpse of it in the climax. Asha's and Vinu's hampering shackles from the past, rising up as a monster to haunt them, is another way of seeing the causes of the ominous happenings in the film. Now people not being dead, which used to be the case in the past keeps the audience glued to their seats till the end; and their patient waiting pays off.

Asha could be any woman: the sole earning member of the family, dealing with issues in family, and has a career. A woman, who is clinically diagnosed with depression, sorting herself out while carrying the burdens of family. Asha, helping Vinu to get out of the situation of loneliness by searching for opportunities away from their hometown, created confusion and



puzzlement in young Vinu. Asha never opened herself up to either her son or her mom. Her past is not revealed; her failure to do so raises more questions.

Asha all along had her mother on her side to support her; but simply breaks down after her mother's death. She feels alone, angry and sad. She feels it more when Vinu decides to go out of town for work. Asha's reaction throws Vinu into a critical situation. Both find it difficult to sit face to face and speak their minds out; but eventually they will have to for their own redemption.

*Bhoothakalam* discusses mental illness, family, women, men, young generation, alcoholism, love, and more. Director Rahul Sadasivan takes a realistic approach to cinema, but treating every situations and characters thoroughly seemed dragging and unnecessary. Staging the story in a simply and ordinary way makes the film calm yet mystical. Revathy and Shane have played their roles extraordinarily. Shehnad Jalal's controlled cinematography and Rahul Syam's minimal sound design adds to the film. Shafiq Mohammad Ali's editing kept the film tight and in good shape. ■



## 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.

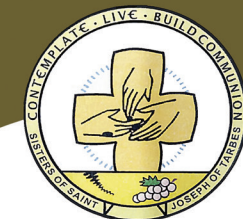
**A Sister of St. Joseph of Tarbes (SJT) is called to:**  
Gather the scattered; Unite the divided with the motto: 'GOD ALONE'

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

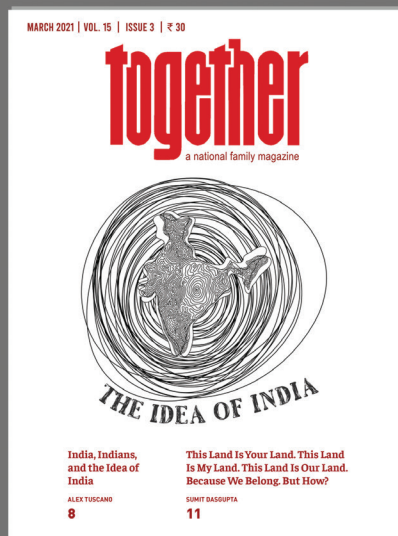
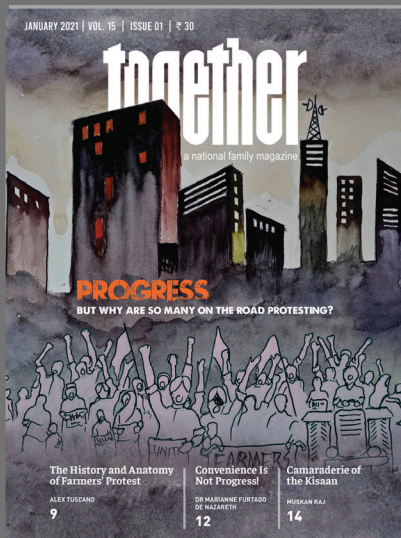


### For Further Information

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

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