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# together

a national family magazine

ART  
MAKES  
WORLDS  
MEET

KOCHI  
MUZIRIS  
BIENNALE  
IN FOCUS



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

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

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

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

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# CONTENTS

February 2023 | Volume 17 Issue 02



- 04** Editorial: Talkablity Is the Key SAJI P MATHEW OFM
- 06** Cover Story: Kochi-Muziris Biennale SUMIT DASGUPTA, SHREEJA MANDAL
- 14** Cover Story: The Politics of Art KAPIL ARAMBAM
- 17** One Nation, One Ruler MICHAEL ANAND OFM
- 20** Bharat Jodo Yatra: A Gentle Resistance GERRY LOBO OFM
- 23** Yatraw... Beyond Politics JAMESMON PC OFM
- 24** The Dark Side of Influential Female Power VANHMINGLIANI HNAME
- 26** Toxic Positivity Denies Us Our Emotions Dr AKEELA P
- 31** Prophetic Truth RICHARD ROHR OFM
- 34** Mimetic Desire MONICA FERNANDES

Cover image from an artwork by Joydeb Roaja

#### Tribute



**28**

Swamy  
Dayanand  
OFM  
1950–2023

SAJI P MATHEW

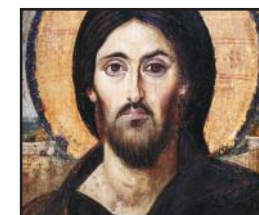
#### Short Story



**36**

A Homecoming  
A FRANCIS OFM

#### Art



**38**

Christian Art and  
Iconography

SHAIJU MATHEW  
MEPPURATH OIC

#### Cinema



**40**

International Horror  
Movies (Not for the  
Faint of Heart)  
SUSANNA VAS



# Talkability Is the Key

**Though art is endlessly changing, its ability to make worlds meet is constant: the worlds of the artist and the art consumers break into conversation, the subjects in a piece of art and the audience pause to converse.**

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

Initiating conversations is perhaps the greatest modern virtue. Our world, in this era of alternative facts, propaganda, thought control, and post-truth, is more polarised and divided than ever before. Most are stuck in their own petite filter bubbles and echo chambers. We are diametrically opposed to each other on virtually every issue that matters - climate, citizenship, refugees, racism, caste, gender - you name it. Exclusive black and white, left and right, for and against is the new mantra for political success. The rest of the population, in between the poles, is ignorantly comfortable and indifferent. To be in a state of being talkable, or people to be in a position to converse is made tougher by people getting offended by the slightest of disapproval. Of course, the time when only a tiny group in society was allowed to get offended, and the rest had to just keep working and keep going quietly is far gone.

## Art Questions Silence

Art is an expansive concept. The permanent possibility of change, expansion and novelty makes art what it is; it gives art its distinguished place in the world. Though art is endlessly changing, its ability to make worlds meet is constant: the worlds of the artist and the art consumers break into conversation, the subjects in a piece of art and the audience pause to converse. Art has the potency to initiate conversations. Even Dadaism, which was an anti-art movement, where art was deliberately made meaningless, had a strong anti-war message to the post First World War world.

Art conveys powerful messages across the

linguistic and cultural barriers that so often divide us. There is no burden of convincing anyone with art, there is no pressure of winning an argument. Sometimes it is too much to ask people to stop, think, and act. There are times when it is a challenge to make people even to stop and think. But with art we can at least ask them to stop; because art is attractive.

Art dispassionately and nonviolently breaks the spiral of silence. It makes the silent and indifferent uncomfortable. Initiating conversations is the biggest service of art to humanity. Art avoids, though not always, chronological details and geographical particulars of an issue, thus making an issue less personal to anyone, and so makes issues talkable, without offence.

## This Biennale Speaks a Language of Resistance

As we enter the main venue of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23 we are welcomed by an upset and unwelcome Aboriginal Embassy, an installation by the noted Australian artist Richard Bell. Bell's installation is inspired by the first Aboriginal Tent Embassy pitched on the grounds of Australia's parliament house in 1972 by four young men demanding aboriginal land rights. The work here brings the visitors face to face with the aboriginals of Australia who are now aware of the exploitation and land grabbing of the past and present; and are beginning to resist. The reality is no better anywhere. The adivasis, the tribals, the indigenous, the aboriginals of every land are helpless when the powerful walk on to their land, and occupy it in the name of growth and development. Whose



growth and development would be an interesting question to explore. According to the UNHCR there are an approximate 103 million forcibly displaced people in the world, of which 36.5 million are children below 18 years of age.

The Aboriginal Embassy sets in the thrust of this biennale - to make people think, converse, and act for aboriginal and indigenous people's rights. Thus the curation seems to be deliberate in including a village swallowed by an ill-planned dam project, documentation of female genocide, Nepali women's quest for relevancy and visibility, disturbing images of manual scavenging, showing light on the importance of indigenous people, and the list goes on. The relegated and banished have found voice through art.

Above: The 'Aboriginal Embassy', by contemporary artist Richard Bell, is many things. To most Aboriginal people it is a symbol of resistance to the colonial power structure that still oppresses us while to some, it is an abhorrent aberration that upsets their master/servant paradigm. So what on earth are Blackfellas doing setting up an embassy within our own country? Internationally, the move was seen as a distress signal from the Aboriginal peoples on the land now known as Australia. Blackfellas' discontent with the policies of assimilation around the country demanded a line in the sand to be drawn ([www.richardbellart.com](http://www.richardbellart.com)).

The installation, 'Embassy', by Australian artist Richard Bell at the Kochi Muziris Biennale.



# KOCHI MUZIRIS BIENNALE IS A TEMPORARY UNIVERSITY

**The *Together* sat down with Bose Krishnamachari—founder member and President of Kochi Biennale Foundation and Biennale Director of international exhibition of contemporary art, Kochi-Muziris Biennale—to get to understand this year's theme and what it meant to him and the artists who are participating in the one-of-a-kind exhibition.**

SUMIT DASGUPTA and SHREEJA MANDAL

↑ **Covering Letter** is an immersive installation that uses the words from a historical letter written by Mahatma Gandhi to Adolf Hitler just weeks before the start of the World War II, projected onto a curtain of cascading fog.

French poet and novelist Théophile Gautier, popularised the idea of art for the sake of art by the 19th century and it was on everyone's lips. *Art for art's sake* stresses the idea that art should be pursued for its own sake, without regard to any morality, politics, or any other practical or utilitarian purpose. The phrase was later embraced by the Aestheticism movement in the late 19th century. The concept however has been the subject of criticism over the years, with some arguing that art should be used for the advancement of moral and political causes, while others have argued that art should be judged solely on aesthetic merits. As I flail my arms in the air trying to snatch words and put them in some semblance of order and present it to you, I am reminded of English poet and writer, John Ruskin who said that art is not a matter of taste, but a question of experiencing truth. No matter how you look at it, art is supposed to disturb the rich and comforted and comfort the disturbed and the destitute. I seem to resonate with Ruskin more than Gautier. In December 2022, the *Together* magazine visited Kochi-Muziris Biennale, one of India's biggest art festivals and exhibitions to understand this dichotomy that Gautier and Ruskin explored in their lifetime.

Art has the power to shape the way people think, feel and act. It can be used to tell stories, inspire and motivate, or even campaign for social change. Art can bring people together and can also be used to highlight issues of injustice and oppression. By investigating the art of a particular society, we can learn more about its beliefs, values, and ways of life. Art can be a powerful tool for creating positive change in society and its importance should never be underestimated. Art takes many



Bose is the founder member and President of Kochi Biennale Foundation, and Biennale Director of international exhibition of contemporary art, Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

forms, from painting and sculpture to music, literature, and cinema. It can be used to educate, entertain and inform, as well as to challenge existing social norms and reflect the values of a society. No matter what form

it takes, art has the potential to bring people together and create an impact that is meaningful and long-lasting.

This year's Biennale theme was *In Our Veins Flow Ink and Fire*. Shubigi Roy, a Singapore-based Indian-origin curator in her curatorial statement focussed on the idea of optimism and collective work. The enormous amount of effort that it takes for hundreds of people to come together and make Kochi-Muziris Biennale an operational success is not easy, especially after the life-threatening hangover of the Pandemic. Rao described working on the Biennale as one of the hardest things she has done to date. Rao has also pointed out that while there is happiness in putting effort and work even when resources are scarce it could have been worse if she did not have a strong support system. Everyone involved in the making of this year's Biennale understands the trials and tribulations it had to go through. But, the political economy of art and the logistical nightmare of organising something as massive as this aside, the *Together* interacted with Bose Krishnamachari, president and Biennale director to get to understand this year's Biennale. Krishnamachari is an unassuming man, busy with the work he has taken up and the position he holds he did not let the humid sun get him down. With a colourful shirt, jaunty walk, and keen pair of eyes accompanied by his queer pair of glasses he was kind enough to give us his time and have a moment with us.

**Q: How do you see this year's Kochi Biennale unfolding for you? The exhibition opened post-pandemic, what are your expectations with it and how has it turned out so far?**

A: Post-pandemic it wasn't so easy. Deciding to formally open Biennale on 12 Dec was special to us. It symbolised prosperity, collective action, growth, and progress but at every level, we were playing catch up. Space came to us late; lack of communication threw us for a loop and installations were not ready on time. But we did not give up and were open to the public on 23 Dec. Biennale to us is important, it is for many a source of joy and livelihood and we decided that we were not going to bend to the wills of the universe and we will sail through. Lots of people do not know that Biennale is a two-year process. Looking back, I remember the difficulties we faced when we started. 'Who are these two people coming from Mumbai? Why do it in Kerala? What is the point of all this?' But I am a Keralite, and I never wanted to do this anywhere else. After all these years we could achieve and erase the borders of elitism and bring people to this site of learning in spite of a pandemic. This is our success.

Shubigi was appointed in 2019 but the pandemic held us back for so long. Now that we are here, it feels good. Contemporary art is essential to life and living. We believe that art is not just regional or national but transnational.

It is a matter of pride that despite the initial hurdles it has attracted so many people. It's a temporary university, it is a site for learning and exploring. You can call it a laboratory and it's a process-oriented space. This site cannot be replicated anywhere in the world. I see whenever we travel to other parts of the world, we see people who go to a museum or collectors, curators, or institutional people but here in Kochi what you see is all kinds and levels of people. From a common man to educational institutions and who is who from around the world.

The location also plays an important role. This is the oldest cosmopolitan city. Muziris was one of the oldest cities that vanished in 1341. When I was in college, I always wondered about getting an opportunity to interact with contemporary art. I think that's why this year, Student's Biennale has turned out fantastic. We used to hear about all great minds and practitioners around the world but now in our own backyard, you can experience all the greatest living artists' practice. It's not just about paintings but also sculptures, new media, photography, audio-visual experiences, science used by artists and so much more. This space has grown organically and that's why I feel it keeps meeting my expectations because this is something we have done with sheer willpower and support from people.

**Q: The press has talked about this year's Biennale with quite the coverage and depth. The curator's note is also available with press kits. However, how do you see or understand the theme?**

A: For them (artists), of course, the conversation is ever-evolving and it happens to them, with them. It changes I suppose as it is the nature of things to change. For me, Biennale has been and always will be an optimistic approach to truth. You can't avoid it. However, you can see it is full of possibilities and learn from them. This year's theme is in a nutshell, can be seen as a moody, volatile, optimist, and transgressive with the potential to hurt and heal. In the face of dire situations, we live and breathe art that transforms each time a new pair of eyes is set on them. We create as a community and strengthen the voices of those who may have gone unheard.

Personally, from the point of view of work, I like creating with professionals. We would like to nurture young talents, whether be it in production or writing. We like engaging with new faces from India and other parts of the world if possible, but that kind of openness and inclusivity is difficult to cultivate. When we look at it, most of the mediators and people working in this organisation are students who graduated from marketing or science

(Below)

Since 2016, Devi Seetharam has been preoccupied with formations of heterosexual male-bonding in social spaces, and the extend to which performed masculinities further the entrenchment of patriarchy in Kerala. Over the years she has amassed a photographic archive of men among men in public spaces—from sites of religious worship to political rallies—clad in the traditional mundu (dhoti), white fabric lined with gold and wrapped around he waist. In her paintings she plays with the formations she finds in her own photographs, exerting agency over social gatherings to which women rarely have access.

While her treatment of this social phenomenon creates a sense of timelessness, by removing any markers that might give clues regarding place or time, her works acquire the tenor of a call for change. Seasons come and go, but the men are still occupying public spaces non-inclusively, rehearsing the learned choreographies of masculinity entwined in the warp and weft of the mundu, and reinforcing them unquestionably with motions that flick, twist and tuck in the ends of the garment.

(Words and Image from Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23)







(Above)

Since Shortly after Vasudevan Akkitham was invited to participate in the Kochi-Muziris Beinnale 2022/23, lockdowns to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic came into place. The 365 small watercolors of 'Almanac of a Lost Year' (2020-21) were made to mark each day of the year that followed. Like a diary entry, or an exercise, Akkitham would paint a thought or an image that crossed his mind each day and in a single sitting. Painting became a means to reflect on the world outside that he suddenly had no access to, a place where views and visions, dreams and news converged to produce new realities and fictions.

Absences, both apparent and absurd, populate the world Akkitham records. A crow sits on a broken branch, a man on a ladder fixes a chandelier, and a candle burns on a table with no people and no chairs. In these tender, mystical watercolours, Akkitham combines the social and political with a deeply personal autobiographical with a deeply personal autobiographical impulse. There is no way to differentiate the past from the present. Spread across a wall, they offer new connections and meanings across times and conditions.

(Words and Image from Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23)

backgrounds or institutions. For me, some of them turned out to be the best, because art can come from anywhere. That is the beauty of it. These students get so many opportunities once they start working here with the locals and start

focusing on their issues and acknowledging the intersectional nature of things. We live and thrive only in a community. Initially, we had great issues regarding unloading materials coming from outside. We had to wait for days and the artists and we had anxious nights. It was horrible, but once things started rolling, they (artists and Biennale members) became good friends with labourers and other craftspeople. The place was developed together. Everyone is part of the system.

Personally, I'm an optimist and I believe that with people's help, we can make this world a better place and a space for all. This process as an artist and why this organisation is different from any other organisation in the world is because it is ideated, run, and curated by artists. An artist who knows that and is empathetic towards changes that happen around them, they know the process, materiality, site, and even the weather of it. When you think about creating something, space is one of the most important things. So that creative optimism comes out naturally because the artists want to bring their work out for the people and that shows, in our theme and their work. If you believe in something, then it is possible to do it.

**Q: The focus on art and the surrounding discussions regarding politics and accessibility, how do you see this exhibition?**

**What makes it inclusive? Also, we noticed that even in your attire there's obvious queerness. It stands out and screams at visitors to notice them. What are your thoughts on that?**

A: Yes, it is kind of a receiver's end. When I look at it, the Kochi Biennale is at the receiver's end, what we receive is a multilingual and multicultural secular space, we would like to have a secular space and that is one of our main agendas. The diversity you see in my glasses and chappals is what I believe that extremities coexist. Understanding clarity and ambivalence is very important to develop your career as well as to understanding the complex spaces of a site for contemporary art. Contemporary art practices are also really fast growing, faster than light I would say. We see the surprises in the projects because they're unpredictable. This is also important because if it's predictable it's not going to be fun.

I was reading a report that was published some time ago that said 37.5 million Euros were spent on an exhibition. It takes place every five years and, in this edition, they've spent around 40 million Euros. And we've spent about just a quarter of that budget but the effect is the same, where people see it and talk about it. I don't want to compare but the economic comparison is an important aspect and the fact that the space itself is so accessible to people makes all the difference.

**Q: The idea when it comes to consumption of art whether it is by the artist or by the people or by the everyday people, how do you hope that they understand not only the theme but every single instillation that's here because it is art that is accessible and inaccessible art are completely different beasts altogether. Do you hope for an abstract or something that is just understood by everybody, where do you stand?**

A: First of all, you've to create a space for it and that's what we've done.

Like when you are born abroad, you're surrounded by museums, when you go to a gallery or a museum you see children sitting in front of Picasso, and Pollock and they talk about art. In Biennale you're allowed to receive and pluck this from the site. There are anecdotes where somebody can come and see the Biennale with a family of four and a media person asks what you think about it. The family's woman, the head, says it's completely crazy and mad, but we're coming for the third time. For me, that is valuable.

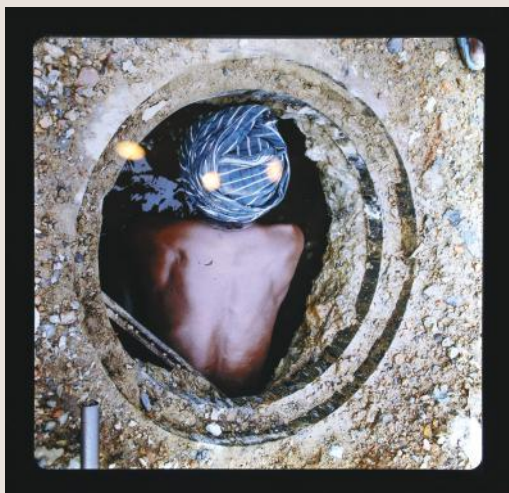
The process of seeing this and giving opportunities for the younger and older generation where you create a conversation space between the old and new and the void spaces. And that is what we've done. As I mentioned earlier, it's a temporary university for learning. I know many people whom I met a decade ago who still remember me saying that the art they were exposed to changed their lives.





**‘Bhumi’** is a community art project initiated during the Covid-19 lockdown in northwestern Bangladesh in the village of Balia in Thakurgaon by Gidree Bawlee Foundation of Arts with support from the Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation. The project brought together craftspersons from four villages to collaborate with artists Kamruzzaman Shadhin in the creation of several installations exploring local material, traditional crafts and agricultural practices, and their inherent connection to the communities. Expanding on the concepts of connectivity that the word Bhumi (Earth) entails, the project tried to create an ecosystem of solidarity and connectedness through collective creative efforts during a time where we all felt uncertain and distant.

(Words and Image from Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23)



This simulation of a manhole built into the floor of the exhibition hall with manual scavenger disappearing into it is from Palani Kumar's 'Out of Breath'.

The **Together** magazine would like to express its gratitude to the organisers of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23.



## THE PUBLIC LIFE OF WOMEN

### A feminist memory project

To become public is to be seen and accounted for in history. The journey of Nepali women from within the boundaries of domesticity to the openness of public life is a move from obscurity to memory...

### Words of Women

The tyrants of our past treated the culture of literacy and learning, reading and writing, as dangerous. For the written word works remotely and independently, and they can travel even into the most secretly guarded chamber. The rise of print culture and the struggle for democracy in Nepal are therefore deeply intertwined. For women, too, participating in progress and democracy meant in the first place being literate, having opinions, and becoming part of the world of letters.

(Words and Image from Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23)

These people come from all sorts of economic strata. Some are generous to us and some shower us with kind words and all are equally welcome. I have seen people grow up and fondly remember Biennale and I've seen them transform in a way as well. Some of them come and work here, the locals of Kochi included and that's what I like.

**Q:** There are these new-fangled AI-generated art apps, which replicate the styles of well-known artists. Do you see that as a bane to the process of art? It seems to us it has handicapped people who receive and consume art, think that the process of making artwork can be boiled down to just a few seconds where you put an art piece through a generator and a piece pops out.

**A:** From a capitalist point of view, things are transforming into something else, you shouldn't be worried about it and keep working with whatever medium you're working with. I do remember a statement made by a painter in the early 1800s when photography was invented and a French artist said that the painting is dead now. But paintings are never dead or when they invented the internet, communication was going to perish. Now AR and AI-generated art is all a part of contemporary times. Some fade away. Some remain. For example, cubism, expressionism, and conceptualism, all of these developed and still remain. The new thinking, the artists talk about materiality and sciences. Those things are also coming together for creative laboratory spaces, where you make foundries for creating art. We work with what comes to us. Some people call it synthetic art or plastic art which is wrong. You find different kinds of creating art and it is always going to be subjective. I'm not diluting such stuff but you see art is not magic, art can surprise people when they least expect it, and the language of consumption moves with time. Understanding time, taking time, and making time, that is more important.

**Q:** Finally, before we go, in three words how will you describe this year's Biennale 2022/23 and what future trajectories do you have for the future?

**A:** This Biennale has been incredible, curious, and volatile. And when it comes to the future, it is the young minds and collaborative organisational structures that will keep giving Biennale a new form of life.

# The Politics of Art

Art for art's sake—much more than a cliché—is a misconception. We construct and understand reality through a seamless blend of arts and politics.

KAPIL ARAMBAM

A subjective statement, like that on art—on its own ground would be lacking reason; but then, we can get hold of the nuances on certain occasions—for instance, when we listen to music for music's sake or perform for performance's sake. The problem is in the deficiency of meaning. Reasons are too insufficient to tell us about ourselves. And we are never logical and always live in chaos. We can arrange the narratives through a creative process.

Again, it might sound like a contradiction that an element of this generalised term of art originated when humans found leisure time and started experimenting with evolutionary-cognitive-and-whatever-growth skills. It was seemingly for its own sake and existed in an apolitical setting. Now it has grown to such an extent that it can be sold and bought at a price. According to Pune-based Fortune Business Insights, 'The global wall art market size was valued at \$46.33 billion in 2020. The market is projected to grow from \$48.50 billion in 2021 to \$72.61 billion by 2028, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9% during the forecast period.'

However there is a catch here. Even from the earliest chronology, it tells the politics of a time when life was all but recorded in the rawest form. We have now come a long way from those troglodyte days. We don't only recreate but let the processes place a mirror in front of us.

Art exists as a part of life, entertaining as

much as provoking us. And the understanding does a somersault when we talk about it location-wise. For instance, its space in a Manipuri life might be entirely different from how it prevails in a city like New Delhi. The apparent hollowness, in its incompleteness of purpose, strikes out when we state that it is a means and an end in itself. In such situations, art does not exist for its own sake.

Politicalisation always invites derision and cynical feedback, which is even harsher in a small backward region like in my hometown, Imphal. The problem is in us: We speak and hear more than we do. It will be unsurprising when anybody accuses us of applying naharolese (that is the expression with the vocabulary of those in the armed rebellion, locally known as the nongmei-paiba naharol or loosely, 'armed youth'). more That would be missing the woods for the trees though that's the thumb rule of the Manipuri mentality. For clarity, we have only one word; we have no gun. This is so obvious. And this, hopefully, makes sense.

The same kind of misunderstanding will crop up if we find all the people are sharing the same view. It's not necessary, for all the people with individualised dreams and aspirations, to perceive from a single angle and understand the whole from just one perspective. It is not simply possible to maintain uniformity when there are differences from the consciousness of the term itself. *In the A Man Without Country*, Kurt Vonnegut, puts it succinctly:



*If you want to really hurt you parents (sic), and you don't have the nerve to be happy, the least you can do is go into the arts. I'm not kidding. The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.*

**KURT VONNEGUT**

If we come back to the point, we can see more reasons why the apolitical groups stand on such a shaky foundation. All along the best we can do is to be a burden on each other physically, socially, politically and economically. This also shows accidentally that art cannot be independent of the boring daily life or even the most happening existence equally. Art imitates life and vice versa.

Another point. Just for the sake of clarity, take the example of some of the American and European countries' craze for extreme sports. The most pathetic sporting events have meanings because that is what they can do when

(LEFT)

Joydeb Roaja belongs to the Tripuri community, one of 11 indigenous tribes living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh collectively, called the Jumma people.

Roaja's work emerges from his experiences as a child, when an armed struggle took place, led by indigenous people who demanded poetical sovereignty for the Jummas and fought for their rights to life and land. In 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed between the local Indigenous peoples and the government. Over the years the agreement has not been honored, and the military occupation of the hills carried on. People have continued to lose their land, culture and dignity. Roaja's drawings, paintings, installations and performances emerge from the loss, anxiety and violence the Jumma have been subjected to over the decades.

The series 'Go Back to Roots' (2021–22) depicts the Jumma people's associations with each other, their culture, practices and the land and forests. It stands as a document of resistance in the face of military oppression and government sanctioned erasure. Here we see women at work, carrying a harvest on their hands and silhouettes of people in adoration. The future, in Roaja's works, comes from the people's resilience and will to hold onto their histories and roots.

(Words and image from Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022/23)

they have nowhere else to spend the time and they can afford to do. The implication is that it will change meaning if we do it in our prevailing condition.

It will be playing dumb if art is interpreted for its own sake. Unfortunately we only love to play dumb because that's the sign of a gentleman, that's the sign of a lady—to be politically correct all over the place, all the time. When there is fire, our thoughts will be on the fire. When there is a flood, our thoughts will be on the flood. This is just a natural order, yet we have broken the chain in the garb of being global and liberal; alternatively, in seeing art independent of the surroundings. When abnormality prevails, we get a society like ours, where the leaders loot in some sort of a daylight robbery, the gunmen are always trigger happy, the society is ready to fuck us up all the time and us, we are just expressionless as if everything is alright.



*'The problem is not to make political films, but to make films politically.'*

JEAN-LUC GODARD

And when there are chaos galore, what should be the best way to realise the truth? Existing art forms and styles are full of promises. In Picasso's words, 'Art is the lie that enables us to realise the truth.' This also explains why pop art is literally called pop, as in popular. So if we are speaking for speaking's sake, however, we need words no more, for any sound or silence would mean the same thing.

Even at the cost of becoming a pamphlet or promoting sloganeering, this written piece is a testimony to the easiness of relating art and politics. Creativity can solve a whole lot of issues dogging us today, while we remain aware of our own story, both the history and the 'contemporary'. Besides it would be too lame to be apolitical that will only show our naiveté;

**Existing art forms and styles are full of promises. In Picasso's words, 'Art is the lie that enables us to realise the truth.'**

and ironically, that has always been the case. Pride is overt when we say we hate politics though, as we have seen earlier, it

is a profound political statement though there is no realisation—it is no surprise in a corner of the world like ours where both the State and non-state actors have their own areas of power and influence.

We never realise why other people, especially the youth, and other societies can lead an impressive collective life on one hand. We unite, on the other, only when there is violence and agitation. It's a tragedy that only blood is the unifying force. Nonetheless art has a role in both construction and devastation. We can say objectively now: art is realistic and demands the impossible. The aesthetics can be overwhelming at times. So it is not only about the beauty but also the functionality—though not necessarily for functionality's sake.



## One Nation, One Ruler

**Multiple reports suggest that since 2010, approximately 800 sedition cases have been filed in India against more than 13,000 people.**

MICHAEL ANAND OFM

**'R**affle, Demonetization, PMLA, Central Vista, all judicial verdicts are in favour of government by Supreme Court. These judges were appointed through collegium system. What more does Rijiju want?' tweeted Mr Kapil Sibal, one of the senior most advocates of the Supreme Court and a senior parliamentarian, in his recent comment on the Union Government's demand on the Supreme Court collegium. This statement says it all about the current political scenario of our country and its impact on the Indian democracy. It seems to be a mere sham to teach the children that our Indian democracy consists of three pillars (Legislative, Judiciary and Executive) as envisaged by the Indian Constitution. It is disheartening to note that our country is almost leaning towards the popular ideology of the ruling party 'One Nation, One Ruler', and that 'One Ruler' will be none but the one and only the majoritarianism. The monarchical and majoritarian mentalities of the present legislators of the ruling party out rightly push forward to make the pillars of democracy toothless and redundant.



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### **The Fourth Pillar**

The freedom of press, the so called ‘fourth pillar of democracy’, is also questionable as most of the leading Indian Television channels and the print media is controlled by the same majoritarian rulers. Just a few days ago Justice K. M. Joseph, the judge of Supreme Court questioned the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) about their unbiased action against the television anchors who express biased views on the air. He said anchors sometimes shut down people from expressing their views. In many of these TV programmes, you don’t allow people to talk on an equal basis. You don’t want the participants to express their views, you will either mute them, or allow the other person to go on the whole time unchallenged, he said adding ‘so the point is it is not the right of the broadcaster or the views of the panelist. It is the right of the persons who are viewing it’ (as reported in The Indian Express, 14 January, 2023).

### **Freedom of Speech**

The freedom of speech is also under the attack in the name of sedition charges. The recent order of the Supreme Court of India on 11 May, 2022, in S.G. Vombatkere vs Union of India has been monumental for the future of dissent in the country. The order has been passed in a bunch of petitions filed challenging the Constitutionality of the provision of Section 124A on sedition under the Indian Penal Code 1860 (IPC). During the hearings in the matter, the Union of India, in its affidavit, averred that it had decided to reexamine and reconsider the provisions on sedition under the IPC. It was further submitted by the Union of India that the Supreme Court may examine the constitutional validity of the law on sedition once the exercise of reconsideration has been undertaken by the government. Accordingly, the Court deemed it inappropriate to use the provisions on sedition till the reexamination by the Union of India is complete. Additionally, the Court recommended

that the governments should restrain from registering any FIR, or undertaking any coercive measure in sedition cases till the matter is under consideration. The Court also ordered that all pending proceedings concerning sedition would be kept in abeyance. Multiple reports suggest that since 2010, approximately 800 sedition cases have been filed in India against more than 13,000 people. The National Crime Records Bureau’s report ‘Crime in India 2020’ states that there have been 70, 93, and 73 cases of sedition in 2018, 2019, and 2020 respectively.

### **Union Government Vs the Independency of Judiciary**

The Supreme Court and the Union government are at odds over how judges should be appointed in the higher judiciary. In the recent weeks, the government has reiterated the need for a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), prompting the apex court to defend the present Collegium system. Union Minister for Law and Justice Kiren Rijiju reignited the debate in the beginning of November when he commented that the Collegium system of appointment was ‘opaque’ and needed to be reconsidered. He also made a statement saying that the judges are wasting most of their time in petty cases and in appointing judges. Later, two days after Rijiju’s statement in Parliament pointing to the high pendency of cases, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said, ‘It is in the seemingly small and routine matters involving grievances of citizens that issues of the moment, both in jurisprudential and constitutional terms, emerge.’

As of now the collegium system has been traditionally followed in India for the appointment of the judges in the High Courts and the Supreme Court, though this system is not based on Constitution. Under this system, the Chief Justice of India along with four senior-most Supreme Court judges recommend appointments and transfers of judges. A High Court collegium, meanwhile,

is led by the incumbent Chief Justice and the two senior most judges of that court. In this system, the government’s role is limited to getting an inquiry conducted by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) if a lawyer is to be elevated as a judge in a High Court or the Supreme Court. The government can also raise objections and seek clarifications regarding the Collegium’s choices, but, if the Collegium reiterates the same names, the government is bound, under Constitution Bench judgments, to appoint them to the post. But if the Union government pushes through its agenda of taking total control in the appointment of judges, the independency of Indian judiciary will be at stake. As Mr. Shashi Tharoor expressed on this issue, ‘We should do everything possible to preserve the independence of the judiciary from the executive. Subordinating the judiciary to executive control would be to compromise its independence at the very moment of appointment.’

### **Governors Vs the State Governments**

The recent incident of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Mr RN Ravi, walking out of the Assembly hall, while the Chief Minister of the State was delivering his talk, his unprecedented involvement in the administration of the State, his unnecessary remarks on the Dravidian Model of rule and the state legislators raising slogans against him, was keenly observed by the entire nation. This is one example of many of the Governors of the States, particularly in the non-BJP ruled States like Kerala, West Bengal, etc., trying to push forward the agenda of the Union government or the ideology of the majoritarian political party indirectly in the local governance.

### **Union Vs the State Governments**

Though, India is not a true federal government because it combines features of a federal government and the features of unitary government which can also be called as a

quasi-federal government. A federal government is a system of government that separates the power between union government and state government of the country. It delegates certain responsibilities to each sector so that the central government has its own task to do and state government has its own. Article 1 of Indian constitution describes India as a ‘Union of States.’ This means India is a union comprising of various states which are an integral part of it. The 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India provides a clear list of Union, State and the Concurrent power of various system of country to enact laws. If the Union government tries to interfere in every aspect of the State governments, the federal nature our Indian Constitution will be at stake.

We can go on enumerating various issues, such as, the introduction of controversial Anti-Conversion laws, through which the agenda of ‘One Nation, One Religion’ is propagated, the aim to reform the electoral laws, through which the agenda of ‘One Nation, One Election’ is aimed at, the imposition of the two-language formula (Hindi and English), through which the agenda of ‘One Nation, One Language’ notion is pushed forward and so on. The beauty of our nation lies in the multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, secular, socialist and democratic realities. The people of our country should never give way to one particular ideology to dominate the entire nation that would pave way for the natural death of democracy. It is time for every citizen of India to ask if the three pillars—legislature, executive and judiciary—under the Constitution have held their own, worked as BR Ambedkar and the other wise people of the Constituent Assembly would have wanted them to. Their intention was clear that they wanted the three pillars of Indian democracy to work cohesively, and at the same time they also wanted each of three wings to function independently, with a clearly defined separation of powers.





## BHARAT JODO YATRA A Gentle Resistance

Bereft of the antagonistic tendencies or any kind of violent strategies, the architects of the *Yatra* exercise a friendly approach to let everyone know that everyone matters for connecting India.

GERRY LOBO OFM

‘What a colossal waste! If only the money spent on this was given to the poor...!’ A very natural and spontaneous sentimental reaction, indeed, which a certain quarter of the citizens of this nation might air out at the One Hundred and Fifty day *Bharat Jodo Yatra* which is nearing its completion this month. Various political commentators, depending on their loyalty to parties they belong to and the news channels, depending on who is controlling their freedom and whose mouth-piece they are – have all their commentaries, interpretations and off-hand judgments on the ongoing event. The freedom of the press and the personal views which are freely voiced in public, whether exaggerated opinions, inimical barbs or encouraging support to the *Yatra* exercise, have invariably spot-lighted the event, allowing individuals and masses to think

and speak about it as one wishes. The march is on undeterred, undisturbed and well composed. Without any fear of any kind of opposition from any quarter and corner of this country, the crowd pulls on, determined to ‘talk the walk’ and ‘walk the talk’ with a message unwritten on the walls or flashed on the media. The *Yatra* is the message and the message is *Bharat Jodo*!

The *Yatra*, conceived and executed by the Indian National Congress party is not a novel concept. Mahatma Gandhi had performed it as a non-violent resistance civil disobedience movement against the salt tax imposed by the British government in India, led by a large group of people from Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March 1930 to Dandi, Gujarat. However, this *Yatra*, not being a civil disobedience movement, is a journey of five months covering a large part of India, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in

order to connect people of the country against the fragmentation caused by the political majoritarianism and divisive politics. Bereft of the antagonistic tendencies or any kind of violent strategies, the architects of the *Yatra* exercise a friendly approach to let everyone know that everyone matters for connecting India, and that joining hands will join hearts for a morrow when the ‘mind is without fear and the head is held high’ (Tagore). Hence the exercise is not playing politics towards electoral gain, even if the detractors will always have detraction. However, this is a definite measure to impact politics.

The citizens of this country have suffered through uncertainty politically, economically and socially under the majoritarian rule which has pushed its agenda into the system towards one nation, one religion goal, almost disregarding the secular fabric of her Constitution. The voices of the Opposition having brushed under the carpet, resolutions have been easily passed. A mid-way course has hardly been adopted in order to reach out to every citizen. The hasty midnight decision and implementation of GST, a stern over night demonetization proclamation, Citizens Amendment Act, caste and communal discrimination, dilution of the right to information, stifling of the judiciary by questioning its independence, spoiling the country’s economic health by selling the public wealth to the millionaire corporate,

hurting the farmers by inordinate laws, dividing the citizenry by religious categorization and excluding the marginalized and the ‘hatred hurting our country’(R Gandhi) – all these have provided a significant occasion for the *Bharat Jodo Yatra* at whose helm is Rahul Gandhi walking the highways and byways of this nation, free of any political mileage as rumored by those who feel the prick. In the words of the well known popular actor, Kamal Hassan, who also availed himself for the *Yatra* on the streets of New Delhi, the ‘idea of Bharat as a country that was stitched together by visionaries’ has hurt the citizens of this country and damaged her nerve. Hence, the ongoing *Yatra* is a ‘darning material to repair India’s gashes,’ as the editorial article of Kamal Hassan was titled (*The Hindu*, 26 December 2022).

A glimpse at the journey traversed in the three months of its commencement indicates that the leaders of the exercise have made no claims on anything spectacular, neither have they become antagonistic and inimical to anyone, even if at times prophetic words were pronounced without hiding facts to keep the nation informed on reality under their very nose. The friendly approach has gathered in masses whose sympathetic participation has beautified the event, making it their journey for a better country devoid of religious communalism and petty politics with the leaders whose initiative would hopefully provide solace and justice to ‘those who are sitting in darkness and in



the shadow of death.’ Enlightened economic luminaries such as the former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Raguram Rajan, well seasoned politicians across the political scenario, the youth and children, actors and sports personnel, realizing the *Yatra* a necessary instrument for the wellbeing of our nation, have shared the dream by their participation. The meetings at various street centers seemed a joyous festivity with hope brimming over the physic of the participants. For all that is, the *Yatra* is a ‘sacred resistance.’

The pessimistic skeptics from the majoritarian government, perhaps are raising eye brows, criticizing the *Yatra* in no kind terms and dumping the entire affair as an exercise in creating division among people or as a futile exercise only to disorient people. They would remark saying that it would have been beneficial for the Congress party to hold ‘Congress Jodo *Yatra*’ instead of *Bharat Jodo Yatra*. They may be right with this remark, considering the dis-harmony and rancor within the party, and eminent leaders deserting the party. It would truly be right if they first put their house in order before the *Yatra* being performed. On the other hand, however, it is also urgent to reveal the truth of the matter and to revitalize the sick organs of a honoured body and not to lie low with a failure mood, by taking upon oneself a long journey through the nation as a measure to impact politics as life of the people about which everyone need to play their responsible role. It is a fact that the opposing skeptics are jittery about the overwhelming response of the people to the *Yatra*. Years ago L K Advani’s *Rath Yatra* had created religious polarization in order to gain electoral profit, which it did. The religiously tainted saffron party might take credit for their success by downplaying the popularity that the *Bharat Jodo Yatra* has gained so far. In the long run, a diatribe hurled at the ongoing *Yatra* only makes it a unique event in the recent history of India. Those who oppose need to oppose or even ridicule the massive event taking place on its very city streets. However, what the managers of this *Yatra* have planned meticulously, executed perfectly and what they hope to arrive at their

hoped for goal will not perish because of their sarcasm. With their tired knees and fatigued body, not permitting any breakdown, the architects and organizers of the march, march on, because the citizens of this country are their agenda.

*Bharat Jodo Yatra* has embraced all religions on its long journey. The elections have not preoccupied the leaders because that was not on their agenda. The forthcoming elections might be influenced on account of this march or might not. The *Yatra* has not been an election campaign, at least on the outset. On the other hand, if this event has its influence on the elections, the electorate would be exercising their right more sensibly and intelligently. However, for the leaders of the *Yatra* the exercise remains a non-propaganda process. Instead, the *Yatra* is to bring together every citizen for the realization of an undivided family, marching together, for no one lives in isolation or in a state of fragmentation.

The frontline figure of the *Bharat Jodo Yatra* is Rahul Gandhi, a passionate, highly motivated and courageous leader. He is a ‘marathon man’ according to R. Sardesai. He does not equate this *Yatra* with *Dandi Yatra*, neither he poses himself as another Mahatma, even if an observer may be reminded of the Mahatma in Rahul. It was not to repeat Mahatma the marathon was organized but to be an ideological challenge to the Hindutva nerved government which has destabilized the normal going of citizens ever since it took over the helm of affairs. The *Yatra* was also organized in order to reawaken the Congress soul by enthusing the party workers who were lying low, inactive and dispirited. However, with Rahul being in the forefront of the show, the youth have found some passion in them, and the old have begun to rethink about their commitment to the party as well as to the nation. The *Yatra* may not change deep rooted perceptions people hold with regard to their religious allegiance. However, the *Yatra*, though a costly enterprise, can still recall citizens to their responsibility to hold together a nation ‘stitched together by visionaries.’

## Yatra... Beyond Politics

JAMESMON PC OFM

A walk is coming to an end and by the time this magazine reaches you it might reach its destiny. But this walk has captured the imagination and spirit of this country called India as never before. Rahul Gandhi has been walking the length and breadth of India. He began his walk on 7th September, 2022 in Kanyakumari and at the moment has reached Jammu and Kashmir. Looking at this walk beyond politics, one gets a gut feeling that it was and is the need of the hour. It is literally attempting to stitch (*jodo*) together a country that is being torn apart by a kind of hate and sectarian politics that is rising to very dangerous levels. Most feel that the situation in this country is quite volatile, and if you have doubts, look at the number of people joining the *Yatra*. This *Yatra* has at least helped to rekindle that spirit of unity, camaraderie and secularism that is being uprooted in recent years.

There has been a concerted effort from an organized media machinery to discredit and malign this person and attach a *pappu* tag to him and they have succeeded so far. And for people who educate and inform themselves through WhatsApp university or such mediocre agencies, Rahul is and remains a *pappu*! But for others, Rahul has been a man of great caliber, intelligence and a voracious reader, as people like Shashi Tharoor, an intellectual himself, would vouch for. Today the public opinion about him has changed to a great extent. But it is not because Rahul has changed but there is a marked perceptual transformation in the understanding of people about him.

Rahul was born with that proverbial silver spoon in his mouth but that has not affected him a bit, looking at his attitude and mannerisms today. He is very down to earth and bears the signs of a common man. Power play does

not sit easily on him. He carries the legacy of a mother who forsook, the post of the top job in this country, though it was very much within her reach. He has, with much ease and comfort, set aside many such posts in his political career. At the moment he is rising like Phoenix, even drawing admiration from his detractors.

Rahul is the man that India needs today, a balm for the wounded soul of India. His walk may look stupid to many. This may not bring great fortunes to himself, as he may not become the Top man, or his party. But he is walking into the minds and hearts of thousands of people. He is touching the souls of many, farmers and laborers, young and old, learned and learning, rich and poor, scholars and intellectuals, artists and activists and many more. He is reaching out to everyone, shaking hands, hugging them. There are people waiting hours even, just to wave a hand, just to get a look from him or a smile, even if they can’t walk with him. There are people on wheelchairs and crutches trying to reach out to this man. You see images of people bursting into tears even after a simple handshake.

India is a land of rich spiritual heritage and the world looks at it that way. There is a constant flow of foreigners to India, seeking spiritual enlightenment. India has given the world some of the greatest spiritual masters like Gautama Buddha, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda and the list is long (we are also accustomed to a new breed of fraud gurus, who are clever entrepreneurs, to say the least).

What Rahul does is inviting people back to their spiritual roots that consist of compassion, care and tolerance. He is at home with all kinds of people. He is able to eat with all and share their culture. It is soul work consisting of a soul-walk.



# The Dark Side of Influential Female Power

There is always a side B to side A we see at first. This, is where I believe we need to be careful and conscious.

VANHMINGLIANI HNAME

The ability of human beings to influence each other has always been a fascinating topic to me. One day, you see or meet another person, and you got very impressed by them that you resonate with their ideas and behaviour, amongst many other things. This is often a helpful strategy when you want someone to learn new things, such as teaching children how to use a spoon and a fork; or when you want to unlearn a habit, such as sleeping very late at night. Having the right kind of people can influence you to be better.

But we live in a world where there is always side B to the side A we see at first. To write this article, I was debating whether I should touch

more on the 'toxic femininity' part or not. It had dawned on me that the term 'toxic femininity' is not understood properly by most people. It is a novel term which became mainstream way after 2015. And yet, I bet most of us who use social media such as Twitter, Instagram etc. had come across this term at least once. The term seemed to point towards anti-feminism or such things. It mostly refers to a situation where females are 'forced' to conform to society's standards of women, such as being demure, not talking loudly, being passive, able to cook, sensitive, marriage-oriented etc. It is without a doubt, that society has certain expectations for males and females. Toxic Masculinity has been around for some time before we came across the term Toxic Femininity. Nevertheless, they are both harmful for the mental, emotional and perhaps even physical health of human beings. Society grooms us into our gender-specific roles and expectations since our birth, and those shape our view about the world and of ourselves.

It's said that, 'In a relationship the man becomes her strength and the woman becomes his weakness'. I find this to mean that they can help each other grow. Girls/Women (females) are known to have been socialized to be more ma-

tured, more responsible, more caring etc. This maybe done consciously or unconsciously. And this process of socialization makes us females emotionally stronger (on an average) than our male counterparts. This, is where I believe we need to be careful and conscious. Like Beyoncé sang, 'Who run the world? Girls.' We have the power to deeply influence our partners. Men tend to listen to the women they love, to the women they admire (whatever quality or values that may be, can be subjective, but nevertheless, they tend to follow what we preach).

In a relationship this dynamic can become fragile for either one. And when the woman isn't good at heart, when she is conniving and manipulative, when she tends to only think of herself first and the rest of the world don't matter if she gets what she wants; and on top of that, if she is backed up by the man who she has wrapped around her fingers, supporting and doing her biddings, all the while he thinks that's his choice and not because of her, other bonds are bound to be broken. The world can turn upside down for everyone involved.

The men in these cases seemed to think what they say or do come from within themselves. They don't know how calculative women can be. And that's when his downfall starts. This is particularly harmful for the men themselves. Again, this is because of our socialization process. He would become the laughing stock in so many ways: like being called a hen-pecked husband, or for being 'weak' for not having a mind of his own, or for finally having a breakdown for others to see. These kind of weaknesses are not

welcomed in society and the man will be looked down by others.

I feel this was seen between Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith and the slapping incident at the Oscars, which led to him being banned for the next ten years. He was one of the most cherished actors until then. And now, on a much larger scale we see it in Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. Prince Harry is accused of being under the spell of an American divorcee who apparently encouraged him to leave his family, duties and country. (We saw how Johnny Depp was blindly in love with Amber Heard, and again on a smaller scale, Brooklyn Beckham apparently has a strained relationship with the Beckhams after marrying Nicola Peltz). These women seemed to be adored by their men (who according to me are/were blindly infatuated). These women know how to work their men, and squeeze the juices out of them, leaving them dry and confused but making them believe they are in control, and every choices are made by them. This encourages the man to believe that the woman is a supportive and loving figure who validates his feelings. He feels that he has won in life. And his stupidity knows no bounds.

Women do have the power to run the world. We just need to be careful how we use our energy. Is it projected for a humane life? Is it utilized to make the world a better place? Is it just benefitting only us or also the others we come across? Let us ask ourselves whether we can truthfully answer these questions. We have the power, let's take it. We can make the world a better place when we all try.



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# Toxic Positivity Denies Us Our Emotions

Toxic positivity forces us to create a false perception of the event and deny the harsh emotions one feels; it is often a falsely created façade.

Dr AKEELA P

In a workshop on positive mindset, Participants were instructed to think only positively and see how it will change their destiny, a gentleman attending the workshop rose from his seat and questioned the facilitator if it's the ultimate truth. What if someone jump down from the roof and because being positive assure nothing would happen? The facilitator was so dumbstruck and left with no positive words to reply.

Social media and that relative uncle who sends every morning WhatsApp messages of good morning to feel positive, made us feel no lesser melancholic prior to reading the message. The ability to express and to reach out to large number of people have given people the power to preach, give advises on life and opine about how to increase positive vibes disregarding one's emotions, and gaslight the other if one does not feel the same vibes.

Whitney Goodman, in her book on toxic positivity, *Keeping It Real in a World Obsessed with Being Happy* defines toxic positivity as, 'Toxic positivity denies an emotion and forces us to suppress it. When we use toxic positivity, we are telling ourselves and others that this emotion shouldn't exist, it's wrong, and if we try just a little bit harder, we can eliminate it entirely.'

The above definition highlights the aspect of however ominous the situation is; people should maintain a positive outlook. Being optimistic or hopeful is good but undermines the human natural reaction when circumstance is going wrong in their favour. Toxic positivity forces us to create a false perception of the event and deny the harsh emotions one feels, it is often a falsely created façade.

Toxic positivity is habitually advised to



people during the phases of loss of someone dear, loss of a job, trying to diffuse when they are deliberately provoked, in the workplace when targets aren't met or when they don't get a raise in their salary, when their child is going through difficult times, post-relationship break-up, or during missed opportunities.

Human life experiences are dynamic and complex we all have painful emotions associated with negative events, however pushing under the carpet and having an extremely overgeneralized assumption that 'it was for better' or 'life will go on' will not help especially for those who are going through a tough time. As a third person it is easy to make these statements, however for the one who is experiencing it would feel that something is wrong with them as they are not feeling any positive but are feeling guilty and frustrated.

## Toxic Positivity Is a Defense Mechanism

It's used by people as a shield because they feel uneasy with grim emotions and they're dodging them at all costs. Toxic positivity doesn't feel correct because it's not coming from a place of acceptance and care: it's coming from a place of avoidance, anxiety, and fear.

Some examples of toxic positivity statements are 'All is well', 'Think positive', 'It is all in your head', 'Happiness is a choice', 'Look at the bright side', 'It could be worse'.

## Effects of Toxic Positivity

In a particular scene in the Japanese series -Fishbowl Wives, an astrologer says to the main character 'Your body knows, it doesn't lie'. This scene might be understood as when we feel an emotion our body experiences it in various body parts, we feel guilty, angry, we blush and feel let down; our stomach feels the uneasiness, there is an alteration in one's heart rate and breathing.

In emotional suppression, especially of those meta emotions, you feel two emotions at the same time, you feel bad for being bad, and you feel guilty for saying no. Emotional suppression can be linked to various problems with psycho-somatic symptoms; physiological problems occur due to an underlying psychological issue.

Feeling of humiliation tells people that the negative feelings are unacceptable and it is easy to shift to being positive and if they are not able to do so there is something wrong with them. When someone is grieving they need to process the loss and it's valid. Trying to contradict and think that they can be happy and about among family and friends may be problematic.

It affects relationships. With toxic positivity, we want to make someone feel better, but it doesn't typically have the desired effect; it shuts the other person up, says Kirkland. Using this as a defense mechanism to reverse the feeling that another human is feeling and confided in you makes them invalidated and brings in a sense of low self-esteem.

It can impact poor parenting styles. For instance, as a parent it is our habit to tell them that everything is fine, they need to control their emotions, they are okay, and stop crying, this

wrongly conditions them that their negative feelings aren't OK and can be hindering their ability to process, express and manage emotions and leads to poor development of emotional intelligence and emotional maturity.

Emotions can bring in gender stereotypes too. Saying things like, boys don't cry, and girls can't control emotions, men and women are different, and less is good. These erroneous socialisation constructs is linked to being gender stereotyped.

Relationships are tough, even between two people, conflict is natural. Over-emphasizing that relationships should be happy with no fights, one must stay with the partner though they mistreat them, share and feel only the best things, and avoiding the bad talk by wearing a mask can lead to façade and pretentious relationships.

## Better Coping Mechanisms with Toxic Positivity

Authentic contentment doesn't come from suppressing negative emotions and proclaiming feel-good statements, but rather accepting what we are feeling in its truest sense and not lying to ourselves, accept all emotions whether it is positive or negative. Be aware of what we are feeling in the present moment, observe changes in the body, and ask ourselves what triggered us, and are we reacting or responding to the situation.

Be emotionally intelligent is the key. Emotional intelligence has four main components intra-personal awareness, intra-personal management, inter-personal awareness, and inter-personal management. By developing intra-personal awareness, we can also be in tune and become aware of other people's emotions, which makes meaningful and supportive relationships.

Express oneself by admitting what one really goes through, like, I cannot think right now of feeling positive and tell others that all they have to do is to listen and not comment, acknowledge rather than making judgement on their emotions, could indeed make them feel better.



# Swamy Dayanand OFM

## 1950-2023

**He was the conscience keeper for his brothers in profession and for thousands who were in touch with him.**

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

### Swamy Dayanand Was Unapologetic

Swamy Dayanand was the first Franciscan I consciously met. It was 1991 and I was fifteen and half years old. Swamy had taken a *padayatra* to Rishikesh, at the foothills of the Himalayas and had returned. He made many journeys across India in search of himself and ways to follow his God in an authentically Indian way; in one of such journeys he walked into my house.

I, growing up in an uncomplicated and orthodox Christian family, had thought that everything was sorted and clear; had well defined and flawless religious and social practices; knew the meaning of the word 'perfection'; comprehended God, his colour and gender; and knew the well cutout path to Him. My family like any other families around there knew the well-defined mannerisms and dress codes a catholic priest must follow.

Swamy Dayanand walked in to my house. He was unapologetic about his long unkempt beard and hair; he was unapologetic about his torn, rugged, brown habit/gown, he was unapologetic about his sling bag and in it the Bible and a begging bowl, he was unapologetic about coming to a house uninformed and uninvited. With a couple of hours of his arrival, without speaking much, without arguing or oratory, he challenged my household's idea of God, idea of path to God, ideas of being a priest, and so on. Eventually I joined the Franciscans.

Thereafter I have seen and heard of Swamy Dayanand entering thousands of families unapologetically and challenging them to a more humane life. He has walked into our provincial policy making meetings and other important gathering and celebrations

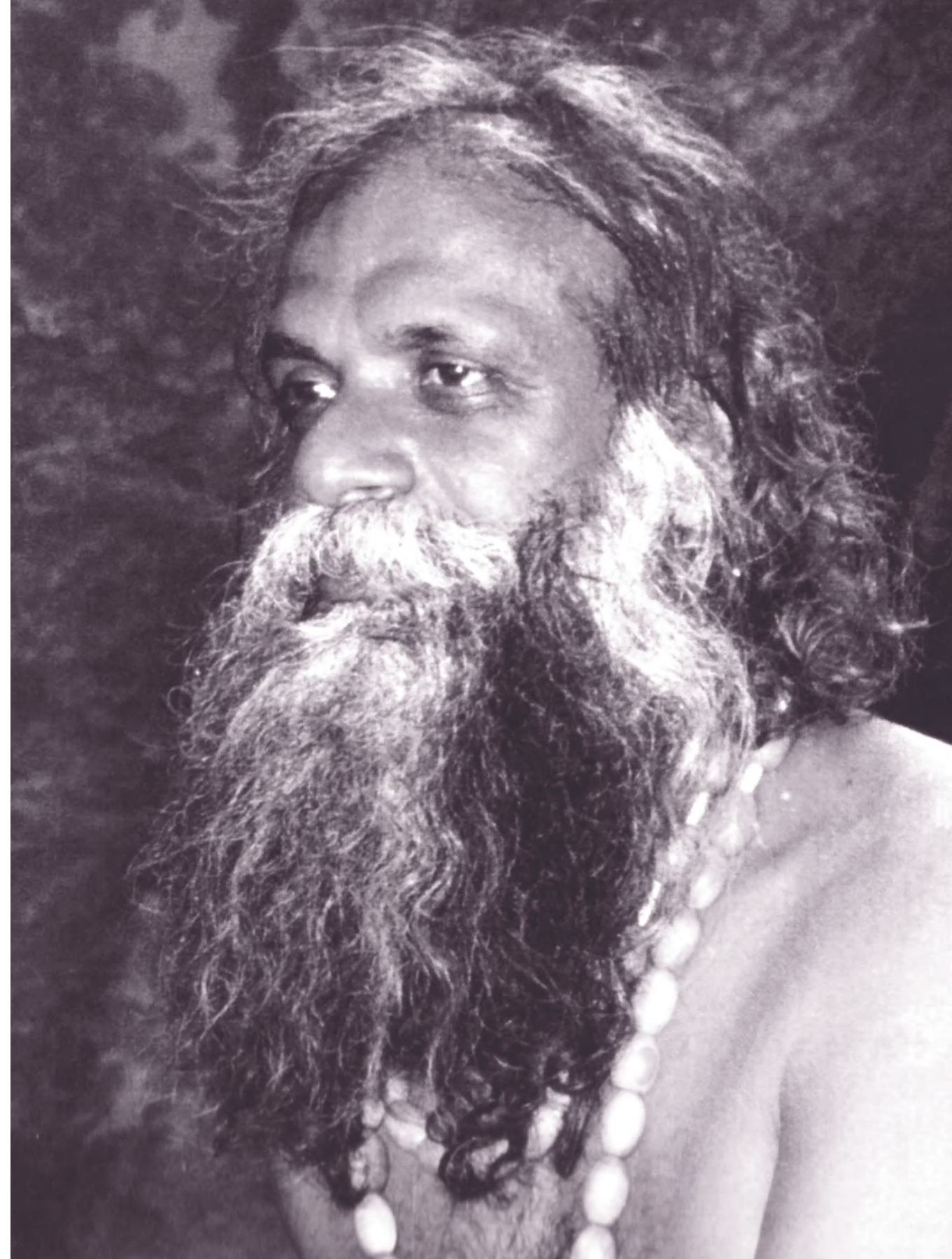
unapologetically with his rugged brown or saffron habit, and has challenged us every single time. He was a conscience keeper for us friars, and for thousands of families he visited in Bellary and elsewhere.

On 22 January 2023, when Swamy Dayanand breathed his last, we not only lost a brother, but a keeper of our conscience. He was a man of extraordinary intellect, integrity, and invincibility against the forces of hatred and division. He was tender and vulnerable in his compassion for those who suffer poverty and injustice.

### Swamy Dayanand Was an Embarrassment for Many

Swamy went around begging. He ate what he got day-to-day. He brought what he got through begging to the ashram in Bellary and distributed it to everyone there. He used to say that he begged to crush his ego. He wanted to consciously live by the providence of God. He used to fall at the feet of even a child to receive blessings. By his clothing, begging, and modest living Swamy has embarrassed his family, friends, other priests and religious, and us. Every enterprise and civilisation goes from the present to the next through a bit of embarrassment. Save the embarrassment, we remain the same and in the same.

Once he was travelling in a bus in his religious habit. Near him was seated a poor woman with a child. As the journey progressed the child, suffering from travel sickness, threw up on to the habit of Swamy. Others travelling in bus, some may have been Christians too, felt unduly responsible for Swamy's state and began to yell at the woman. Swamy, to their utter





embarrassment, calmed them down, he himself cleaned up the mess from his dress, and began a conversation with the woman to make her comfortable. The woman was in tears.

#### Swamy Dayanand Lived a Spontaneous Life

Being spontaneous is a Christian quality. In Mark 3 Jesus had become very popular. When his disciples informed him that there were many looking for him, Jesus told his disciples, 'come let us go to the next town', and just left. Elsewhere when Jesus was extremely popular and large crowds followed him, Jesus would dismiss the crowd and withdraw to a lonely place to pray. Swamy Dayanand had the same spontaneity of Jesus.

It was a practice for brothers who were becoming religious or priests to come and spend a month or more with him in his ashram at Bellary. A batch of brothers arrived; as usual he gave them inputs and occasionally took them along with him while visiting the villages etc. The season of Lent was approaching, and he without any prior indication announced to the brothers that he is going up the huge hill near ashram for forty days of prayer.

Brothers were clueless about what to do. They went up the hill to listen to him, when

they went they also carried a small tiffin box full of food for Swamy. They were afraid something would happen to him if he went without eating for long. When one of those brothers was narrating it to me I was amused at what happened next.

Hearing that Swamy was on the hill praying, people began to come up the hill to listen to him, he continuously spoke to them in groups switching languages according to need. Swamy could speak fluently Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, and of course English. People who came up brought food and fruits for him. The brothers who went up taking a small tiffin box for Swamy now had to carry down basket full of food and fruits; and distribute to the poor and the ashramites. If he were to continue on the hill, he would have become a cult by himself, he had so much following. He came down, and travelled to other villages and towns to spread the message of peace and goodwill.

Like Jesus, like St Francis of Assisi, like Gandhiji, Swamy lived a modest life, and his life was his message. We bid farewell to one of the finest Franciscans our province had, and one of the finest priests in India. We would truly miss him. May his soul rest in Peace.

# Prophetic Truth

**It's the nature of culture to have its agreed-upon lies. Culture holds itself together by projecting its shadow side elsewhere.**

RICHARD ROHR OFM

#### Disrupting the Status Quo

One of the gifts of the prophets is that they evoke a crisis where one did not appear to exist before their truth-telling. In the 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr was blamed for creating violence—but those who had eyes to see and were ready to hear recognised, 'My God, the violence was already there!' Structural violence was inherent in the system, but it was denied and disguised. No one was willing to talk about it. Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, and others said, 'We're going to talk about it.'

Prophets always talk about the untalkable and open a huge new area of 'talkability.' For those who are willing to go there, it helps us see what we didn't know how to see until they helped us to see it. That's how we begin to recognize a prophet—there is this widening of seeing, this deepening of a truth that was always there.

Prophets generate a crisis, so it's almost understandable why they're usually called troublemakers and so often killed. They generate the crisis because while everybody else is saying the emperor is beautifully clothed, they are willing to say, 'No, he's naked.' We're not supposed to say that the emperor has no clothes!

It's the nature of culture to have its agreed-upon lies. Culture holds itself together by projecting its shadow side elsewhere. That's called the 'scapegoat mechanism.' René Girard, Gil Bailie, and others have pointed out that the scapegoat mechanism is the subtext of the entire biblical revelation. It's the tendency to export our evil elsewhere and to hate it there, and therefore to remain in splendid delusion. If there isn't a willingness to be critical of our country, our institution, and ourselves, we certainly can't be prophets.

When the prophet is missing from the story, the shadow side of things is always out of control, as in much of the world today, where we do not honor wisdom or truth.

It seems the prophet's job is first to deconstruct current illusions, which is the status quo, and then reconstruct on a new and honest foundation. That is why the prophet is never popular with the comfortable or with those in power. Only a holy few have any patience with the deconstruction of egos and institutions.

The prophets are 'radical' teachers in the truest sense of the word. The Latin radix means root, and the prophets go to the root causes and root vices and 'root' them out! Their educational method is to expose and accuse with no holds barred. Ministers and religion in general tend to concentrate on effects and symptoms, usually a mopping up exercise after the fact. As someone once put it, we throw life preservers to people drowning in the swollen stream, which is all well and good—but prophets work far upstream to find out why the stream is swollen in the first place.

#### Big Picture Thinkers

What is a prophet? Let me try this as a definition: one who names the situation truthfully and in its largest context. When we can name the situation truthfully and in its largest context, it cannot get pulled into interest groups and political expediency. I was preaching in Atlanta, and I went for the first time to the Martin Luther King Jr. exhibit. It's so obvious that he was a biblical prophet. I stood there and heard the addresses right in his very church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, where they play his preaching constantly. I realized how he was always putting racism and segregation in the

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big context of the kingdom of God. And then he kept going and came out against the Vietnam War. He is said to have lost at least one-third of his own followers because he placed the issue in too big a frame.

We don't want the big frame. No one wants the big picture. The prophet or prophetess speaks truthfully and in the largest context. In Martin Luther King Jr's 'Beyond Vietnam' speech, he spoke from the 'big frame' to call for a revolution of values based on love. This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all [humankind]... When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I'm not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.

### Anger Does Its Work

Prophets are often known for their anger against injustice. Teacher at Centre for Action and Contemplation Brian McLaren makes a connection between anger and love: I think about things I love... birds, trees, wetlands, forested mountains, coral reefs, my grandchildren... and I see the bulldozers and smokestacks and tanks on the horizon. And so, because I love, I am angry. Really angry. And if you're not angry, I think you should check your pulse, because if your heart beats in love for something, someone, anything... you'll be angry when it's harmed or threatened.

To paraphrase René Descartes (1596–1650): I love; therefore, I'm angry. Anger makes most sense to me through an analogy of pain. What pain is to my body, anger is to my soul, psyche, or inner self. When I put my hand on a hot stove, physical pain reflexes make me react quickly, to address with all due urgency whatever is damaging my fragile tissues. Physical pain must be strong enough to prompt me to action, immediate action, or I will be harmed, even killed. Similarly, when I or someone I love is in the company of insult, injustice, injury, degra-

dation, or threat, anger awakens. It tells me to change my posture or position; it demands I address the threat.

Anger does its work. It prompts us to action, for better or worse. With time and practice, we can let the reflexive reactions of fight/flight/freeze, mirroring, and judging pass by like unwanted items on a conveyor belt. Also, with practice, we can make space for creative actions to be prompted by our anger... actions that are in tune with the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control; actions that overcome evil with good and bring healing instead of hate.

So, yes, you bet I'm angry. It's a source of my creativity. It's a vaccination against apathy and complacency. It's a gift that can be abused—or wisely used. Yes, it's a temptation, but it's also a resource and an opportunity, as unavoidable and necessary as pain. It's part of the gift of being human and being alive.

### Love Speaks the Truth

Truth-telling can be a very difficult journey on the way to freedom, says, Jacqui Lewis in *Fierce Love*. Jacqui Lewis writes about the ways both prophetic and personal truth-telling challenge us and the systems to which we belong. In my faith tradition we call that speaking the truth—in love. As a clergyperson, I have many truth-telling strategies. Sometimes I'm gentle, needing to take good care of the one who is listening. Sometimes I've got my fists in the air while marching for the truth, for justice and liberation. Always my intention is to free up the energy that's caught in the story, to liberate myself and the other with whom I'm in relationship to find a way forward. Can we win this action? Will the politician change policy or give in to demands? Will the congregant or colleague hear my point of view, and can I hear theirs? Can I change the story in the public square in a compelling way and open eyes, hearts, and minds to new worldviews? Will [my husband] John and I become stronger because of this difficult talk? Telling the truth is an act of love, an act of resistance, an act of courage. Its end is liberation, freedom, and, if possible, reconciliation. But there can be no reconciliation without truth.

The historian Howard Zinn wrote, 'The most revolutionary act one can engage in is to... tell the truth.' Indeed! I think the revolutionary part of truth is that it can free us and those around us to live with greater certainty about what is real, even when it hurts, because we are no longer shackled to the energy lying requires of us. Lying demands the continuation of the lie and the amplification of the lie to keep the truth hidden... Telling the truth creates ripples of authenticity that change the world...

I believe truth is revolutionary; it's part of the work of fierce love. Truth makes a personal, spiritual, ethical, and moral demand upon us. It wants to be said, known, told. It hurts and it's inconvenient, but it's essential to our well-being. It cleanses our spiritual palate and restores our souls. Truth is a drink of water to a parched traveler. It lubricates relationships. It liberates us from bondage. It builds trust and connections. It's the beginning of authentic living and joy. Truth eludes us at times, and we have to

pursue it. Truth invites us to be honest about who we are, about our flawed-but-beautiful, broken-but-healing selves. Truth leads to reconciliation and peace; without truth, there is no peace. In the light of truth, we are able to honor our journey and love ourselves. Truth-telling is a spiritual discipline that requires practice. We must not lie to others and, as Fyodor Dostoevsky suggested, we mustn't lie to ourselves. Being honest with ourselves about ourselves is to love ourselves unconditionally, to love ourselves fiercely.

What the prophets are doing is creating an alternative consciousness. Now, that isn't easily created. Most of us are formed, and our thinking is formed, by the dominant consciousness. We are shaped by the way everybody thinks, by the way the culture thinks. What the prophet dares to do is step into the middle of the dominant consciousness and create an alternative, a new set of possibilities.



# Mimetic Desire

I once read an article about a woman in America who underwent forty surgeries in order to look like her favourite movie star!

MONICA FERNANDES



The French philosopher René Girard coined the term 'Mimetic Desire'. He said, 'Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires.' A lot of our desires are not our own but fake, illogical desires borrowed from others. Hence we are not focussed on obtaining either worthwhile objects or experiences. For instance, Vinod buys a bigger house even though he will have to work to the bone paying EMIs only because his friend has a large house. Tina became a teacher not because she likes to teach but her mother is a teacher.

A simple example would be two siblings playing happily with toys when one shouts to his brother, 'Hey Ben. See what I have. My toy is better than yours.' This results in Ben punching his brother in order to get what he now thinks is a better toy. I remember a neighbour dressing his three small daughters in identical clothes. When I asked why, he said that otherwise each child thinks her siblings have prettier outfits.

The advertising industry capitalises on this aspect of human behaviour. The effect of repeated ads promoting a product is insidious. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram create a craving for what others have. Influencers and celebrities are reaping in the money endorsing products, sometimes which they themselves do not use. We are effectively being taken for a ride.

We blindly buy prohibitively expensive designer outfits just because a star is sporting

them. We do not stop to think, 'Will it suit my purse, my figure and my age?' We see advertisements of a handsome actor speeding around in a car with a beautiful girl by his side and we are swayed into thinking that we cannot be happy until we buy the same model. What actually happens is that we overreach ourselves and are extremely stressed in the process.

The con game played by companies is unethical when they influence our desires to use products that could harm us. We are told that a certain product is a must as it will boost our health and give us that extra burst of energy. What we only know if we read the fine print on the packaging is that the product has a generous percentage of sugar. The star endorsing the product has a professional team taking care of his diet and probably avoids it like the plague. At a time of instant gratification, we are sold the idea of getting instant noodles and instant coffee. We are totally unaware of the chemical additives which ensure that the product is instant.

I once read an article about a woman in America who underwent forty surgeries in order to look like her favourite movie star! This obsession about looking like someone else displays a total lack of confidence on the part of the woman and an inability to think things out logically. How do we make sure that we do not fall into the trap of taking on a lifestyle or appearance detrimental to our well being?

Experts suggest we take the time to think of our goals and write them out in order of preference. This will bring direction and focus to our lives. Do you wish to strengthen ties with family and friends? Plan out time to spend with your aged grandmother. Is it your ambition to become a software engineer? Explore what

**Desire is contagious. Others in your group or community may think alike. Think out of the box.**

steps you need to take to achieve this goal.

When it comes to purchases, do we really need a new computer

and the latest mobile? Are we able to afford these purchases? Will they enhance our lives or are we yielding to mimetic desire? Management guru Stephen Covey suggested, 'If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster. Choose the right wall to place your ladder.'

Another suggestion made by a psychologist is to stay away from the 'shiny object syndrome.' This is a psychological term to describe someone fixating on a fashionable idea, even if it does not help him/her ultimately. It is a distraction resulting from the fear of missing out. Don't allow your value system to be hijacked in the process. Whom do we want to imitate? We should choose our role models wisely. They are beacons on the path of our lives.

Desire is contagious. Others in your group or community may think alike. Think out of the box. While our countrymen suffered under foreign yoke and could find no solution to this undesirable situation, Mahatma Gandhi thought differently and was able to take an entire nation along with him. The nation followed the right role model.

Share failures and successes on your journey through life with others in a group of like minded people who are facing the same challenges. They are more likely to be sympathetic and offer solutions. Working as a team will help you to reach your goal. The group Alcoholics Anonymous is a case in point.

Ultimately our future happiness is in our hands. We could either follow the pied piper of consumerism or follow a path that will bring us a sense of achievement, happiness and make the world a better place.



# A Homecoming

A FRANCIS OFM



The early April showers poured down heavily outside the Lakeside Cafe. Through the half-open windows, the cool breeze sneaked into the café, with the audacity of an unwelcome guest.

Brian sat inside the Café as a prisoner to his self-grueling thoughts and emotions. ‘What soaring dreams we used to cherish, when we were in love? Didn’t we feel the magic of the imaginative light bulb turning on, and the bells ringing? After all, what happened to my two-hundred percent of certitude: ‘She is the woman I want to share the rest of my life with?’

Outside, the rain stopped abruptly, clearing up the foggy blanket over the lake. The sun scurried down to spruce up the lake with its light and warmth.

‘Everything looks like an illusion now. A mirage!’ Brian kept thinking about his marriage.

Seven years ago, Brian and Sandra were two unconnected individuals, working in a far-off land, chasing after a desert dream of a rich robust future. They crossed their paths daily, seldom noticing each other.

Not noticing the other is nothing despicable these days. In fact, it is considered an

acceptable behavioral norm in the postmodern world, where the wheel of life is spun with a roaring speed.

Amidst climbing the covetous rungs of their respective corporate ladders, destiny brought them in a fender bender of love.

Back home, Sandra’s parents were busy making plans of an arranged marriage for her with a promising medical doctor. ‘With his reputable family lineage and an admirable social status, he certainly is a catch!’ They lured her.

Sandra, effortlessly brushed off the ambitious streaks of their traditional logic. Being an innovative IT professional, she was used to wielding such instant shots! ‘Brian is my choice. He understands the stress involved in a corporate career. If you don’t agree, I will stay single, happily pursuing my career dreams!’ She made a straightforward declaration of her stance.

Her homefolks, who firmly believed in the importance of marriage as a sacred design of God, unhappily gave into her stubborn logic of practicality.

Brian’s story was not any different either,

except for its dramatic finale. His mother belligerently held on to her right for choosing her daughter-in-law. She substantiated her entitlement with the virtue of her bringing him up as a single mother since her husband’s death.

She surrounded him with an inexhaustible list of hurdles, why Sandra was not his match: ‘She is shorter, of darker complexion, and will not respect our family values and traditions.’ The same cliché of a protective mother who could soon metamorphose into a self-absorbed mother-in-law!

Brian too had a well-resourced spiel for disarming his mother’s attack on Sandra. He presented an emotional account of Sandra looking after him when he fell ill in a foreign land where he missed his mother. He climaxed the story with a yours-faithfully-statement, ‘if it is not for Sandra, I would not be alive today’. Brian’s mum fell flat for the emotional twist in his story.

Like the fate of many marriages today, the magical light-bulb and the bells did not last long in theirs, too. They bumped into many difficult couple moments. Initially, they resolved these with understanding and patience for each other. But soon they ran

short of those problem-solving skills. The well-restrained passive silence was replaced with confrontational altercations. Finding fault with each other became a routine scenario! They seldom engaged in any quality couple-time and lost their hope for a life-long togetherness. The ‘D’ word (Divorce), became quite common in their daily conversations.

This afternoon Brian was at a luncheon with a colleague who was also undergoing a difficult marriage, which could be ended anytime soon. Just like the aim of an experienced hunter that never misses the animal hiding behind the bush, the truthful confession of his friend, hit a chord in him, triggering the vulnerability and brokenness in his own marriage. Until now, he was able to stay put, tactfully avoiding them. Unexpectedly, the bubble that he created for so long, busted, instantaneously!

Pushed to the edge of his resistance by the surging truth of his marriage, he said to himself, ‘My pain is not about my friend’s marriage, but mine.’

In that moment of confronting his truth, he felt an inner urge, to leave the café. But he didn’t. He sat listening to himself, empathically, neither judging nor defending. With a renewed sense of self-acceptance, he befriended his thoughts and emotions, one after another. Making sense of his brokenness and vulnerability, he once more heard the words of his friend: ‘You know, it is easy to talk about divorce in the presence of my wife. It gives me a pleasure of settling scores with her. But the fact is, it hits me hard, when she is not present.’

Gripped by the power of self-acceptance, Brian stepped outside the Lakeside Cafeteria. As he walked towards the car, he realized that his mind was reminiscing the lines of a poem he studied in the school, a long time ago:

*I hold it true, whatever befall;  
I feel it, when I sorrow most;  
’Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all*

He walked fast, hoping earnestly, that Sandra would be waiting for his homecoming!

# Christian Art and Iconography

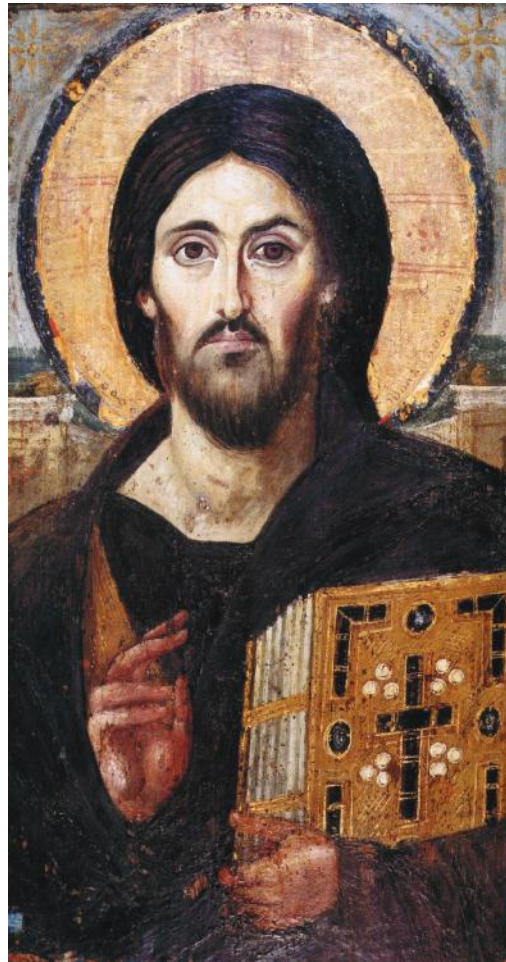
SHAIJU MATHEW MEPPURATH OIC

Iconography, a unique form of ancient Christian art, derived from the ancient eastern Roman Empire and byzantine cultural milieu. Iconography is one of the most ancient, established and unique forms of Christian art, whose legacy can be claimed by the entire Christian world. Originating from the Eastern Roman Empire this system of art developed in different parts of the Western and oriental Christian world, with modifications, adaptations and inculturations.

The word icon comes from the Greek word *eikon* or *ikona*, which generally means 'simple image or picture'. Iconography here exclusively refers to the art of painting an icon on wooden panel or walls; and it is also a branch of science dealing with the study of Icons. Some of the scholars prefer the verb 'writing', exclusively instead of 'painting' to denote the act of painting an icon; citing the reason; an icon is something to be read by those who encounter it and not just an object to be 'seen'.

## Iconoclasm and Iconophile

The popular use of icons in the churches brought about series of theological discussions which eventually lead to condemnation and destruction of icons which is called Iconoclasm



The icon of Christos Pantocrator depicts Christ in his divine and human personalities.

and though late, subsequent arguments in favour of icons also emerged. Iconophiles were of the opinion that the same God who gave the second commandment in the Old Testament is God offered to Israel divine revelations (Theophanies) and ordained or asked them venerate images that pointed symbolically toward salvation by the incarnate Word: such as the bronze serpent in Numbers 21, the Ark of the Covenant,

and the Cherubim. Theologians like John of Damascus and Theodore of Studites; during the eighth and ninth century paved the way for a comprehensive theology of icons. Icons were also used to depict the dogmatic position and teachings of the church. For instance the icon of Christos Pantocrator, depicts Christ in his divine and human personalities. Thus it clearly portrayed the teaching that Christ is both fully human and fully divine.

Icon painting is an artistic system with its own philosophy, technique and ideals. Down the centuries and through different schools, the artistic system has developed and made in practice a variety of stylistic solutions and patterns. St Photius defined icon painting as an art of divine inspiration, that the hand of the icon painter is guided from above, and that the wondrous works achieved in all periods are the fruit of the Holy spirit. Therefore Icon writing is not only an artistic endeavour but also a theological contemplation twined with creativity and spirituality.

The use of lines and its peculiar character differentiate an icon from other similar traditions. The use of choice of colour always have theological and dogmatic significance. Lines projects the forms toward the viewer, lifting them off the surface of the icon. Line plays a decisive role in unifying various elements in a composition rhythmically in a manner in which exertion of energy can be possible from the form. In iconography forms are not static representation of a reality but it is a movement, a rhythm. Kordis writes, 'All form is movement, everything is energy. They are not a passive and abstract object that stands opposite the spectator in its own time and space. It is something active that moves toward the viewer and demands a response in order to meet the icon and what is depicted therein. The Byzantine art create specific movements that enable what is depicted to come in communion with the surroundings and the viewer thus participates in a visual engagement'.

People may find icons to be not well painted in proportion. Proportionality and perspective in iconography differs from schools to schools. some of the schools understand proportionality as a new system which depicts 'the glorified bodies' more than the actual bodies which are visible to our naked eye. Proportionality here becomes a sign of transformation and transcendence. The use of Transverse principle is a unique feature of iconography. A figure is painted not using one dimensional technique rather a transverse lines in relation to the surface of the icon, which reveals the dialectical relationship of a figure with the surface and projects it toward the viewer. Fluidity is an another unique feature of iconography. In an icon everything within a form flows and interpenetrates every other element. Nothing is static or discordant. Everything communicates and exists in a wondrous unity.

A movement lead by orthodox thinkers like Evgeny Trubetskoy, Pavel Florensky and Leonid Ouspensky in 20th century in Russia, tried to establish new interpretation of icons insisting upon the spiritual, otherworldly and abstract aspects. Thereby the use of icons in the orthodox tradition came into be established as a unique and characteristic feature of orthodoxy. they have developed special cannons and strict discipline in treating icons. apart from the rigidity of faith icons are used all over the world by those who appreciate the artistic beauty of this unique art form.

Icons are part of the cultural and artistic tradition of the entire Christianity and for those of the secular world. Anita Strezova is of the opinion that, 'Icons attempted to represent the spiritual world through the material, the invisible through the visible, thus taking the character of a Sacrament.' Consequently icons creates not only an artistic style which is based on realism but also on abstraction. Thus, it continues to amuse the art world and demands deep attention and academic interest.



# International Horror Movies

## (Not for the Faint of Heart)

SUSANNA VAS

Note: This listicle does not contain jump scares, but it does contain spoilers. Viewer discretion is advised.



**Baskin** (2015)

Director: Can Evrenol  
Country: Turkey

Five Turkish police officers end up in the bowels of Hell in this visceral, phantasmagoric movie that combines all the physical and psychological horrors of the nether regions. Every trickle, discharge, burble, and squelch will make your insides tremble and your toes curl.

Arda, the youngest of the cops, enters the antechamber a boy and leaves it a man. As such, the movie is about hazing: the forceful and ritualistic initiation of a rookie into masculinity.

Surprisingly, but rather befittingly, almighty masculinity is embodied in a vertically challenged, grotesque figure called The Father, the leader of an orgiastic cult that mortifies and mutilates flesh and psyche.



**The Shrine** (2010)

Director: Jon Knautz  
Country: Canada

Carmen, a Canadian journalist, persuades her boyfriend (Marcus) and an intern (Sara) to accompany her on an unofficial visit to the fictional

Polish village of Alvernia, the site of several unsolved disappearances.

The village is remote, its people are hostile, its clergymen emanate a cultish whiff, and its centrepiece is a localised fog enshrouding a demonic statue.

The lack of backstory weakens the plot and characters. What we know about the sleuthing trio (the ambitious journalist girlfriend, the simple frustrated boyfriend, and the wide-eyed intern) does little to endear them to us. As for the villagers, we are clueless about them as they speak Polish (with no subtitles) and commit unspeakable acts for unthinkable reasons.

While the movie could have capitalised on the theme of cultural and language barriers, it leaned into the usual Western stereotypes of Central and Eastern Europe (backward, superstitious villagers).

In Ari Aster's *Midsommar*, one of the Americans ignorantly urinates on a sacred tree. *The Shrine* pales in comparison to Aster's movie but it, too, vaguely acknowledges the disrespect and defiance of Anglophone westerners who trespass into and piss in their neighbours' backyards.

Considering Carmen and Sara are journalists, the actions of the Poles, taken metaphorically, stand to reason. They do not want their story dripping from Western mouths and darkening Western newspapers. Therefore, they



'exorcise' visitors who come sniffing around.

**The Privilege** (2022)

Directors: Felix Fuchssteiner, Katharina Schöde  
Country: Germany

Though fictional, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* proved that

medical misadventures actuated by pride and ambition never wrap up neatly for anyone involved.

Science has realised many dreams and just as many nightmares. The latter are the focus of the pharma horror genre.

Pharma companies are complex villains whose operations are ensconced in secrecy. The nature of said villain is hard to define and harder to defeat because it comprises non-human (equipment, drugs, branding) and human (pharmacologists, stakeholders, doctors) entities with various degrees of power, intelligence, and responsibility.

It's fascinating that a supernatural family pharma horror movie is titled *Privilege*, because 'privilege' is a buzzword in social science and humanities discourses. It does not exactly conjure up images of malicious fungi or demonic spectres.

In real life, we have chilling examples of human experimentation during the Holocaust. As this is a German movie, you inevitably juxtapose the pseudoscientific ideologies of the

antagonists with those of the mad Nazi doctors. The movie's villains believed that embedding a rare fungus (grown on corpses) into a cleft in the subject's palate would provide a host body for the deceased. Psychologically, it explores the erotic-thanatotic dialectic in the aftermath of trauma and the arbitrary dividing line between the past and the present.

Finally, the universal lesson: The people we expect to safeguard us are usually the ones who sabotage our psyches. That's a hard pill to swallow.



**Goodnight Mommy** (2014)

Directors: Veronika Franz, Severin Fiala  
Country: Austria

A pair of identical, inseparable twins resort to cruelty when they suspect the woman who has returned home after cosmetic facial surgery is not their mother.

This is a movie about unresolved grief and how drastically it alters individuals and relationships, rendering the former unrecognisable and the latter strained.

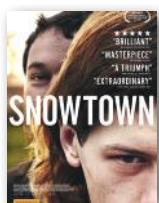
The house is decidedly important to the story as it visually represents grief. Its isolation is a nod to the loneliness of the bereaved characters. Its minimalistic décor silently conveys that something is missing. Its sterile colour palette, starkly contrasting the vibrant scenery outside,





shows how grief saps the mind and atmosphere of happiness.

Masks are integral to the movie's visual semiotics. They conceal people's identities. Here, the mother, with her neatly bandaged face, is covering up her misery. The twins wear ghoulish handmade and hand-painted wooden masks because untamed grief can bring out the dark and monstrous side in people.



**Snowtown** (2011)  
Director: Justin Kurzel  
Country: Australia

Based on the true events of the Snowtown Murders in Australia (aka the Body Barrel Murders), this true-crime horror movie depicts the evolution — or, to borrow the *Criminal Minds* neologism, 'evilution' — of John Bunting and his protégé, Jamie Vlassakis.

Suburban discontent is writ large in the lives and relationships of the characters who are socially stagnant and psychosexually perverse. Families live in unkempt, cramped houses where they suffocate on cigarette smoke and choke on alcohol. Their hobbies include killing and butchering kangaroos and their pent-up sexual urges find reprehensible gratification.

Overall, the movie is a cautionary sketch of grooming. After an incestuous incident of abuse, Jamie Vlassakis takes refuge under the wing of John Bunting (his mother's boyfriend) only to get trapped in Bunting's chokehold and become party to a series of torture killings whose victims Bunting deemed dispensable, weak, or sexually immoral.



**Let the Right One In** (2008)  
Director: Tomas Alfredson  
Country: Sweden

Oskar, a brilliant, bullied schoolboy, develops a friendship with Eli, the strange girl next door. He soon realises

that she is a vampire connected to a series of local murders.

The movie ventures into transgressive territory by giving us insights into preadolescent sexuality. Shots of bare torsos, naked legs, and a sutured crotch, along with scenes of dressing, undressing, and kissing, are more disturbing than the fact that Eli is a vampire.

Reading the novel from which the movie is adapted reveals the theme of trauma. What we don't see in the movie is Eli's tragic backstory. She was castrated; hence the androgynous voice and appearance. In the present, she is chaperoned by a paedophile.

Vampirism is a metaphor for victimhood. Because of the irreparable bodily and mental damage, Eli can only live half a life with no end in sight.



**Lake Mungo** (2008)  
Director: Joel Anderson  
Country: Australia

After Alice Palmer's disfigured corpse is dredged up from a lake and her ghostly image appears in pictures, her family strives to uncover and understand the circumstances that culminated in her death.

*Lake Mungo* explores bereavement and mortality through psychological, supernatural, and existential lenses. Shot in a mockumentary style with improvised dialogue and little-known actors, the movie achieves the illusion of reality.

To deepen the mystery, nothing is known about the director, Joel Anderson. That's probably because *Lake Mungo* was a box office failure that witnessed belated recognition for its intriguing plot and masterful storytelling. (Let's hope he's not at the bottom of a lake somewhere.)

The real horror of the movie has more to do with uncertainty and loneliness in life and in death rather than ghostly apparitions and bloated corpses.



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

On 15 August 1843, God gave six young peasant girls of Cantaus, Diocese of Tarbes in France an experience of His Trinitarian Communion. Each of the girls relished this experience, discerned it, and was spontaneously drawn to share it with one another in simple faith.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

May they all be one.

JOHN 17:21



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