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A national family magazine

IN THE BEGINNING WAS CHIZIS THAS

06

Christmas Was from The Very Beginning RICHARD ROHR OFM

08

Christmas: Bread Might Be Hungry GERRY LOBO 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

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

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

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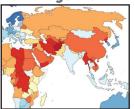
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God Child and Adult Humans

Some journeys can't wait even if one is uncertain and insecure of the destination.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

G od has become human. Yes. God is on the side of humans. God and humanity coexist in the same place, in the same body. It is going to challenge the theist and the humanist alike. No night has been so life-changing as this night. No birth has ever challenged humanity to this degree as this birth. No child has mesmerised and attracted the world for varied reasons as much as this child. Humans fall in love with this child at the very first sight of it. People are infatuated with its sweetness and warmth. It is nice to be around a child who makes no demands.

In the fullness of time Jesus grows up, his uncompromising humanity grows up, and the challenge begins; contrary to people's expectations the adult Jesus goes to their worship places, Jesus meets them in their tax-collecting offices and on their busy streets, Jesus visits their homes, and he asks them the primordial question, 'Where is your brother? Where is your sister?' And people fall out of infatuation. Christ-birth is a gift to all; but growing up with him is a choice each one makes.

Religion is not just the feel-good-factor of the celebration of a divine child's birth; on the contrary, religion is allowing the child to grow up as human and stand face to face. Richard Rohr categorically proposes that people do the Gospel no favour when they make Jesus, God, into a perpetual baby, who asks little or no adult response from them. What kind of a mind and establishment would want to keep Jesus a baby? Maybe only one that is content with 'baby Christianity'. Any spirituality that makes too much of the baby Jesus is perhaps not yet ready for prime-time life.

Leaving Is More Critical than Reaching

Some journeys can't wait even if one is uncertain and insecure of the destination. Falling for the illusion of stability, security, and power, even at the cost of one's life and becoming, is an adult sentiment. It could be attributed to the fear of uncertainties that lie beyond. Thus more and more adults are reducing everything, even God and religion, to their convenience and advantage; and worse still, they are esteemed for the same. They decide the creed and devotional practices of institutional religions. They control the classrooms, newsrooms and courtrooms of a land. They sway the destiny of a nation.

Isn't it time to depart? I am not sure what is on the other side of an infantile religion and god-image. By departing from it would we run into the danger of reaching a faithless barren land? Or is the other side a river on which we travel uncertain and undefined yet meaningful? One thing is sure that we must depart, and embrace a prime-time life, a more serious life!

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Christmas is not just about who came to the manger, but who decided to walk away from the manger.

We Make the Road by Walking

Roads are the future. More roads connecting more people are the future. How do new roads happen? How do we make new roads? The title of the book that records the conversation on education and social change between Myles Horton and Paulo Freire gives the answer: 'We Make the Road by Walking'. Christmas is not just about who came to the manger, but who decided to walk away from the manger, but who decided to walk away from the manger. The legend of the three kings who came to the manger to pay homage to the child Jesus ended pointedly, saying, they walked back to their country on another road, meaning a newly-found road. I would imagine that they fashioned a new road by where they chose to walk then on.

A 20th century Swiss psychologist, Karl Gustav Jung, states that the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insolvable. They cannot be solved. They are only outgrown. The outgrowing needs a new level of consciousness, walking on to a new terrain. We cannot solve a problem at the same level of consciousness at which it was created. Moving to the next level of consciousness is outgrowing. It is an inner, spiritual, and psychological walking. Many great problems at various stages in life are complex. However deep we get muddled in it, the problem remains. The solution is in raising one's awareness. With the new awareness and consciousness we outgrow the problem itself. Christmas story is all about walking into a new awareness and consciousness. In the story of the birth of Jesus, Joseph, husband of Mary had a huge problem. Mary, his betrothed, was with child without him knowing it. He was caught in between-put her into public shame or divorce her quietly? God in a dream challenges Joseph to another level of awareness and consciousness. Joseph outgrew a problem that had no easy solution. Christmas shifts our focus from arguing, solving, and establishing to moving, walking, changing, and growing.

Poets and artists have romanticised the manger where Jesus was born, but amusingly Jesus never cared to return back to it. He is someone who believed in walking, going forth. Jesus was never for tall and rich establishments, reaching to the ends of the earth. Remain established long enough in a place, all sorts of forests grow around you, and you are lost in it. Just to imitate the words and rhyme of Robert Frost, cradles are lovely bright and shallow; but we have places to leave; roads to walk before we sleep; roads to make before we sleep.

Christmas Was from the Very Beginning

Incarnation was always there, ever since the Big Bang took place 13.7 billion years ago. It seemingly took until 2,000 years ago for humanity to be ready to understand it.

RICHARD ROHR OFM



I n the first 1,200 years of Christianity, the most prominent feast was Easter, the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Around 1200, Francis of Assisi entered the scene, and he felt we didn't need to wait for God to love us through the cross and resurrection. He believed God loved us from the very beginning and showed this love by becoming incarnate in Jesus. He popularised what we take for granted today, the great Christian feast of Christmas. But Christmas only started being popular in the 13th century.

The main point I want to make is the switch in theological emphasis that took place. The Franciscans realised that if God had become flesh and taken on materiality, physicality, and humanity, then the problem of our unworthiness was solved from the very beginning! God 'saved' us by becoming one of us!

Franciscans fasted a lot in those days, as many Christians did, and Francis went so wild over Christmas that he said, 'On Christmas Day, I want even the walls to eat meat!' He said that every tree should be decorated with lights to show its true nature. That's what Christians around the world still do eight hundred years later.

The Birth of Christ in Us Is What Matters Anglican mystic and author Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941) shares her perspective on the importance of Jesus' incarnation and this season

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Modeling the entire divine pattern of incarnation, Mary had to trust littleness or, better said, bigness becoming littleness!

in the church's life: Beholding His Glory is only half our job. In our souls too the mysteries must be brought forth; we are not really Christians till that has been done. 'The Eternal Birth,' says Meister Eckhart, 'must take place in you.' And another mystic says human nature is like a stable inhabited by the ox of passion and the ass of prejudice; animals which take up a lot of room and which I suppose most of us are feeding on the quiet. And it is there between them, pushing them out, that Christ must be born and in their very manger He must be laid—and they will be the first to fall on their knees before Him. Sometimes Christians seem far nearer to those animals than to Christ in His simple poverty, self-abandoned to God.

The DNA of Creation

The first coming of 'the Christ' is in creation itself. The Franciscan philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus (1266 1308) wrote that 'God first wills Christ as his supreme work.' Creation could not have been empty of Christ for billions of years. In other words, God's 'first idea' and priority was to make the Godself both visible and shareable. The word used in the Bible for this idea was Logos (from Greek philosophy), which I would translate as the 'Blueprint' or Primordial Pattern for reality. The whole of creation is the beloved community, the partner in the divine dance. Everything is the 'child of God'-not only Jesus. There are no exceptions. When you think of it, what else could anything be? All creation must in some way carry the divine DNA of the Creator.

Giving Birth to Christ

Modeling the entire divine pattern of incarnation, Mary had to trust littleness or, better said, bigness becoming littleness! Mary could trustingly carry Jesus, because she knew how to receive spiritual gifts—in fact, the spiritual gift. She offers a profound image of how generativity and fruitfulness break into this world. We have much to learn from her.

First, we learn that we can't manage, maneuver, or manipulate spiritual energy. It is a matter of letting go and receiving what is given freely. It is the gradual emptying of our attachment to our small 'separate' self so that there is room for new conception and new birth. There must be some displacement before there can be any new 'replacement'! Mary is the archetype of such self-displacement and surrender.

There is no mention of any moral worthiness, achievement, or preparedness in Mary, only humble trust and surrender. She gives us all, therefore, a bottomless hope in our own little state. If we ourselves try to 'manage' God or manufacture our own worthiness by any performance principle whatsoever, we will never give birth to the Christ, but only more of ourselves.

Whenever the material and the spiritual coincide, there is the Christ. Jesus fully accepted that human-divine identity and walked it into history. Henceforth, the Christ 'comes again' whenever we are able to see the spiritual and the material coexisting, in any moment, in any event, and in any person. All matter reveals Spirit, and Spirit needs matter to 'show itself'! What I like to call the 'Forever Coming of Christ' happens whenever and wherever we allow this to be utterly true for us. This is how God continually breaks into history.

Mary, Virginity, and Receiving the Gift

Why, from the earliest centuries, have Christian people been so excited about Mary? What's happening in the depths of our soul when we hear her story? Surely it must be about more than the miracle of the virgin birth. As Benedictine oblate, author, and poet Kathleen Norris shares, Mary's 'virginity' has less to do with biology than with her stance towards God and life itself. It's in the monastic world that I find a broader and also more relevant grasp of what it could mean to be virgin. Thomas Merton, in Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, describes the true identity that he seeks in contemplative prayer as a 'point vierge' [virgin point] at the center of his being, 'a point untouched [by sin and] by illusion, a point of pure truth ... which belongs entirely to God....'

If Jesus is the representative of the total givenness of God to creation, then perhaps Mary is the representative of humanity, showing us how the gift is received. And I believe that is why we love Mary. She's a stand in for all of us. When we can say, like her, 'Let it be,' then we're truly ready for Christmas.

The Trajectory of Incarnation

Christianity's true and unique story line has always been incarnation. That means that the spirit nature of reality (the spiritual, the immaterial, the formless) and the material nature of reality (the physical, that which we can see and touch) are one. They have always been one, ever since the Big Bang took place 13.7 billion years ago. The incarnation did not just happen when Jesus was born, although that is when we became aware of the human incarnation of God in Jesus. It seemingly took until 2,000 years ago for humanity to be ready for what Martin Buber (1878 1965) called an I/ Thou relationship with God. But matter and spirit have been one since 'the beginning,' ever since God decided to manifest himself/herself as creation.

John Duns Scotus (1266–1308) took the intuition of Francis and made it into a philosophy. He said that Christ was not Plan B; God did not plan to remain absent until Adam and Eve ate that darn apple and Jesus had to come save us. Rather, Duns Scotus said that Christ was Plan A from the very beginning, the very first idea in the mind of God, as it were (John 1: 1–4). God, the formless, eternal, and timeless One essentially said I am going to manifest who I am in what we now call physicality, materiality, or the universe.

The Symbols of Christmas

People often use the word 'magical' to describe their Christmas memories from childhood. I hope that was your experience. I have to confess that I am fortunate enough to have some rather 'mystical' Christmas memories, too. It was evening and all of my family was in the kitchen with the lights on. It was bright in there, but I was in the living room where it was dark with just the Christmas tree lit. I had the sense that the world was good, I was good, and I was part of the good world; and I just wanted to stay there. I remember feeling very special, very chosen, very beloved, and it was my secret. The family in the kitchen didn't know what I was knowing. I have to laugh now to see how my ego was involved, but that doesn't mean it wasn't a true and holy experience. God meets us where we are, even as a five-year-old.

Howard Thurman (1900–1981), the Black theologian and mystic, also saw great power in the symbol of Christmas. For Thurman, the 'Mood of Christmas' was not merely in the Christ Child, but in what Christmas is offering us across the entire sweep of creation and time. He writes: The symbol of Christmas—what is it? It is the rainbow arched over the roof of the sky when the clouds are heavy with foreboding. It is the cry of life in the newborn babe when, forced from its mother's nest, it claims its right to live. It is the brooding Presence of the Eternal Spirit making crooked paths straight, rough places smooth, tired hearts refreshed, dead hopes stir with newness of life. It is the promise of tomorrow at the close of every day, the movement of life in defiance of death, and the assurance that love is sturdier than hate, that right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil.

I pray that this Christmas, we are each gifted with some magical or mystical experience, reminding us that we are beloved, part of a good world, stirring with the 'newness of life.'

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COVER STORY



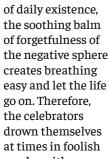
Christmas: Bread Might Be Hungry

To call the very birth of Christ in history a political event, and its celebration today a scandalous exercise, wouldn't be incorrect.

GERRY LOBO OFM

The annual memorial celebration of the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, undoubtedly surpasses all religionboundaries, and for centuries has remained a universal festival, offering delight to every human heart. Necessitated by no legal code and demanded by no external pressure, humanity at large deliberately makes space in their daily schedule of goings and comings for celebrating, sometimes irrationally, the birth of 'someone' whether one is familiar or acquainted with that person or not. The phenomenon is inexplicable! The fact is that romanticism has enveloped this event so expansively and penetratingly that the truth of the matter remains elusive to the celebrators of this festival. While romanticism may be worth the grain for literature, reality may remain distant from the fact of history. People at large prefer romanticism rather than reality lest their conscience get disturbed. This is in no way to block celebration; instead to remind that there is 'more to life than meets the eyes.' Hence for most the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ remains on the periphery of life as a means of warding off those aspects of life which enervate and offer discomfort. By preferring to remain on the bland surface

9



The Birth of Christ also discloses the truth, on the other hand, about the deep darkness of self-will and ego play obstructing foundational goodness and the movement of selfless concern towards others.

revelry with an exorbitant financial source, as if the earth is under their management, who they can pound as they will. Human reason as human, relegated to nothing when it serves the enlarged self, in the celebration of the birth of the Galilean Jew, Jesus, forgetting that that Jew was born to die for others.

The Birth of Christ, neither mythic or epic legend nor a fairy tale, is historically established by biblical and related scholars. While Galilee was under the Roman Empire, Jesus was born. That being stated, uniquely, his birth in history was a Divine disclosure of the concealed truth, not so much about who God was but who the human person was/ is. Positively, the Christian Scriptures are emphatic in considering the dignity of the human person as being created in the Creator's image and likeness. The humans surpass all other created things because they alone are a replica of God, who alone bears His imprint. We are persons, conscious, and most of all, are able to love. Hence human body has incomparable dignity and it is the first gift of the Creator. 'We humans possess our own particular grandeur because we have the incomparable dignity of being formed as image of God and allowed to share in the Creator's freedom and happiness' (Thaddee Matura).

The Birth of Christ also discloses the truth, on the other hand, about the deep darkness of self-will and ego play obstructing foundational goodness and the movement of selfless concern towards others. Envy, detraction, murmuring, greed, apathy and violent tendencies close in on self, leading to gross injustice,

compulsive hate, heartless indifference and war in human interactions and dealings. Societies at all times have consistently interrupted human relationships of friendship and neighbourliness, many a time violently, for mere self-gain. Distress and tears have ever been the existential sufferings on the faces of the humans because of the hard-heartedness and unconcern of fellow men and women. All these are caused by the dominant powers of destruction residing at the centre of human heart. This is the disclosure found in the event of the birth of Jesus Christ in history and today. Therefore celebrating Christmas is diminishing the ego-filled heart in order to alleviate sufferings on the face of humanity. Christmas truly is the disclosure of the basic lie residing deep down in the heart of men and women which is covered with 'fig leaves' of the commercial and monetary market.

To call the very birth of Christ in history a political event, and its celebration today a scandalous exercise, wouldn't be incorrect. It is scandalous in the very manner the birth of a Divine Child took place – 'there was no place in the inn' (Lk 2: 7). Moreover the warmth in the coldest night experienced by this child was the breathing out of the animals and the straw where and on which the child lay. Does this surprise us, the women and men of the polis? Could this not be a definite sign that the Divine manifestation takes place not in enormous

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and luminous golden structures, fascinating temples and churches, in huge statues erected in prominent city-centres by our governments and religious leaders; instead it takes place in the huts of the marginalised humans and in their unpretentious existence? May it strike us that one's lamps can never burn bright and outshine others' if the darkness in which millions live is not lighted up by our burning candles of compassion and kindliness. Christmas is a political event in which men and women with civic sense expand their vision beyond their petty interests and look out for opportunities to become neighbors of any in need. Politics is nothing but thoughtfulness of others in an environment of human dwelling. The birth of Christ, therefore, is a sheer thoughtfulness of God who desires human well being. Christmas is not a competitive market of goods but a sharing of those goods justly, for no profit except the profit of peaceable communion of life. It is scandalous because it reverts to the original creation, humbles the proud hearted and raises the lowly. As a political event Christmas upholds human dignity, establishes equity and equality, eliminates bigotry and shuts hate-mongering and creates healthy tolerance and creative harmony among peoples. Six hundred years prior to the birth of Jesus prophet Isaiah had declared about the harmony and tolerance that would be a reality: 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb...the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them... The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra...They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain...' (Isaiah 11: 6-9).

The religion-stained government might do all it can to undo the person of Jesus Christ and his seductive power or even mute the echo of his words by ordinances passed against minority religions and legislating Anti-conversion Bill. However, the fact is that his person and his message are still calling humanity to a more worthy human and hopefilled life, particularly in the face of an ongoing war which Russia is waging on Ukraine resulting in enormous amount of innocent children becoming a prey to death. The birth of Jesus Christ was a protest against the innocent children being slaughtered by king Herod then, and it remains a protest against the cruel manner in which the innocent children are treated today by our society of high-minded rulers and governments.

Christmas is not an abstract event but an event that presses on to make humans 'neighbours' filled with loving kindness. The Incarnate God lived and lives today among human beings, healing their lives and doing good, defending the least ones, loving women and seeking their dignity and rights. He does not belong to Christians only and he is never the private property of preachers and teachers. His birth, therefore, transcends religions, doctrines and personal interests and opens up towards the expansion of hearts beyond fixed circumference of petty minded political leaders and conventional hard-core religionists whom our country is nurturing. It sharply and prickingly reminds humanity ravaged by hate and ill-will to believe in love as he did, to look at people with compassion and to confront life and death with hope as he did.

St Augustine of Hyppo stuns humanity with a paradoxical thought on Christmas: The Creator of humankind was made man so that the Ruler of the stars might suck at the breast of a woman; that the Bread might be hungry; the Fountain thirst, the night sleep; the Way be wearied with journey... the Foundation be hung upon a tree; Strength be made weak; Health be wounded; Life, die. ■

DATA TOGETHER

Dance of Democracy

About half of the world's countries are now democracies. The end of World War I led to the birth of many democracies. However, during the 1930s, many of these young democracies then reverted to being autocratic.

After World War II, the number of democracies began growing again. But it was the end of the Cold War that led to a more dramatic increase in the number of democracies.

Information source: Our World in Data

The data is produced by third parties and made available by Our World in Data

Democracy

Based on the expert assessments and index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2022). It combines information on the extent to which citizens can choose their political leaders in free and fair elections, enjoy civil liberties, prefer democracy over other political systems, can and do participate in politics, and have a functioning government that acts on their behalf. It ranges from 0 to 10 (most democratic).

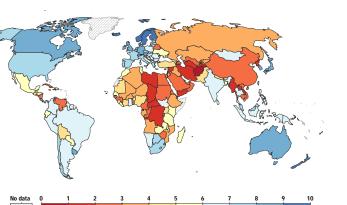
Electoral Democracy

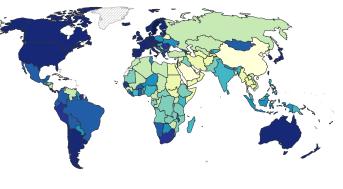
 $2^{\text{Based on the expert assessments}}_{\text{and index by V-Dem. It captures to}}$ which extent political leaders are elected under comprehensive voting rights in free and fair elections, and freedoms of association and expression are guaranteed. It ranges from 0 to 1 (most democratic).

Age of Electoral Democracy

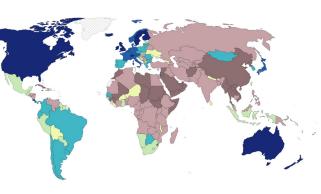
Based on the criteria of the classification by Lührmann et al. [2018] and the assessment by V-Dem's experts. Electoral democracies are understood here as political systems that hold meaningful, free and fair, and multi-party elections.

3





No data 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 0.6 0.7 0.8 0.9



0 years 18 years 30 years 60 years 90 years 173 years Closed autocracy

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Which political systems does the 'Regimes of the World' classification distinguish?

(i) In closed autocracies, citizens do not have the right to choose either the chief executive of the government or the legislature through multiparty elections.

(ii) In electoral autocracies, citizens have the right to choose the chief executive and the legislature through multi-party elections; but they lack some freedoms, such as the freedoms of association or expression, that make the elections meaningful, free, and fair.

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(iii) In electoral democracies, citizens have the right to participate in meaningful, free and fair, and multi-party elections.

(iv) In liberal democracies, citizens have further individual and minority rights, are equal before the law, and the actions of the executive are constrained by the legislative and the courts.

Political Regime

4 Based on the criteria of the classification by Lührmann et al. (2018) and the assessment by V-Dem's experts.

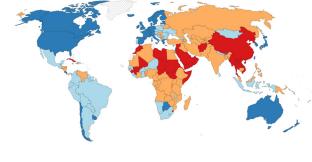
Share of democracies

and non-democracies 5^{Based} on the classification and 3^{Bases} assessment by Boix et al. (2013). Democracies are understood here as political systems in which political leaders are elected under broad right to vote for men in free and fair elections.

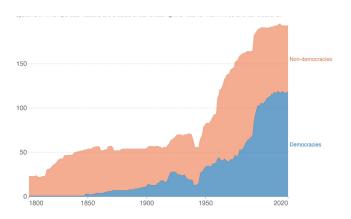
People Living in Democracies and Autocracies

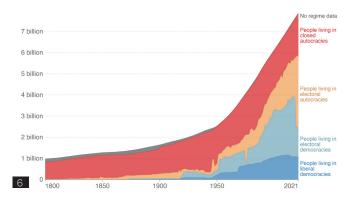
6 Political regimes are based on the criteria of the classification by Lührmann et al. (2018) and the assessment by V-Dem's experts.

Compiled by Kapil Arambam



lo data Closed autocracy Electoral autocracy Electoral democracy Liberal democracy





13

Big Tech is Failing. The Future of Democracy Depends on What Happens Next

The Musk-Twitter apocalypse is a symptom of a much bigger crisis. To avoid a bleak future we have to bring the big platforms under our control.

JEREMY GILBERT and ALEX WILLIAMS

fter Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter for \$44bn, many people fear for its survival. The world's richest man has laid off more than half the social media platform's total staff, botched the rollout of new features such as 'Twitter Blue', leading to a deluge of false 'verified' accounts, and allowed numerous banned users back onto the platform.

Yet while the Musk-Twitter apocalypse has been unique in its sheer chaos, the platform is far from alone in being a tech giant exhibiting signs of commercial and organisational failure. Meta Systems Inc, the owner of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, has laid off 11,000 workers and lost more than 70% of its total market capitalisation over the course of the last few months. Even Amazon and Google, previously stalwarts of the platform economy, have seen significant layoffs and reduced outgoings.

Meanwhile, alleged future revenue streams such as cryptocurrency, blockchain, web 3, VR, AR, and quantum computing have all either crashed or faced significant difficulties in demonstrating their value to potential customers. Big Tech, the leading edge of the global economy for the last 20 years, is looking increasingly in deep trouble. What on earth is going on here?

One possible explanation could be that much of this trouble relate to the overreaching power and incompetence of Big Tech leadership, with Facebook and Twitter in particular appearing to be the playthings of their oligarchical owners rather than wellmanaged businesses run by professional boards. With users disempowered, this set-up is typical of what theorist McKenzie Wark describes as a sort of digital neofeudalism. But there's more to it than that.

Within the tech world, the most significant development of the past two years has been the collapse of the profit-making model described by Shoshana Zuboff as 'surveillance capitalism'. This system, effectively devised by Google in the early 2000s, has seen enormous profits accrue to those platforms able to command large populations of data-generative and attentionpossessing users, and even more to those able to efficiently organise a market for targeted advertising.

But as the global economy has entered a period of stagnation and inflation, advertising budgets have been cut, while cynicism grows over the purported efficacy of the targeted ad-tech model. If 2020 to 2021 was the highpoint of Big Tech's dominance, its revenues and valuations bloated by pandemic lockdown profits, then 2022 has marked a rapid decline from this height.

In the background of all this is the increasingly politically controversial nature of the platforms themselves. If the ideal objective of a platform is to disappear into the background – to seem like an invisible, neutral ground upon which other processes can exist – then the years since 2016 have been ones where the platforms' invisibility cloaks have fallen into tatters. Platforms like Twitter have been revealed as highly-motivated actors possessing

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enormous economic, political, and editorial power. European and US legislators have threatened them with large fines and attempts at regulation, including the potential break-up of monopoly positions for companies like Meta and Amazon.

Our world depends upon these systems, to different extents, as digital infrastructures. Leaving them at the mercy of quixotic owners, or indeed to market dynamics, is unsustainable in the long term.

While the image of a 'nationalised Facebook' might be unpleasant and ridiculous, there are more fine-grained options available for the future ownership and control of global digital infrastructures. Technologies such as Decentralised Autonomous Organisations offer potential models for platforms that are owned and controlled by users and workers.

Beyond tech, we are coming to the end of a long period of global neoliberal hegemony – the dominance of a certain set of ideas about how the world should be run. This project established itself in the early 1980s, reached predominance in the 1990s, and has suffered three key blows since its peak of power in the mid 2000s.

The first of these was the financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 and the fiscal debt crises that followed. The second was the collapse of political authority that neoliberalism faced in 2016, with Brexit, the election of Donald Trump on a populist anti-globalisation platform, and the re-emergence of the political left on both sides of the Atlantic.

Finally, 2022 brings us the relative decline of Big Tech. If the finance and tech sectors were the parts of the capitalist class that most managed to get what they wanted out of neoliberal rule (broadly speaking, immense wealth and power combined with relative social liberalism and free markets backed by state largesse), then this completes the fall of neoliberalism.

The systems and structures built over the last 40 years will of course remain. The structural power of technological and financial networks is not in doubt, even if the relative power of their owners declines. But the ability of the neoliberal political class, and of financial and tech elites, to command consent and shape public opinion, has been fatally eroded.

Their position of extraordinary power has always depended on being able to convince enough of the global population that their interests aligned with those of this technofinancial elite. We have now entered a period of immense change, of interlinked crises that threaten neoliberalism's dominance.

These range from the climate crisis through to stagflation, from the collapse of the UScentric geopolitical order to the declining authority of the political class. Each of these crises is working to undo the basic mechanisms that have kept global neoliberal hegemony in place for the last 40 years. While neoliberal politicians cannot even deliver house price growth for the middle classes, tech elites are increasingly seen as idiotic man-children bent on destroying digital infrastructure while corroding democratic norms.

The future that emerges from this turmoil, a political and economic settlement offering some form of relative stability that secures the interests of at least some key social groups, seems to be being pulled in two major directions. One is towards a green neosocialism, a collective effort to meet the huge social and environmental challenges coming our way. The other is a bleak fascist populism, perhaps mixed with a revanchist return to neoliberalism as an unstable 'third way'.

Which future we end up with will depend on what happens politically over the course of the next decade. Big Tech still occupies the commanding heights of our global information infrastructure, and as such its evolution should be of concern to all who want to secure a better future for our planet. Platforms like Twitter are too important to be left to the billionaires – we need to be talking about how to bring them under our control.

Jeremy Gilbert and Alex Williams are the authors of Hegemony Now: How Big Tech and Wall Street Won the World (And How We Win it Back), published by Verso Books. This article was originally published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International licence by Open Democracy (opendemocracy.net)

Beaming Beyond the Aches and Pains

The intersection of practical knowledge and life experience is the perfect cradle for resilience.

A FRANCIS OFM

ging for most of us is not a 'love-at-thefirst-sight' reality. We abhor, the thought of this inescapable and the irreversible biological process. Who on earth likes to appear 'out of shape' and 'out of control' of their bodies?'

The Malleability of Personality

Gosh, no, it isn't easy to reconcile with the terrifying aberrations which our body and psyche involuntarily adapt to - the wobbling of feet, losing of teeth, greying of the hair, wrinkling of the skin, fading of memories, vision and sight, and an array of countless other dwindling realities of life!

Considering these anatomical anomalies and the functional aberrations that accompany the package of aging, and its many closest kith and kin like dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, depression, etc., our loathing could be candidly justifiable.

We age despite our dislike. This is the catastrophic common lot of humanity! Humans have been attempting to do away with this fundamental law of life from time immemorial, but have not succeeded yet. 'Time machines' still continue to be a hypothetical device and exist only in the realm of imagination – in books and in movies!



In my youthfulness, the topic of aging never knocked at the threshold of my mind. Not that I deliberately eluded paying attention to it, but simply because it was not a timely topic deserved to be reflected upon. Call it a milestone or a hump birthday that marks the downhill journey of my life, I turned 50, this year, and I am beginning to feel the grip of it.

Nostalgia Beyond the Slowing Down of Life

With hand on my heart I declare, 'I abhor aging!' I abhor all of the disfigurations and aberrations associated with it, and the legion of its kith and kin! Is that it?

No, ironically there is something remarkably more to it. That is, in the same breath of my loathing for aging, I have a nostalgic feeling on the very imagination of it. I don't think it is merely an illusory infatuation, but a personal experience distilled from myriads of tangible first-handed encounters I've had with the old folks around me. That is, there are many incredible blessings of life that visit us only in the evening of our life, in the ripe old age. Interestingly, this is a befitting highlight of the book, 'Successful Aging', a New York Times bestseller written by the renowned neuroscientist, Daniel J. Levitin.

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Blessings of the Old Age

Thinking of the unique blessings of the old age, what runs through my mind is the unconditional love and affection bestowed on me by my grandpa of happy memories. He was incredibly nonjudgmental, loving and so full of fun. I still cherish hanging out with him - to movies, to the beach, to festivals, to church, to Balan's barbershop, to Gopi's teashop and to every nook and corner that my parents could never have imagined.

Neuroscience approves that older people show higher levels of positive emotions, and love being the greatest of them. No wonder, many people say, of course figuratively, 'We should have had grandparents, prior to parents.'

The embeddedness of patience and contentment is a rare gift that old folks disseminate around them. As children, we could interrupt grandma Lekshmi any time during her routine renditions of stories and mantras. She was as cool as a cucumber. Her 'Zen mindset' that lost no calm, penetrated the naughtiness of our questions, without loosing her innate infectious grin, grace and graciousness.

Patience is the other name for contentment. When we are content, we are not impatient,

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neither to the demeanour of the individual nor to their questions, no matter how naughty they are!

There is the highly prized eternal wisdom of the old age, which Levitin compares with King Solomon, the archetype of such wisdom in the Bible. Modern psychology identifies it as the 'interpersonal' or 'social intelligence'. Unlike the binary quick-fix charades of the logical intelligence which the youth and the middle aged are instinctually adept with, the old-age adorns us with the incredible trove of practical knowledge seasoned with awesome life experience!

The intersection of practical knowledge and life experience is the perfect cradle for resilience, a significant psychological quality for adaptation and self-regulation in the midst of a stressful situation. This is one of the reasons why old folks display high levels of emotional regulation, and seldom panic to any ill-happening in their surroundings. From the treasure of their time-tested wisdom, they have the experience of the stoic maxim, 'This too shall pass!'

What Is Aging?

My friend, grandpa Fred, lived to a ripe old age. In the last few weeks before his death, I was awestruck to realize that he was fearless about dying. I was also startled looking at the numerous wrinkles on his face and the body. At some point during my silent but respectful observation of him, it flashed through me that his wrinkles were not mere signs of his frailty or his impending death, but sacred signs of the great maturation that life had blessed him with.

So, what is aging? Is it really a process towards dying or a process towards maturing from inside? There is a caveat, though; these blessings are acquired by those who gracefully age, - the ones who are willing to tap into the resources for healthy living from their families and communities, coupled with the meaningful utilization of the cutting-edge research that neuroscience, medicine, psychology and spirituality offer us. Never grow tired of aging (gracefully)!

In India, WhatsApp Is a Weapon of Antisocial Hatred

ROHIT CHOPRA

general election in India, the world's most populous democracy, seems a theoretical impossibility. Collecting the votes of nearly a billion people across a staggeringly diverse subcontinent has for more than half a century faced challenges of logistics, politics, economics, violence and law.

Since 2019, a new challenge has arisen in the form of social media—specifically the text messaging app WhatsApp, owned by Facebook. Hate speech, disinformation and scary rumors on the platform are already responsible for violence and deaths in India.

I have been studying the impact of the internet on Indian political, cultural and social life for the better part of two decades. Under the strict protocols of the Election Commission of India, voting has proved one of the more robust signs of Indian democracy. Voters turn out in large numbers, particularly the poorer segments of the electorate, making the process and its results a fascinating study and experiment in Indian politics.

The 2019 parliamentary elections showed how social media affects Indian democratic life. They will also provide additional information about the nature of technological threats to democracy in general.

Indian Social Media from 2014

Two years before Russian troll farms infiltrated Facebook in an attempt to tilt the 2016 U.S. presidential election, social media played a critical role in Indian politics. It helped the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and its hardline candidate for prime minister, Narendra Modi, come to power, though in a different way than the U.S. experienced.

In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party ran a formidable social media campaign on Facebook and, to a lesser

extent, Twitter. The party's online efforts complemented and supplemented its equally well-orchestrated campaign on the ground. The Bharatiya Janata Party's trained social media teams, and a veritable army of enthusiastic volunteers, ensured that the party's online presence was much more active than its rivals.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's information technology group, as well as the party's supporters, exploited the political power of social media. They unleashed an often abusive barrage of criticism at the Congress Party, thenincumbent Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other Bharatiya Janata Party opponents.

In the lead-up to the 2019 election, social media is being used in a far uglier and more dangerous fashion. The Bharatiya Janata Party even has its own official app, which is rife with disinformation and inflammatory propaganda about non-Hindus, posted by party members and supporters. More broadly, WhatsApp is being used to disseminate rumors and disinformation to spark fear among the populace, particularly about people who are perceived as outsiders.

This connects with the Bharatiya Janata Party's main message that Hindus should have first claim over India and that India should be



a culturally Hindu nation, rather than a secular state governed by a diverse range of voices. The chief opposition, the Congress Party, seems to lack the Bharatiya Janata Party's level of reach and skills at weaponising social media.

Threats of Violence

Online, the Bharatiya Janata Party's volunteer army of internet trolls blurs lines between troublemakers, genuine supporters and party officials. Their collective intensity, especially about Hindu nationalism, has put everyone on edge about violence—including social media platforms, law enforcement officials and ordinary citizens.

The danger is real. By one count, the use—or misuse—of WhatsApp has already resulted in 30 deaths in India. Many of these are not political events, but rather because of fear of outsiders spread through WhatsApp messages carrying fabricated warnings about strangers allegedly coming to rural communities to kidnap children.

It's not clear yet whether WhatsApp's remedial measures, such as blocking users from forwarding any single message more than five times, will effectively counter the dissemination of dangerous and fake information. Earlier restrictions—including limiting forwarding to 20 times—did not.

Getting Benefits but Avoiding Responsibility

Of course, media technologies do not make anything happen by themselves. Their effects depend on how they're used. In the Indian context, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition government and its digital allies have

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legitimised an unusually high degree of bigotry and virulence against minorities, particularly Muslims and the members of the lowest caste, called Dalits.

As a result, it's easy for party members and social media volunteers to use digital platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook to inflame sectarian sentiments. In the run-up to the election, they have created a climate of general distrust, fear and paranoia in which disinformation cannot be distinguished from credible facts.

My own research suggests that the decentralized nature of online networks has allowed the Bharatiya Janata Party government to benefit from hateful and violent messages sent out by other hardline Hindu nationalist groups, while being able to avoid accountability or responsibility for those messages. It also enables the Bharatiya Janata Party to benefit politically from religious violence while at the same time diverting blame to WhatsApp or Facebook.

These developments in India raise deeper questions about the nature of social media communications. In particular, these abuses of social media may cause people to rethink the relationship between free speech—including forwarding messages from others—and violence. The outcome of the Indian election—won comprehensively by the Hindu Rightwing BJP is just one indication of how societies are being reshaped in complex, and often troubling, ways by social media technologies..■

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The Brides of Aravan

The pre-Vedic Indian society prided in having the oldest ethnic transgender community in the world, the Kinnars.

JOSHUA BEN JOSEPH

he blistering summer heat was unforgiving, but this didn't seem to hinder the thousands who thronged to the village of Koovagam during this time of the year. The usually sleepy and quiet village comes to life once a year during the month of May for one of the biggest transgender festivals in Asia. For the transgender and transvestite community in India, this festival has become a part of their identity. And for two days in a year they get to do something that society has prevented them from doing, to live the life of a married woman.

There are close to 1,20,000 transgenders living in India under deplorable conditions. This is a far cry from the position they had in the ancient Indian society. The pre-Vedic Indian society prided in having the oldest ethnic transgender community in the world, the Kinnars. They were considered as demigods by the people of that time and by the Sanatan

Dharma or Hindu tradition. Their intercessions and blessings were requested before the start of auspicious events. Even in the Mughal era they held positions of power and prestige. The regressive mindset of the current society has become heavily prejudiced against the transgender community. Denied jobs many have resorted to begging and sex trade as means of survival. Transgender prostitutes with no other source of income are regularly arrested by the police as the Section 377 of the Indian penal code criminalizes sexual acts against the order of nature. Modern society has reduced the Indian transgender community to forgotten pariahs.

The advent of television and the internet has helped in familiarising the general public with the 18-day Koovagam festival and with the perils faced by the transgender community. The festival begins with India's only beauty pageant for transgenders 'Miss Koovagam'. Donning heavily embellished garments hundreds

participate in the contest in hopes that the title would help them get accepted back by their families and by the society in general. It wasn't hard to notice how the entire festival is a plea from a helpless community for validation and basic respect which has been denied to them for a very long time. The festivities culminate with the main event, their marriage to the god Aravan.

The roots of the festival can be traced back to the Mahabharata. For the Pandavas to win the war, a warrior had to be sacrified. Aravan. son of Arjuna is chosen as the ideal candidate. He agrees to be sacrificed but he asks to be married before it. Faced with an entire lifetime of widowhood women were hesitant to marry him. It is said that at this time the Lord Krishna takes up his Mohini avatar (transgender form) and gets married to him. Aravan has since been considered the god of the transgenders. They wait to get married to him every year during this festival, so that they can live as married women until he is ritually sacrificed on the second day.

Hundreds of the customary fires adorned the temple grounds of Koovagam. The smiling brides were gathered around the flames, eager to get married to their god. The strong smell of camphor from the fires filled the air. Traditional wedding songs resounded and many were seen crying happy tears. At the instruction of the priest the *thaali* or the sacred thread was tied and they were ritualistically married to Aravan. Their faces beamed with joy, a happy bride for one dav.

The next day began with the preparations for the customary sacrifice of Aravan. A huge effigy of the god was dragged across the temple grounds as a pre ritual to the sacrifice. His brides followed celebrating the last moments of their married life. The effigy was burned and Aravan sacrificed widowing his countless one day wives. The brides went into a state of mourning following his sacrifice. Loud wailing could be heard from the corners. An intense sense of pain and ardour was present in their grief. As a spectator this display of sorrow felt intensely heart-wrenching. It was as if they weren't crying due to the death of their folkloric husband but rather for all those years of ostracization, hate and indignity that they faced. This tragic enactment of love and loss that happened every year was in fact a mirror into their lives where they may never know true love but the pain of loss forever remained constant.



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IN PICTURES

Ingenious Crows of Kalimpong

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

rows, often denounced as annoyance by city-dwellers, and as invaders and thieves by farmers, in fact are interesting birds. Fables associated with crows announce their intelligence. The fact that we can spot crows almost everywhere on this planet speaks of their adaptability. Crows eat anything; they live anywhere; back their folks for good and for bad. Yes. Crows are toughies; and they are survivors. They are here to stay.

Crows have huge brains! They have the largest brain-to-body ratio of any bird. Their brain to body ration is even bigger than humans. Therefore they do a lot of intelligible things, like, the stored food when needed.

making tools, making vehicles at traffic to help crack hard nuts, and others.

Something that amused me as I was birding in Kalimpong, West Bengal, on a rainy day was seeing a crow gathering all remaining biscuits from the hotel yard and flying away. It came back again and again carrying away more and more biscuits. I followed it thinking that it is taking it to feed its young; but to my surprise it kept piling it up in the cavity of a tree. Yes. Crows store excess food. Crows store food in trees or rain gutters, or even bury food in the yard and cover it with leaves or grass. Like squirrels, crows retrieve









Women Prisoners and Their Children

DR VASUDHA M C

Pandemic Exposed the State of Our Women Prisons In the recent pandemic situation, though several sections of society were considered as vulnerable and accorded priority in vaccination, treatment and preventive measures like front-line workers, health workers, police, transport workers elderly people and people with comorbidities, seldom the prisoners were classified among them. The vast majority of these prisoners are Adivasis, Dalits and from the marginalised communities who are unable to defend themselves legally and financially because of their social and economic situation. They were even the least covered section in the general vaccination drive. COVID-19 had put these systems under even greater strain as it becomes difficult to provide the requisite healthcare to manage the



The pandemic had a distinct impact on incarcerated women. One of the most pressing issues was the suspension of visits by family members in a bid to stem the spread of the virus in prison.

outbreak of a virus. In many prisons, access to the essentials like soap, water, and hand sanitiser was limited, and prisoners could not apply social distancing measures in a meaningful way—it is simply a luxury not afforded to them. The pandemic had a distinct impact on incarcerated women. One of the most pressing issues was the suspension of visits by family members in a bid to stem the spread of the virus in prison. These visits are a critical lifeline for women who rely on them for essential items including food, clothing, and hygiene products. Moreover, such visits allow for all-important contact between women and their children.

The pandemic presented a threat to inmates' physical and mental health, and that measures to stop transmission were making their sentences "much harsher"; and hygiene was often inadequate coupled with the lack of proper access to healthcare. In response to the pandemic, many states had taken urgent measures to decongest their prisons through early release, temporary release, or commutation of sentences. Many during this time strongly advocated for the use of noncustodial measures—like bail, electronic monitoring, house arrest, monetary fines, suspended sentences, community service orders, and probation—as a way to ease and prevent prison overcrowding.

The Challenges of Women Prisoners

• Lack of proper healthcare including

menstrual and psychological well-beingPoor sanitation and un-hygienic living

conditions • Only 1.3% of the total 4.3% female prison is housed in all-women's jails. The remaining ones

stay in separate enclosures situated inside the male prisons, which may not address all their needs

• Absence of comprehensive policy guidelines and legislations with regard to body searches exposing women to physical, sexual and psychological abuse

• Increased restrictions due to insufficient prison staff, especially women staff

• Lack of sensitised trainings for prison officials on women centered issues

• Lack of adequate pre- and post-natal care for pregnant women

Absence of trained counsellors and social workers

• Longer periods of incarceration due to inability to furnish bail bonds/surety, by women from marginalized backgrounds

• Limited rehabilitation avenues available for women once they get released

Children of Women Prisoners

When deciding on the prison to which the woman is to be sent, regard should be had to her caretaking responsibilities if she has a child, and as far as possible, the woman must be given the choice of selecting the prison.

Children must be kept in the prison in a manner that they are not made to feel like offenders. Administration should ensure that the facilities provided are tailored towards children living under their care. NGOs, schools and pediatricians can be engaged to ensure that children in prisons have access to basic facilities of education, day care, recreation and a healthy lifestyle.

To the extent possible, prison administration shall strive to create a suitable environment for children's upbringing, which is as close as possible to that of a child outside prison. E.g. airy room s with adequate natural light, minimum security restrictions, outdoor play area, opportunity to socialize with peers outside prison if not available within prison etc. The Board of visitors shall inspect these facilities at regular intervals. Women prisoners whose children are in prison with them shall be provided with the maximum possible opportunities to spend time with their children.

Children should receive a special diet and be regularly examined by a Lady Medical Officer at least once a month to monitor their physical growth and condition of physical and mental health. They should have access to a lady medical officer as per their need.

Ideally, no child shall be admitted into or retained in prison if he/she has attained the age of six years. The best interest of the child should be the determining criteria to determine whether and for how long they should stay with their mothers in prison.

Supreme Court Guidelines for Children of Prisoners

• A jail must have adequate facilities for prenatal and postnatal care for female prisoners as well as their children.

• Gynaecological examination of female prisoners shall be performed in the District Government Hospital. Proper prenatal and post-natal care shall be provided to the prisoner as per medical advice.

• Where possible and feasible, temporary release/parole arrangements (or suspension of sentence in case of minor/casual offender) should be made to enable an expectant prisoner to have her delivery outside the prison. This can be denied only in exceptional cases (high security risk, e.g.).

• Pregnant women in jails should be able to give birth outside the prison (except in extreme cases).

• The fact that the child has been born in prison shall not be recorded in the birth certificate. Only the address of the locality shall be mentioned.

• Within the prisons, children should be able to have access to food, shelter, medical

assistance when required, education and a recreational space.

• Children shall be regularly examined by a lady Medical Officer to monitor their physical growth and ensure timely vaccination, while maintaining vaccination records. Extra clothing, diet, etc. may be provided per Medical Officer's recommendation.

• Children can remain with women prisoners until age six. Then they should be handed over to welfare institutions run by the Social Welfare Department, preferably in the same city/town.

• The child can remain in such an institution until the mother is released or the child is capable of earning a livelihood.

• Children kept under protective custody in care homes shall be allowed to meet their mother at least once a week. The Director, Social Welfare Department, shall ensure this.

Conclusion

Despite the various constitutional provisions providing a status of equality to the women in India, the condition of the poor women prisoners is not good. They are being ignored and tortured in the prisons. Imprisonment does not spell farewell to fundamental rights, the Supreme Court of India has made it very clear in many judgments that except for the fact that the compulsion to live in a prison entails by its force the deprivation of certain rights, like the right to move freely, a prisoner is otherwise entitled to the basic freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. Prisoners cannot be treated as animals and are not to be punished except under laws. Government has provided various measures to safeguard the rights of the women prisoners but is this is not actually applicable in true sense; women are still facing problem in the police custody. Many times they suffer through sexual harassment during their custody, they still face hurdles in all stage of criminal justice process. At the time of arrest, the women suffer from lack of knowledge about her basic rights. It is common in case of poor and illiterate women. This custodial violence is definitely a menace or cancer to our Indian society. 🔳

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Everything Can Be Made Beautiful with a Little Imagination

BOBBY JOSE KATTIKAD OFM CAP

I n the seminary where I was studying, there was an interesting custom at the beginning of December. We plant a dried branch in the patio. On the porch is a hardboard box full of crepe paper decorations. For every act of kindness something can be taken from the box and hung on this branch. Thus a tree is formed which is decorated before Christmas by competatively doing good.

I remember how beautiful a dry tree was made with colored paper that didn't cost even two rupees. If you have a will, you can turn this world into a beautiful place. That is how the Bible tells us about the stars scattered in the sky. After creating the sun for illuminating the day and the moon for the night, He decorated the firmament with stars. Everything can be made beautiful with the benefit of a little imagination.

A jar or two of orange peel is enough for you to produce a milder scent than any refreshner; especially in closed rooms. Our New Gen Chai shop wallas make sure to put a banana leaf in the bowl when serving food. A beer bottle can be made into a flower pot by stringing it with a stem of a money plant. When the tea is boiling, add a cardamom. Follow the guest who come to the house to the vehicle.

Look, it's Christmas time. A star has made the house we live in so poetic. Each ornament reminds us that life still needs poetry. In that sense, the time you spend in front of the mirror is not just by chance. One adorns oneself for



Look, it's Christmas time. A star has made the house we live in so poetic. Each ornament reminds us that life still needs poetry.

the sake of others. While going to the forest, Anasuya presents Sita with ornaments and a make up kit.

There is a gospel message that goes well with this thought. It had to do with finding a place for the Lord's Supper. You will meet a man on the way with water jar on his head. Follow him. He will take you to ornate, spacious upper room.

All the gurus were men who carried a dream for the world. Their dream is that the world will be a dining table, without walls, and have a high vision - broad, decorated upper room. Follow them. ■

Time for New Year Resolutions

Here are a few gems of wisdom for the young.

ALWED EKKA

Dare to Dream Big and Write Down Your Life Goals

Don't be shy to have a big dream. Most importantly, never ever tell your dreams to anyone. If you do share it with others, your goals may lose its power by people who cast their doubts. Instead, tell it to yourself in secret by writing them down in your journal and look at it every day. By writing down your goals you impress your mind that you truly mean it. You have laid the foundation or at least drawn a blueprint.

And never ever say, your dreams or goals are too big or impossible. Don't ever doubt whether they will come true or not. Furthermore, it's better even to write down clearly what kind of husband or spouse—the qualities you are looking for in a person. Be clear & specific. You will attract & gravitate towards it.

Educate Yourself

Focus on your education. Complete your schooling, college, and university. Keep learning constantly through reading books even after your studies are complete. You may read millions of books, but it means nothing if you fail to learn and apply those valuable insights from those books consistently.

Learn New Skills

It is wise to upgrade your skill sets. Learn to communicate well through writing, speaking and listening. Learn to tell stories. Learn to give a presentation. Learn to write stories, reports or diaries; learn computer coding/programming languages; learn new foreign languages— French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean; learn cooking, baking, stitching, gardening, farming, taking care of nature, planting trees; learn driving, singing, drawing, painting, photography, designing; learn critical thinking and problem solving; learn from your mistakes. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Cultivate Good Habits

Learn to form good habits. Avoid drinking alcohol & smoking cigarettes. Avoid consuming unhealthy stuffs that friends offer you or ask you to do it just for fun once. You don't know, soon it will get too strong to break the chains of bad habits. Read books or listen to inspiring talks on YouTube. Find out what you don't know from Google or ask good wise people.

Learn to Say 'No'

When something is not right, say No. You can't please everyone. Be quick to say YES to good things, and NO to bad things early on. Set healthy boundaries. Learn to stand up for yourself.

Associate with Good Friends, Keep a Good Company

Choose your friends wisely. Spend time with good friends. If you hang out with your five friends who smoke or drink, lie or rob, you will be the sixth one to do so. Avoid associating with friends who mislead you. You tend to gravitate towards people you spend the most time with. Remember, birds of the same feather flock together.

Have Good Role Models or Heroes

These role models or heroes will inspire you to go for your dreams. Remember, if they can achieve their dreams, so can you too. Let them guide you and motivate you to excel in life. Let them mold you and lead you. There are so many good role models in the world.

Love, Respect and Accept Yourself

Nobody is like you in the whole world. You are unique, special and beautiful. So love, respect & accept yourself as you are. Avoid abusing yourself in words, thoughts and actions.





We are all the citizens of the world first. Planet earth is our home. We are all earth's children.

Do the Little Household Chores

Teach yourself to do the little tasks in the house. Make your bed. Clean up your messy room. Learn to wash your own clothes & dry them. Sweep & mop the floor. By taking up small tasks, you are teaching yourself to be responsible. When you are able to complete and accomplish such little things, you mature well and grow in confidence. Besides, it equips you better to face future challenges & responsibilities. Above all, you grow to be a responsible leader, not a coward who blames their past or predecessors.

Never Compare Yourself with Anyone

Avoid comparing yourself with anyone. If you keep going steadily, you will accomplish your goals and dreams. Even the slowest tortoise has the ability to win in life. Keep the ball rolling.

Stay Healthy

You have only one body, so better take care of it by eating healthy food. Avoid junk food as much as possible. Don't make it a habit. Treat yourself on special days.

Be Honest and Avoid Telling Lies

Be truthful to yourself. Never lie, cheat or fake. Because if you tell a lie, you have to invent more lies to hide your past lies. One lie leads to telling more lies. You become a liar. Others will avoid you and thus they won't take you seriously. Life becomes a mere joke.

Pay Yourself First

When you start working—always pay yourself first from your salary by saving at least 30%, (10% savings account, 10% Investment account, 10% charity), and live on 70% (rent, education, house, food, clothes, car, bike, etc.). It will make you financially independent.

Ask for Help

Seek help from people you trust such as teachers or any trustworthy, good person. Share your feelings and challenges with people who will help you, and not mislead you. Try not to bottle up your unpleasant feelings for too long.

Avoid Casual Sex

Your body is sacred so don't abuse by indulging in unsafe sex. Better, avoid sex with random people. Preserve it for the right permanent partner or spouse. Casual flings or hook ups do give you instant pleasure. They don't last longer. In truth, such acts debase you. It leaves you with many unknown, lasting consequences. Maintain your self-respect and dignity. With multiple partners, one accumulates 'Negative Karma' of others. And negative energies destroy your natural aura or magnetism. Some sages say that it may take as many as twelve long years to come out of one negative impression.

Avoid Gossiping and Blaming

Gossiping and blaming others or the past not a virtuous way of living a good life. Gossip & blame show how immature a person is. It's wise to run away from people who gossip about others or blame in your presence. Soon you will become their targets. Perhaps, they already gossip about you and blame you behind your back.

Teach Yourself to Be Happy and Confident

By following the above guidelines, you will grow confident and surely excel in your life. Use it as your guide. Don't go astray. Stay on track like the slow tortoise who was able to beat the fastest rabbit. Slow and steady wins the race. This is so true. Check it out for yourself.

We Are the Citizens of the World First

Finally, remember: we are all the citizens of the world first. Planet earth is our home. We are all earth's children. None of us is alien or foreign here. None is inferior or superior. None is perfect. It means we are all imperfect. We are growing & evolving beings at our own pace. We are unique, special & uncommon.

The earth takes care of everyone. Let's show our love by not exploiting its natural resources for our selfish gains. Let's give back to society, nation, and the world. Be useful and serve others!

Philo Yoga: The Power of Breathing

The East and the West, to a certain extent, use breathing for orienting the human towards the Divine.

Dr MATHEW CHANDRANKUNNEL CMI

ndia and Greece were two of the very ancient civilizations which had so much in common. Philosophy, love for wisdom was generated in Greece while yoga, spirituality became the symbol of India. The philosophical traditions, namely the six systems in Hinduism and the three main turnings of Buddhism, namely, Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana composed of innumerable philosophical positions by different schools and the logical argumentations in Jainism exhibit the ethos and heritage of India. Thus, the philosophy evolved in Greece has a counterpart in India. Greek philosophy became the bulwark of the Western development of philosophy, theology and later science and ultimately

the renaissance spirit that gave rise to the integrated effect of the Western Culture. The Indian philosophical systems and religions also traversed in time and transcended geography and became the foundation for the Eastern Culture. So an integration of the West and the East would be beneficial for the progress of humanity in a globalized world driven by science, technology and market forces. These driving forces are mostly from the West and gradually a recent phenomenon that is being woven into the globalized context is that of spirituality.

This spirituality could definitely generate a deeper theology that will be more holistic and leading to wellness and holiness. It will also be capable of achieving the stillness and awareness which the ancient Indian sages where practicing through yoga while the Greek saints from Mount Athos practiced through hesychasm and spilled over to the Slavic region such as Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Belarus and at present gripping all over the world. Today yoga and hesychasm is spread like wildfire in all over the globe, leading the practitioners to awareness and de-stressing themselves and find meaning in life. So I am trying to integrate these two foundational traditions, through the love of yoga or philo-yoga, fusing the best contributions from the West and the East. This is only a primal attempt and much has to go for a better integration and fusion. So I request the critiques to be sympathetic to my intention and also the following attempt in integrating them.

Yoga

Yoga is very popular and spread all over the world, because of its ability to transform a human person. The Medical Profession is promoting Yoga because of its power to calm the human mind, eliminate stress, keep the body agile with a vibrant brain. With enthusiasm, the corporate world embraced Yoga because of its ability to refresh the worn out mind and body.

The Spiritual world from time immemorial experienced the Yogic power to bind the body, mind and soul into a continuum of consciousness and its power to transcend from the natural to supernatural, from the mundane to the ethereal. It is a powerful tool to raise the body to a higher dimension of experience, to a level of transcendence, towards a higher state of consciousness. Yoga is holistic, binding the body, mind and soul into a continuum of consciousness; physical matter, the plant life, animal life, human life and the Divine fused into an inextricable intertwining. Yoga is one of the greatest contributions of India towards the humanity, just like Ayurveda, number zero and the Indo-Arabic Numerals etc. One may find a young woman squatting on a mat as an advertisement, placed at the Time Square in New York in a conspicuous way so that everybody can see it, as if trumpeting the importance of Yoga and a call to everyone, all over the world to practice yoga and become and adept of yoga. Yoga is spreading like wild fire all over the world, as a spiritual practice, relaxing technique and for heightened consciousness, eliminating stress, toxicities from body and mind. It has the unique quality to integrate the body, mind and soul into a holistic whole and transcend from the natural to the supernatural. Thus, both science and religion, now promote Yoga because of its healing power, as a transformation technique and as a unique means of transcendence towards an integral whole, the mundane, human and the divine, matter, life and mind into an inextricable intertwining singularity.

In the religious landscape of India, Yoga has a conspicuous role to play and is indeed deeply rooted in the cultural matrix. From time immemorial, even from the proto-history of India, that is, from the Indus Valley civilization onwards, the influence of Yoga is visible. In Mohenjodaro and Harappa, the prominent cities of the Indus civilization, archaeological excavations unearthed sculptures imitating animal forms. Figures of men, with wide open mouth and bulging eyes, that looks almost like a roaring lion, an imposing meditating person, sitting cross legged and austere which is popularly known as Pasupati which became popular in the later cultural periods of India and found in many temples, amulets depicting women who came to be called yogins all show



how the yogic tradition became a template for the cultural heritage of India, transcending the time and space linking the past, present and the future. This fact has been acknowledged by many thinkers like the prominent philosopher of religion Mircea Eliade.

The eight-fold path of yoga is indeed successive eight steps starting with an attitudinal form, internal and external cleansing, a moderate life vision endowed with ethical and spiritual principles, deeply founded on a spiritual template with physical exercises leading to concentration on the breath. This path gradually shifts its focus on the ethical, spiritual dimensions and exponentially progresses and ascends towards the apex of happiness or ecstasy synthesizing the body, mind and soul into an integral whole unified with the absolute or the ultimate which is kept as undefined in order to escape from the narrow divisions that may emerge from the mundane hair splitting rational explanations of the society. The individual has the right to interpret the ultimate in his own terms and thus any religious follower can practice yoga without any mental conflict or guilt and it is not against his or her religious tradition. Jain, Buddhist and Hindu religious philosophies can easily be visible in the spiritual foundation of yoga. It can also be seen that Jina, Buddha and other leading religious exponents were the practitioners of yoga and have contributed to the propagation of yoga. So therefore, it is important to elucidate the eight fold limb of yoga. They are Yama (code of ethics), Niyama (code of discipline), Asana (set of physical exercises), Pranavama (breathing techniques), Pratyahara (sense of withdrawal or control of the senses), Dharana (concentration or awareness), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (bliss or ecstasy experienced because of the union with the divine).

Tibetan Buddhist Meditation

Meditation has become now popular in the West and to some extent it was due to the spread of the Tibetan Buddhism through His Holiness Dalai Lama. Earlier the Japanese Zen Buddhism was a special interest to many in the West and now because of the influence of Dalai Lama and the spread of the Tibetan Meditation practices, it is also spreading widely in the West.

The Tibetan meditation is based on visualization. The present neuro-biology speaks about the firing of neurons even when we are simply visualizing things. As we are lifting the hand, certain neurons will be fired in our brain and the same neurons will be firing even when are merely imagining to raise our hands even though we are not really raising the hand. So visualization is a very powerful meditative technique and this has now evolved into the psychological treatment such as Mindfullness for correcting illnesses and behavioural phobia and neurosis etc. Buddhist meditations like Tummo is practiced in generating inner heat and even conducted as a meditation. During cold winter in the Himalayas, Buddhist monks are asked to get wet themselves and dry as many wet clothes as possible through their body heat. There are many who could dry more than five and the one who dry highest number of clothes are given awards. So all these meditative styles are now spreading all over the west and people are now turning towards meditation. These meditative practices could help someone who is meditating to transform oneself.

Philokalia

The prominent hesychasm method is that of Jesus Prayer and it is given through the illustrious spiritual classic known as *Philokalia*. It's the love of beauty. Philokalia is the collection of spiritual exhortation from the monks from fifth century to 15th century who were deep into the search for awareness, steadfastness in prayer, wellness and happiness in life. It is strange to find that in the first volume, there is a section written by St. John of Karpathos for the Indian monks. Perhaps, it is observed that these Indian monks mentioned here might be from Ethiopia rather than real Indians. However, the connections between the ancient Greece and India in terms of philosophy and spirituality seem to be deeply rooted.

The spiritual classic Philokalia was compiled by the monks of Mount Athos,

Both Yoga and Hesichasm employ control of the breath and synchronizing the

name of God in attaining stillness or Samadhi.

breath with chanting the of the Jesus Prayer can help us to transform ourselves into the consciousness of Christ as St. Paul had shown us. In his epistles, especially that of Philippians, Paul's consciousness has totally transformed, fused and merged into the consciousness

of Christ. He was able to say that for me to live is Christ. These diverse, spiritual techniques can enable a seeker to transform oneself into the consciousness of Christ who could be encountered through the Gospels and the epistles as an embodiment of compassionate love. For Christians, Lord, Christ Jesus is the embodiment of the divine in whose footsteps every Christian should follow. Christayan is the turning of one's own self into the mindfulness of Christ, in terms of the yoga (Phili: 2). It is a process or a Sadhana by integrating the spiritual elements of both, the West and the East. Yoga, one of the greatest contributions of India, through its eight way path leads one to concentrate and fall oneself into the union with God. Creating attitudes of physical and mental cleanliness, being truthful, non-possessiveness and surrendering totally to God, one journeys towards and attains the highest union with God. The Buddhist meditation techniques employ the art of mindfulness in raising oneself to the highest form of consciousness. Both Yoga and Hesichasm (Jesus Prayer of the Orthodox Christianity — Philokalia) employ control of the breath and synchronizing the breath with chanting the name of God in attaining stillness or Samadhi. 🔳





namely, Nikodemos

and Makarios and was

used as a means for the

spiritual transformation

in the monasteries. This

book later translated into

Russian and it became a

household name through

Mount Athos.

Christavan

the book, The Way of the Pilgrim, a pilgrim who

makes pilgrimage from one spiritual centre to

another while he was reading the Philokalia.

Several translations were made in Russian

and later in English and many other foreign

languages and became a bestseller. Those who

want to follow the spiritual path, it became a

and many renounced their jobs and went in

search of meaning and spiritual wholeness to

In the Orthodox Christianity, the prayer

method of Jesus prayer incorporates the control

rhythmic way while inhaling and exhaling. The

fifth book of the Philokalia describes how this

prayer method is to be synchronized with the

initial conditions for meditation. In Indian

tradition, mantra yoga is another method just

breathing to form a meditative practice. Thus

for orienting the human towards the Divine.

Integrating the yoga awareness, Buddhist

meditative techniques and the hesychasm

like the Jesus prayer that can integrate with the

East and West to a certain extent use breathing

breath. Thus prayer could also be synchronized

with the breathing and Pranayama could induce

of the breath. They use the Jesus prayer in a

must read book. Its fame spread in to the West

Is Being Humble a Virtue?

Dr MARIANNE FURTADO DE NAZARETH

When we were children and attended the Sacred Heart Cathedral, New Delhi for Mass every Sunday, it perplexed me that Dad and Mum preferred sitting at least 10 rows behind rather than up front. The simple reason was I liked being able to see the celebrant and listening to his sermon from where we sat – rather than keep peering through all the taller heads of people in front and trying to guess what the celebrant was saying in his sermon.

At a recent free concert in Greenville in a University, we got in late because it took time to track down the hall it was being held in, in such an enormous American college campus. Again peering through the tall Caucasian heads in front holding up phone cameras to record the program, was difficult and needless to say we could hardly hear the choir singing. But St. Luke's Gospel explains why we need to choose to sit behind rather up in front as an act of humility and simplicity.

We have been taught through our childhood to be humble and sit behind, rather than being



embarrassed and told to get up and go behind, making way for the guests of honour. Prominent people are usually invited and given the seats upfront and are the guests of honour. So we have never taken the seats upfront which are always reserved for the chief guest and his entourage.

When visiting my son's homes I realise now that being a parent can be a very humbling experience – wiping noses, changing diapers and looking after a child's every need for years. In the supermarket, letting someone ahead of

December 2022

We have been taught through our childhood to be humble and sit behind, rather than being embarrassed and told to get up and go behind, making way for the guests of honour. you in line when you see they are in a hurry and have only one or two items to pay for- is an act of humility. Cleaning the bathroom of your office, even though you own the company, is an example of humility. There are so many acts of humility that we can emulate and Jesus explains them so well in his parables.

In the gospel of Luke 14:7-11 Jesus could not have explained the whole issue of humility more succinctly. Jesus at a celebration had noticed how the guests picked the places of honour, so he told them a parable. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.'

Jesus could say it because he had done it his own life, stepping down from His throne at the right hand of the Heavenly Father and humbling Himself to be human and walk among us. I have no human equivalent to compare this act of selflessness. Maybe someone who was the president or prime minister of a great country who suddenly resigned their position and gave away their wealth and title to head out to the mission field might be a kind of example but still it cannot compare.

Humility is a tough virtue for us to imbibe and practice. But it is important to understand that it's the humble man who will be exalted and will be looked upon as an inspiration.

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Gujarat	100%	100%	100%	O%	
Himachal	100%	100%	100%	0%	
Delhi	100%	100%	100%	0%	



FIFA World Cup 2022

The World Cup is an international association football competition contested by the senior men's national teams of the members of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). The championship has been awarded every four years since the inaugural tournament in 1930, except in 1942 and 1946 when it was not held because of the World War II. The 22nd FIFA World Cup is taking place in Qatar from 20 November to 18 December 2022.

Tom John OFM



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SOLOMON

ISLANDS







FIFA WORLD CUP Qat_ar2022

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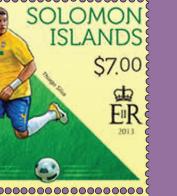
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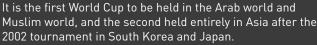
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Muslim world, and the second held entirely in Asia after the 2002 tournament in South Korea and Japan.



Vaulting Ambition and the Family

Togetherness is of paramount importance for fostering relationships within the family.

MONICA FERNANDES

Wacbeth about 'Vaulting Ambition' overreaching ambition that eventually leads to the downfall of Lord and Lady Macbeth. 'Vaulting Ambition' is having a deleterious effect on the basic unit of society, viz. the family. If the building blocks are dysfunctional, it stands to reason that the smooth functioning of society is jeopardized.

Ambition has been defined as 'an ardent desire for distinction'. It is the force that keeps the wheels of civilization turning. If it were not for the collective ambition of countless individuals, both famous and lesser known mortals, we would not have enjoyed the conveniences we take so much for granted. However, ambition driven parents with self-glorification as their raison d'etre, could spell disaster to relationships within the family.

We are jet setting the way of the West where individualism, instant gratification and consumerism are the be all and end all of life. The irresistible neon lights display advertisements which tempt us to endlessly buy for which we have to endlessly work. Where is the time to fulfill the basic function of parenthood, viz. to nurture the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical dimensions of our children? We are stifling their growth in confidence and integrity to enable them to become happy, well-adjusted and contributing members of society.

Rohan is a workaholic in order to acquire the status symbols of a larger car, a bigger house

and membership in a fancy club. Never mind if he has barely any time to spend either at home or at the club. His wife likewise is very busy with her career and in socializing. Of course we have to work to enjoy a better lifestyle but we should set limits. Also we should bear in mind that the air is pretty rarefied on the peak of the treacherous mountain called 'Success'. It's a dog-eat-dog existence.

It is pertinent to mention that domestic help are paid to do their job. There is often no emotional bonds with their employees, added to which they often come from maladjusted homes themselves. In the age of instant coffee, we harbor the wrong assumption that rapport could be instantaneous. We tout the new-fangled concept of 'quality time'. Is it possible for a child to fall sick or have his/her exams during 'quality time' that does not interfere with the business trip we must attend in order to go up the ladder of success?

There is no set timetable we can adhere to. Different kids require varying attention. The same child requires varying attention at different stages of his or her life. For instance, a teenager requires parental time so that he/she does not fall into the wrong company and does not get unduly influenced by the social media.

No matter what the media says, it is not possible to be Superman or Superwoman. Alice leads a hectic life. She works in a bank during the day and is a soloist in a choir in the evenings. Her husband works abroad. Hence the

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One comes across people who have no physical disability but manmade psychological handicaps such as lack of self-esteem, because of childhood neglect.

children are neglected. Alice could make some compromises such as choosing a less remunerative job nearer home or joining a less demanding choir.

I have always worked in a 9-to-5 job. But my parents and in-laws pitched in by keeping an eye on the maid when the children were young. Like Alice, I too joined a choir but did so only when the kids were fairly grown up and for part of the year. I also had the support of my late husband, Nelson, who took up the children's studies while I went for singing practice.

Togetherness is of paramount importance for fostering relationships within the family. Family dinner at the table without the TV on was a must at our home as this activity was a chance for parents and children to draw support from one another. Youngster may have a teacher who picks on her for no rhyme or reason and Dad may be the victim of politics in the jungle euphemistically called the 'workplace'. Dinner time is a time for sharing and caring and so are family outings such as picnics, going out for dinner, a movie, a play, a dance recital.

One comes across people who have no physical disability but man-made psychological handicaps such as lack of self-esteem, because of childhood neglect. Do we want our kids to be a part of this group or do we want to bring out the best in them?



Parenthood is not an easy vocation in times of the mass media. Despite our best intentions, we parents do make Himalayan blunders such as pushing our children too hard academically or not allowing them to choose a career they are interested in.

Parenthood is not an easy vocation in times of the mass media. Despite our best intentions, we parents do make Himalayan blunders such as pushing our children too hard academically or not allowing them to choose a career they are interested in. Kids of devoted and law abiding citizens do sometimes go astray. But the chances of such an occurrence are less when parents are around for their kids. If we single mindedly pursue will-o-wisps of status symbols that will be buried with us, we may have to pay the heavy price of children going astray and lose their love as well.



The Forest Within

ROY M THOTTAM SJ

A world not free from wars, Conflicts never end within. Free we are, we say, Our land is free, we acclaim, But chained with un-freedoms, Legs heavy and tongue in bondage. Ear dumbed with the storm of words, The hammer of power over our heads. Many in the desert of afflictions. Treading through the wilderness, Galloping on the horse of desires, Under the scorching sun of hope, Gasping through the waters of wisdom, Towards the mirage of freedom. A plant of solace from the inner-scape The wings of soul await, To awake into that 'heaven of freedom'.



WEB SERIES

1899 Is the Show You Would Want to End 2022 with

SONU FAKIHA

What is reality? Is it a construct or the one we happen to see around?

2899 is an intriguing show on Netflix created by the same folks who created another masterpiece, *Dark*. It is a critically engaging and mind-boggling show the show that you would want to end your 2022 with. It keeps you on the edge of your seat till the end. You are confused till the last crucial six minutes of the show.

The title is quite interesting because it was in 1899 when the interpretation of dreams by Sigmund Freud was published. Every character at one point gets lost in their past. It adds a background story and it also portrays the fears they are running from. The fears are born out of a traumatic incident. Every character in the show wants to escape reality because of these incidents. They have buried these incidents deep in their psyche (in their unconscious). Every time they are lost in the past, a 'wake up' call brings them back on the ship, which is the reality (for now). The entire study of 'psychoanalysis' deals with understanding the unconscious mind. It was a thriving field in the late 1800s. There is a possibility that the entire show is just a psychoanalytic experiment. The opening lines from the series 'The brain is wider than the sky...The brain is deeper than the sea. For hold them, blue to blue...' reminded me of the iceberg reference used by Freud to explain the unconscious mind.



Another philosophical angle to the show is Plato's cave theory. According to Maura Franklin's father, she was obsessed with the idea and thus created a reality (simulation), in which they are all trapped. The entire show revolves around the question of what 'reality' is. Maura Franklin, the protagonist of the series resonates with the character 'Edna Pontellier' from Kate Choppin's Awakening, which was published in 1899. Edna's dilemma to pursue her passions or fit in as a mother, and wife confused her and led her to assert her freedom in an unfamiliar way. Here, as mentioned in the show. Maura Franklin creates a simulation (in 2099) just so she could save her child, this is revealed in the later episodes of the show. According to me, Maura Franklin uses her role as a mother to save her child as an opportunity to bring her learning interests to life. We all know, learned women were frowned upon in the 1800s.

The show is multilingual. It has Spanish, Portuguese, German, and English actors. Class issue (that is, the rich exploiting the poor) is quite evident in the show. Moral conflict is seen in every character. Trying to fit in what they are not has made them confused, which is portrayed in every scene.

In the 1800s, Europeans saw America as a land of better economic opportunities. The germ of the 'American dream' is quite evident in the show. The folks on the ship want to migrate to America. They are not only escaping their fears but also a restrictive Europe. The show is eerie, creepy, and thrilling. To those who have watched it already, ik you can't wait for the next season. Even I am waiting.



Ponniyin Selvan I Decoded

G SELVIN KASPEROV

onniyin Selvan, the two-part movie, directed by Mani Ratnam, is adapted from a historical account made interesting by fiction written by Kalki in Tamil.

The exposition of the film takes time to set up the plot when Aditha Karikalan entrusting his friend Vandhiyathevan with a message to be delivered to his father Sundara Cholar on a delirious threat the empire is about to face with Nandhini who is the sole person making the schemes against the empire for her own reasons.

The first 20 minutes of the film felt crammed up with the introductions of characters, meaning new characters were introduced even before we could fully understand the character's motive or the setting of the scene which was a bit problematic for me as a viewer as the movie was the only foundation to the historical events; but for those who have read the novel, they had their leisure to understand the setting and characters. Best example would be flirtatiously romantic Vandhiyathevan's arrival into the Chola Empire, which is told in the Ponni Nadhi song. However, the movie is at the right fast pace as we don't feel the three hours run time of the movie. For nonreaders, they might feel Vandhiyathevan is the hero but in fact the hero

is Arunmozhi Varman who is introduced at the later end of the movie. None other than Mani Ratnam could pull off a feat like introducing the protagonist of the story at the very end of the movie.

Director of photography Ravi Varman made an extraordinary feat with the visuals. AR Rahman's music score and Ravi Varmans visuals with Thotta Tharani's production designs went hand in hand. Fine attention to details went into costume design of hair and jewelry, ranging from the emperors, Queen, nobles to the underprivileged citizens in the city.

The cast of the movie is handpicked so well that every actor performed brilliantly the characters they portrayed. Actor Karthi's role as Vandhiyathevan looked like his flirty characters played in his previous movies. Actor Rai Bachchan as Nandhini and Trisha K as Koondhavi carried their elegance splendidly.

The film ends in a cliffhanger but there's a second part coming up which will give the viewers the answers to their questions. And a note to conclude, the story read by the readers is fully subjected to their own imagination and fantasy; and both the print and visual versions could never be compared.

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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.

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_____ MOBILE APP _____ DEVELOMPMENT AND MAINTENANCE



MOBILE APP DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

Android and IOS] for institutions – Schools, Colleges, Nursing homes, Hospitals and NGO's

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