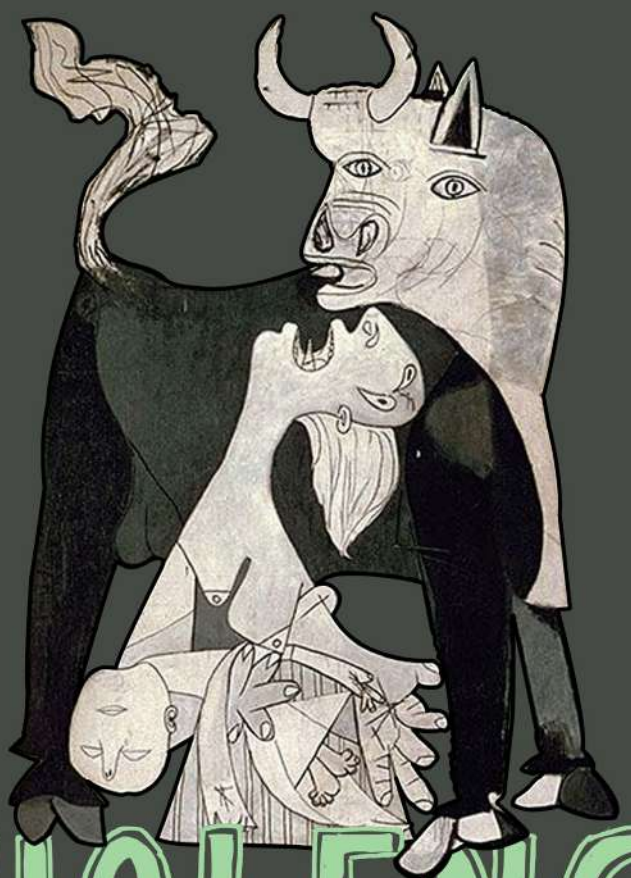
NOVEMBER 2025 | VOL. 19 | ISSUE 10 | ₹ 45

together

a national family magazine



VIOLENCE

THE VIOLENT AND THE VIOLATED

together

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

The magazine *Together* is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. *Together* is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together.

Together is also 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.

PUBLICATION OFFICE
Franciscan Publications
St Anthony's Friary
#85, Hosur Road, Bengaluru 560095
Karnataka, India

managertogethermagazine@gmail.com
manager@togethermagazine.in
Mob: +91-88971 46707 / +91-77366 64528

PLEASE NOTE

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

SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe to the magazine or to contribute to the running of Together please log on to www.togethermagazine.in

Pay online (NEFT) Transaction
Franciscan Publications – Together, South Indian Bank
Branch: Christ University, A/c. No. 0396053000005736,
IFSC: SIBL0000396, MICR: 560059010

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

ADVERTISING IN *TOGETHER* (PER ISSUE)

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	1 year	3 years
India	₹500	₹1,400
Other Countries	US $75	US $200

Contents

November 2025 Vol 19 Issue 10

EDITORIAL

THE VIOLENT AND THE VIOLATED ON THE SAME CANVAS

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

Violence bleeds with the stories of the violent and the violated. This observation cuts to the heart of one of the most profound and uncomfortable truths about violence: the complete narrative of violence must encompass both the hand that strikes and the face that receives the blow, both the system that crushes and the body crushed beneath it. To tell only half the story—to focus exclusively on victims' suffering or perpetrators' actions—is to miss the terrible human complexity that makes violence possible, sustainable, and repeatable across history.

Guernica, a massive black-and-white antiwar painting by Pablo Picasso, depicting a scene of chaos, suffering, and the brutal realities of war, with figures of a bull, a screaming horse, a fallen soldier, and grieving women, makes us see both the violator and the violated in war. In 1937, the Spanish town of Guernica was destroyed by Nazi bombers supporting Francisco Franco's fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War. The attack killed between 200 and 400 civilians in approximately three hours. Pablo Picasso, living in Paris and learning about it from the newspapers, spent the next month creating a 25-foot-wide canvas that would become one of the most powerful anti-war images in human history.

Guernica begins, as we face the painting, at the right-hand end. There are open doors and from them run out a woman violated and mutilated, dragging her feet; another woman cries out in anger and sorrow with hands outstretched like a figure on the cross; and yet another woman pops out with a lamp, terrified, searching for dear possessions that are long lost, like the philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope, who walked the streets with a lit lamp even in broad daylight. When asked for an explanation he had said, "I am looking for a human being." Here in the work, as she searches, we look on a struggling dove, the symbol of peace, vanishing into the darkness in front of the lamp.

In the middle of the large canvas we have a horse that is stabbed and struggling to move, and the warrior fallen and his weapon broken. An ancient psalm confirms, "The horse and the rider on which you put your trust are thrown into the sea." From the broken sword rises a plant and flower—our weapons of destruction and mass destruction must breakdown for an alternative world of peace and beauty to emerge. The texture used is like newspaper prints, pointing to Picasso confessing of his privilege of seeing and knowing violence and atrocities of war only through the daily newspapers.

The bulb in the centre burns so bright like a torture light; the harsh glare is shown as an unblinking eye. The electric bulb represents the new, destructive technologies of the twentieth century, such as the bomb and the bombers. Picasso may have played with the image and shape of the bomb because the Spanish word for lightbulb is *bombilla*, which sounds similar to the Spanish word for *bomb*, *bomba*; creating a clever double meaning that links it with destruction.

And to the extreme left we have a woman carrying a dead child looking up, demanding an answer. And that brings us to the image of the bull, the only figure that is standing erect. It has a face that is of half-man and half-bull, Minotaur, often figured in the works of Picasso, appearing in around seventy different artworks. The figure of the Minotaur dates back to Greek mythology: it inhabited a labyrinth and devoured innocent people. Picasso likened the Minotaur's muscular bull qualities to the bullfighting of his native Spain. Picasso's minotaur is a display of unconscious and uncontrolled desires. It had embodied him with his beastly desires. He had once said, "If all the ways I have been along were marked on a map and joined up with a line, it might represent a Minotaur."

The Minotaur is the only figure in the painting that is looking out as we look in—it is the personification of the violator standing accused. Primarily it is Picasso, who though a Spaniard, claimed and remained apolitical and silent when his country was going through fascist attacks, civil war, and the bloody bombing. Secondly it is the Spanish fascist regime, with its dictator, Francisco Franco, who curiously invited the Germans to come and bomb them. Finally, it is all of us watching others watching us and the victims of our conflicts and wars. Picasso's Guernica is the aftermath of conflicts and wars anywhere, anytime; Gaza is a perfect contemporary example.

The rational, progressive, religious humanity that had produced universities, museums, philosophies, and parliaments had also produced the trenches to sit, hide and kill the other. Science that had given humanity penicillin, vaccines, painkillers, and anesthetics has given humanity machine guns and mustard gas too. Industries have turned violence and wars into profit-making businesses. Politicians use violence as a ploy to spread fear and retain control.

Postscript

Having said all these, believe it or not, today we may be living in the most peaceful time in our species' existence. With the constant bombardment of news from the Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Palestine war, other conflicts around the world including Manipur, Kashmir, and silent genocides that unfold right behind us, it is difficult to convince us of the above. Steven Pinker, a Canadian evolutionary psychologist, popular science author, a public intellectual and professor at Harvard University, unambiguously proves with data that violence is on the decline, whether it is about the waging of war, treatment of women, or even dealing with animals.

Steven Pinker gives multiple areas of decline of violence: humans have moved away from nonstate/anarchical existence to state societies, which he calls the 'pacification process'. There is a humanitarian revolution that has brought down homicides, tortures, and capital punishments. Slavery is abolished, and it is illegal all over the world today. There is a historic, unprecedented decline in interstate wars. After the great two wars in the first half of the 20th century, and the last atom bomb dropped in Nagasaki in 1945, contrary to the predictions, fewer states fight wars—which is called The Long Peace. And finally, the civil rights revolution put an end to or reduced the practice of lynching in most parts of the world along with violence directed towards women, children, and animals. Racist and patriarchal attitudes and atrocities are better checked and contained.

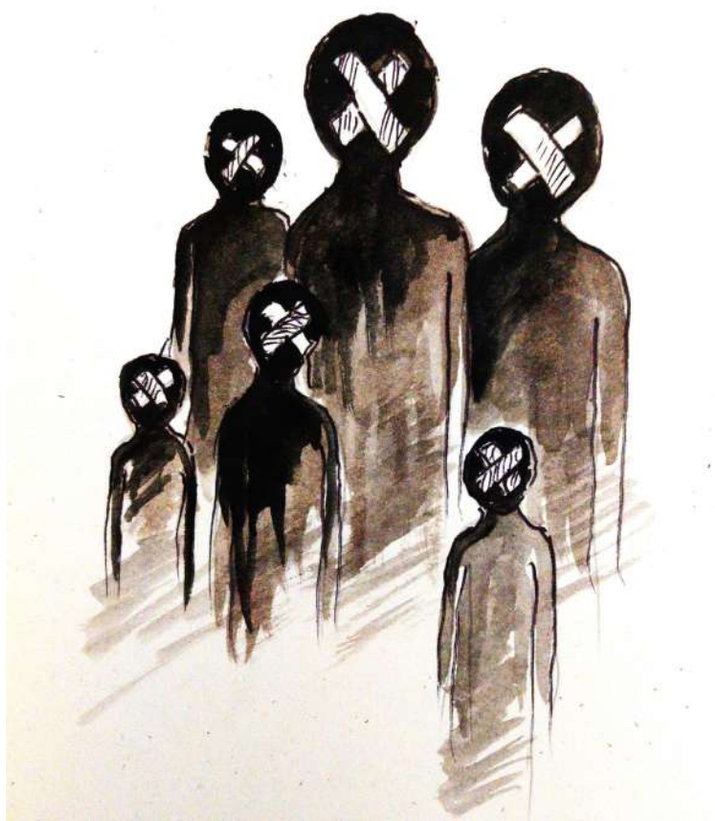
Though the intentions of violence: exploitation, dominance, revenge, utopian ideologies are still prevalent, Steven Pinker says that people have developed more self-control, empathy, moral sense, and of course reason. Yes. Violence is on the decline, but Pinker warns us that the decline is not guaranteed to continue automatically.

Understanding the Human Capacity for Harm

Each act of violence makes the next easier. During the Holocaust, Nazi killers didn't start with genocide. The progression went: legal discrimination → social ostracism → forced relocation → ghettoisation → shooting operations → industrial murder.

Dr URMILA BISWAS

Violence is not an aberration of human nature but a potentiality woven into our species' psychological architecture. Yet this same species also possesses profound capacities for empathy, cooperation, and altruism. Understanding the psychology of violence requires grappling with this paradox: How can beings capable of such tenderness also commit such brutality? The answer lies not in a single cause but in a complex interaction of evolutionary inheritances, neurological mechanisms, developmental experiences, social contexts, and cognitive processes that can transform ordinary humans into perpetrators of extraordinary harm.



Violence begins in the brain—specifically in ancient structures that predate human consciousness. When the amygdala, an almond-shaped cluster of neurons deep in the temporal lobe, detects danger, it can hijack rational thought, flooding the body with adrenaline and cortisol within milliseconds. This system evolved over millions of years to ensure survival: our ancestors who responded aggressively to threats lived to reproduce, while those who hesitated often didn't. The prefrontal cortex—particularly the ventromedial and orbitofrontal regions—serves as the brain's "brake system," inhibiting aggressive impulses and enabling moral reasoning. Damage to these areas consistently correlates with increased violence. Modern studies confirm this pattern: a 2000 meta-analysis published in *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* found that approximately 50% of violent offenders show evidence of frontal lobe dysfunction.

Neurotransmitters profoundly influence violent behaviour. Low serotonin levels correlate strongly with impulsive aggression—studies dating back to the 70s found that violent criminals and suicide attempters often show reduced serotonin metabolites in cerebrospinal fluid.

A 1994 study in Finland found that impulsive violent offenders had serotonin levels approximately 25% lower than non-violent individuals. Testosterone, while popularly associated with aggression, has a more complex relationship: it increases dominance-seeking behaviour and reduces fear, which can manifest as violence in certain contexts but not inevitably.

Perhaps most disturbing is research on the neuroscience of killing. Military studies found that most humans have a powerful, neurologically-based resistance to killing members of their own species. Modern military training overcomes this resistance through conditioning techniques that create automatic responses. Using realistic simulations, immediate feedback, and repetition, training bypasses conscious decision-making.

Violence is not simply biological destiny—it develops through experience, particularly in childhood. The most robust predictor of adult violence is childhood exposure to violence. A landmark study following 1,575 children from 1967-2000, published in *Science* in 2002, found that children who experienced severe physical abuse were significantly more likely to engage in violent crime as adults—though the majority did not, demonstrating that biology is not destiny. Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, reveals how early relationships shape capacity for violence. Securely attached children—those whose caregivers respond consistently to their needs—develop emotional regulation, empathy, and healthy relationship patterns. Insecurely attached children, particularly those experiencing disorganised attachment (often due to abuse, neglect, or caregiver mental illness), struggle with emotional regulation and show higher rates of aggression. These children essentially learn that relationships are dangerous and that aggression is necessary for survival.

The Social Psychology of Violence

Humans are profoundly social creatures, and much violence emerges from group dynamics rather than individual pathology. Social psychology has demonstrated repeatedly that ordinary people will commit extraordinary violence under specific social conditions.

Stanley Milgram's experiments (1961–1963) remain the most famous demonstration of how authority enables violence. Milgram found that 65% of participants would administer what they believed were potentially lethal electric shocks to strangers when instructed by an authority figure wearing a lab coat. The participants weren't sadists—many expressed distress, questioned the experimenter, and showed visible signs of tension. Yet they continued because someone in authority told them to. Factors that increased compliance included: physical proximity to authority (obedience highest when authority figure present), distance from the victim (obedience decreased when participant had to touch victim), and presence of disobedient peers (obedience dropped to 10% when other "participants" refused).

Research on mob violence demonstrates this effect. A 1986 meta-analysis found that anonymity increases aggressive behaviour across multiple contexts. During riots, looting, and lynch mobs, individuals who would never act violently alone participate in collective violence.

Perhaps the most powerful psychological mechanism enabling violence is dehumanisation — perceiving others as less than human. When people are viewed as animals, objects,

or abstractions rather than fellow humans, the normal inhibitions against harming them dissolve. Language facilitates dehumanisation. During the Rwandan genocide, Hutu extremist radio referred to Tutsis as "inyenzi" (cockroaches). Nazi propaganda called Jews "untermenschen" (subhumans) and depicted them as rats. American soldiers in Vietnam used the term "gooks." Serbian forces called Bosniaks "Turks." This linguistic dehumanisation isn't incidental—it's essential. Research has shown that dehumanising language measurably increases willingness to harm others.

Moral Disengagement

Psychologist Albert Bandura identified eight mechanisms of moral disengagement—cognitive strategies people use to commit violence while maintaining a positive self-image: (i) moral justification: portraying violence as serving worthy purposes; (ii) euphemistic labeling: using sanitised language to obscure violence. "Enhanced interrogation techniques" instead of torture, "collateral damage" instead of dead civilians, "ethnic cleansing" instead of genocide; (iii) advantageous comparison: comparing one's actions favorably to worse alternatives. "At least we don't torture like they do"; "It could have been worse"; (iv) displacement of responsibility: claiming orders or circumstances compel action. "I was just following orders"; "I had no choice"; "Everyone was doing it"; (v) diffusion of responsibility: spreading responsibility across many actors so no individual feels accountable. This occurs in bureaucratic violence, firing squads, and collective atrocities; (vi) disregarding or distorting consequences: minimising harm or avoiding awareness of it. Drone operators killing from thousands of miles away, policy makers never seeing bodies, guards avoiding eye contact with prisoners; (vii) dehumanisation: viewing victims as less than human (discussed above); (viii) attribution of blame: claiming victims provoked or deserved violence. "They shouldn't have resisted"; "They brought it on themselves." Here people genuinely believe their justifications. Research shows that individuals using moral disengagement experience reduced guilt and anxiety about harmful actions.

While individual violence involves one or few perpetrators, collective violence—genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass atrocities—requires mobilising thousands or millions. This involves specific psychological mechanisms operating at scale. Propaganda and Framing: Collective violence requires creating shared narratives that frame the target group as threatening. This isn't simply misinformation—it's creating psychological schemas that reinterpret reality. Social Conformity and Peer Pressure: Most participants in collective violence aren't ideological zealots—they're ordinary people conforming to group norms; Escalation and Habituation: Violence often begins with small transgressions and escalates. The progression is psychological: each act of violence makes the next easier. Inhibitions erode, moral boundaries shift, and what seemed unthinkable becomes routine.

During the Holocaust, German killers didn't start with genocide. The progression went: legal discrimination → social ostracism → forced relocation → ghettoisation → shooting operations → industrial murder. Each step normalised the next.

While much violence is impulsive or situational, some emerges from ideological commitment. The psychology here involves different mechanisms. Us vs. Them Psychology: Ideology strengthens in-group/out-group psychology. When ideology divides humanity into "us" (the righteous, the chosen, the pure) and "them" (the evil, the enemy, the corrupt), it activates these deep-seated psychological tendencies. Combined with dehumanisation, this makes violence against "them" feel not just permissible but obligatory. Certainty and Ambiguity Intolerance: Individuals who struggle with ambiguity and uncertainty are more attracted to absolutist ideologies. Research shows that authoritarianism—characterised by rigid thinking, intolerance of ambiguity, and desire for order—predicts support for violent suppression of out-groups.

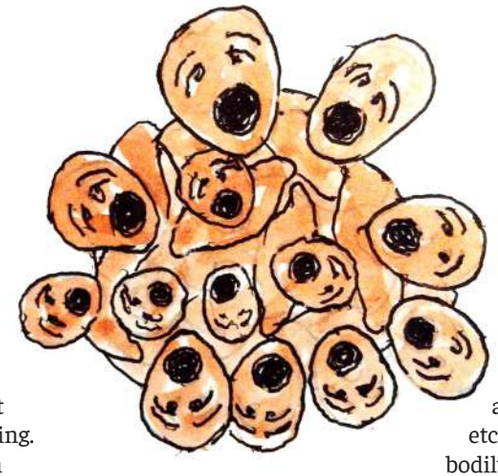
The psychology of violence reveals both disturbing truths and reasons for hope. Violence is not hardwired inevitability—it emerges from specific psychological processes operating in specific contexts. These processes can be altered. The same neural plasticity that allows trauma to rewire the brain for violence also allows healing to restore regulation and empathy. The same social psychology that enables collective atrocities can be harnessed for collective healing—witness the remarkable transformations in post-genocide Rwanda and post-apartheid South Africa, where former enemies now coexist.

Dr Urmila Biswas is a research scholar in developmental psychology, based out of Pune.

The Many Faces of Violence

The moral debate over violence rests on competing values, liberty versus life, justice versus peace. What remains is the burden of discernment.

SUMIT DASGUPTA



Violence is and will be, an ever-present aspect of living. Just the act of being born into a world that acts as your cartographer, a distant companion and not your caretaker is in itself an introduction to the many faces of violence. Traditionally understood as physical force or aggression, it also includes structural and symbolic dimensions. Johan Galtung distinguishes direct physical violence like war or assault from structural violence, where social systems like but not limited to poverty, racism, sexism, caste harm people by denying basic needs. Galtung notes that structural violence such as institutionalised racism or poverty interacts with direct violence. Hate speech, propaganda, and communalism can be considered as cultural violence because these norms legitimises and sustains other forms of violence. Pierre Bourdieu, French sociologist, refers to symbolic violence as subtle imposition of meaning and domination through language, media, or ideology. These forms are often intertwined reinforced by cultural stereotypes. Modern theorists emphasise that violence is embedded in socio-political systems and identities, intersecting across gender, race, class, etc. Violence is not only bodily destruction but also deprivation, discrimination, humiliation, and psychological harm that is part of social structures and cultural norms.

Amartya Sen argues that violence often stems from narrow identity politics. He cautions that reducing people to a singular view of identity can be dangerous. Sen stresses that individuals have multiple identities, and forcing a single identity fuels conflict. People will be led to fight each other along imagined identity lines, leading to communal slaughter and wars. For Sen, recognising plural identities and our shared humanity is key to countering identity-based violence. Noam Chomsky similarly highlights how power structures drive violence. According to the linguist and philosopher, states are violent institutions, and that governments wield violence to serve entrenched interests. In an old interview, Chomsky noted that modern states including liberal democracies rely on violence and that resistance to state violence is often criminalised. Chomsky pushes further on the

source of violence by scrutinising the positions that hold power and how it is enforced. His view is echoed by Marxist thinkers who saw the state's monopoly on legitimate and legal violence as oppressive. For Chomsky, Sen, and others, the systemic use of force by the state is a central concern of violence's critique.

Francis Fukuyama has written on how identity politics can threaten the possibility of deliberation and collective action in liberal democracies. He warns that when societies fracture into ever-narrower identity groups, institutions weaken and conflict rises. Fukuyama's recent work stresses that globalised change has made identities salient, provoking a backlash. Yet he notes identity is not fixed, it can divide or unify, implying that violence often erupts when identity cues are mobilised for exclusion.

Hannah Arendt offers a pointed distinction. She famously said, "Power and violence are opposites." True collective power arises from consent and collective will, whereas violence appears only when power is threatened. In her view, violence is an instrumental phenomenon used when authority and legitimacy break down. Arendt provokes the conscience by saying that power doesn't need justification because violence can be justifiable, but it will never be legitimate. She suggests that even if violence can have immediate effect, it cannot create enduring social order or moral authority. Walter Benjamin similarly contrasts types of violence. In Critique of Violence Walter Benjamin differentiates lawmaking, 'mythic' violence from 'divine' violence. If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying. If the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood. He highlights that most legal-political violence like police or orderly conduct supervisors serves to maintain order, whereas a radical break would break that order. This idea feeds into debates over revolution and justice below.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, argued that decolonisation is inseparable from violence. Colonialism, he wrote, is "naked violence," sustained through domination and fear, and it can only end when met with greater force. For Fanon, the colonial order dehumanises the oppressed so profoundly that rebellion becomes a just political and psychological way to reclaim dignity. Violence, in this context, acts as a force, restoring agency and self-worth to the colonised. Yet Fanon does not glorify brutality. He exposes the tragic logic that liberation often demands confrontation.

Across the thinkers mentioned above violence emerges as a complex, layered phenomenon. Sen and Fukuyama link it to fractured identities and social breakdown. Chomsky and Arendt examine the machinery of state power and the ways authority legitimises force. Benjamin and Fanon focus on the idea that some forms of violence can be morally or politically transformative. You can understand these ideas to hopefully come to a realisation that violence cannot be understood in isolation. It has many faces.

Violence in India and the World

Violence continues to scar societies across the globe. It is visible in war zones, homes, and even on digital screens. Physical violence remains the most tangible form. The WHO estimates that nearly one in three women worldwide has faced physical or sexual violence. In India, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) logged over 4.45 lakh crimes against women in 2022, a rise from the previous year. India saw 59 riots in 2024, up by 84% from 2023, and at least 13 lynchings linked to vigilante or interfaith hostilities. Globally, the world recorded 61 armed conflicts in 2024, the highest since World War II, largely from Ukraine and Gaza. Civilian casualties remain devastatingly high, underscoring how lethal violence still defines much of the human condition.

Structural and institutional violence takes quieter, systemic forms. India reported 57,789 crimes against Scheduled Castes in 2023, alongside a sharp rise in attacks on tribal communities. Behind these numbers lie generations of social marginalisation and injustice. Around 800 million, globally, people still live in extreme poverty, and over 122 million have been forcibly displaced by war or persecution. In India, development-induced displacement adds another layer, often pushing tribal and rural communities deeper into poverty. Structural violence, in short, is the invisible scaffolding that holds up every day suffering. Symbolic and psychological violence now plays out most vividly online. A UNESCO-IPSOS survey found that two-thirds of internet users have encountered hate speech. Since late 2023, anti-semitic and anti-muslim hate incidents have surged dramatically worldwide. In India, election rallies and social media feeds are increasingly laced with communal rhetoric. Globally, misogynistic and racist abuse in digital spaces continues to rise, blurring the line between words and wounds.

If you trace the trajectory and look through the numbers you might see that violence is obviously not just physical. It is digital, structural, and psychological. From Gaza to the comment section of Charlie Kirk's assassination, harm is woven into the social fabric. India's rising communal and caste-based hostilities echo the same truth reflected globally, violence is no longer an exception but a condition of modern life.

Justifications and Critiques of Violence

The question of when, if ever, violence is justified has long divided philosophers and political thinkers. Its defenders often invoke necessity, self-defence, survival, or liberation from tyranny. International law recognises a state's right to defend itself under Article 51 of the UN Charter, while theorists from Locke to modern democrats uphold the 'right to rebel' when governments betray the social contract. Even committed pacifists have occasionally acknowledged moral limits to nonviolence. The father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi wrote if a person, "cannot protect himself non-violently, he may and ought to do so by violently dealing with the oppressor." Similarly, Fanon wanted to fight naked violence with just retaliation. Such reasoning has shaped revolutions across history. From the American and anti-colonial struggles to the fight against apartheid in South Africa, and now in Palestine, each invoking violence as a tragic but redemptive necessity.

Yet critics warn that even the most righteous violence can corrupt the ideals it claims to defend. Pacifist traditions, from Tolstoy to Martin Luther King Jr., argue that violence multiplies suffering, undermines moral authority, and perpetuates cycles of revenge. Hannah Arendt drew a sharp line between violence and genuine power, arguing that while violence can destroy, it cannot create enduring legitimacy. Terrorism, extrajudicial killings, and pre-emptive wars illustrate how violence justified in the name of security or freedom often erodes trust and deepens injustice. Fanon himself cautioned that revolutions born in blood can easily reproduce new hierarchies of domination. Real-world history mirrors this tension. The French Resistance's fight against Nazi occupation is widely viewed as morally justified, yet indiscriminate bombings of civilians in modern conflicts are condemned. India's independence movement is remembered for Gandhi's nonviolence, though it also contained armed uprisings led by Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose. Each case raises the same enduring questions, Is the cause just? Were peaceful options exhausted? Are the victims truly guilty? Is the response proportionate?

Where Is the Line?

The moral debate over violence rests on competing values, liberty versus life, justice versus peace. Arendt's insight might capture this dilemma well. Violence may achieve immediate ends, but it never sustains moral legitimacy. What remains is the burden of discernment. How do you justify the defence of humanity and the right to exist when the defence of humanity crosses into its betrayal? If you like watching war movies or read about historical conflicts, you must have come across, Just War theory, where retaliation and response is seen through a practical lens. Yet beyond theory lies empathy, the simplest moral test. Would the same justification hold if one's own community were on the receiving end? Structural analysis also matters. Violence often signals deeper injustices. Poverty, exclusion, or repression, that peaceful reform might address more effectively. Historical hindsight reminds us how easily necessary violence becomes regrettable. Genuine moral clarity requires examining not only the act but the conditions that made it seem inevitable.

Violence, in all its forms remains woven into the fabric of human society. It shapes politics, sustains hierarchies, and sometimes dismantles them. Philosophers from Arendt to Fanon compel us to see beyond the immediate act to its moral architecture: who wields violence, in whose name, and toward what end.

To confront violence, we must navigate the moral pull of condemnation and we must question the systems that normalise them. Amartya Sen and Francis Fukuyama remind us that the antidote lies in recognising shared humanity. Resisting identity-based divisions that breed fear and aggression. Building a world where power emerges from justice rather than coercion demands empathy, restraint, and inclusive dialogue. Only when societies learn to replace force with understanding will violence cease to appear inevitable.

COVER STORY

The Unspoken Violence of Waiting in Manipur

In the far-eastern periphery of India, thousands continue to suffer in Manipur's relief camps—a poignant reminder, captured largely through fragmented media coverage, of how systemic neglect and restrained attention have turned temporary displacement into a normalised form of everyday violence.

KAPIL ARAMBAM

Children line up for food at a relief camp somewhere in Imphal West. Image source: Aribam Bishwajit/*Tehelka*. News resources: *The Times of India*. *The New Indian Express*. Amnesty International. India Today. Pulitzer Center.

Following months, now years ever since it started in May 2023, of ethnic conflicts in Manipur, tens of thousands of individuals continue to reside in temporary relief camps. They endure shattered livelihoods, ambiguous legal status, disrupted education for their children, inadequate sanitation, and the persistent daily degradation that arises from being considered "in the way". These issues represent not just the overt effects of violence but they also embody its more subtle, insidious manifestations, which is a form of violence that functions through institutions, classifications, and interpretations as much as it does through bullets.

Last March, *The Times of India* reported that over 14,000 Meitei individuals were still displaced in more than 100 relief camps located in the Imphal East and West valley districts. Meanwhile, *The New Indian Express* highlighted a report on plans to construct 7,000 homes to resettle approximately 20,000 Meitei and 40,000 Kuki-Zo individuals who continue to reside in these camps. These statistics illustrate a narrative of not just temporary disruption, but of ongoing stagnation.

The numerous camps and rows of prefabricated structures serve as more than just emergency shelters. These are locations where structural violence is perpetuated on a daily basis. As of May 2025, Amnesty International states that 58,000 individuals inhabit 281 relief camps throughout Manipur, frequently enduring "inhumane conditions" characterised by overcrowded living spaces, makeshift sanitation facilities, and inconsistent healthcare services. The government's own statistics roughly correspond with this level of displacement. Such a significant degree of displacement necessitates more than just emergency assistance but calls for an urgent structural change.

Structural and Symbolic Violence

As framed by Johan Galtung, the Norwegian sociologist and principal founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies, structural violence occurs when institutional frameworks systematically deny groups access to resources, security or dignity. In Manipur, this is evident in the patterns of relief distribution, infrastructure enhancement, rehabilitation strategies, and access to legal safeguards for these people categorised as internally displaced persons (IDPs). In a particularly troubling case, Amnesty also reported that in February 2024, the State ceased relief deliveries to camps in Churachandpur district, leading to protests from displaced residents who were demanding basic necessities. Essentially, the administrative systems that should support citizens have, at times, become withdrawn or apathetic.

Merely offering "shelter" in camps does not bridge the gap left by destroyed homes, disrupted livelihoods, contested land ownership, or ongoing security threats. The camps place displaced individuals in a state of limbo: they are neither fully recognised as citizens with complete protection nor are they seen as permanent dependents of the state. Due to policy responses being sporadic, inconsistent, and underfunded, many IDPs remain in these camps not by choice, but by circumstance.

However, the violence extends beyond mere material neglect — it operates through symbolic frameworks that legitimise exclusion. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence highlights that power is not solely derived from force or policy, but also from the daily construction of what is perceived as "normal", "deserving", or "other". When media or official communications depict displaced communities as burdens or "inmates" and "wards", and when the narrative focuses on the "return" of a select few families to signify progress while the majority remains in limbo, this represents a symbolic diminishment of their claims. When the struggles of displaced families are reduced to communal labels instead of being grounded in civic rights, symbolic violence has effectively taken its toll.

The violence extends beyond mere material neglect — it operates through symbolic frameworks that legitimise exclusion. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence highlights that power is not solely derived from force or policy, but also from the daily construction of what is perceived as "normal", "deserving", or "other".

In *Two years of Manipur conflict: Thousands wait to go home, The Times of India* reported on a displaced Meitei individual residing in a temporary unit who recounted the destruction of his grocery business and the uncertain futures of his children. Meanwhile, the story *Ground report: In restless Manipur, displaced Kukis await return to normalcy* covered by India Today from Kangpokpi district details a relief camp accommodating 700 Kuki individuals, where four people, including children, succumbed to illnesses due to a lack of adequate medical care. Their experiences are not isolated incidents. Throughout various camps, there are recurring reports of measles outbreaks, fevers, poor sanitation, and unresolved chronic health issues. Even instances of suicide and medical emergencies have been documented, although official statistics remain unclear.

Lives Behind the Figures

The above figures represent more than just statistics. They embody lives in precarious situations. A woman who has lost her home, a child forced to abandon their education, an individual with cancer denied essential treatment: these are the harsh realities that the fight against symbolic erasure must highlight. So, how can we craft a narrative that refuses to relegate the displaced to the waiting rooms of history?

To begin, we must focus on institutional accountability: while rebuilding homes is crucial, it is equally important to clearly delineate, legally secure land rights, and phase out camps in a timely and transparent manner. In the Sep 21 issue of the *The New Indian Express*, the report *Rehabilitating Manipur: Challenges in returning displaced people from relief camps* mentions the government has an initiative to resettle 60,000 individuals across hills and valleys may be a promising start, yet its implementation must be monitored and evaluated for fairness.

Secondly, the media and civil society play an essential role in uncovering what remains concealed. Local newspapers in Manipur, including *The Sangai Express*, *Poknapham*, *Hueiyen Lanpao*, among others, have historically influenced public opinion within valley communities. By focusing on narratives of internally displaced persons, camp life, trauma, disrupted education for children, and neglect of infrastructure through these local perspectives, we resist the tendency to delegate the conversation to outsiders. When a Meitei newspaper reports on Kuki-Zo families waiting in camps, or when a hill-area publication shares Meitei stories, it challenges symbolic barriers.

Ultimately, we must ensure that justice remains a priority: displacement without resolution breeds resentment. In the absence of transparency, thorough fact-finding, and reliable legal recourse, any resolution is likely to be superficial. When victims perceive a lack of acknowledgment, they come to accept exclusion as their destiny.

In the camps of Manipur today, silence does not equate to absence, rather it signifies a presence: of denied rights, delayed justice, and gradual erasure. To highlight this is not mere rhetoric; it is a civic duty. If we neglect to identify structural neglect and symbolic silencing, we risk rendering displacement permanent and despair a norm.

A native of Imphal West, Manipur, **Kapil Arambam** is an assistant professor teaching media studies to undergraduates in Bengaluru. He can be contacted at arambamkapil@gmail.com.

COVER STORY

Echoes *of* Silence

Faces of Violence in Kashmir and Beyond

These peace-loving communities are being taken for granted and pushed toward rebellion by those in power, both internally and externally.

VIRONIKA

Violence often declares its presence through the tears and cries of victims, the blast of bombs, and the complexities and chaos caused by conflict. Yet its surreal presence lies in silence—the silence of empty and abandoned homes, of wives waiting in vacant houses, of history either erased, silenced, or too painful to tell.

From the very beginning of humanity, killing, hunting, and gathering have been part of human life; the essence of human evolution has been "the survival of the fittest." Across continents and centuries, from the Mongols to the Soviets to modern-day Russia, war has shaped humanity and human consciousness. Its voice echoes not only on battlefields but also in the quiet of villages and in the fear, memory, and loss of victims. History in many ways is a tale of violence and conquest; civilisation has thrived on bloodshed and succession. Yet violence has never been limited to war zones themselves—it encompasses various aspects of society such as poverty, inequality, exclusion, and social dilemmas.

According to philosopher Johan Galtung's idea of structural violence, harm often hides behind systems of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. Violence thrives not only through weapons but also through silence, through what society chooses to ignore.

From the ruins of Gaza to the occupation of Afghanistan, from the ethnic cleansing in Iraq to the hate crimes in India, violence manifests in both subtle and spectacular forms. The world bleeds not only through bombs but also through fractured communities, domestic and sexual violence, hate speech, and apathy. In this sense, the idea of geography extends from nations to religion to ethnicity, gender, and finally to individuals. Violence can be both personal and global at the same time.

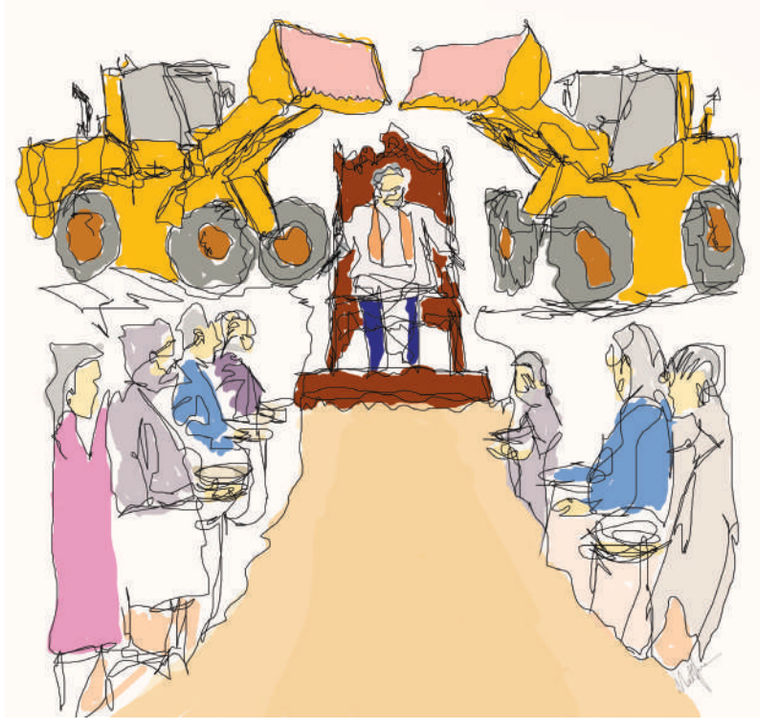
Psychologists and philosophers have long tried to understand why humans are driven to inflict pain and violence, and the need for power and authority in human nature. Sigmund Freud spoke of Thanatos—the death drive that coexists with the life drive in human beings. Frantz Fanon wrote that violence is a language of resistance, and Nietzsche described it as inherited and observable even in infants who love to destroy everything in their path. He also saw violence as part of humanity's "will to power," the struggle between compassion and domination, restraint and rage. Meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi saw violence as humanity's oldest language and non-violence, or Ahimsa, as the greatest answer to it. He redefined strength not as the power to destroy, but as the courage to endure without hatred. He believed that non-violence demands a far deeper form of bravery—one that resists evil without becoming it.

In the context of the Indian subcontinent, nowhere are these echoes more profound than in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, a place where heaven and hell coexist. For decades the valley has seen bloodshed and lived under the shadow of fear—the fear of both the known and unknown. From the plains of Jammu to the hills of Kashmir to the deserts of Ladakh, all districts are united by a common and shared history of political unrest. Since the day of Partition, the state has been divided into three major parts—POK, IOK, and Aksai Chin. From historical divisions to the modern-day controversy over Article 370, harsh militarisation, displacement, disappearances of young men under suspicion of "terrorism," being labeled a "spy" or "stone pelter," never-ending curfews, and hate crimes—the people have endured systematic violence. Shutting down the internet and isolating people's pain from mainstream media is an old tactic used to silence voices. Some of the most common slurs such as "stone pelters" and "terrorists" are routinely used against Kashmiris in mainland India.

Yet amid this violence and the politics of division between the three major ethnicities of Jammu and Kashmir—Dogras, Kashmiris, and Ladakhis—the people have preserved a spirit of resistance, not through aggression but through resilience, faith, and poetry. Various groups like the Leh Apex Body and activists like Sonam Wangchuk embody that endurance. The verses of Agha Shahid Ali become a mirror of suffering transformed: "They make a desolation and call it peace." His poetry transforms suffering into art and silence into speech. The valley's Sufi traditions—rooted in love and unity—remind us that even in conflict, the soul seeks harmony. Activist groups like Farzand-i-Khas are actively helping people become aware of the importance of Dogra culture and their martyrdom in building this nation. These peace-loving communities are being taken for granted and pushed toward rebellion by those in power, both internally and externally. Jammu and Kashmir stands as a symbol of the world's contradictions: where spiritual depth meets political despair, where the yearning for peace outlives the forces that try to bury it. Its history tells us that violence and forceful occupation may win territories but never the hearts of people.

Violence has undoubtedly shaped our past and history. From genocides to wars to hate crimes to domestic violence, its forms are endless, but so is humanity's capacity to forgive and heal. All philosophies and psychoanalyses of violence and its aftermath end with the question of healing: How does one live after loss? How does one forgive, rebuild, and live again? The echoes of silence that follow every act of violence call us not to forget, but to listen—to the grief, the guilt, and the lessons buried beneath the ruins. In that listening lies hope. In that stillness, peace begins to whisper.

Vironika is a native of Kashmir and a student scholar at the Indian Institute of Heritage, Noida.



Violence and Non-Violence

When the relationship between capital, the capitalists, and the working class reaches a breaking point, the police and paramilitary forces are called upon to stand on the side of the capitalists.

ALEX TUSCANO

Ever since the beginning of history, humanity has witnessed violence. The very first instance the Bible narrates is how Cain killed Abel. What distinguishes human beings from the rest of the creatures on earth is their ability to love and to be loved. Being rational is not the highest mark of humans. Their ability to love and be loved is their highest quality. Philosophers and spiritual leaders have written and spoken extensively about human beings' life of love. We have learned about God as "God is Love." We are born of His love, and therefore we must love Him and love one another. Jesus said, "If you love one another, then the world will know that you are my disciples."

It is not that people do not recognise this fundamental nature of human beings, but despite this, there are conflicts among people. There are wars between nations. There is a large industry in every nation that produces weapons of war. If we analyse government-to-government treaties, predominantly these treaties revolve around the trade of weapons. The war economy is a parallel economy that each nation is adopting. Governments possess weapons not only to be used against enemy countries but also against their own citizens. Surveillance technology has been used against civilians and politicians of opposition parties.

In the midst of this towering reality, there is talk of nonviolence. Emperor Ashoka fought the war of Kalinga and won. But when he saw the death and violence that the war had caused, he threw away his sword and decided never to follow the path of war again. He embraced Buddhism and decided to build his kingdom on the foundation of nonviolence, love, and the welfare of the people. India has proudly adopted the Ashoka Chakra on its national flag to demonstrate its commitment to nonviolence.

Mahatma Gandhi solemnly adopted the path of nonviolence to achieve freedom from the British Empire. His nonviolence and Satyagraha won the nation its independence. However, Mahatma Gandhi won freedom through the path of nonviolence but himself succumbed to the violent bullet of Hindutva activist Nathuram Godse. After independence, the partition of India saw the biggest violence and killing in the history of India.

Every nation rules its people through violence. They maintain full-time, huge military and paramilitary forces. This defence force is part of the structure of any society. They spend a huge portion of their national budget on defence. Under normal circumstances, the military and paramilitary forces stand between civil society and the capitalists. When the relationship between capital, the capitalists, and the working class reaches a breaking point, the police and paramilitary forces are called upon to stand on the side of the capitalists.

To illustrate this, I would like to remind you of an example I quoted earlier. In Plachimada, Kerala, there was a Coca-Cola factory. This company had been extracting a huge quantity of groundwater, which led to a drinking water crisis. Apart from that, the factory was also polluting the land and water in the surrounding area. The local people were protesting this, and the struggle was going on for a long time. The then Chief Minister of Kerala, Achuthanandan, had gone to visit the spot. On one side of the factory boundary, the police had lined up. On the opposite side, the protesting people were standing. The Chief Minister was standing and discussing the issue with the leaders of the protesting people. The police force did not come to stand around the Chief Minister to protect him from the people. They did not perceive any threat to the Chief Minister from the people. But they were protecting the factory. The factory workers and the local people who were facing the brunt of the problem were nonviolent, unarmed people. They had to confront the provocative armed police force. Armed police and paramilitary forces are symbols of violent force, not nonviolent force.

When the relationship between capital, the capitalists, and the working class reaches a breaking point, the police and paramilitary forces are called upon to stand on the side of the capitalists.

During the farmers' agitation, the government came against the farmers with a heavily armed hand. Water cannons and tear gas are not less violent compared to bullets. The government acquires farmers' land with an iron hand and massive violent force. There have been killings of scores of farmers, workers, and Dalits throughout the history of our society. If the civil society begins to protest, they cannot be considered a violent force. People go about their lives working and living peacefully. But the peacekeeping forces cannot be called silent and nonviolent. The police and paramilitary armed forces cannot be considered nonviolent. Nowadays, some state governments are called bulldozer sarkars. Civil society continues to face the violent force of the state.

Another presence of major violence in society is the massive poverty, hunger, and disease among the people—the deaths of people because they cannot afford treatment. The presence of massive poverty and hunger is another side of society where we have Adani and Ambani, who have become multibillionaires at the expense of poverty in society. These multibillionaires run their business enterprises primarily by taking loans from banks—that is, the money of common people. The government often writes off their loans amounting to thousands of crores. Some of them take massive loans and run away from the country. But when it comes to farmers, all forces are unleashed on them to recover their paltry loans of less than five thousand rupees. This can be called nothing less than massive violence against common people.

If you compare the money spent in the name of development on projects like expressways, airports, harbours, and special economic zones to the projects aimed at pulling people out of poverty, it demonstrates how unjustly common people are treated by the state. This injustice is equally violent.

The war between Cain and Abel could be considered an insignificant instance in history. But this insignificant event is the precursor of the history that has followed from the time of Cain and Abel. History is based on struggles it has witnessed. Mankind had to struggle with nature to earn their livelihood. It had to struggle with natural calamities and find ways to survive. As history progressed, people found themselves struggling for territory. This history of struggle demanded empowerment—power over nature and power against foreign intruders. It became a given fact that human beings need power to survive in the midst of threats to their lives.

If we think of power in present society, we must speak about politics. Politics is the way power is acquired and exercised. From the wars between tribes, we have come to the wars between kings. Through this journey, we have arrived at the present reality of the "nation-state." The nation-state is the most advanced stage of development in the world. But along with this, there have been the most developed modes of wars between nations.

Armies of both kings and present-day nations have had to wage dual wars. They have had to fight against their enemies, and they have had to fight their own people. When it came time for kings to collect taxes from the people, kings often used armies against those who had difficulties paying corvée or taxes to the king. In today's nation-state, the situation is altered. If there is a foreign nation that may pose a threat to another nation, then there is a more fundamental need to defend the capital of the capitalists than the lives of the members of civil society.

In capitalist states, there is a struggle between capital, represented by the owners of capital, and the toiling masses. The toiling masses in one way or another work for capital. There is conflict between the wages of the toiling masses and the profit of the capitalists. The capitalists require the toiling masses to produce, and they also need the toiling masses to buy and consume what the capitalists produce. There is interdependence and conflict between capital and the toiling masses. The state stands between the capitalists, their capital, and the toiling masses. The state comprises the constitution of the country, the judiciary, and the armed forces.

While the state gives the impression of working for the welfare of its citizens or civil society, it constantly protects the interests of capital. In the name of development, farmers are forcefully evicted from their land and livelihood to build industries. It reduces landowners into landless workers who may get employment in the industries built on their land. Strictly speaking, development today means development of capital, infrastructure for capital, and what the rest may get is "basic minimum income." Dignity of life comes from people's freedom for self-determination rather than living on doles called "basic minimum income." In this structure, if the society and the state is not violent, then what would you call it?

Gaza, Violence, and the Religious Justification

The Bible and theology have played a significant role in this war of genocide in Gaza.... To be clear, when Scripture is used to justify genocide or promote ideologies of supremacy, this use has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus.

RICHARD ROHR

Part of the genius of Martin Luther King Jr inspired by the teachings of Jesus and Gandhi, was that he was able to show thoughtful people that violence was not only immoral but actually impractical and, finally, futile. In the long run, it doesn't achieve its stated purposes, because it only deepens bitterness on both sides and leaves them in an endless and impossible cycle of violence that cannot be stopped by itself. Instead, some neutralising force must be inserted from outside to stop the cycle and point us in a new direction.

King insisted that true nonviolent practice is founded on a spiritual seeing and has little to do with mere education or what I would call the "calculative mind." He thought it self-evident that the attitudes of nonviolence were finally impossible without an infusion of agape love from God and our reliance upon that infusion. He defined agape love as willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation, and willingness to reconcile without the desire for domination. This is clearly a Divine love that the small self cannot achieve by itself. We must live in and through Another to be truly nonviolent.

Palestinian Christian theologian Munther Isaac challenges us to confront the deep disconnect between the nonviolent teaching of Jesus and the ways Christianity has often aligned with systems of power and violence, even today: Christianity and violence should not go hand in hand, at least theoretically. The teachings of Jesus are very clear. The teachings of Paul and the apostles are very clear. There is no place for violence for the followers of Jesus. Yet an honest assessment of even the last 150 years will clearly reveal that many who claimed to be Christians committed some of the worst atrocities in our world: the Belgians in Congo, the Germans in Namibia, the French in Algeria, the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Guatemalan genocide against the Laya indigenous people, and of course the Holocaust against the Jewish people in Europe.

The Bible and theology have played a significant role in this war of genocide in Gaza.... To be clear, I fully believe that when Scripture is used to justify genocide or promote ideologies of supremacy, this use has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus nor the essence of the Christian faith. Yet, shamefully, the church has aligned itself with empire throughout the centuries. It has chosen the path of power and influence. One would expect Christians to have learned the lesson. We have not.

For king nonviolence is a way of strength and not a way for cowards. It is not a lack of power which allows us to be nonviolent, but in fact the discovery of a different kind of power. It is a choice, not a resignation; a spirituality, not just a tactic. The goal of nonviolence is always winning the friendship and the understanding of the supposed opponent, not their humiliation or personal defeat. It must be done to eventually facilitate the process of reconciliation, and we ourselves must be willing to pay the price for that reconciliation. The opponent must be seen not so much as an evil person, but as a symbol of a much greater systemic evil—of which they also are a victim! We must aim our efforts at that greater evil, which is harming all of us, rather than at the opponent.

Peacemaking Is Not Niceness

I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth, said, Martin Luther King Jr.

Minister Elle Dowd, an anti-racist white activist, challenges the notion that being a peacemaker means being "nice": We white people love to think of ourselves as nice.... But too often, niceness is about convenience. It's about our comfort. It's about control. It is our pathological desire for niceness that leads white people to look at young Black people crying out in the street and say, "They should really say #AllLivesMatter."

For people of colour and other oppressed people, the tension caused by marginalisation is ever present with very real consequences.... Racism is like being force-fed a poison. Direct action is what happens when people refuse to drink that poison and instead bring a bottle of it to the doorstep of those force-feeding them and demand that they gaze upon the reality of it.

Direct action doesn't create new tension. It redistributes the tension that is already there and puts it back where it belongs—at the source. Many people—white people, in particular—have little tolerance for tension. We have been taught to avoid tension. Our conditioning has trained us to recoil from discomfort, to think of it as an inherently bad thing, something to sidestep and evade at all costs. Instead of leaning into tension to see what we can learn from it, we often avoid it. But when we do this, when we turn away from tension, we fail to see the gift that this tension can be in revealing the truth. We miss out on the clarity it brings with it, the opportunity to move forward.

The Sandbox of Destruction

Where Children's Play Mirrors the Chhata River and Life Around It

Today the children have begun creating toys by imitating something entirely distant from their daily lives. Their toy lorries are not meant for carrying agricultural produce or other goods, but mimicry of those mining sand from their own Chhata River.

SAM VENKAT

As summer approaches, most of the marginal and small land-holding Sarna farming communities—including some converted Christian families (the Sarna being indigenous tribal communities from the Chota Nagpur region whose religious beliefs are deeply connected with nature)—from villages like Ermere and Kulda are finishing their rabi crop harvest. This was grown in the low-lying land pockets of Amma Panchayat and Barkuli Panchayat, where the Koel and Chhata tributaries of the Karo River flow through Jharkhand's Torpa block. This marks their last engagement with the land this year before the next monsoon arrives and pre-monsoon land preparations begin at summer's end.

Traditionally, this gave these communities time for socialising activities, including summer festivals like Sarhul, Bhakta Jhoolan, Maagi Jatra, Diri Dul Pav, Kabr Parv, and others, along with matchmaking and marriages across these villages. However, lately, due to various reasons, most of these communities are now moving toward tier-two towns and metro cities for livelihood opportunities at this time of year, where they find work in construction and other labour-intensive wage jobs.

Meanwhile, the children from these villages, even before their holidays start, have begun their days of socialisation and exploration across these landscapes—cutting through the sharp-edged remains of harvested fields and evaporating broken tar roads. With their existing friend groups or while making new ones under the blazing sun and hot wind flowing across their sweating bodies, they offer glimpses into their activities for the days to come during this particular time of year.

Above: Children rushing with their little lorries in a track of the actual lorries.

One of their exploring and hangout spots during this time has been the water bodies of these villages. Since most small lakes nearly dry up by this time of year, what remain are the sand-soaked patches of the Karo River, still holding knee-to-chest-deep water in some stretches. The children roam everywhere with their little lorries that they constructed themselves from materials they found in their surroundings, checking every possible tree for something to munch and gathering their day's food supply as the afternoon stretches long past their departure from the village a few kilometers away.

With the sun's shadow now pointing the other way beneath their feet, the children reach the river and park their little lorries carefully on a rock that juts up just above the sand and water patches. The younger ones take dips in the knee-level water at the periphery while the elders within the group run from afar and jump deeper, swimming and dragging some of the youngsters into chest-level water to teach them as well. Generations of these communities have done this, learning to swim during these same exploratory summers.

Shift in Generational Crafts

Lately there's been a change between the current generation and previous ones, seen in the little lorries that accompany them on these exploratory summer journeys. Where earlier generations roamed with just two wheels joined to a small stick they would pull along with a thread, gradually improving them later to imitate bullock carts (*bailgadi*)—those familiar sights within their own community that played a crucial role in daily life, carrying agricultural produce and serving as part of their lifestyle.

Today the children have begun creating toys by imitating something entirely distant from their daily lives. The characteristics of their little lorries clearly show they're not meant for carrying agricultural produce or other goods, but rather mimic those mining sand from their own Chhata River. They follow the same tire tracks where actual mining trucks work just a few meters away, loading and hauling sand. Additionally, in their village community, no one actually owns a real mining lorry—only a very few work as labourers on mining operations.

This has become normalised as it is now part of their everyday play. This cultural shift among the children, emerging from their exposure to mining vehicles, reflects both the prevalence of this activity and their meticulous attention to detail in crafting toy lorries. Particularly striking is how they've replicated the hydraulic system that lifts the dump body so the material slides out by itself—a feature found mainly in mining dump trucks.

Right: Children have parked their little lorries while taking a dip.

The Exposure That Changed

The excessive sand extraction from riverbeds has already caused water scarcity in other districts across the state. Take the mining along the Damodar River—Asanpani and neighboring villages have confronted severe drinking water crises triggered by mining activities, forcing district administration to intervene.

Sand is being mined extensively from the Chhata River, among others, to meet Ranchi's growing urban demands, as the city lies just sixty kilometers from these villages. If this reckless extraction continues, it will alter the river's natural flow—leaving no path for water to walk, but run down and away. When water runs instead of walks, groundwater recharge suffers severely. The river's water retention directly impacts groundwater levels; if these decline, the entire ecosystem will be disrupted.

"During the monsoon session of the State Assembly this year, officials revealed that between April and July 2024-25, authorities seized 1,189 vehicles, registered 301 FIRs, and collected fines totaling 256.62 lakh, all within just three months," as reported in the news at this point in the year.

In tribal regions governed by the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, gram sabha approval remains mandatory for sand mining operations—a requirement rarely fulfilled. JSMDC reports reveal that Khunti district, which includes Torpa block, faces particular challenges as gram sabhas consistently deny permissions due to environmental concerns. The agency has also received multiple complaints about declining water levels in Torpa.

Even NITI Aayog's report warns that 40% of India's population may lack drinking water by 2030. When the evidence is this stark, instead of mitigating the crisis, we see accelerated natural resource extraction worsening conditions, as evidenced by the complaints of declining water levels in these villages. While metro infrastructure matters, mindful utilisation of rural natural resources matters more. These marginalised communities will face the catastrophic effects first, potentially forced into year-round distress migration, breaking their practice of seasonal movement at this time of year.

10 November

World Science Day for Peace and Development

TOM JOHN OFM

World Science Day for Peace and Development emphasises the vital role of science in society and the need for public engagement in scientific debates. It highlights how science shapes our daily lives and supports informed citizenship.

In line with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms everyone's right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, the day promotes inclusive access to knowledge. By connecting science more closely with society, it seeks to raise awareness of how scientific progress contributes to peace, sustainability, and global cooperation. The celebration also recognises scientists' role in deepening our understanding of the planet and fostering responsible innovation.

I HAVE LOVED YOU (DILEXI TE)

Pope Leo Cries Out: Let the Love Lift the Poor

JOHN SEKAR OFM

Pope Leo XIV's apostolic exhortation, titled *Dilexi Te*, which means "I have loved you" (Rev 3:9), is addressed to all people of good will. Issued on the Feast of St Francis (4 October 2025), it is a significant papal teaching intended to inspire and lead all people to live out Christ's teachings: the Gospel. *Dilexi Te* is a continuation of the work Pope Francis began in his papacy, offering at the same time a fresh mandate: a passionate invitation to rediscover God's love manifest in Jesus, a love that uplifts the poor, and to reorient the Church and society in light of that very love.

At the heart of this exhortation lies a disturbing and pertinent question: while millions continue to suffer acute poverty, how can we justify the immense wealth in the world and the increasing indifference to the poor? Pope Leo contends that poverty today is not only material but also spiritual, social, and ecological. Different parts of the world are tormented by the issues of migration, addictions, trafficking, unemployment, and ecological destruction, resulting in a suffering humanity.

Pope Leo compellingly argues that love for Christ and love for the poor are inseparable; thus, every person of faith has an obligation to God and equally to the poor.

Pope Leo urges the readers to realise that indifference is as evil as injustice: we live in a world where the poor are discarded without even being noticed. The Pope rightly echoes the Christian perspective of poverty not as a social problem but a "theological one—a faith-related one." He vividly explains that Christ Himself waits to be encountered in the poor. To turn away from the poor is sadly to turn away from Christ Himself.

Relying on the biblical foundation, Pope Leo highlights God's preferential option for the poor. Starting from the burning bush episode in Exodus (3:7-8) to the poor crucified Christ on the cross, the exhortation details how God has always taken the side of the poor and the afflicted—revealing this as a fundamental and consistent nature of God. The beatitude, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20), is not a poetic metaphor but God's powerful assurance: the poor own God's Kingdom.

Pope Leo compellingly argues, encouraged by the Church Fathers, that love for Christ and love for the poor are inseparable; thus, every person of faith has an obligation to God and equally to the poor.

The Church cannot authentically preach the "poor, crucified Christ" without first standing visibly, concretely, and consistently with the poor, as God does in Scripture. This exhortation forces an urgent and inevitable reality check on how the Church is administered pastorally and financially today at the parish and diocesan levels. It is a challenge rooted in Pope Leo's unequivocal warning inspired by John Chrysostom: "...if the faithful do not encounter Christ in the poor who stand at the door, they will not be able to worship him even at the altar."

Pope Leo recalls inspiring examples of many saints who embraced a life of poverty and manifested a rich love for the poor. The exhortation highlights St Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi, whose lifestyle of poverty and love for the poor was at odds with their world. Pope Leo cites the Rule of St Francis: "...appropriate nothing... but as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serve the Lord in poverty and humility." Similarly, he recalls how St Clare obtained from Pope Gregory IX the "Privilege of Poverty"—the right to live without any material goods. These radical saints, with their evangelical revolution (choosing to be poor and to be among the poor), together with the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites, were the prophetic signs of their times. Invoking these saints and religious movements, Pope Leo calls for a revisit of the origin of these religious movements and their current existence, and whether they still possess their prophetic stance.

This exhortation is certainly a loud echo of Pope Francis' gripping vision of the Church: "How I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor!" Pope Leo explains that the mission of the Church is not fulfilled merely through her charitable projects and social services. The Church, however, must identify herself with the poor, partaking in their lives, their pains, and their sufferings, and must learn from the poor of today as Saint Teresa of Calcutta did. The exhortation outrightly rejects the prevalent notion in the Church and among the religious congregations of treating the poor as mere passive recipients; instead, it calls for treating them as "living images of Christ" who evangelise the Church, showing her the way back to the crux of the Gospel.

Pope Leo advocates for "structural conversion," which entails doing away with systems within the Church that are akin to worldly power and committing to building communities led by simplicity and hospitality.

Lauding the health care of the Church to the poor, Pope Leo declares, "In the act of healing a wound, the Church proclaims that the Kingdom of God begins among the most vulnerable. In doing so, she remains faithful to the One who said, 'I was sick and you visited me' (Mt 25:36)." "Education of the poor is not a favour but a duty," Pope Leo exhorts. "Not a favour but a duty"—the implications of this cry of the Pope invite the Catholic education centres to review their present existence in this light—not a favour but a duty. It may not be an exaggerated claim to say that an overhaul is necessary to be faithful to the cry of Pope Leo in the way Catholic education is envisioned and administered. In the same way, Pope Leo urges the Church to welcome the migrants as a mother would—embracing, respecting, and loving them.

Pope Leo advocates for "structural conversion," which entails doing away with systems within the Church that are akin to worldly power and committing to building communities led by simplicity and hospitality. The practical implications of such conversion are potentially huge; the question is whether the Church is willing to walk the talk here. Pope Leo writes, "Unjust structures need to be recognised and eradicated by the force of good, by changing mindsets but also, with the help of science and technology, by developing effective policies for societal change."

The exhortation calls for "Pastoral Closeness," which ensures that the poor are not kept at the peripheries of parish life but are brought to the centre of the Church and accorded full dignity and participation—the work of Saint Oscar Romero, who was martyred for the same reason. This questions some pastors/religious whose associations and friendships circle around only a particular class of people while the poor are ignored. If the poor are to form the centre of the parish, the pastors need formation in this Dilexi Te. Pope Leo expresses his gratitude to "...all those who have chosen to live among the poor, not merely to pay them an occasional visit but to live with them as they do. Such a decision should be deemed one of the highest forms of evangelical life."

The central message of this exhortation is uncompromising: poverty reveals the heart of God! Seeing Christ in the poor is not a choice but a human-Christian-religious obligation sealed by the word of God: "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). We may be tempted to shrug this document off with a complacent attitude, thinking it has nothing new to offer. But it is a powerful and challenging call to rediscover the core of Christian discipleship: love that lifts up the poor!

Those of us for whom our almsgiving is merely a salve for our Christian conscience stand exposed in *Dilexi Te*! Our comfortable perspectives on charity—undisruptive of our life situations—are confronted here, calling for a paradigm shift in the way we reach out to the poor! Pope Leo, however, asserts that "almsgiving remains, for the time being, a necessary means of contact, encounter, and empathy with those less fortunate."

Dilexi Te is a much-needed cry for our times. "I have loved you" is the voice of Christ that is whispered to the Church: to love as Christ loved is being a Christian; to lift the poor in love is our witness of being Christians. We cannot afford to ignore—not if we still wish to be Christians—the bearers of the love that lifts the poor!

The Stunted Lemon Tree

MONICA FERNANDES

Actually, calling poor Stunted Lemon Tree (SLT) a tree was a misnomer. Unlike singer Trini Lopez's *Lemon Tree*, it was not "very pretty." It would never rise above its humble plant stage. A bird had accidentally dropped a seed in the flower pot filled with mud on the balcony. While watering the adjacent plant, the domestic help was probably dropping water in the pot. After a while, the lemon plant peeked through.

The poor SLT was shriveling up on the balcony, what with the hot sun's rays beating down on it on the one hand and the lack of water on the other. How it wished it could walk to the tap and get some cool, clear water to drink! But Tripti, the owner of the house, was away and the domestic help was at play. Besides, the domestic help who was told to water the plants was focusing on the pretty flowering and leafy plants, leaving SLT to wither away. Fortunately, Tripti returned. She ensured that SLT was watered daily, and so it revived.

Tripti had two daughters. While the older girl was smart and sprightly, the younger one was mentally challenged. But that did not mean that the younger girl was neglected or unloved just because she, like SLT, would never be a contributing member of society.

There are many SLTs in our vicinity. The mentally challenged child, aging parents—how are we toward them? Do we allow them to wither away like SLT, or do we look after them, even though they are unable to earn and contribute toward their medical expenses and upkeep? Have we fallen prey to modern warped societal values which judge people by what they earn and spend? Are we wary of donating to a good cause because we don't get any monetary benefit? Are we like Tripti or the domestic help? It's time we introspect and think these values over.

Have we fallen prey to modern warped societal values which judge people by what they earn and spend?

Breaking the Stigma

Rethinking Mental Health in Families

EMMANUEL OFM and URJA DOGRA

For generations, mental health in India has been a subject cloaked in silence, a private storm expected to be endured alone. Common phrases such as "Don't overthink so much" or "It's just a phase; stay strong"—though often intended to comfort—have carried the weight of dismissal. They reflect a larger truth about how society views emotional distress: not as something requiring care, but as something to be endured.

Expressions of anxiety or vulnerability are frequently brushed aside with remarks like "You're just stressed because you're too sensitive. Others have it worse." Such responses equate vulnerability with weakness and highlight a cultural tendency to celebrate endurance of pain while overlooking the quiet strength it takes to face it. But times are changing. Across the country, there is a growing recognition that mental health is just as important as physical health. The Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 declared access to mental health care a right, and initiatives like Tele-MANAS, a 24/7 government helpline, are reaching even rural households. Sometimes, the most powerful help is not advice but simply listening—a reminder that empathy begins at home. Accounts from volunteers and interns reveal how even a single conversation—free of judgment and filled with understanding—can provide profound relief to those in distress.

The media has also played a significant role in reshaping the dialogue. When actress Deepika Padukone spoke publicly about her battle with depression and established the Live Love Laugh Foundation, it sent ripples of change across the nation. Films like *Dear Zindagi* portrayed therapy not as a clinical process but as a deeply human and accessible conversation. These cultural moments have helped normalise discussions around mental health, affirming that it is no longer confined to the shadows but is entering everyday discourse.

The Health Belief Model suggests that awareness alone does not inspire change; belief does. People seek help only when they recognise that mental illness is common, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of.

Yet, within many Indian households, stigma persists as an unspoken rule. Conversations about mental illness are often hushed or avoided entirely. Statements such as "Therapy is for those who can't handle life" or "If others can manage without help, why can't you?" continue to circulate. In some cases, families discourage therapy, believing prayer or endurance alone will suffice. Such attitudes are rarely rooted in malice but in misunderstanding.

In a culture where family reputation often outweighs individual suffering, mental illness becomes something to hide rather than heal—leaving many to struggle in silence. This is where families can make the greatest difference. Change begins in small, everyday ways:

- Listening without judgment when a child or spouse says, "I'm not okay."
- Normalising conversations about stress, anxiety, or sadness at the dinner table.
- Encouraging professional help when needed, just as one would for a physical illness.

As psychologists remind us, people learn not only from books but from examples. When parents, teachers, or community leaders speak openly about mental health, children grow up seeing it as normal and acceptable. And when families treat therapy as an act of self-care rather than weakness, the stigma begins to fade.

Psychological theories help explain these patterns. Attribution Theory highlights how mental illness is often misinterpreted as a personal failing rather than a legitimate condition. Reframing it as an interplay of biology, environment, and experience shifts perceptions from blame to empathy. Social Learning Theory emphasises that acceptance grows when individuals witness peers, public figures, or family members openly discussing therapy. The Health Belief Model further suggests that awareness alone does not inspire change; belief does. People seek help only when they recognise that mental illness is common, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of.

Transformation often begins in small, personal spaces. Everyday conversations—whether in classrooms, workplaces, or family gatherings—play a crucial role in reshaping perceptions. When mental health is explained in simple, relatable terms, and therapy is reframed as a tool for self-understanding rather than a sign of weakness, attitudes begin to shift. Even within families, perspectives evolve when empathy replaces judgment. Acknowledging the courage it takes to seek help can itself become a quiet revolution.

India's relationship with mental health is a story of progress intertwined with hesitation—a journey of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Laws and media campaigns may provide the scaffolding, but real transformation happens in living rooms, over cups of chai, and in the way people respond when someone says, "I'm not okay."

Breaking the stigma does not require grand gestures; it begins with compassion in the smallest of moments—the willingness to listen, to understand, and to affirm that mental health is not a luxury but a necessity.

Perhaps the day will come when seeking therapy or admitting to anxiety will no longer be seen as an act of bravery, but simply as an act of self-care—ordinary and essential, like visiting a doctor when physically unwell. In the end, true strength lies not in enduring in silence, but in speaking with honesty and listening with heart.

The Man Who Outlived a Death Sentence: Friar Richard D'Silva

BOB BHAI

In 1967, Friar Richard D'Silva was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis and given just three years to live. He defied every expectation, outliving that prognosis by decades. His story is not one of bitterness, but of resilience, insatiable curiosity, and a testament to the power of the indomitable human spirit.

When the news of his passing at the age of 92 arrived on October 12, I felt no great weight of sorrow. Instead, I was filled with the image of a joyful friar emulating his guide, Francis of Assisi, and welcoming "sister death" with a silent smile.

A Foundation of Discipline and Resilience

My earliest memory of Friar Richard is from the Atmajyothi farmhouse in Mysore, where he was my director of formation. His day began with a ritual of purpose. He would rise at 4:30 a.m. to sweep and swab his room before tending to the common passage outside. For a man once defined by a life-threatening diagnosis, this physical activity was a profound statement of intent.

He rode his bicycle into the city for daily needs, exploring back roads and forgotten alleys, returning with a deeper understanding of the world. Ask for directions to any landmark in Mysore, and he could draw a precise, detailed map from memory.

This deep-seated resilience was a family trait. Richard once shared that after his father's death, his mother rejected relatives' advice to return to Goa. Instead, she stayed in Mumbai, took a job as a hospital aide, and educated her son, all while completing her own Secondary School Certificate alongside him. That powerful lesson in determination became the bedrock of his own life.

The Lifelong Learner

Friar Richard's mind remained sharp through a lifelong love of reading. When asked his secret, his answer was simple yet brilliant: "Though I have not done any specialized study, I have learned that the best way to keep up with the latest material is to read the reviews first. Then, I pick only those books on subjects I need to study in depth."

This tool was a gift. It taught us students how to navigate the library with skill, cutting through the noise to find true knowledge. The practice he passed on ignited in me a passion for lifelong learning.

His philosophy for life was just as clear: "Lay a large foundation, and then build up as per your need and ability. Assess your requirements and limitations, and develop what is required to respond to the circumstances." This wasn't just a phrase; it was a blueprint for a life without limits. It gave me the courage to join an itinerant mission and later, to spend time with the tribal communities of Chotanagpur, shaping my worldview and pushing my boundaries.

Guide in Times of Crisis

Years later, his mentorship continued to guide me. After the devastating Tsunami, our parish priest struggled to find someone willing to give the New Year's message, as we had lost some of our parishioners. He asked me. I hesitated, busy guiding students providing psycho-social first aid in Tamil Nadu, but I said yes.

I was at a loss until I remembered a prayer Richard had led during evening vespers. The biblical citations he used echoed in my mind. When I approached him, he immediately encouraged me and gave me the verses to reflect upon. The result was a visual meditation, knitting together pictures from my students with the verses he provided. It was so impactful that it was used to replace preaching during Eucharist. A young Japanese woman even asked for permission to translate it and share it in Japan. I silently thanked God for the inspiration that flowed through Richard.

Wisdom Without Judgment

As a theology student, I faced a dilemma. A classmate, who had become my girlfriend, was planning to visit with her sister. Unfortunately, their rescheduled flight clashed with a three-day excursion we had planned. I confessed my turmoil to Richard, my director.

His non-judgmental response still astounds me. With perfect clarity, he said: "Boby, I know you will have many women friends in life; that is a precious gift. Respectful mutuality is an important aspect of our Franciscan charism. It is important that you discern. Let her come and spend time with you. May you both find clarity on what God wants from each of you. Be open and sincere, and take her to meet your spiritual director."

Thanks to his intervention, I stayed behind, and the elder friars welcomed my guests warmly. This open-mindedness was not an isolated event. Years later, he led a retreat for college students where he readily agreed to include sessions on friendship and sexuality, even creating an anonymous question box to foster honest dialogue.

A Spirit of Radical Inclusivity

Richard's inclusive spirit extended far beyond personal relationships. He believed that the best religion for a person is the one that sets them free. I once heard him address an interfaith meeting where he audaciously quoted the Gospel: "The truth will set you free!"

He lived this belief. He celebrated Diwali by lining the church compound with diyas. In return, the shopkeepers in Ponda celebrated Christmas by illuminating the church and their shops with lights and stars.

His generosity was legendary. Whenever invited to dinner, he would bring back food for us students. He would invite his friends to the friary for tea, introducing them to us. When he was transferred, his friends became our friends. He preached through practice—a rare quality to be found in so-called leaders. His friendly ways attracted not only humans but also animals. He named the stray dog that came into the friary and tamed it, calling him "Loafer!" The cat he domesticated amazingly became a playmate to Loafer and a silent companion in our prayer gatherings.

A Final Toast

Friar Richard, you have departed to occupy your rightful place in the celestial sphere, where you will continue shining and guiding us. This morning, as I walked the labyrinth pattern on my terrace—a prayer ritual of mine—I cried for the first time in a long while. I am going to miss you.

The last piece of wisdom you gave me was to rejoice over human faults, including betrayals, yours and mine, as happy mistakes, and let God's abundant mercy take over. After your funeral, I will say "Cheers" to you with the Goan Feni you gave me. The distilled, pure loving wisdom you passed on will be shared, for you taught me never to drink alone.

Though my heart is in pain, I will raise a cup of joy, remembering the trail you blazed in so many lives and reminding us all that we, too, are just stardust on earth.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE VATICAN JOIN HANDS IN FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

TOM THOMAS

I have always been a fan of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Austrian bodybuilder who made his way to the USA and, starting from scratch, rose to the top of the bodybuilding world, graduated to films despite his unusual accent, married a Kennedy, and became Governor of California for two terms. He seemed to have it all—the American dream—until his life unraveled with an extramarital affair and a child born out of wedlock that destroyed his marriage. He called this moment one of his biggest regrets, yet his candor in accepting his mistakes and owning up to them helped people regain their trust in him.

Thinking of his life and how he bounced back from personal setback by focusing on his vision of a better world, it was inspiring to read recently on Vatican News that he has partnered with the Vatican on the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si to battle climate change. Over 1,000 religious leaders, climate experts, and political leaders met in Castel Gandolfo on October 1-3 for the "Raising Hope for Climate Justice" conference. "God gave me this gift to communicate the issue; I have the will, and I can see it, and I will do everything I can to make this a better world," said Mr. Schwarzenegger ahead of a press conference at the Holy See Press Office.

Change is required if we wish to do better for the climate. Reducing dependence on fossil fuels and increasing reliance on solar power is one crucial step. Mr. Schwarzenegger advocated heavily for such initiatives during his tenure as Governor of California, a state which, if taken independently, is the fourth-largest economy in the world and home to many technology giants. It is certainly wonderful for Pope Leo to involve a leading personality like Arnold Schwarzenegger to champion this great cause and partner with the Vatican. "We must shift from collecting data to caring, and from environmental discourses to an ecological conversion that transforms both personal and communal lifestyles," said Pope Leo at the Conference on Climate Justice. He also stated, "Citizens need to take an active role in political decision-making at national, regional, and local levels—only then will it be possible to mitigate the damage done to the environment."

We too can join in. Personal transformation toward reducing carbon footprint is possible in both business and personal life. Here are suggested steps:

Don't go where it's crowded. Go where it's empty. Even though it's harder to get there, that's where you belong and where there's less competition.

Arnold Schwarzenegger.

For Organisations:

- *Undertake a carbon audit* conducted by a third-party auditor such as TÜV. Work on the audit findings in a time-bound manner to reduce carbon footprint. Many businesses in India have already done carbon audits, and this is something the Catholic Church can undertake worldwide.
- *Reduce power consumption* through efficient lighting such as LED bulbs, which lead to huge savings over time in energy bills.
- *Examine compressors, air conditioners, refrigerators, and water/room heaters* for optimal energy consumption. Replace older equipment wherever possible, and ensure regular servicing. Use air conditioners only when required and set them at higher temperatures—even 2°F higher can result in significant reductions. Investing in newer equipment with higher energy star ratings means lower utility bills and smaller carbon footprint long-term.
- *Go paperless:* About 50% of waste generated by businesses comes from paper. Use tools like Google Documents, Dropbox, or OneDrive to store documents securely. Less paper consumption means fewer trees cut down. Many church circulars can be delivered electronically via WhatsApp, reducing unnecessary printing, especially during Advent and Lent.
- *Ensure e-waste is disposed of at proper recycling centres* that process waste responsibly without harming the environment.

For Individuals:

- *Use free carbon calculators* such as www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx to determine your lifestyle's carbon footprint. This can reveal surprises—for instance, coffee has a large carbon footprint. Cutting down daily cups or choosing sustainably produced coffee reduces impact.
- *Unplug devices:* Residual power drawn by electronics in standby mode can be substantial. Power off devices completely when not in use.
- *Reuse:* Bring your own water bottles and cups to work, school, or college instead of using disposables made of paper and plastic.
- *Carpool, use public transport, bicycle, or explore electric vehicles.* Walk where possible. Flight travel is one of the biggest contributors to carbon footprint, and the pandemic taught us that many trips can be replaced with Zoom or Google Meet calls.
- *Work from home when possible:* Even one day a week reduces vehicular pollution and congestion while improving family connection.
- *Reduce personal consumption:* Buy only what is needed and buy local. Every item purchased adds to carbon footprint through production, packaging, delivery, and disposal. A minimalistic approach helps both financially and environmentally.
- *Seek suggestions from your team and family* on reducing carbon footprint at work and home through brainstorming sessions.
- *Create awareness among local government leaders* to make climate change a priority and drive change through relevant policies. Follow conferences like the upcoming COP30.
- *Gain knowledge about challenges* ahead by reading resources such as UN Climate Change Conference materials (unfccc.int/cop30), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy India (mnre.gov.in), and Pope Leo XIV at the International Conference "Raising Hope for Climate Justice" (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development website).

Let us commit to taking steps toward reducing our carbon footprint today, thereby leaving this planet better than we found it!

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

We must design AI as a tool that offers immediate assistance and advice, while humans remain essential for empathy and decision-making.

JULINA ROSE

Our generation has lived through a dark pandemic, which made traditional mental health systems difficult to access and unable to handle the demand. Every day, people keep giving up on seeking professional help because the waiting time is too long or it's too expensive. All these years, the field of psychology has been said to have scarce resources, scarce time, and scarce funds. It was a system built for scarcity in an era of demand.

Now, there's a new aspect to this: Artificial Intelligence (AI). This is not about talking to ChatGPT to solve your life problems, but a serious discussion about training AI to mend the soul. AI does offer immediate, non-judgmental support, but can a machine truly help a human heart, or can it only diagnose us with a disorder? The difference is everything.

People turn to AI so they do not have to face the people they ask for help. They think they might seem weak or scared. My first experience with this was when I wanted to talk to someone about my feelings but couldn't bring myself to call up a friend and tell them everything. The fear of being judged was too much. I wanted to talk to an anonymous entity, and the guarantee that AI would give me a non-judgmental response allowed me to rant to it quickly. At that time, the ability to open an app at 3 AM to have an ear to lend felt like a better option than a human therapist.

AI is needed to manage the scale, logistics, and analysis. Human therapists are needed to provide advice, wisdom, and ethical judgment.

AI has great potential as it can analyze people's personal data within seconds—sleep cycles, heart rates, etc. AI algorithms can look at past medical records, detect minute changes, and identify the correct issue. The key is that a mere machine will not replace a human therapist; it gets the right therapist to the right person at the precise moment. Patients often have frustrating therapies as it is a process of trial and error. AI, by processing genetic information, neurological data, and patient responses, makes treatment more personalized and humanistic. It can analyse millions of data points to suggest the most effective path, which helps cut short the frustrating process. This ensures the treatment is for the person, not just for the diagnosis.

Yes, I agree that once AI acts as a therapeutic tool for humans, the integrity of care begins to fade.

The most important factor needed for therapy is the feeling that you are truly seen and heard by another human. We all need an act of empathy, memory, and shared history. Can an algorithm truly feel compassion? No, it can only generate certain words to make it seem like it empathises with you.

I know I wouldn't trust a machine with a life-or-death situation about my life. AI chatbots can sometimes give dangerous answers, which can lead to the patient becoming suicidal. When a person feels suicidal, they need a real, grounded voice, not a perfectly generated response. AI also relies on our data. This raises the main question about privacy. Who can see our data, where do they store it, and how is it protected from hackers? And if AI is being trained using only certain people's data, then it would be biased. This means people from different backgrounds are being given worse advice and less care. AI can be actively trained with diverse, culturally sensitive data.

Regarding privacy and security, AI systems must have end-to-end encryption at all times—both when we speak and when data is stored. It must also be ensured that the data cannot be traced back to the individual. They must conduct regular security inspections. This ensures the person's trust and confidentiality.

Adding AI to mental health care does not mean choosing between technology and humanity. We must design AI as a tool that offers immediate assistance and advice, while humans remain essential for empathy and decision-making.

AI is needed to manage the scale, logistics, and analysis. Human therapists are needed to provide advice, wisdom, and ethical judgment. It is better when AI manages the data and therapists handle the soul. We can harness the power of AI without sacrificing the humanity of care.

THE BUSINESS OF BLOOD

WHY VIOLENCE STILL SELLS

ROMIL UDAYAKUMAR TNV

Violence has always had a strange pull in the world of movies. It started as something primal, an emotion that gave audiences a kind of release. Watching a hero throw a punch or a villain meet his end was never just about justice. It was about feeling something raw, unfiltered, and immediate. Over time, that emotional rush turned into a pattern, and then into a product. Violence became a currency, a selling point, a shortcut to thrill the crowd.

I still remember discovering the word "gore" when I watched Indonesian films like *The Raid* series and *The Night Comes for Us*. Those movies did not just show fights; they sculpted them. Every move was sharp, every drop of blood was placed with intention. The camera did not flinch. It celebrated the chaos. I had grown up watching violent films, but these were different. They were physical poems of destruction, and they changed the way I saw violence in cinema. It was no longer just an act of aggression; it was an aesthetic choice, a rhythm of motion and sound.

That awareness shaped how I viewed recent action films like *Kill* and *Marco*. Both were celebrated for their intensity, both pulled audiences into a world of adrenaline, but they felt completely different. *Kill* used violence like language. It spoke through pain, through loss, through catharsis. The fights felt necessary, almost spiritual, as if every punch released a burden. *Marco*, on the other hand, was a film built around violence. The blood came first, and the story followed behind, gasping to catch up. It was stylish and ambitious, but it lacked heart. You could sense the craft, but not the connection.

This difference matters. Violence, when used well, can be deeply satisfying. When it goes wrong, it becomes background noise. There is always a strange joy in seeing a villain punished, but there is also a line that divides satisfaction from excess. Do we really want to see someone's eyes being gouged out, or do we simply want to know that justice has been done? The answer depends on how the story earns that moment. Violence has to mean something before it can move us.

Cinema has always known that audiences crave this dance of pain and power. From the earliest black-and-white fight scenes to today's digital mayhem, the fantasy of strength has sold tickets. Yet violence without purpose is hollow. It is like listening to an orchestra that keeps playing louder without ever changing its tune. What separates meaningful brutality from mindless spectacle is emotion. That is why a film like *John Wick* stands apart. The premise is absurdly simple: a man's dog is killed, and he goes on a rampage. But the emotion behind that act gives every bullet weight. You do not watch him kill because it is cool. You watch him because you understand his grief.

The heroes swagger through smoke, their fights unfold in slow motion, and the violence is shot like dance. It looks magnificent on screen, but often the emotion disappears under the glitter. The blood is beautiful, but it is also empty. The violence becomes fashion.

Indian cinema has its own long and layered relationship with violence. In Tamil films like *Vikram Vedha* and *Kaithi*, violence is used to ask moral questions. Every act of aggression has a consequence, every choice a cost. Lokesh Kanagaraj's filmmaking is steeped in rhythm. His action scenes are not just fights; they are emotional releases. You feel the physical weight of what is happening, and you understand why it must. On the other hand, there are films like *Animal*, where violence becomes theatre. The camera worships the blood. The sound design glorifies the destruction. The emotion gets lost in the noise. The film mistakes violence for depth, rage for meaning.

Sometimes, though, Indian filmmakers go beyond the spectacle. *Jallikattu* from Malayalam cinema is a perfect example. It uses violence not as entertainment but as reflection. The chaos of the villagers trying to catch a bull becomes a study of human nature. The film turns primal energy into social commentary. It asks whether civilisation has truly tamed us, or whether we are still ruled by the same instincts we pretend to have outgrown.

Bollywood in the 1970s understood this power in its own way. The angry young man era made violence heroic. Amitabh Bachchan's characters in films like *Deewar* and *Zanjeer* were not just beating up villains. They were expressing the frustration of a generation that felt betrayed by politics, poverty and corruption. When he raised his fist, it was not only cinema. It was rebellion. That was violence as metaphor, violence as identity.

Today's pan-Indian blockbusters like *KGF*, *Pushpa* and *Leo* have turned that tradition into pure spectacle. The heroes swagger through smoke, their fights unfold in slow motion, and the violence is shot like dance. It looks magnificent on screen, but often the emotion disappears under the glitter. The blood is beautiful, but it is also empty. The violence becomes fashion.

Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs of Wasseypur* sits somewhere in between. It begins with energy and excitement, the thrill of revenge and power, but slowly the viewer starts to tire. The killings go on and on until the blood loses meaning. That exhaustion is intentional. The film wants to show that endless violence only leads to emptiness. By the end, you do not want anyone to win. You just want the madness to stop.

That may be the most honest portrayal of violence we have had in years. It reminds us that brutality, when consumed too easily, becomes boring. It loses its moral edge. What once made us flinch now barely moves us.

The modern audience has been trained to expect violence everywhere. It is in action films, thrillers, even romantic dramas. Filmmakers assume we need it, and we have started to believe them. There is a cultural conditioning at work, a quiet belief that strength must always be shown through pain. Masculinity and violence have become partners on screen. The man who forgives is weak. The man who fights is brave. The box office numbers seem to agree.

But some films still use violence to say something true. *Asuran* from Tamil cinema is a brutal story about caste and revenge. The violence there is not stylish or fun. It is raw, dirty, painful. You feel every cut because it comes from a place of injustice. The same is true for Sairat, where love and violence collide in the most devastating way. When the violence arrives, it shatters the dream you had been watching. It does not entertain. It breaks your heart. That is what purposeful violence can do.

These films prove that brutality can be meaningful if it serves an idea. When violence reflects the world outside the theatre, it becomes powerful. It can expose inequality, challenge prejudice, or reveal the rot behind power. But when it is there only for show, it turns into noise.

The difference lies in empathy. When a film makes you care about who is bleeding and why, it earns your attention. When it treats pain like decoration, it loses you, even if you are still watching. The best action scenes are not the ones with the most punches but the ones that make you feel the hit inside your chest.

Violence in cinema is also tied to how we view justice. We love to see the bad guy punished because life outside rarely gives us that satisfaction. The screen becomes a place where moral order is restored. The villain suffers, and we feel peace. That fantasy is what keeps audiences coming back. But the danger lies in mistaking that fantasy for truth. When every story solves its problems through violence, it teaches us that there are no other answers.

Imagine if more films treated action not as spectacle but as emotion. Imagine if every fight came with a question instead of applause.

The challenge for modern filmmakers is to find new ways to channel that energy. Instead of recycling the same scenes of blood and fury, they can use violence to explore vulnerability, fear, and consequence. Imagine if more films treated action not as spectacle but as emotion. Imagine if every fight came with a question instead of applause.

Cinema is a mirror, and the reflection it shows today is one of exhaustion. The more we see violence, the less we feel it. The thrill is fading. What remains is habit. But habits can be broken. Audiences are smarter than studios think. We are ready for stories where emotion hits harder than fists.

Still, there will always be a place for violence in movies. It speaks to something ancient inside us, a craving for justice, for release, for balance. But for that craving to mean something, filmmakers must give it shape and soul. The punch should not just land on the villain. It should land on us too. It should remind us of what it costs to hurt, even in fiction.

When violence has meaning, it becomes art. It becomes memory. It becomes that moment when the screen feels alive and human. When it does not, it is just blood and sound fading into the dark.

"The Soul of My Writing Is Hope"

DR RAMAKRISHNA PERUGU

Poetry is a well-crafted art that uses the tool of language to create deepest meanings from life's experiences. **Vinitha Agarwal**, *a Gold Medalist for MA (Political Science) from M S University Baroda, was born in Bikaner to a Director of National Dairy Development Board, Anand, Gujarat. Now living in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, she is a poet of national fame who has been shortlisted for the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize.*

DR RAMAKRISHNA PERUGU *interviewed her for* Together *magazine.*

Dr. Perugu Ramakrishna: **How did you become a writer/poet? What was your inspiration?**

Vinitha Agarwal: I wanted to be a writer. The evidence was everywhere: in the journal I had been writing in since my teenage years, the half-finished short story on my laptop, the blog idea I'd talked about for years but never started. I felt a disconnect, a sense that the part of me that was most me—the observer, the wordsmith, the storyteller—was being systematically silenced by the daily grind.

The emotion was a cocktail: 75% restlessness, 20% doubt, and a mere 5% flicker of hope that I tried desperately to protect from the downpour of "be realistic." The initial inspiration was the beautiful poetry I was reading by Jayanta Mahapatra and Kamala Das.

Which genre of literature do you like the most? Why?

Definitely poetry—because it says so much using very few words.

Are you a bilingual writer/poet? In which language do you feel more comfortable writing?

I write only in English. My education was such that I have literary command in English.

How many books have been published so far? What is the soul of your writing?

Six collections of poems so far and four anthologies. The soul of my writing is the hope that my writing might make a difference to someone's life. I have also co-edited five volumes of the Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English.

What is poetry to you? Please provide your own definition.

Poetry is a well-crafted art that uses the tool of language to create deepest meanings from life's experiences.

What are the current trends in Indian English literature, as per your view?

These days people are not afraid to bare all through poetry. Poetry today is bold but extraordinarily sensitive. There is a raw authenticity in contemporary Indian English poetry that connects deeply with readers.

Please tell us about the awards you have received.

Jayanta Mahapatra National Award for English Literature 2025, Tagore Literary Award 2018, Gayatri GaMarsh Award for Literary Excellence 2015.

Tell us about your association with Buddhism and the Dalai Lama.

I've had a deep association with Mahayana Buddhism through various books and kind Lamas. I regard myself as very fortunate to have received the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on more than one occasion. He is incredibly kind-hearted and compassionate.

Please recite a few of your favourite lines from your poems.

What is thirst, but love's sharpest metaphor.
What is a plant's thought,
if not light itself—
undivided, unafraid,
a quiet so deep
it hums with joy?
It is a gentle shape
this white moon
my father gave me
the night he passed away.

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

Together English Monthly Magazine
Licensed to Post Without Prepayment | **License No:** PMG/BG/WPP-217/2025–2027
Registration No: RNP/KA/BGS/2082/2025–2027 | **RNI No:** KARENG/2006/19274
Published and posted on the 30th of every month at BENGALURU/PSO/BENGALURU-560026. No. of pages 44

ಇಂಡಿಯನ್ ಇನ್ಸ್ಟಿಟ್ಯೂಟ್ ಆಫ್ ಸೈಕಾಲಜಿ ಅಂಡ್ ರಿಸರ್ಚ್ (ಐಐಪಿಆರ್)

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH (IIPR)

Affiliated to Bengaluru City University & Approved by Government of Karnataka
A unit of Sarvodaya Seva Sangha ®

NAAC Accredited With 'B+' (1st Cycle)

ADMISSIONS OPEN 2025-2026

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

B.A. Degree (Triple Major)

1. Psychology, Journalism, Women Studies (PJW)
2. Psychology, Journalism, Optional English (PJO)
3. Psychology, Marketing, Economics (PME)
4. Psychology, Journalism, Marketing (PJM)

B.Sc. Degree (Triple Major)

1. Psychology, Economics, Computer Science (PEC)
2. Psychology, Journalism, Computer Science (PJC)

POST GRADUATE COURSES

M.Sc. Degree

1. M.Sc. Psychology
2. M.Sc. Counselling Psychology

MSW Degree

1. Master of Social Work

Post Graduate Diploma

1. Post Graduate Diploma in Psychological Counselling (PGDPC)

SHORT TERM CERTIFICATE COURSES

1. Basic Counselling Skills
2. Art Therapy
3. Learning Disability
4. Personal Excellence Program
5. Applied Behavioural Analysis

St. Anthony's Friary,
#85, Hosur Road
(Near Madiwala Check Post)
Bangalore- 560095

: office.admissions@iipr.in
: 080 41217484 / 41307111
: +91 7022619130
: www.iipr.in

Scan QR Code to Visit:

Apply