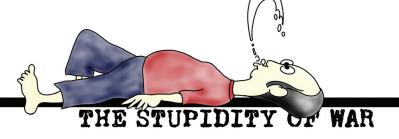
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MICHAEL ANAND OFM



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

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

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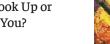
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## **EDITORIAL**

# THE END OF WAR

Modern wars will fail by default; and there will be no triumphant wars any more. Conflict is not a creative way to negotiate a social contract.

### SAJI P MATHEW OFM

othing teaches so well as failures. There have been hundreds of wars of all kinds since the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. which once and for all defeated Napoleon's lust for war. The toll of human misery and death at war measures around 30,000,000 since the Waterloo, and there never have been any other result for war than death and misery. However humanity is yet to learn.

#### Why War?

Why war? is as easy and as complex as asking why peace? There may be less involved and quasi-spiritual answers that people and institutions blurt out. The study of wars and conflicts, starting from tribal wars to World Wars tell us that there are no easy answers. There have been theories in literature and in international politics, like, war is least likely if power is distributed equally, war is least likely if power is distributed unequally, or distribution of power has no effect on the likelihood of war; or again, war is least likely in a closed society, war is least likely in an open and free society, or how society thinks has no effect on the likelihood of war. In a corporate world, where business and profit are everything, the motives for war take other directions.

We are a month into the Ukraine war. From dinner tables to international meeting tables everyone is talking about war. The world becomes

vocal about wars after they are triggered off. Humanity has known wars; all these while we were okay with wars, we were preparing for wars. Isn't war a form of accepted international behaviour? If not why are we making, accumulating, buying, and selling weapons of war?

The binary of war and peace is defied; today it is war and fear. Peace has become unpopular. We live in constant fear, and occasionally we have wars. People work at building fear as meticulously as they work at designing war; because both have the potential to gain control over the other. We have just witnessed elections in 5 states in India. Elections here and elsewhere have become as threatening as wars. They too put into practice war strategies of extermination, exhaustion, annihilation, intimidation and subversion. They too need propaganda and polarisation. The Kashmir Files is playing in full house in multiple multiplexes and singles screens in India.

The Ukraine war is happening, it is not that there are no other wars happening. Even as we are preoccupied with the Ukraine war, there are other wars going on in the world. How much people and television channels speak about a war, how visible is a war depends on where it is happening. Ukraine war is discussed because it is happening in Europe. Ukraine war is opposed by other mighty powers not because they care for Ukraine but they are watchful of Russia.



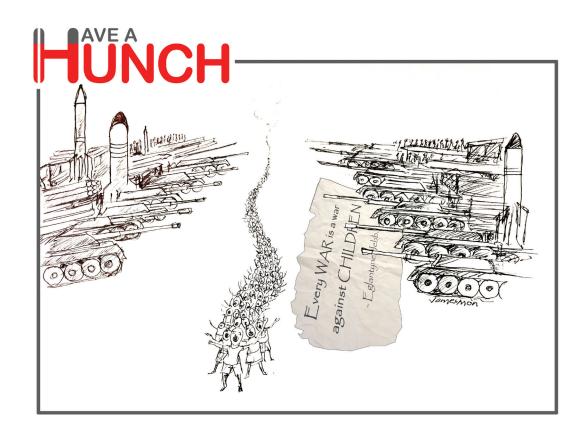
## **Modern Wars Are Pointless**

Ancient wars and conquests gave birth to empires and expansion of kingdoms. A stronger king defeats a weaker king; and everyone and everything in the kingdom obeys the mightier king. The mightier king unquestionably ruled over them. No modern wars will have the same result. After 20 years of war America withdrew from Afghanistan, not because they lost the war; but they could not rule. In modern times no people can be ruled over without their cooperation. Modern wars have failed. Wars will fail by default; and there will be no triumphant wars any more. Every modern war will hurt both the sides, however mighty a side is; and it eventually becomes a war against one's own people.

There are many other ways to power than brute force. Conflict is not a creative way to negotiate a social contract. Fools still go to war; others build political power through mutual negotiations. Perhaps that is the way for the

mighty and the weak to survive together, in the given capitalist world. The quality of one's might will also be measured by the quality of one's negotiations. Totalitarian rulers, unrestrained armies, and brute forces will lose respect in the modern world.

We must obstinately build peace. The key to building peace in our times of conflict and war is Positive Peace, points out Global Peace Index 2021 by the Institute for Economics and Peace. Positive Peace is defined as the attitudes. institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. High levels of Positive Peace occur where attitudes make violence less tolerated, institutions are resilient and more responsive to society's needs, and structures create an environment for the nonviolent resolution of grievances. Merciless attitudes, non-functioning institutions, and corrupt structures must go for wars to end, fears to vanish; and peace to have a chance.





# **THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE?** HISTORY, POLITICS, AND POWER

War is evil and nobody should support the present war in Ukraine. But Russia is not the only country that should be blamed for the war.

## ALEX TUSCANO

I n February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. The world's eyes were fixed on this war. In 21st century no war is good news to anyone. Everybody should condemn any war in any part of the world. Russia invading Ukraine is definitely not good news at all. Ukraine is the biggest country among all the countries who dissociated from the Soviet Union. Notable weapons of the Soviet Union were installed in Ukraine. The Chernobyl nuclear plant was the biggest installation of Soviet Union.

It may be a crazy dream of Putin to get Ukraine back into Russia. But the present war on Ukraine is not an idea of making Ukraine to join with Russia nor is it for change of government in Ukraine; the issue is different in the war with Ukraine.

This war is to ensure that Ukraine does not join with the NATO. To get a better idea of the problem behind Ukraine's joining with the NATO we need to go a little bit into the history of NATO. War on Ukraine has to be understood in the context of history dating back to 1990-1991. It is not a war with Ukraine but with NATO.

#### The Emergence of NATO

After World War II in 1949 NATO was constituted to protect the capitalist bloc from the Soviet Socialist bloc. We saw in the World War II a situation where Hitler and his allies waged war on the western countries. Hitler also attacked Soviet Union. US, the British Empire, France, entered into alliance with the Soviet Union and defeated the Fascist forces of Hitler and his allies like, Italy, Spain and Japan. Before entering into alliance with USSR, US and others it was demanded that USSR dissolved the Communist International organization which had members of the communist parties all over the world. There were communist parties all over the world who were taking command from the Soviet Union. To do this Stalin fabricated a theory called "Socialism in one country". In reality the Second World War against Fascist forces were defeated on the soil of Soviet Union.

After the war the situation changed. Apart from Germany and its allies the greater part of European countries (western Allies) were left weak due to the war. The Soviet Union had emerged strong with its armies dominating all the states of central and eastern Europe. The Soviet Union was perceived as a threat to the western Europe.

#### Warsaw Pact

Germany was the main enemy against which the World War II took place. But it was taken into NATO on 6th May 1955. Its membership eventually translated into a very substantial contribution to the Alliance's military strength in Europe. Germany was the front line of the Cold War in Europe for 40 years. Warsaw pact was created on 14th May 1955, in reaction to the integration of West Germany into NATO. It was a kind of balance of power or counterweight to NATO. It was officially called "the treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance", commonly known as Warsaw Pact. It was a collective defence treaty signed between Soviet Union and seven other Eastern Bloc socialist republics of Central and eastern Europe on 14th My 1955. This was a complementary organization of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for the socialist states of the central and eastern Europe.

#### **Developments around Disarmament**

Mikhail Gorbachev initiated and worked hard to bring the 'arms race' under control. Both America and USSR were in competition in creating more and more sophisticated nuclear arms. It was said that the nuclear arms piled up in the armouries of US and USSR to such an extent that using these, the world would have been destroyed twelve times over. Arms race had put the economy of USSR under tremendous strain. Through several negotiations between America and Soviet Union, and with the efforts of Mikhail Gorbachev in getting the cooperation of US, there was a drastic reduction in the nuclear arms and ensured the possibilities of world peace. In this negotiation Mikhail Gorbachev was promised that NATO will not expand itself to the East European countries.

In 1989, popular civil, political, and public discontent toppled the communist government of the Warsaw Treaty countries. From 1989 to 1991 the communist governments were defeated. The introduction of economic reforms (Perestroika) and civil reform, and democratisation (Glasnost), led to the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the socialist bloc collapsed. All the nations who were drawn into the Soviet Bloc separated themselves and become independent Nations. The famous breaking down of the Berlin Wall epitomised the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Former socialist countries who had broken from the Soviet Union were eager to join the European union and participate in the glorious democracy and capitalist prosperity. Eventually, they became part of NATO. At the end Russia too was contemplating joining NATO. But their attempts failed. Russia's chances to join NATO was blocked by the major powers, like Germany from the West.

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Ukraine is the biggest country among others who parted company with the Socialist Soviet Union. It had the major installations of strategic weapons of the Soviet Union. Ukraine was loyal to Russia and did not join EU and the least of all, NATO. But the present dispensation under the president, Volodymyr Zelensky Ukraine is open to join EU and NATO. NATO has been extending its arms to all the states which have come out of Soviet Union. Indirectly It is an extension of US forces on the borders of Russia.

But in spite of the promise to Mikhail Gorbachev to not to extend NATO to the socialist countries, in 1999 NATO launched a military operation against Yugoslavia without UN sanction. NATO bombed Yugoslavia for several days killing several thousand people, mostly civilian and caused a massive damage to the country's infrastructure. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization carried out an aerial bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the Kosovo War). The air strike lasted from 24th March 1999 to 10th June 1999

The breach of Promise to the Soviet Union (Gorbachev) and the aggression against Yugoslavia has contributed to the attitude of Russia towards NATO. NATO was created against the Soviet Union. When its relevance was over after the end of cold war there was a need to disband the NATO. The Soviet Union had already abandoned the Warsaw Pact. But US and its allied nations continue to expand in the direction of Russia. This raises great security concerns for Russia.

America and the NATO forces continue to exist with its prime objective to position themselves against Russia. Russia has not been a threat to any of the NATO member countries and much less to US, Great Briton and West Europe. In this scenario Russia is isolated and does not enjoy the good will from the NATO countries. If NATO comes to the boarders of Russia, it will definitely make Russia very vulnerable. Hence to prevent Ukraine from entering into NATO is a legitimate demand Russia can have. Most of the developments, including defence machinery in Ukraine is part of the development from USSR. War on Ukraine is in reality war on NATO and its expansion policies. If US

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could carry out 10 years of war against the North Vietnam to prevent the expansion of Socialism should Russia not prevent Ukraine from joining the NATO?

#### America's Role in International Affairs

The use of nuclear weapon: On July 16, 1945 the United States detonated in the New Mexico desert, to carry out the world's first nuclear weapons test explosion. Three weeks later, at 8.15 in the morning on August 6, the US bombers threw the uranium-based atomic bomb "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, a home of approximately 320,000 people. In minutes half of the city vanished. Three days later, the US leaders ordered "Fat Man" a plutonium-based bomb with an explosive yield of 21 kilo tons, dropped on Nagasaki, home to over 260,000 people.

Example of the Vietnam War: If we recall the Vietnam war, we will realise that it was fought on the wrong assumption. North Vietnam was a socialist country strongly aligned to the Soviet Union and Communist China. South Vietnam was not a socialist country. South Vietnam was made to believe that it was facing a threat from North Vietnam and the Soviet Union. America believed that they were morally bound to defend South Vietnam. Further, America wanted to prevent the spread of communist regime to come down further to south in Asia. America fought ten years of most unsuccessful war. A small country like North Vietnam brutally defeated the world's mighty military power like America. It took just a few years for both south Vietnam and North Vietnam to become one united country.

War on Afghanistan: In 1978 People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) gained power. This party was pro-Soviet Union. The fundamentalist Muslim, Mujahideen waged a war against the PDPA and civil war broke out in Afghanistan. PDPA requested the Soviet Union to intervene and save the PDPA government against the fundamentalist Mujahideen. In December 24, 1979 Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan under the pretext of upholding the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty 1978. America came to the aid of Mujahideen and used Osama Bin Ladin to fight against the Soviet Union's aggression. The Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan and the fundamentalist Taliban came to power. US used Osama Bin Ladin to organize war against the Soviet Union. They funded him to the teeth. Later Osama Bin Ladin attacked the twin trade Tower in America. America in vengeance against this terrorist act attacked Afghanistan. America occupied Afghanistan for 20 years. Once they withdrew their forces Afghanistan is back to square one of Taliban rule.

War on Iraq: When Saddam Hussain attacked and captured Kuwait, the American forces marched towards Iraq. Falsehood and lies were used to make sure that Saddam Husain was ousted and killed. America had used Saddam Husain to wage war against Iran to settle the score with Iran who had ousted the America supported Shah of Iran. America had supplied chemical weapons of mass destruction to Iraq to be used against Iran. America and Great Briton wanted to search for the chemical weapons. Under this pretext America and Great Britain went ahead with the war against Iraq and made sure that Saddam Husain was unseated unceremoniously and hung.

#### Was War on Ukraine Necessary?

The issue of Ukraine not joining NATO could have been settled through negotiation and the war could have been avoided. Since 2014 the mood in Ukraine was changing against Russia. America and the Western media had already started media war against Ukraine who had fortified its western border. We would like to state equivocally that war is evil and nobody should support the present war in Ukraine. But Russia is not the only country that should be blamed for the war. NATO supporting indirectly and even by supplying arms to Ukraine makes the war to continue. The NATO alliance and principally the Unite States of America should not get into the war, even indirectly and encourage Ukraine to sort out the dispute amicably. NATO should not harbour ambition to bring Ukraine in its fold. This will continue the arms race and the security of the nations will be at stake at the expense of peace and development of the people.

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## **COVER STORY**

# WHEN YOU LOOK AT WAR, WHAT DO YOU SEE?

'Nation' and 'freedom' are little big words known to all and understood by few. This is what makes them the perfect stalking horse for warmongers.

SUSANNA VAS and KEERTHANA V

Sn't it ironic that one has to fight for peace? Wars endow certain people with a sense of purpose. Those whose lives depend on war thrive whenever there is chaos. People who fight wars are simultaneously the bravest and the most foolish.

What do we kill for? What do we die for? Some would say freedom, others would say nation. But if you ask a handful of people what 'freedom' and 'nation' mean to them, you'll end up with a sample of nonidentical, even opposing, answers. Whose definition of these slippery, intangible entities and concepts do we spill blood for? 'Nation' and 'freedom' are little big words known to all and understood by few. This is what makes them the perfect stalking horse for warmongers.

More appalling than wars fought for nation and freedom are wars fought in the name of God. It takes a special kind of cowardice and crookedness to shroud ignoble intentions in religious rhetoric. In the 1989 adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Henry V*, after the Battle of Agincourt that claimed around 6,600 lives, the victors carry the corpses of their comrades off the battlefield, 'Non Nobis Domine' bursting triumphantly from their lips: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory!" How can God who is most compassionate and merciful, who condemns eye-for-eye retribution, who can only be conquered through love, accept victory won at the tip of a sword?

During the ultimate phase of the Hundred Years' War, Joan of Arc, the legendary saint and warrior installed Charles the Dauphin on the throne of France. While his coronation boosted French morale and solidified national identity, it was also problematic because Charles had breached the codes of chivalry by assassinating his cousin, the Duke of Burgundy, during what was supposed to be a meeting. It does leave one wondering: were Joan and her soldiers fighting for Charles the man, a disgraced, bankrupt person of disputed legitimacy, or Charles the king, the figurehead of the nation?

Life becomes a plaything and a weapon in the hands of rulers and political ideologues who steep impressionable youth in extremism characterized by despisal and fear of an unknown, unseen 'other'. They groom martyrs who are convinced they are dying for something bigger than themselves when they are really cogs in a killing machine who are dying over personal issues and petty quarrels of powerful people that expanded into wars. The groomers are opportunists who wouldn't hesitate to jump parties.



Unlike them, the trainees' fates are sealed because they are the pawns destined to die first in the battle unless smart enough to save themselves. As Erich Hartmann neatly framed it, "War is a place where young people who don't know each other and don't hate each other kill each other by the decision of old people who know each other and hate each other but don't kill each other."

If youth are not groomed, they are conscripted; service becomes a duty, not a choice, regardless of whether or not they believe in the cause. It is unfair to make service compulsory for people who might not want to participate in military activities. Reluctant draftees have to rationalize their involvement somehow to mitigate the cognitive dissonance; some seek and find shallow justifications for their participation, some yield to brainwashing, others come face to face with morality and mortality—their own and others'—and suffer relentlessly.

Consider Liam O'Flaherty's short story, *The Sniper*, set in Dublin during the Irish Civil War. The adrenaline of battle charges up the rooftop sniper, but when it wears away, he is consumed by despair, doubt, and remorse. The young man is forced to dehumanize his enemy, but ultimately succumbs to the urge to look into his face and acknowledge his humanity after he shoots him dead. The story ends with him realizing he killed his own brother. This is the moment that Green Day sang about in their anti-war song, 21 Guns: "the pain weigh[ing] out the pride".

Let's also take a moment to contemplate words like 'casualties' or 'collateral damage'? During wartime, lives ultimately boil down to data or statistics. War itself is an inhumane act, so it's no surprise that efforts are made to sanitize the wreckage they cause. That a war is happening itself means that humanity is lost. So does it matter that such words are used after people are wiped out? Still, let's not forget that 'casualties' and 'collateral damage' are actually human beings just like us: someone's child, someone's spouse, someone's parent, someone's sibling, someone's friend.

Each side believes (or convinces itself) of the rightness and righteousness of its actions and purposes, but one side's hero is the other side's criminal. Surrender, forgiveness, and friendship are unthinkable because war mentality privileges retaliation over emotional intelligence and diplomacy. Instead of reparations, the belligerents become embroiled in an internecine cycle of revenge. Instead of seeking a cause to die for, why not seek one to live for?

**Susanna Vas** and **Keerthana V** are a pair of best friends who have completed their postgraduate studies in Literature from Stella Maris College, Chennai.

# **COVER STORY**

# The Kashmir Files **PROPAGANDA AND CINEMA**

Deception in the presentation of facts or narratives has been around as early as there were people who had agendas to push.

## SUMIT DASGUPTA

ne of the tools of influence and control of any value is propaganda. In many countries, the British government was directly involved in the foundations of broadcasting - first on radio, and later in newsreels. Though this state support had its benefits, it inevitably meant that the broadcast content was sympathetic to those in power. Radio and newsreels were used for manipulating public opinion in World War I as a way of stoking pride, nationalism, and morale while the war dragged on. The line between truth and fiction was blurred in films; though the depicted real events of some sequences were staged. The film was just one medium the British government employed in a wider campaign which was quite effective. Indeed, there was one German soldier on whom the British propaganda had a strong impact: Adolf Hitler. Now, due to the infamy of Hitler and his followers, we associate all our understanding of propaganda with Nazi Germany. Deception in the presentation of facts or narratives has been around as early as there were people who had agendas to push. Roman accounts of non-Roman civilisations are considered to probably be propagandistic. With each new technology - theatre, painting, and the printing press – propaganda found a new



medium in which to spread. It was no different when film emerged as its medium.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 created a political environment that pushed the role of propaganda in cinema. The word 'propaganda' at that time didn't have the negative connotation it has today.

Propaganda was termed as an 'essential activity' to spread awareness among the public and 'stimulate their revolutionary thoughts'. Many great filmmakers emerged in this era who believed in the power of propaganda and they made films that are considered some of the most important artworks in cinematic history. These were filmmakers who gave many film theories that are still taught across the best film schools in the world. Among them, the most prominent is Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein who gave 'montage theories' or editing techniques. Most modern editing techniques currently used in Hollywood and Bollywood owe a lot to Eisenstein and Lev Kuleshov's theories of editing.

As such, the base of cinematic editing techniques lies in the idea of propaganda. No wonder famous French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard once remarked: "Cinema is truth 24 times a second, and every cut is a lie." There is a medium of psychological manipulation lo lit through the use of editing that every filmmaker uses to present their ideas or 'truth' to the public.

Cut to 2022, The Kashmir Files makes a huge splash at the Indian Box-office. Director, Vivek Agnihotri poured his soul out to tell the Indian masses about one of the biggest if not the biggest atrocities ever committed on Indian soil. It recounts the story of Kashmiri Pandits, and the exodus they faced in the 1990s. A deeply terrible tragedy that saw the lives of many Kashmiri Pandits forcefully taken away from them. Many were killed and even more driven away from their homes.

Agnihotri in an interview with Newslaundry mentioned that facts are not facts and The *Kashmir Files* upholds that idea to a T. There are countless ways of looking at any given fact. What separates facts from knowledge is context. This context – narratives that help us weave together facts – is what makes them intelligible to our limited human mind. These narratives are at the heart of both drama and politics and, if used in a deliberately misleading way to serve a partisan cause, is also known as propaganda.

The director gets several facts right about the Kashmiri exodus in his film. The killings have shown in the movie happened, as did the terrified flight of the Pandits. Yet the movie winds up as a particularly shallow and exploitative project, where the object of the storytelling is not to shine a light on the suffering of the Pandits but to use them as a springboard to illuminate the worldview of Agnihotri and by extension the BJP. The film was made tax-free in several BJP led states. The PM of the country publicly praised the movie, something he has not done in recent memory. Assam's BJP led government even asked their employees, party members, and workers to watch the film by taking half-a-day's leave.

Hitler spends two chapters of Mein Kampf dissecting the importance and power of propaganda. He placed a lot of importance on propaganda's reach, writing, 'all propaganda must

be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to'. Hitler's Nazi government controlled all cinema, initially through tax incentives (creatively manipulated by filmmakers who did not want to make Nazi movies) then by direct dictatorial control. To make sure their message got to the most impressionable in society, the Nazi government ensured that all schools had film projectors.

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In Triumph of the Will directed by Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler and the Nazi party are glorified. Young Aryan men, women, and children, bright and blue-eyed smiling Adolf surrounded by Swastikas presented an image of strength, unity, and prosperity which was enough for people to buy into the idea of a superior Aryan race. This resulted in the people of Germany actively taking part in the erasure of countless Jewish people. Which is similar to what happened with the Babri Masjid demolition.

Casting our minds back, we can imagine a busy afternoon and busier road. Scores of trucks, vans, cars, and bikes filled to its brim with people carrying Trishools, wearing saffron turbans, saffron shawls, and chanting, "Jai Shree Ram!" These men, young and old, were rallying to rebuild the Ram temple in Ayodhya where Babri Masjid stood. Lal Krishna Adwani, party member and leader of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) went door to door carrying red bricks, asking families to write their names on it with Jai Shree Ram written on the other side. With those bricks, he would rebuild the Ram temple and bring true glory to India and its ancestors.

A frenzied crowd starts to gather chanting slogans and waiting eagerly for LK Advani to come out of the neighbourhood and when the moment Advani comes out, his scores of followers looked at him, wide-eyed as if he were a messiah, their faces transformed, like they found the meaning of life.

This may sound like an exaggeration, but it is not. Replace, LK Advani with Narendra Modi, and this will sound like an election rally.

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LK Advani's attempt to bring Ram temple was received well. This was in 1990. As the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and BJP were collecting funds from all across the world including India, were able to churn out videos after videos recounting one particular incident as fact. The video showed a child dressed in Lord Ram's attire appearing out of nowhere inside the locked gates of Babri Masjid on a stormy night in December 1949 and that young child was asking people to be let free and restore his home, i.e., the Ram Temple.

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People, intoxicated by words of the BJP and VHP on December 6, 1992, invaded the masiid in droves and destroyed all essence of it-broke down its walls, hurt people, and claimed it to be Lord Ram's victory.

Other films were not designed to glorify the Nazis but to dehumanise, criminalise, and demonise vulnerable minorities—, particularly Jews. Joseph Goebbels even issued special instructions on how such movies were to be described. Does that sound familiar? The Kashmir Files does just that. While Vivek Agnihotri and Leni Reifenstahl are separated by both decades and critical acclaim, they find common ground in the propagandist's most insidious tool – a lie carefully layered upon a kernel of truth. Riefenstahl's truth was that the movie she is most notorious for was filmed live, and thus could not be propaganda for the Nazi regime, but was simply journalistic documentation of reality. The lie was that reality had been constructed specifically for the camera when some footage of the party leaders was spoiled, Hitler himself gave orders for the shots to be re-shot.

The truth that Agnihotri bases his film on is that the Kashmiri Pandit exodus featured a great deal of unconscionable violence by militants and caused terror among the minority Kashmiri Pandit population. The lie is that all Muslims must be collectively punished for this, and any violence visited upon them is justly deserved. As the film reaches its 200-crore mark

the genocide of Indian Muslims. The central government is looking at The Kashmir Files as the only film to come out of the elitist, nepotist, cocaine addled cabal of Bollywood highlighting the plight and trauma of the Kashmiri Pandits; completely overlooking a 2020 film, Shikara that also delved into the lives of Kashmiri Pandits during their exodus. That film never got any tax exemptions, PM praise, or weekday leaves. Maybe, that's because the entire nation was suffering from collective brain fog that made them forget all about it. The film shows the displaced pandits in moments of fear and despondence and their helplessness to show the audience that they, the everyday Hindu man, woman, and child could be them if this continues. But how is it continuing? you may ask, the film with ease paints leftists, liberals, the so-called JNU intellectual elites, and Urban Naxals as spawns of Satan, who are not only blind to the atrocities

at the box-office, multiple videos have surfaced

on the web where people are actively calling out

H

of the pandits but actively dismissing it. Agnihotri's cinematography uses visual cues as a moral device – there are long, lingering shots of blood seeping on floors, roads, ground, with the camera not resting on a militant's face as much as his actions. Gunshots to the face are repetitive to the point that they lose their percussive force, and become expected. In contrast, the camera lingers lovingly on the faces of those terrified.

The us-versus-them narrative can be clearly seen in the film and through that film, Agnihotri shot the gun off the Kashmiri Pandit's shoulders and the bullet is dipped in the rhetoric of the BJP and their populist agenda. The Kashmir Files will soon be replaced by another big-ticket film. People will talk about that film with gusto and dissect it with eagle vision because people, collectively have poor memories. But the effect of Agnihotri's film will live on and the dead will be exhumed again for the next election cycle.



# Elections 2022: Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, and Goa

This election was the last chance for the opposition to come together to defeat the BJP. The Congress Party finds itself in the wilderness and the opposition unity against the BJP is "a pie in the sky".

#### ALEX TUSCANO

I there is anybody who is not surprised by the results of the elections to these five states then he is either unconcerned about the elections or he must be brilliant in understanding the mood of the people. Yes, I mean it. As for me I was surprised by the results. When Amit Shah said that BJP is going to win the elections in all five states, I thought he lives a fools' paradise. But was right minus one.

How did BJP win the elections? There were great and mighty issues before the people. There is a large scale of unemployment in the country and especially in Uttar Pradesh; the fuel prices have shot up to the sky; inflation is very high; the covid deaths, the delta virus had resulted in massive miseries to the people. There was shortage of oxygen; there was huge crowding of corpses in the crematoriums. The dead bodies were floating in the ma Ganga. The people were unhappy with the Prime minister Modi; and were vowing not to vote for his party.

In spite of the so long farmers' agitation; the

home minster's son driving over the farmers' procession and killing the farmers, the people voted for BJP! Did the farmers' agitation have no impact on the elections? Narendra Modi did feel that the farm laws he had promulgated would spell disaster for BJP. With this fear he repealed the farm laws. But this repeal did not bring much cheer to the farmers.

This reminds me of the elections prior to this. Demonetization had a massive impact on the economy and the livelihood of the people involved in informal sector. It looks like even if Modi causes the Himalayan Mountain fall on the heads of the people, they will still vote for Modi and BJP.

I would like to analyse these several aspects of the victory of Modi and BJP briefly. I would divide my illustration into two parts. Part one, all the non-BJP parties which are called opposition parties and their politics. Why I prefer calling them non-BJP parties is because they are not opposition parties. For one, they have no

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character of opposition parties; they are what has been called as BJP B parties. I will give a little more explanation to it later on.

Did farmers' agitation not play a role in the elections? First and foremost, the farmers' agitation was independent of all political parties. Unlike Anna Hazare's agitation, which was hijacked by BJP, the farmers' agitation did not entertain any political parties to enter the agitation. Farmers believed that their cause will not be served by any political party. If it comes to the Congress and the rest of non-BJP parties, they would have brought about farm laws which would have the same character and impact on the farmers. Though UPA legislated the landmark Land Acquisition Law, it only spoke of fair compensation to be given to the farmers rather than bringing the farmers' fortune on par with the fortunes of the industrialists.

The congress Party in general and Rahul Gandhi in particular have been raising right questions and pointing out the right issues. These are the problems of the people. Unemployment, price rise, petrol and diesel prices, Indo China boarder issue, the handling of the Corona infections, Hatras killing of a Dalit girl, Kheri massacre of the farmers, the farm laws and the farmers' plight etc. None in the opposition parties were as vocal as the Congress party. Even Akhilesh Yadav had not opened his mouth on these issues. He came out only during the election campaign. I do not find congress lacking in raising right issues and campaigning in UP, Uttarakhand, Goa and even In Punjab.

In Punjab, I must say quite clearly that Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka went horribly wrong. It was absolutely absurd on part of these people to bring in Navjot Singh Sidhu as a president of Punjab congress party. Even a child could have said that Navjot Singh Sidhu was absolutely a wrong person for this post. In all his body language, he showed himself to be pompous and totally immature. There was a fear that he would join Aam Admi Party and that would make the chances of the Congress bleak. If he had joined the Aam Admi Party he would have brought bad luck to that party. After he was made the president of Punjab congress he functioned as an enemy of the Congress Party. There was no need for anyone to campaign against the Congress party. Navjot Sidhu was far excellent in destroying the chances of the Congress Party in Punjab.

All the senior and seasoned politicians of the Congress Party in Punjab were not drawn into the discussion over the issues of leadership of the Punjab Pradesh Congress party and planning for the election campaign. Sunil Jakhar, Manish Tiwari, Ashwini Kumar and many others were far more experienced and they knew the ground situation better. Drawing people as star campaigners was decided more by the personal equation Rahul had with people than by the competence of the person. Sunil Jakhar claimed that Ravat who was made in charge of Punjab congress party had his own agenda in Punjab.

Anand Sharma, Sachin Pilot, Sahshi Taroor, Gulam Nabi Azad, Manish Tiwari, and many members of group 23 are long standing and committed congress members. They have worked hard for the party. But they do not find themselves in the coterie of Rahul Gandhi. This has a reason. I guess Rahul Gandhi is not confident about these senior and tall congressmen. His position in the party is not strong as he does not have a mandate of the wider members of the party.

My suggestion to the Congress party would be that when there is a situation of election preparation all the stalwarts of the congress party should hold a conclave and discuss the strategies for fighting election. Even in other situations when the party faces a challenge, all the big heads of the party should come together to face these challenges. I would go further to suggest that every two years the party should organize national level meetings to revitalize the party.

A word about Rahul Gandhi: Rahul Gandhi is a very hardworking person when he is at his job. The opposition parties, principally the BJP, have maligned his name. BJP was afraid that Rahul could make the fight of BJP difficult.

This election was the last chance for the opposition to come together to defeat the BJP. The Congress Party finds itself in the wilderness and the opposition unity against the BJP is "a pie in the sky".

Therefore, they were always targeting him and the Congress Party. Within the Congress party there are many who may not approve Rahul Gandhi's method of operation. Rahul Gandhi should venture into interacting with all the members of the party and try to get their cooperation. He should keep his friends closer but he should keep his detractors even closer and work with all and get their suggestions.

It seems BJP is able to win the elections after elections even without delivering on any front. Narendra Modi appears to be a factor behind the success of BJP. Is this the only reality of BJP? Of course not. BJP has changed the dynamics of fighting elections.

He has created an image about himself as a supreme pontiff of the Hindutva. He was the chief priest and Poojary in laying the foundation stone of Ram temple. He was the chief priest when it came to opening up of the Kashi Mathura corridor. He is accepted as an unparalleled leader who can defend Hindu religion. He has converted the BJP into a religious organization. All Hindus are made to look up to him to ensure the salvation (Moksha) of all the Hindus.

But the practice of the religious organization is devoid of any spirituality or religion. He has divided the society into Hindus and Muslims. He has revived the old mantra of treating the Muslims as the enemy number one of the Hindus. Even the British who ruled India were not considered as enemy number one. Golwalkar called the Muslims as the old and bitterest enemies. He writes, "We have allowed ourselves to be duped into believing our foes to be our friends" (M. S. Golwalkar, We or our Nationhood Defined, Nagpur, 1939). The hate campaign against the Muslims and the people of other minority community was the most effective instrument BJP and the Sangh Parivar used to divide the nation and make Hindus live in fear. Their strategy consisted in spread fear among the Hindus that if they are not careful the population of Muslims will overtake the

population of Hindus and then the Hindus will become slaves of the Muslims. There is not factual evidence to show this development. But this is a convenient strategy to wing the Hindu votes. Golwalkar attacked the nationalists for "hugging to our bosom our most inveterate enemies (Muslims) thus endangering our very existence". The Sangh Parivar had adopted the position of Golwalkar in letter and spirit. With this sort of campaign BJP has succeeded in capturing the imagination of the majority Hindus and gaining their support. It is using religion to capture the political power.

The other very important factor responsible for the victory of BJP is the lack of unity among the opposition parties. Akhilesh Yadav recently said that this is the last chance for the prajatantra. He pointed out that the BJP is trying to steal the mandate by robbing the voting machines. Akhilesh should have realized this before the elections were to commence. He ruled out point blank any understanding with the other major opposition parties. He was afraid that if he had collaborated with the Congress then Congress will grow in UP. He missed the point that the greater danger was not in allowing Congress a foothold in UP but letting BJP have a second term and consolidate itself and allow the opposition to be paralyzed.

Mamata Banerjee also played a spoiler game by trying to eat away into Congress Party's hold in Tripura, Goa and Punjab. She declared that the Congress Party is incapable of defeating the BJP. Therefore, she went out to destroy the Congress party. In Goa the Congress Party had put up a spirited fight against the BJP. But the Trinamool Congress party and Aam Admi party succeeded dividing the anti BJP votes and gave a cakewalk to the BJP.

This election was the last chance for the opposition to come together to defeat the BJP. The Congress Party finds itself in the wilderness and the opposition unity against the BJP is "a pie in the sky".





# HASTY LEGISLATIONS BOON OR BANE TO NEW INDIA

day we have a goal to fulfill,

the dreams of an independent India. We have a target to build a new India before the 100th year of independence, 2047", avowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi after unveiling the hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate on 22nd January, 2022. It is an irrefutable point of view that the New envisioned India can take its shape only through the proper guidance and support of qualified legislators and quality legislations. And the enactments of such revamping legislations are possible only when legislators take into consideration the mind and need of the 'aam aadmi' of India. In his maiden speech in Lok Sabha on June 11, 2014, Mr. Modi proclaimed, "Victory teaches us many things and we should learn also. Victory teaches us to be humble. I give my trust to this Parliament, I believe that the seniors here, from whatever group they may be, with their blessings, we will get that strength which will save us from arrogance. It will teach us every moment to be humble. Whatever be the number here, but I will not move forward without you. We should not move on the basis of numbers. We should move on the basis of the power of collective

In its second term, over six Parliament sessions, the Modi government has passed 42 Bills in less than half-an-hour, and 19 in less than 10 minutes.

#### MICHAEL ANAND OFM

approach. We want to move forward with the feeling of collective approach". But what is happening in reality is contradictory to what the Prime Minister spoke of. The entire country is watching the proceedings in the Parliament on whether the legislations in the recent years are enacted, based on the majoritarianism or in the interest of the public. The lack of discussions and consultations over Bills being passed in the Parliament is very obvious.

One of the most important functions of our Parliamentarians is to enact legislations. And in India we have a long chain of standardized motions which has to be adopted by both the Houses of Parliament before a bill becomes a law. The ministry drafts a text of the proposed law, which is called a 'Bill', after calling comments from other ministries, and even from the public. The draft is revised to incorporate

such inputs and is then scrutinized by the Law Ministry. It is then presented to the Cabinet for approval. After the Cabinet approves the Bill, it is introduced in Parliament. In Parliament, it goes through three Readings in both Houses. During the First Reading the Bill is introduced. The introduction of a Bill may be opposed and the matter may be put to vote in the House. After a Bill has been introduced, the Bill may be referred to the concerned Departmentally Related Standing Committee for examination. The Standing Committee considers the broad objectives and the specific clauses of the Bill referred to and may invite public comments on a Bill. It then submits its recommendations in the form of a report to Parliament. In the Second Reading (Consideration), the Bill is scrutinized thoroughly. Each clause of the Bill is discussed and may be accepted, amended or rejected. The government, or any MP, may introduce amendments to the Bill. However, the government is not bound to accept the Committee's recommendations. During the Third Reading (Passing), the House votes on the redrafted Bill. If the Bill is passed in one House, it is then sent to the other House, where it goes through the second and third readings. After both Houses of Parliament pass a Bill, it is presented to the President for assent. He/She has the right to seek information and clarification about the Bill, and may return it to Parliament for reconsideration. (If both Houses pass the Bill again, the President has to assent) After the President gives assent, the Bill is notified as an Act. But the actual happening in the recent years is far from this procedural reality.

Nine minutes in Rajya Sabha and three minutes in Lok Sabha: that's how long the Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, for which hundreds of farmers sacrificed their lives, took to be passed on 29 November, 2021 — without any discussion. This is the reality of law making in India today. The present Union government has often faced criticism for rushing Bills. The last session saw 15 Bills — 14 in Lok Sabha and one in Rajya Sabha — being passed in less than 10 minutes, and 26 Bills in less than half-an-hour. In its second term, over six Parliament sessions, the Modi government has passed 42 Bills in less than half-an-hour, and 19 in less than 10 minutes, according to PRS Legislative Research data. While many of the Bills were ordinary in nature, some deserved serious discussion.

For instance, the 14 Bills passed in less than 10 minutes in Lok Sabha in the Monsoon Session included the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill (discussed for 8 minutes), The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill (5 minutes), The Tribunals Reforms Bill (9 minutes), and The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill (6 minutes). The Opposition wanted the general insurance Bill to be referred to a standing committee; in Rajya Sabha, but the Bill was passed in 22 minutes.

According to the PRS data, the Monsoon Session perhaps holds the worst record when it comes to Bills being rushed through in Parliament. The other Bills passed in under 10 minutes were: The National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, The Inland Vessels Bill, The Coconut Development Board (Amendment) Bill, The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill, The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, The National Commission for Homoeopathy (Amendment) Bill and The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (Amendment) Bill.

It is no wonder why the ordinary Indian citizens have to get on to the streets to fight for their rights every time when such hasty laws are enacted. In the recent years our country has been witnessing such protests one after another. We protested against the NRC, NPR and the CAA.

NRC, to put it simply, can be described as the National Register of People: a register that will have the list of all the country's genuine citizens, even though it is currently only done in Assam, and as our leaders put it, there will soon be a national NRC. NPR is a database which contains a list of all the country's regular residents. The goal is to provide a comprehen-

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## All that the people look from the Parliamentarians is not the creation of a 'New India', but regaining the originality of the independent India and its constitutional values.

sive identity database of individuals residing in the country. It is generated by house-tohouse enumeration during the census' phase of "house-listing," which is held once in 10 years. CAA stands for Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, the Act was passed in parliament on December 11, 2019. Under this Act, the Indian government plans to give citizenship to religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, which are people belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities. This trio is supposed to provide people who have been called migrants belonging to the neighbouring countries and the idea is to provide them with an identity while purposely excluding the people a from particular community of faith. Though the union government vehemently defends these laws, it sounds superficial to most of the legal experts and the social activists.

On 5 August 2019, the Parliament of India voted in favour of a resolution tabled by Home Minister Amit Shah to revoke the temporary special status, or autonomy, granted under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir—a region administered by India as a state which consists of the larger part of Kashmir which has been the subject of dispute among India, Pakistan, and China since 1947. Along with the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 it was also passed to divide Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories called Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh. This had the Indian constitution applying to the people of Jammu and Kashmir from then onwards. The action did result in a lot of protesting and anger against this decision and the region was put on lockdown, with Section 144 being imposed and internet and phone services being blocked.

The Indian agriculture Acts of 2020, often termed the Farm Bills, are three Acts initiated by the Parliament of India in September 2020.

2020. The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, gave his assent on 27 September 2020. The three Acts are: (i) the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, (ii) the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and (iii) the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. These controversial anti-farmers' laws gave rise to the longest and also the biggest protests by the farmers all over India to withdraw the laws. Eventually, many poor farmers had to even sacrifice their lives in the process of protests. Finally, as an electoral gimmick (just before the Utter Pradesh, Punjab assembly elections), the union government had finally yielded repealing the farm laws on 29 November, 2021. We can go on enumerating such hasty, con-

The Lok Sabha approved the Bills on 17 Septem-

ber 2020 and the Rajya Sabha on 20 September

troversial and politically motivated legislations such as the CGST Act, 2017, The Dam Safety Act, 2021, The New Education Policy, 2021, and so on. Every time the legislators propose a particular legislation, they should focus on maintaining order, establishing standards, protecting liberties and resolving disputes of the nation. The focus should be on the interest of the ordinary poor men and women of the society than the hidden political agenda of the ruling parties. All that the people look from the Parliamentarians is not the creation of a 'New India', but regaining the originality of the independent India and its constitutional values of 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic nation, imparting the values of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity to all section of people irrespective of their religion, language, culture, etc., Every enacted legislation of our country should be a "boon and not a bane" to the nation.

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## Throughout history powerful nations have subjugated weaker nations but their victory is only temporary.

## MONICA FERNANDES

es! Indeed we do. We worship the 'fake gods' of wealth, power, prestige and endless enjoyment.

Wealth : 'Money can't buy me love', belted the Beatles. It's so true. Designer clothes, bags, expensive holidays, fancy cars, changing our mobiles for the latest model – these may be 'a few of my favourite things' but they are temporal. It is ironic. We work ourselves to the bone to acquire all the new toys and then don't find the time to enjoy them. What is the use of a large house if we only have time to sleep in it?

Acquisitions are addictive. We are never satisfied and are always seeking for more. When we single handedly pursue the chimera of wealth, we lose out on relationships with family and friends.

Those who lose sight of their values and employ shady deals in order to live their crazy rich lifestyles are bringing down the pillars of the very society they live in. For instance, the unscrupulous felling of trees results in climate changes and environmental degradation that affects the health of the so called business man behind this act.

Being rich in itself is not harmful provided we do so legally, we know when to stop and we use it for the betterment of society. Businessman Asim Premji is the founder

Chairman of Wipro and is known as the Czar of the Indian IT Industry whose business acumen has resulted in much needed jobs. In addition he is a philanthropist who has agreed to give away at least half of his wealth.

We do have a right to ownership through our hard work and through our inheritance. But we should spare a thought for others.

**POWER** : Power is a drug which enslaves the powerful. Harbouring ideas of grandeur is an illusion. It is temporary. Napoleon Bonarparte spent his last years in exile on the island of Saint Helena. Alexander was the Great only till the tender age of 27 when he died of syphilis. His greatness ended in pain. Adolf Hitler, the notorious megalomaniac dictator, spent his last days in a bunker. These power crazy leaders are heartless and the death of others is fine as long as gives them power and as long as it is not their own death. These guys would have been powerless unless they had others who followed them blindly in the hope of reflected glory. Throughout history powerful nations have subjugated weaker nations but their victory is only temporary.

The late astronaut Kalpana Chawla in an interview said that the earth seemed so tiny when seen from Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997 as a mission specialist and primary robotic arm

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operator. A different perspective from the war mongers and megalomaniacs who imagine they have conquered the world!

As the Gospel according to Mathew states 'What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? '

FAME AND IMPORTANCE : A lot of us want to be in the limelight. We insanely share selfies on Instagram and Facebook at a restaurant, on holiday and wearing something cool. We are desperate to score more 'Likes' than our friends.

It is pertinent to mention that the famous singers of today are forgotten in time and replaced by younger singers. There was a guy who prided himself on the articles he wrote which were published in several magazines. After his death, copies of the articles he had treasured were unceremoniously jettisoned. The articles he wrote yesterday were of no use unless they give a positive message and changed someone's life for the better. The boss everyone curries favour with is a forgotten nobody after retirement.

**ENJOYMENT**: We live in a world of instant gratification. For some of the pampered rich, their lives revolve around enjoyment. These self centered individuals lack the ability to stand on their own two feet when the chips are down.

The party brigade indulges in binge eating followed by spells of binge fasting, as enjoyment to them is the be all and end all of life. They indulge excessively in smoking, drinking, gaming, drugs, sex and night club life, thinking that since they are young, nothing will happen to them. They burn the candle at both ends. The entertainment industry has many instances of young, talented life being tragically snuffed out due to excessive self indulgence.

Some of you would have heard of the '27 Club' of several western pop musicians, artists, actors, and athletes who died at age 27 between 1969 and 1971, often as a result of drug and alcohol abuse or suicide. Some of them were Jim Morrison, the lead singer of the Doors, Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. According to Wikipedia, a 2011 British Medical Journal study concluded, "Fame may increase the risk of death among musicians, but this risk is not limited to age 27".

There are so many temptations with easy online accessibility and it is easy to fall prey to 'fake gods'. Life is short and when we pursue fake gods, we are throwing our lives away. It is therefore imperative for our own happiness and that of others that we view our priorities and focus on living useful, productive lives.



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# **IN PICTURES**

# A Series of Epiphanies from a Trip to Ladakh

#### **RITISHA NAIR**

where that came from. When we landed in Leh the day after that we found out that both my parents had left something behind. Epiphany no 1: No matter how thoroughly you plan something inadequacy is the way of the world.

The first place we stayed at was called Karu. As we settled into our room, my hands started to go numb from the cold. My whole life has been a death metal song of two polar opposite ethnicities. It was when I could feel the cold in my bones that I had epiphany no 2: I'm definitely more Malayali than Arunachali.

There is a Gurudwara called Pathar Sahib on the outskirts of Leh. I'm not a very religious person so the holiness and sanctity of the place didn't really affect me. What did strike me was that when we sat to eat at the langar I noticed that the stark contrast between all of us there. My mom a Christian, my dad a Hindu, our driver doubling as our guide who was a pure bred Buddhist, and me were seated on the floor eating a simple but extremely tasty meal which was served by people who were constantly chanting Waheguru's name. Epiphany no3: it is so easy to coexist, to listen to the breeze, to smile at strangers, if only we would just sit down together and eat. I remember we were driving down a very pretty road, snow clad mountains on both sides and my dad remarked 'how beautiful Ladakh is'. We were in an Army vehicle sent by my dad's friend so the person driving was a *jawan*. He told us about how he had premature twins and how he lost both of them just four days after their birth. He told us about how a year after that he was blessed with a healthy baby boy who was just six months old whom he had to leave behind because he got posted to Leh. To him all Ladakh is cold. Beauty to him will be holding his son. Epiphany no 4: Picturesque landscapes can mean desolate for some.

I got back home from the two week trip and even though Ladakh is the most beautiful place I've been to and I met the sweetest people there, I cannot explain to you the relief I felt when I walked into our house. That's when I had epiphany no 5: Travelling to new places can give you interesting stories to tell, but the comfort of sleeping in your own bed and listening to your fan make the same old noise is irreplaceable. There's no other place like home. There just cannot be.









# Turning Swords into Ploughshares

Extending our concern beyond our immediate circle to a universe without circumference will end the cycle of retaliation, and give rise to a new style of being.

GERRY LOBO OFM



There seems to be a pre-civilized world of revenge, emerging in our socio-political-religious environment in the name of religion. A sick retaliating psyche has surfaced in the dynamics of relationships in the society. Frown, fury and vengeance are being considered nobler virtues today than loving-kindness and contrition. Obviously there prevails an imbalance in the human soul, leaning more towards retaliatory violence than harmonious and a humanitarian solution to issues pertaining to the public domain, finally resulting in social upheaval and uncomfortable co-existence.

Hate speeches delivered by interested fringe religious, narrow-minded individuals and groups in the Indian society contemporarily sign in clear terms that the venom of aggression. war-mongering and annihilation are easily encouraged as works of justice and expressions of true faith. Fabricated facts about those who seem to be a threat, particularly in the realm of religion and politics, are spewed out freely by the zealots of a religion, creating an uncertainty and fear among innocent people. Because the ruling dispensation bears the mark of a strong religious sentiment and it functions on the basis of 'one religion, one country,' it remains silent, which in turn brews further hatred in the propagators, licensing them of their misdeeds. The vicious circle of fury and hate continue to be normal today. The outright extermination of people who profess and practice their faith is considered as a justifiable moral act. Hence, the individuals and their master-inspirers simply cannot know to this day and are unable to recognize when the 'night is over and the day has dawned!'

The sad fact before us today is that the educated millions who have vowed, and exercise the divinely human and humanly divine ancient faiths and philosophies which are mystically awesome and stupendously nourishing the soul, have yet to see the light of day and recognize their brothers and sisters on the eyes of human beings whatever their colour and religion be. Being caught up in the flashy political philosophies and grossly exaggerated



ideologies which are being propagated through the media today, even the sane and the reasoning persons can hardly be reasonable any longer and unable to arrive at a reasonable judgment when it comes to electing leaders who can carry forward the divine destiny of people. The freedom of speech is turned into a mockery by liberal and oppressive declarations in public. The law of the land is flouted by the informed and knowledgeable leaders with their cadre, regardless of who governs and judges human behavior. Such a disregard for human decency has covered the ambit of honesty and integrity. In the bargain the human being is either killed by the poisonous tongue or hate is sowed in hearts who never wished that to happen. Then hate begets hate. Hence committing an injustice becomes an adorable act.

The challenge today is to meet the demons of hate and retaliation with loving-kindness. This does not mean we let ourselves be victims of grave injustice and crime instead seek the way of reconciliation. Compassion, understanding and a belief that all humans are redeemable may free us from the retaliatory instinct of our ego. Without blame or being driven to get back at the unfairness of others, people of our nation need to return to the spiritual practice of mindfulness into which they are born and grown.

Unfortunately the attitude and behavior, speech and act of the numerous political leaders do not impress upon the citizens a positive, non-revengeful and peace-loving appearance. They are often overridden by natural impulse of ego-sport of the pre-civilized world which stands contrary to the importance of subjectivity and interdependence which the contemporary philosophy insists upon if humans wish to sustain their life in society. In a spiritual practice of mindfulness or deep sense of presence one notices others' negative behavior but does not get back at them for it. Getting back at others has become the normal style of many in our society so much so that boundaries and barriers are constructed between families, nations, cultures and religions. It seems to me that all our enthusiastic and emotional religious practices absolutely stand contrary to our thinking and practice. This kind

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of hypocritical attitude was condemned by Jesus Christ, calling it as "white-washed tombs".

Retaliation works only between lions and tigers, not among rational and affective humans! The truly human never looks for the glee of retaliatory disposition, instead for a connectedness that enhances mutuality with standards of love. Human history of recent times indicates the loss of moral consciousness which upholds, bears and sustains every human person as sacred life in whom is Divine Energy hidden. The Hitlarian mind grossly corrupted by hate has been making its way with its intolerance towards anyone who does not fit into one's likes and dislikes. Healthy anger is not violence but a firm disagreement with the unfair or inhumane treatment towards the sacred mortals. Hence developing a healthy psyche will gear to release the innate compassion for the human other in his or her other-ness manifested in ones way of life, worship, religious practices, attitudes, behavior and culture. On the other hand, the neglect of this will eventually corrupt and corrode human society and turn it into a bestial space. Everyone is accountable for this sin which is inherent in the human soul.

A conscientious effort on the part of all to alter the non-acceptable events of our common history which have dominated the discourse these days is of paramount importance and urgent need. We cannot permit 'live or perish' philosophy. Replacing hate speeches of vengeance and retaliation by turning "swords into ploughshares" of the Biblical prophecy is what is truly required today in a situation where human beings are begging for their daily bread on the fringes of our society. How can hate find its room in the heart when millions struggle for a penny or two? How can getting rid of a disturbing and dangerous presence is promoted and the "eye for an eye" historical style still persists when millions are displaced and dispersed without a home of their own?

Recall that nature tailors each and every species to support others. Extending our concern beyond our immediate circle to a universe without circumference will end the cycle of retaliation, and a dialogue between humans will evolve as a new style of being.

# LGBT+ Acceptance: A Long Walk Begun

Among a large section of the educated middle class, especially people below 30, there is an acceptance of queer people, at least for the sake of sounding progressive and politically correct.

### DR M N PARASURAMAN

n 15 April 2014, the Supreme Court of India delivered the historic NALSA judgement (so called because the Petitioner was the National Legal Services Authority) upholding the constitutionally mandated human rights of members of the transgender community and giving the nation a roadmap for the various laws that ought to be passed to secure those rights for them.

On 5 September 2018, the Apex Court decriminalized all forms of sex indulged in privacy between two consenting adults, thereby invalidating the draconian Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, an 1860 law that prescribed rigorous punishments for all "carnal intercourse against the order of nature." What exactly constituted "the order of nature" was never specified but policemen habitually interpreted it to harass gays and others thought to be involved in anything other than heterosexual penetrative sex.

These were two blows struck by our judiciary for the rights of members of the LGBT+ or Queer Community, which includes all people of non-binary gender and/or sexual orientation. It must be noted here that the executive has been consistently either evasive or inimical to the rights of queers, fearing to alienate possible voters belonging to the heterosexual majority. They refused to permit adoption and surrogate parenthood rights to transgender and same sex couples on the grounds – not merely dubious but outright erroneous –that such permission would go against "Indian culture." It is these same grounds that are being cited to express opposition to marriage rights being granted to same-sex couples and we have the pathetic spectacle of even "respected" members of the legal profession arguing that marriage is, by its very definition, heterosexual, aimed at procreation. As if procreation was the need of the hour for the human species in this already overpopulated planet!

So where has India come in its acceptance of the queer community and its rights? India claims to have a tradition of accepting transpeople. There is some evidence to support this claim in our scriptures and myths, as well as traditions of worship in various parts of the country. Hijras are allowed to exist and revered on certain occasions in certain contexts. So are several other people of non-binary gender orientation such as Shivshaktis, kothis, etc.

However, when we come to the hard realm of economic and civil rights, when we talk of practical things like education and employment opportunities and civil rights, such as the simple right to take a house on rent without having to hide one's gender identity or sexual expression, the much touted "acceptance and tolerance" don't really seem to exist. A disturbingly large proportion, if not majority of transpeople in India, still live by begging or sex-work. They still find it difficult to stay in the education system beyond Class 9, due to the bullying and mental torture inflicted on them by fellow students, with the tacit or open support of teachers and authorities.

In a state like Kerala that boasts endlessly about its high literacy and low birth rates, its pluralism and embrace of modernity and its unmatched social and civic consciousness, more than 60% of transgender children are forced to drop out of school before Class 9. They are tortured physically and mentally and disinherited and disowned by their families. Less than a decade ago, in a prominent government-run women's college in the capital city of this educated state, a transboy, studying in the college because of his female sex-assigned-at-birth, who wore his hair short and dressed male, was ordered by the Principal to dress and behave more like a girl and "not create confusion and problems" for people. His mother was summoned to the college and reprimanded for not reining in her "wayward" daughter. Kerala is, in many ways, a particularly serious victim of what the sociologist Dipankar Gupta has beautifully described as "mistaken

modernity", but other Indian states are not very much better.

As for people of non-binary sexual orientation, most of them live in the closet by hiding their orientation in order to avoid harassment and do simple things like getting an education, securing and keeping a job, inheriting money or property, being able to take a house on rent, etc, If at all they have a sex life involving partners of their gender, it is a secret parallel life. This is the case even with gay men.

The plight of lesbian women is terrible because marriage is more or less compulsory for women in this country and marriage for a lesbian woman –if we are to be unflinchingly honest –means a lifetime of accepting regular rape. This is the same story with transmen who do not have the means, support and courage to undergo gender affirmation (formerly called 'sex change' or 'sexual reassignment') procedures.

When we come to intersex people (those born with the genitalia of both sexes), thousands of them continue to fall prey to infanticide. When one parent (usually the mother) refuses to "cooperate" with this cold blooded murder

I feel cautious optimism about the future of my community and the acceptance we shall receive, although it is not unmixed with depression and anger over existing realities.

by another name, the child nevertheless grows up facing harassment and cursing in addition to neglect by the other parent and society as a whole.

What I have presented above is a more or less accurate picture of the state of "acceptance" of the queer community in India! So where is the silver lining in this dark cloud?

First, we have the blows struck for our rights by the judiciary, starting with the two Supreme verdicts I mentioned at the beginning, followed by several noteworthy and praiseworthy High Court judgements, like many delivered by the Madras High Court in the past two years.

Second, among a large section of the educated middle class, especially people below 30, there is an acceptance of queer people, at least for the sake of sounding progressive and politically correct. This seems superficial at one level, but it has created a climate conducive for such verdicts and reduced the harassment of queers by the police system. More significantly, it has brought out into the open the mere fact of talking about the existence and human rights of queer people and articulation is almost always the first step towards emancipation.

Third, in keeping with global trends, the Indian academia has accepted queer studies as a legitimate field of serious enquiry, although teaching about the rights of queer people at undergraduate level is still confined to a few universities. Courses and modules on this area are usually "elective" and not compulsory. This is unfair, because those who are old enough to read about heterosexual love and romance are old enough to read about the love and sex life of the queer minority. Nevertheless, it is a beginning.

I, the author of this article, am an open bisexual. My coming out in my boarding school in my Plus One (1992–93) was accepted because the management of the school was extraordinarily liberal and ahead of its times.

After leaving school, I was more discreet, selective and gradual about revealing my sexual identity. In 2015, aged 39, I happened to get involved in the Kerala Queer Pride organised by a CBO called Queerala and the runner-up events leading to it. It was then that I realized that an educated and privileged queer like me, holding down a government Assistant Professorship and commanding the attention and respect of hundreds of students, had a duty to speak, because if I spoke, I would help strengthen the conditions for dozens of others to do so. On the whole I have not only been accepted but actually enjoyed increased respect from many among my students and a few among my peers.

There have been instances of phobia though. In one college where I worked, a coworker told me to my face, "I can even understand people wanting sex with animals, but I cannot accept people who want sex with others of their own gender!" In one BA classroom, as I was going out, a mischievous boy called out "Bye!" to me in a faux feminine drawl. A WhatsApp DP of mine, wherein I was dressed in a nightie, was shared by a girl student with the head of my department with the allegation that I had sent it to her. Fortunately, I was able to establish that the girl who made that allegation was not there on my Contacts list. Upon interrogation by the head she confessed that she had downloaded it. (This was possible in 2016. Subsequently the privacy features were strengthened).

However, on the whole, I feel cautious optimism about the future of my community and the acceptance we shall receive, although it is not unmixed with depression and anger over existing realities, especially when I think about transmen and lesbians.

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# The Shroud: An Artist's **Journey Back to Faith**

#### **MURIEL NATHAN**

was passing through a trial of faith in 1982. I had come under the influence of philosophers such as Ayn Rand and had begun to reject the tenets of Christianity, although deep in my heart I could not reject Christ. Outwardly in word and deed I adopted an attitude of caring lesser for people I encountered and more for the pursuit of my own selfish needs. My husband John and I were living and working in Calcutta. We had been to Kathmandu on work in June 1982. The place, teeming with Buddhist and Hindu art combined with the ritualistic fervor and religiosity of the people, both attracted and repelled me. I had very deep tensions within me, tensions I could not share with anyone, even my husband. I started isolating myself and retreating into the world of art. I had come to the conclusion that art was the only thing in life worth living for and in July, I made a solemn pledge that I would never again seek happiness in any person or thing apart from the pursuit of art.

A week later I fell ill. The doctors diagnosed typhoid. I was not too disturbed, thinking that medicines would set me right in two weeks. A month passed by and I was still in bed. During this time I was trying to discover the 'Hidden Teaching beyond Yoga' and such like. My husband enquired one Sunday if I wanted our Parish priest to come over and give me Communion. To please him I agreed. Our parish priest came and gave me the Sacrament of the Sick. He did not ask if I wanted to confess and I did not offer to say that I did, either. He gave me a general pardon and administered the Eucharist to me. After he and the family left my room, I realized that I ought not to have received that Communion as I needed spiritual healing much

more than physical healing. I guess that was the beginning, of my conversion. My fever continued unabated, doctors were at a loss to know why as they could not find anything wrong. Months passed. I was thrown into isolation by Divine purpose as I now see it. All I could observe were the passing clouds as they drifted past my window ... and I wondered about God ... Who was He?...Where was He?....He seemed so far away.

One afternoon I reached out for my Bible and turned to the Gospel of St. John. I had always liked the opening lines, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God..." There was a kind of solemnity in those lines which spoke of His presence. I read on, for the first time right through to the end of the Gospel, the WORD taking life in my soul. I was stirred to the very depths of my being. I sensed His living power; here was no intellectual rationalizing, but a living presence. I stood in awe and then was down on my knees weeping as never before. I could see the chasm, the terrible distance I had placed between God and me. Sure I was searching for Him in my own way, there was that yearning to know Him, but the more I searched the greater seemed the distance. How desperately I wanted to close that gap, how I longed to unveil those mists that shrouded His Image. I could remember how as a child He had always seemed so close at hand, how often I had walked in the safe comfort of my hand in His, but now, I felt the loneliness of sin as He confronted me with my life.

On the 20th November my doctor had advised a complete medical checkup and tests on the 22nd November 1982. Since I was



supposed to go to Bangkok, for similar tests I was reluctant to have the tests done locally. On the 21st November was the Feast of Corpus Christi. We went for the 7 am mass. A priest was at the Confessional. Something prompted me to make my Confession especially after hearing the Gospel reading about the paralytic who was let down from the roof, and received forgiveness and healing. When I returned to my place I said to the Lord, 'Jesus when you healed people you always forgave them, today I believe you have forgiven me, but I want a proof of your forgiveness, take my fever away.' It was a simple prayer. I did not even think I was putting God to the test. All I know is that I was afraid to take my temperature though my normal habit was to reach out for that thermometer almost every hour. I was afraid to know the answer, if I had fever then I would have to admit there was no God, on the other hand, if I had no fever, then I would have to admit that God existed, and He existed in Christ Jesus. Either way I was cornered. At 2 p.m. as planned, my family came to

our place. Our flat on the tenth floor overlooked the grounds of St Xavier's College in Calcutta where the people congregated for the Procession. The plan was that my Dad, who was old and fragile, and I, would remain at home and watch the Procession from our balcony. However, when they arrived, I could resist no longer and took my temperature. It had dropped below normal for the first time in almost five months! I decided to go for the Procession. All along the way my heart rejoiced in the Lord Who had paid heed to my prayer. The fever never came back again. We went to Bangkok as planned in December and had a good holiday. I didn't need to do any further tests.

The outcome of all this was a new reverence for my Faith. I realized I needed to do a lot of spiritual spring-cleaning, my search had not ended—it had only just begun! I started turning to religious writings, such as the 'Divine Milieu', seeking a personal encounter with the Living Christ. These books though good, did not satisfy. They were too intellectualized; I could not

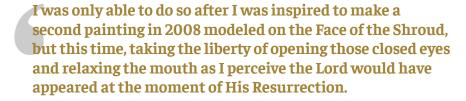


He is Risen



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The Holy Shroud



touch the heart of Christ. Then I came across, 'The Turin Shroud' by Ian Wilson. Here was something vital, it carried the Face of Jesus on the cover, and a history and research documentation on the latest findings on the Shroud. I was interested, stirred deeply. It was also the beginning of Holy Year. I made a new promise to keep the year Holy and seek happiness only in the Lord.

A friend in Italy sent me a book on the Shroud which had an enlargement of the Face. I started studying the Face, its structure, its proportions. I was fascinated. I made a few sketches, gaining new insights into its human quality. A desire started growing within me to recapture the living Christ as He appeared to me from the negative, on canvas. I had been painting portraits for some time. I was convinced this negative could be painted. I thought I would try. But the question arose in my heart that I was unworthy to attempt painting the Divine. I went through several waves of hesitation and doubt whether I could or should attempt such a task. I prayed and asked for guidance. I found the urge growing stronger than ever. I knew I just had to paint it. I remembered as a young girl, on seeing frescoes of Christ's suffering in a Church in Mangalore, I had made a promise to Jesus that someday I would paint Him crucified; if it had to be the last thing I would do before I died. I wondered if Jesus would hold me to that promise! In fact I knew I would paint the crucified Christ, but I had sub-consciously kept deferring it, thinking that once I did it, I would die... And I didn't feel ready to die! In a way Christ has held me to that promise, yes, I am dying to self, as I allow Him to cleanse out and rebuild the temple of my heart, and not in the way that I had anticipated!

On the 16th April 1983 I finally got ready. At Mass I prayed that He would give me the grace to faithfully recapture His Image from the negative. I started around 8.30 a.m. and worked non-

stop till around 4.30 p.m. with a short break for lunch. I believe His Hand guided every stroke; I just could not leave the canvas till the picture was finished. I was completely lost in it. All I remember was the feeling of a pleasurable tiredness, of being near to Him, energized in Him, as I drew strength and sustenance from His wounded Image. It was food for my soul. I had never experienced such deep satisfaction from any other painting I had done before. The Face was etched deep in my heart. I carried the Image of His Face before me for months after that. It haunted me; I just could not get away from it. And I believe much of my spiritual growth since then has come from the Image of His Face. I am grateful to God for this wonderful gift He has given me, and especially for the grace and privilege of painting His Face, unworthy as I am, and for using me as His vehicle, for His honour and glory, not mine, as I had once pledged.

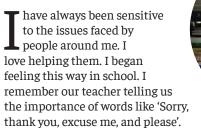
The Late Fr Robert Herzer, TOR with whom I came in contact in 1984, quite providentially, through the picture of my painting of the Holy Face, had said with reference to my painting, "It is not a picture of a dead Christ as we understand it as applied to a corpse. It is the Body of Christ waiting in restful repose for the moment of Resurrection. Looking at that sacred picture one knows without a shadow of doubt that Resurrection had to follow. This picture speaks only to those who love but speak it does to those so favoured."

On 21st October, 2009 I finally presented my painting of the Holy Face of the Shroud of Turin to the Vatican. It was not easy to part with this painting so greatly loved and so intrinsically a part of my life, however, I was only able to do so after I was inspired to make a second painting in 2008 modeled on the Face of the Shroud, but this time, taking the liberty of opening those closed eyes and relaxing the mouth as I perceive the Lord would have appeared at the moment of His Resurrection.

# **Being Sensitive Is the First** Step to Be of Help to Someone

# The satisfaction that comes from being there for someone who needs support, is what social work is all about.

**ADITI JAIN** 



Every session with her started with us going through the day's newspaper to find a positive and impactful story. We would read them out loud and discuss them. This activity eventually inspired me to go try and make some positive impact of my own. My first step was to go to an NGO with a friend, and pitch a curriculum we had designed, hoping to teach it to some students. While that didn't quite work out (we were just kids ourselves), it was still a great learning experience to begin my impact journey.

My next real step happened in the first year of my under graduation. I took a solo trip to Jaipur to travel and work with an NGO that helped children from difficult families and those who had run away from home. I



taught the kids how to express themselves through theatre, something I had learnt from my teacher, and also the basics of photography. The experience, like all such experiences, was a two-way street. In turn, the kids taught me a lot about their lives and how they grew up helping each other survive.

In my second year as an under graduate, I worked with another NGO which helped children who had survived rape and abuse. These kids faced a double blow - first they

suffered the abuse, and then they lost trust in people they were close to, who choose to not believe them. Here I heard a lot of stories about how they survived the horror-not just sexually, but also physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

This time it was difficult to separate myself from the situation. I had to learn to work for the betterment of the child, without involving myself emotionally.

For example, I visited a court for the hearing of a case of a child. I was not really sure of the

## It's heartbreaking, but a reality a lot of us haven't even thought of. I learnt of it because I was there, and I could make a difference, however small.

age of the child, but it had been about four years since the crime and uncountable sessions had taken place before the system had arrived at the conclusion of the case. Having done my research on POCSO guidelines, I could follow and understand the proceedings, so I was giving updates via call to the lady I was interning for.

Among the updates I had to regularly share was about the mother of the child. Imagine the heaviness that mother must have felt. She was one of the parents who chose to fight for her child. The strength she held within her was unimaginable.

It was not a pleasant place to be: an old building full of stairs, a lot of rooms and white walls. Every room has an ongoing session. A lot of chaos. A lot of people. A whole lot of hearing sessions and a gloomy environment. Now imagine the perpetrator and the survivor are on the same floor. The perpetrator walking in shackles, and the child seeing him. That's what it was like. This method can cause a lot of trauma to resurface, but that's the reality of our legal system.

Thankfully POCSO guidelines help keep the child relatively protected. The child is spoken to with respect. And the accused is asked to go behind a screen so the child doesn't have to see them or be scared of anything. But, such guidelines can only do so much to help a child not be triggered.

Since that first visit, I have come across a lot of cases over the years. But it's only recently that I have begun to separate myself from these cases emotionally, so I can engage with the person a little better and find a way to understand their needs. This growth has also allowed me to take my first steps as a creator of positive change, rather than remaining as an assistant to others doing the same.

In 2017, I began an initiative called 'Engage

In You', where survivors of sexual abuse came together to express their experiences vocally, or through dance, theatre, drawing, painting, and music. No pictures or videos were taken for the safety of the survivors. It really did do us all some good.

Those sessions felt important, as they did help survivors communicate how they felt, what their needs were, what they were struggling with, and how they felt supported. I knew I was on the right path, and the years of experience had shown me how to walk down it even further. And I continue to walk down it any way I can. My most recent attempt came in October 2021, when I travelled to Shillong. A friend, who is a gynecologist, was invited to assess the situation of Maternal Mortality Rate in Meghalaya. I joined up to assist her.

A lot of mothers die in the region, giving birth to babies. In a case I came across the mother died giving birth to her 14th child, and the infant died the next morning. That was just one case among thousands. A primary reason for this, as was explained to us, was that patients simply did not have the means to reach distant and rare hospitals, from their homes high in the hills.

It's heartbreaking, but a reality a lot of us haven't even thought of. I learnt of it because I was there, and I could make a difference. however small. The satisfaction that comes from being there for someone who needs support, is what social work is all about.

Social work takes a lot of courage, strength and patience. I know I am not there yet, but I am learning. The work has made me more open to my own learnings and helped me unlearn what I don't believe in anymore. It has pushed me to try and stand up for what I believe is right. It is a long journey. Perhaps one that will take an entire lifetime. But I'm getting there.

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF REJECTION OF TABLEAUX

The rejection of the representation by these states at a platform where we celebrate our diversity, unity, and pride in being an Indian was baffling and insulting.

## TOMY PALACKAL OFM

I n the development of Moral agency persons refrain from behaviours that generate a sense of self-condemnation and engage with behaviours that develop a sense of selfworth and respect. They do that by constraining negative self-sanctions that violate their sense of moral standards and by supporting positive self-sanctions that promote and is in consonance with their personal moral sense. In the face of situational inducements to behave inhumanely, people can choose to behave otherwise by exerting self-influence or learn how to do so. Self-sanctions keep conduct in accordance with internal standards.

The exercise of moral agency works by inhibiting self-sanctions that permits inhumanity and by supporting proactive behaviours that are grounded in a humanitarian ethic and is manifested in compassion for the plight of others and efforts to further their well-being, often at personal costs. In cases of proactive moral courage, individuals prevail as moral agents over entrenched social practices that are unjust and inhuman. An all-embracing morality includes doing good things, not just refraining from bad ones.

An analysis of behaviours or actions that are prejudicial, detrimental, inhuman, vested with selfish interests or evil in nature would clearly manifest a certain inhibitive mechanism of moral self-sections that allowed the execution or perpetuation of such behaviours; very often they operate in concert with both personal and social systems.

Let us look at one of those behaviours that clearly manifest this negative, inhibitive mechanism in action that is employed to silence or prevent visibility or even to insult the victims. The intent may have to be inferred from the context that exists between the perpetrator and the victim. But the mechanism that was engaged is clearly detectable. We can call the mechanism in this context, "Displacement of Responsibility." The contextual behaviour/experience is the rejection of tableaux presented by the states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

The rejection of the representation by these states at a platform where we celebrate our diversity, unity, and pride in being an Indian was baffling and insulting to the people of these states. It was surprising and utterly shocking how even an artistic depiction of the contribution of the freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to his nation by his native state was denied an entry though the centre itself was celebrating him at the national level. And Tamil Nadu that depicted the contributions of its local heroes and heroines to the nation building was denied the visibility it deserved. And finally, Kerala that came with the depiction of a social, religious transformer who helped the community to wriggle out of its archaic religious and social aberrations and practices was denied its right to express. It's worth observing and reflecting on

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the direction of our actions, a certain numbing of our moral sensitivity at the individual and at the communal levels. Below are some of the responses by the government machinery of these 'victim states.'

"I have been profoundly shocked and hurt by the decision of the government of India to abruptly exclude the proposed tableau of the government of West Bengal from the ensuing Republic Day parade. It is even more baffling for us that the tableau has been rejected without assigning any reasons or jurisdiction" Mamata Banerjee in her letter to Prime Minister of India. Banerjee said the proposed tableau was set to commemorate the contributions of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and his Indian National Army. Bose's 125th birth anniversary will be celebrated three days before Republic Day.

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu said, "It is shocking to know that Tamil Nadu's tableau has been denied the opportunity to take part in the Republic Day parade without citing any reason." He added, "The tableau trumpeting the contribution of freedom fighters from Tamil Nadu who faced the Britishers bravely has been denied an opportunity at the Republic Day Parade at New Delhi..."

"It is sad. I don't know why Sree Narayana Guru's tableau was rejected. We have no idea why the Centre is against the social reformer, ... The float was avoided at the eleventh hour, and concerned people owe an explanation to the state," Kerala Education Minister Shivan kutty.

The Ministry suggested changing it to a monument of Adi Sankaracharya, an Indian philosopher and theologian who put forward the Adwaita philosophy. Sree Narayana Guru was an anti-caste social reformer who spearheaded the temple entry movement that demanded that individuals of lower castes be allowed to enter temples. According to the Defence Ministry jury, Adi Shankaracharya united the country, but Kerala felt Guru as the ideal representation. Since Kerala did not make modifications as suggested by the jury, their proposal got rejected. This is the third time that Kerala's tableau is getting rejected in a row.

Replying to the letters of the West Bengal and Tamil Nadu chief ministers protesting against the exclusion of their state tableaux, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had said there is a well-established system in place and the selection process was fair. Singh had also said the expert committee in charge of the selection of tableaux for the Republic Day parade consists of eminent persons from the fields of art, culture, music, architecture and so on.

So, what is "displacement of responsibility", as a Moral disengagement mechanism and how is it manifested in the above case scenario. Displacement of Responsibility is when an agent operates by obscuring or minimizing one's agentive (and negative) role in causing harm. With displaced responsibility, they view their actions as arising from the dictates of authorities or systems or traditions/customs, etc. Because they are not the actual agents of their actions, they are spared of self-condemning reactions. Self-exemption from inhumane acts via displacement of responsibility is most gruesomely revealed in institutionally sanctioned genocide. Nazi concentration-camp commandants and their functionaries absolved themselves of personal responsibility for their unprecedented atrocities. They claimed they were simply carrying out orders. In his memoirs, Adolf Eichmann, who managed the mass deportation of Jews to the extermination camps, portrayed himself as a mere functionary obeying orders. He said, "It is normal that I who was not responsible, was not the master planner, the initiator or the one giving orders, should set out to defend myself against these accusations". He had to obey.

Looking at the answer of the honourable minister on questions regarding the rejection of these tableaux, do you think we have something to be concerned about?



# Hate Speech Right at Home and **Some Psychological Remedies**

We shame our children, partners, senior citizens, co-workers, and others inside our family system and in the outer world if their actions or personal attributes do not fit into our patterns of thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

#### **ROSLINE GOMES**

was raised in a culture that guided me in strengthening my social identity and most importantly my strengths. Today, I feel empowered as I can make my own decisions, learn its consequences or outcomes, strategize through the trial-and-error processes and move towards being a leader of my own life. But if I reflect on the present and walk backward, I observe that this freedom of individuality came with its comrades. One of them was called 'Prejudice' that reflected an added preconceived unfavorable negative judgment towards me and my group in the forms of verbal actions known as 'The Hate Speech'. As I pen down my experiential journey as a child, a teenager, an adolescent, and now an adult. I notice that in all these developmental phases one dimension that stands out is the practices of 'Hate Speech'. Social psychologists view hate speech as a form of prejudice, stereotype, and intergroup aggression. It can be a situational cause, an interpersonal attitude, or a phenomenon of social cognition. This leads

people to process information about people and the world in a biased manner as they lack mental capacity-building skillsets.

Hate speech has originated from varied theoretical perspectives and is a strong part of our community. The realistic group conflict theory suggests that hatred stabilizes due to competition and scarcity of resources. The social identity theory found that individuals who view themselves to be superior to others give them the confidence to emit hatred towards others or groups. There is identification with other members that creates a sense of belongingness. There is a categorization that makes people discriminate or label others based on personal or social attributes.

As a so-called psychologist, professor, student, researcher, daughter, sister, peer, and so on-the social roles labels that society has given me, has motivated me to always look into myself as a human. As I go back to my childhood phase I realize the phrases of body shaming,

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dishonoring on grounds of academic failures, humiliation concerning colour, embarrassment due to religious practices, and disgracing on aspirations. These practices get unnoticed and become unheard as our culture and institutions like family, schools, and others normalize them. The repercussions include low self-esteem, neurotic behaviours, feelings of insecurities and loneliness, imposter syndrome (inability to believe in one's skills and accomplishments), lack of coping, which all get diverted towards an increase in negative mental health. In the teenage journey and the process of adolescence, there have been phrases of racism and sexism that paved its way towards a prejudice that regularized preconceived notions about stereotypes and beliefs about personal attributes that were overgeneralized. In the phase of adulthood, there have been phrases of hate speech highlighting incompetence, social irresponsibility, inability to follow social norms like that of the workforce in groups, and family norms of marriage.

Hate speech has been an ideology in my interpersonal system. If I own a mind of my own where I can decide my ways and walk in it, it's considered as 'Rebellious'. If I can educate myself to empower the youth of my community, it's called 'Over Achiever'. If I can voice out an opinion about our community's pressure of marriage and the system of patriarchy, I am called a 'Burden'. If I can stand out as a professional in my capacities I am termed an 'Exhibitionist'. If I can talk about my mental health breakdowns, I am spoken about as 'Someone who lost her Anchor'. All these are some of my real-life examples that have been part of my existence and the process continues and will be there till the end. Even today, I have to hide my educational qualifications and my further aspirations as it's looked down upon in my community where the social norm is that 'our women should be less educated'.

In all these transformative years what stands out the most is the usage of hate speech and its roots that has become part of our culture. We shame our children, teenagers, adolescents, partners, senior citizens, co-workers, and others inside our family system and in the outer world if their actions or personal attributes do not fit into our patterns of thoughts, beliefs, and

actions. There is a choice that I have made for myself in my life. I had two options and one was to think and rethink these hate phrases and make them part of my unique personality. The second option was to see beyond and create my purpose. Today, digital media has been booming, and with it the hate speech. Our youth have been battling with all these experiences; and it's time we start to handhold them and sensitize our society. It's time we show others the value of applying a 'Growth Mindset' that means our capacities and that of others can be transformed through perseverance, resilience, trial and error methods. If we nurture the 'Fixed Mindset', that we are unable to view ourselves and others as divergent people with dynamic qualities then we will fail to be recognized as humans. Hate speech is more recognizable if we choose to believe that those who are applying these phrases are battling with their insecurities and therefore, they displace it on others. They also fail to apply a 'Growth Mindset'.

So as individuals we cannot stop 'Hate Speech' but we can stop its influence on us. We have to use some positive psychological skills here like 'Self-Affirmative Phrases', that is 'I am amazing, the way I am... I have my abilities and I will lead...' These affirmations encourage phrases to be true. It guides in challenging and diminishing negative phases that transform into actions. It promotes positive thinking, strategy building and overpowers hate speech. There is also another method that we can create for ourselves and that's known as 'Active Constructive Responding' where we can respond in a transformative way by changing negative phrases to positive. The strategy will help us to look at hate phrases in a positive light. I feel that if we view our children in their beauty, then they will evolve as strong adults. This needs to be done in partnership with families, schools, and local institutions. It's needed to identify hate speech in our intimate groups as adults and assist our youth in developing strengths and well-being measures. If we spend more on developing the aspirations of the young than saving our life earnings for their marriage, it will ensure a strong Self-Driven Identity of our youth and members of the society.



## **CINEMA**

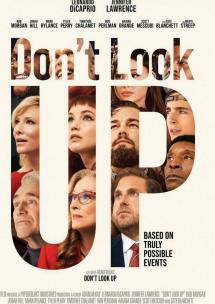
# Don't Look Up or Should You?

#### SINCHANA SHETTY

dam McKay's *Don't Look Up* is more than just a subtle nod that strikes a chord in its viewers about how not so subtle the end of the world is. This star studded satire truly goes to show that despite everything that conspires, the only true hero of the story is Jonah Hill's character, Jason Orlean's Hermès Birkin bag, a bourgeois must have.

The movie follows the story of two low-level astronomers from Michigan, Dr Mindy and Kate Dibiasky who make an unnerving discovery: a comet heading towards earth in exactly 6 months and 14 days. In the aftermath of this discovery, due to the lack of sincere efforts from the President on the issue, the two go on from one media channel to other, warning people about the consequences of an extinction level comet such as this, only for one to be dubbed 'The Bedroom Eyes Doomsday Prophet' and the other to end up a meme. The casual ignorance, the serious dismissal of scientific evidence, reminds one of a quote by Issac Asimov: 'The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge'.

A well written story that touches not only on the issue at hand but also several other themes like social media, pop culture, technology, politics, capitalism and climate change. The movie shows that media companies care more about profits than telling the truth, that politicians are the mouthpiece of the truly wealthy and that repeated stifling of all those that choose not



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to conform to the agenda of those in powerful positions are all part of the game. These themes are explored in a rather tongue in cheek manner than insightful. But then again, the entire point of the movie was to let us know that "We're all going to die". Somehow this begs the question: who really is the intended audience? Because we all know, as much as the extinction is real, every Tom, Dick, and Harry are as responsible for climate change as they are to authorise a nuclear attack. While I don't intend to dismiss the individual effort in climate change, it is only plausible to acknowledge the substantial change that capitalists and their corporations could bring to the table.

The movie makes it easier for its viewers to come to terms with the idea of extinction by creating one that is all encompassing as a comet. In reality however, the extinction is going to be one that is far more gradual and lugubrious than 8 AM classes on a Monday. To a pragmatic person, this comes off as utopic and that does not help the movie rating.

A solid 2.5 stars, the movie is definitely refreshing with cinematography that Timothee Chalamet's character, Yule, would describe as "meh". All in all, a one-time watch, *Don't Look Up* reiterates what we know and always have known: Jonah Hill is occasionally funny, Meryl Streep would probably be a better president than her character and we're all going to die.



# TRIBUTE

# Dr Puneeth Rajkumar Comes Alive in James

**RENITA MENDEONSA** 

He is a dancing idol, a power packed actor, playback singer, television presenter, and producer with a smile and remarkable social work he became Karnataka's loving son and had huge fan base. Yes, we are talking about Kannada superstar who now has a place in heaven among the gods of Karantaka: Puneeth Rajkumar.

Puneeth Rajkumar's last movie *James* got released on the remembrance of his birthday. It was his first birth anniversary since his death in October 2021. Karnataka was waiting to see Appu's last appearance on screen. People were moved with emotions when they saw posters, flex and grand decoration in theaters.

James, as the name suggest, is a power packed action movie which is directed by Bhaddur and Bharjari fame Chethan Kumar and produced by Kishore Pathikonda. The movie also stars Priya Anand, Anu Prabhakar, Srikanth Meka, Sarathkumar and others. In the movie Puneeth plays as major Santosh kumar who is a soldier but he quits and starts a security agency to take revenge. The beginning scene of the movie which is the entry of Puneeth Rajkumar's entry holds everyone's breath. The way Puneeth Rajkumar enterss through the chasing scene remains till the end an impressive experience.

The highlight of the movie is the Hat-trick hero Shivrajkumar, who is Puneeth's brother giving voice to Puneeth's character in the film.





Puneeth Rajkumar's last movie *James* got released on his birthday

Shivrajkumar also stars in cameo in the film along with younger brother Raghvendra Rajkumar. *James*, with the dancing star Puneeth, is big time entertainer. The first half of the movie moves forward with high power action and the actor supporting heroine's family as a security guard, but the twist is when the actor starts taking revenge on heroine's family. The audience are left to wonder why? Charan Raj's music adds flavour to the movie.

Appu won national award for his movie *Bettada Hoovu* where he acted as a child artist. In almost 30 films he had played the lead role. Puneeth was awarded honorary doctorate on March 13, which was received by his wife Ashwini. Puneeth's death is a huge loss to Kannada film industry and Karnataka.

# Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth

## DR SUSHEELA B

N oble prize-winner author Wole Soyinka's latest novel is a study in contradictions; a work of pungent irony where laughter probes the meaning of misery.

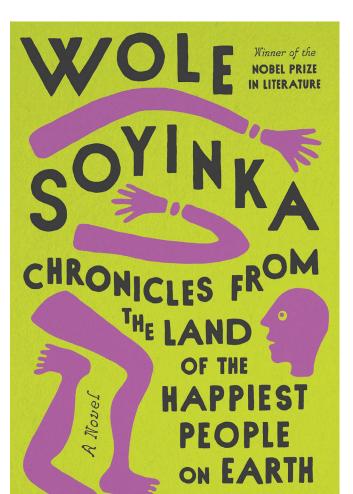
His latest book *Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People* tells a story full of contradictions starting with its title. This is a sordid tale about the human condition by one of the most consummate story tellers alive today. Soyinka managed to formulate a tale that can carry the weight of all that chaos. With asides that are polemics, facilitated with a style that is over-ripe, its flaws are plentiful, its storytelling wayward, but the incandescence of its achievement makes these quibbles inconsequential.

In an imaginary Nigeria, a cunning entrepreneur is selling body parts stolen from Dr Menka's hospital for use in ritualistic practices. Dr Menka shares the grisly news with his oldest college friend, bon viveur, star engineer, and Yoruba royal, Duyole Pitan-Payne. The life of every party, Duyole is about to assume a prestigious post at the United Nations in New York, but it now seems that someone is determined that he would not make to there. And neither Dr Menka nor Duyole knows why, or how close the enemy is, or how powerful.

The novel opens with the sentence: "Papa Davina-preferred to craft his own words of wisdom. Such, for instance, was his famous' perspective is all.' Papa Davina is the religious guru who runs a spiritual ministry that deals in the vilest and most atrocious things, and he is the ally of the wily and evil Sir Goddie, the Prime Minister. 'Perspective is all' may even take as a reminder of the surrounding of tragic wisdom in King Lear, 'Ripeness is all,' though Lear's tragic world and Chronicles' comic world are poles apart. When a writer like Wole Soyinka laughs, it can have the impact of a tragic blow. He is the first black African to win the Noble Prize for Literature and has been among the most impactful writers from the continent in the last 50 years. He is a novelist, play- wright, essayist, political activist, and critic of society. He has only written two previous novels, The Interpreters (1965) and Season of Anomy (1973).

The novel has many story lines that get mixed up and work around the mysterious murder of a widely respected and popular engineer Duyole Pitanpayne, Prime Minister Goddie, the false prophet, Papa Davina and many others are all involved in the plot in different and complicated ways. There are other characters too that dominate the novel's chaotic world, like Pitan-Payne's best friend Dr. Kighare Menka who is an award-winning surgeon, famous for his work with mutilated victims of the Boko Haram militant group. Through him, the novel opens up a black market of human parts in which the





In an imaginary Nigeria, a cunning entrepreneur is selling body parts stolen from Dr Menka's hospital for use in ritualistic practices.

> country's elders have a stake. Science, religion, business and superstition mix in weird ways in this underworld venture where human organs are used as charms to gain power, kill enemies, and for other purposes. Some of the great works of literature like Brothers Karamozov are built around murders and can read as detective stories and great explorations of life and searches for meanings and insights. They are read, experienced and understood at different levels

AAAAAAAAAAAA

of reading. A big laughter runs through its grim world, making its habitants the happiest people on earth. There is a pungent irony here, but it is a perspective that makes us understand the world better. Laughter can probe the meaning of misery as much as tears can.

Framing the background of the narrative is its colonial history, slavery and the oil industry, a source of misery and devastation that many readers will be aware of, all factors which have blighted and shaped the country into what it is. Those who oppose the corrupt and ruthless powers, like Dr. Menka Kighare and Diyole Pitan-Payne, compromising the Government with its practice of co-opting the opposition, the media and religion and can expect a dangerous and powerful pushback.

There is a complex work that needs some care and effort to follow. There are a number of characters and all of them are not perhaps essential for the story. The language is a bit dense, not a simple language where Sovinka is known for. Some readers might even be tempted to drop off or quit because of the complexities of the story. An understanding of Nigeria's politics might help the reader appreciate the novel better. But, it should have been the other way around. Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth is at once a literary hoot, a crafty whodunit and a scathing indictment of political and social corruption. It is a stirring call to arms against the abuse of power from one of our fiercest political activities, who also happens to be a global literary giant.

If you want to know what kind of novel can be written by someone who has survived as a sort of insider in a difficult land but who has kept their creative conscience and their powers of invention alive then *Chronicles* answers that question. It is Soyinka's greatest novel, his revenge against the insanities of the nation's ruling class and one of the most shocking chronicles of an African nation in the 21st century and has to be widely read. I found it engaging and extremely challenging.

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# WE ARE A MONTH INTO WAR

On 24 February 2022 Russia began invading Ukraine. Such invasions have happened in the past too. Countries are up in arms against Russia. But do they, on their part, vow to war no more? Don't our children deserve a better world; not a world full of war memorials build in cold stones. The words of Bertrand Russell are so true. "War does not determine who is right, only who is left."

















The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.

Norman Schwarzkopf



# 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 Cantaous, Diocese of Tarbes in France an experience of His Trinitarian Communion. Each of the girls relished this experience, discerned it, and was spontaneously drawn to share it with one another in simple faith.

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!

May they all be one. JOHN 17:21





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

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

Visit our website at http://sjtbangalore.in

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