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together

a national family magazine



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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 before the 15th of every month.

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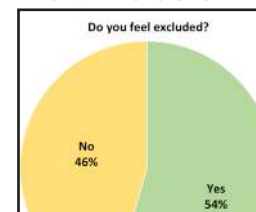
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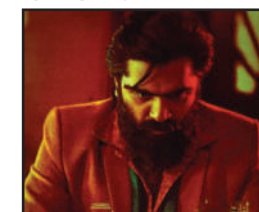
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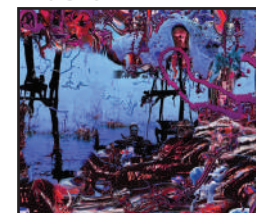


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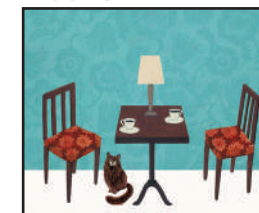


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2022 The Year That Was



We Are Eight Billion

The world's population hit eight billion on 15 November 2022.

While it took the global population 12 years to grow from seven to eight billion, it will take approximately 15 years—until 2037—for it to reach nine billion, a sign that the overall growth rate of the global population is slowing. Growth will not happen evenly across the planet, UN noted that more than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania.

Russia Wages War in Ukraine

On 24 February, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched an unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, setting off the largest armed conflict in Europe since the World War II. Ukraine has mounted a strong defense despite being vastly outnumbered, but Russian bombing and shelling have beaten Ukrainian cities, while civilian casualties are growing by the day, and the fighting has sparked an enormous refugee crisis.

Queen Elizabeth II Dies

On 8 September, at 15:10 BST, Elizabeth II (1926–2022), Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms—and the longest-reigning British monarch—died of old age at the Balmoral Castle in Scotland, at the age of 96. She is succeeded by her eldest son, Charles III.

Images from Unsplash, Adweek, Maira Erlich/Bloomberg



Elon Musk Takes Control of Twitter

Business magnate Elon Musk initiated the acquisition of American social media company Twitter, Inc. on 14 April and concluded it on 27 October.

Gautam Adani Becomes 2nd Richest Man in the World

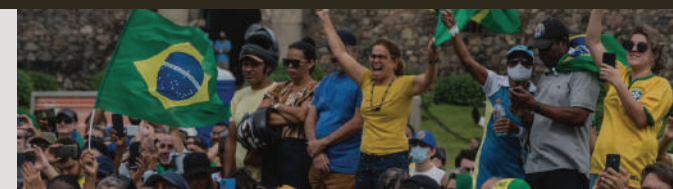
Gautam Adani briefly became the world's second-richest person on the Forbes real-time billionaire tracker on 16 September, weeks after becoming the first Asian to break into the top three. The self-made billionaire's net worth surged \$4 billion overnight to \$154 billion, according to Forbes, ranking him ahead of Amazon's Jeff Bezos.

Geetanjali Wins Booker Prize

Geetanjali Shree became the first Hindi author to win the International Booker Prize, for her novel *Ret Samadhi*, translated by Daisy Rockwell from into English as *Tomb of Sand*.

Argentina Wins the FIFA World Cup 2022

Argentina walked away with the FIFA World Cup after a thrilling tournament in Qatar. Records tumbled with winning captain Lionel Messi taking the Golden Ball for the best player.



Brazil Votes Right Wing Jair Bolsonaro Out of Power

Brazilians delivered a very tight victory to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in a bitter presidential election in October, giving the leftist former president another shot at power in a rejection of incumbent Jair Bolsonaro's far-right politics.

The Fall of the FTX 'King of Crypto' Sam Bankman-Fried

On 12 December, officers of the Bahamas Financial Crimes Investigation Unit arrested Sam Bankman-Fried at his apartment complex, in Nassau, at the request of the US government, based on a sealed indictment filed by the Southern District of New York. The man formerly nicknamed the 'King Of Crypto' has seen his company collapse, stepped down as chief executive and now faces criminal investigation.

Iran Erupts into Protests

People especially women are protesting in Iran against imposition of Islamic law, a continuing economic crisis, lack of freedom of expression, violation of women's rights, brutality carried out during protests, internet cutoffs, and the killing of Mahsa Amini. According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency, more than 500 protesters—including 69 children—have been killed. Two protesters have been executed and at least 26 others face the same fate, after what Amnesty International calls 'sham trials'.

India: A Cauldron of Exclusivism

The diversity of religion, language, culture, ethnicity in India, which could be considered as sources of beauty and strength, have become sources of exclusivism and even annihilation.

JAMESMON PC OFM

One of the biggest emergencies that the world faces today is the refugee crisis. It seems that the number of people floating around the world has reached, an all-time high, a 100 million people. This is the biggest number in modern history. There are people constantly moving on waters as they can't put their foot on any land whatsoever. These are people who have lost their habitat due to extreme conditions like war, bombing, invading army, gang violence or other life-threatening circumstances. There are also other reasons like natural calamities by which people are displaced. Those who have been forced out of their homes often have to face further struggle as they move on. Their living conditions are miserable, as they often don't have access to food, clean water, shelter and health care.

But there are other subtle ways in which people become refugees in their own land. They may not be forced out yet. But there is always a threat of displacement that could happen any time in the future. This is not a new phenomenon. During the Holocaust, the Jews were made to feel like aliens in their own homeland. One of the key process used by the people in authority was the creation of ghettos, wherein the victims were brutally separated, persecuted, and ultimately destroyed. Jews were forced to leave everything behind and move into the ghettos, where living conditions were terrible. It was

simply miserable to survive in those circumstances. Ghettos were often enclosed spaces that isolated Jews from other people and from other Jewish communities.

The Germans established the first ghetto in Poland in October 1939. These ghettos were meant to be temporary. In many cases, ghettoization lasted only a few days or weeks. In other cases, it lasted for several months and even years. The isolation and ghettoisation brought death to many because the living conditions were inhuman. The vast majority of these people died from disease, starvation, shooting at random, or deported to the concentration camps that were killing centers.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia, or fear of strangers, is a broad term that may be applied to any fear of someone different from oneself. Hostility towards outsiders is often a reaction to fear. It typically involves the belief that there is a conflict between an individual's in-group and an out-group (Lisa Fritscher, *Verywell Mind* Newsletter, 2022). It may manifest a suspicion of other's activities, and may lead to a desire to exclude and eliminate their presence, and almost always there is a fear of losing national, ethnic, or racial identity. The pity is that these fears are often ungrounded and devoid of any logic or reason. One of the byproducts of xenophobia is nation-

In India, we have reached a stage where dissent is considered as a crime. Most dissenters are jailed and they languish there, waiting for a closure that may or may not come.

alism. On nationalism Jiddu Krishnamurthy has some interesting observations. He would say: 'I have watched nationalism in operation all over the world, and I say it is poisonous. So I am watching now if that poison is in operation in me. And when it comes out, I am there. There it is. I don't do anything – there it is. I am aware of it; I am fully cognizant of it. Unless I see conflict is poisonous, actually see it, I'll create other forms of conflict. So why don't we see it? As we see fire burns, why don't we see this?' We are used to glorifying nationalism and patriotism as though they are natural and of great value. In India, we are asked to prove our commitment to them by standing up for national anthem even in movie theatres. The lynching mob forces the victim to cry out patriotic slogans before murdering him/her. There is a growing tendency to divide people as national and antinational. Nationalism or for that matter, even patriotism is not natural. It is cultivated and made use of for division and political exploitation. As J Krishnamurthy says that the instinctive thing in humans is to appreciate beauty in everything and everyone, and not to say 'my country.'

The Question of Dissent

In India, sad to say, we have reached a stage where dissent is considered as a crime. Most dissenters are jailed and they languish there, waiting for a closure that may or may not come. More and more people are losing their voice. There is a rising chorus for annihilation of certain community of people in India that can be seen at random in many parts of this country. Unmistakably, on many fronts we are inching towards a genocide, exclusively of certain minority communities.

Victimisation and exclusion is happening in India on an alarming scale. There is a coinage of certain phrases that speed up this process like, love jihad, corona jihad, job jihad, food jihad, dress jihad and the list goes on. Name calling and targeting certain minorities is a deliberate attempt at exclusion. India is a cauldron of exclusivism of all sorts and the diversity of religion, language, culture, ethnicity which could be considered as sources of beauty and strength have become a sources of exclusivism and even annihilation. ■

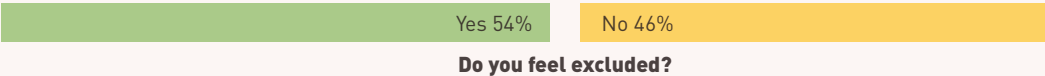
India Inclusion Audit 2022

The worth of a country would depend on its institutions' capacity to provide and protect a sense of belonging in its people. The **India Inclusion Audit 2022** exposes the harsh reality of more than half the population of our country not feeling included and accepted on one or multiple grounds.

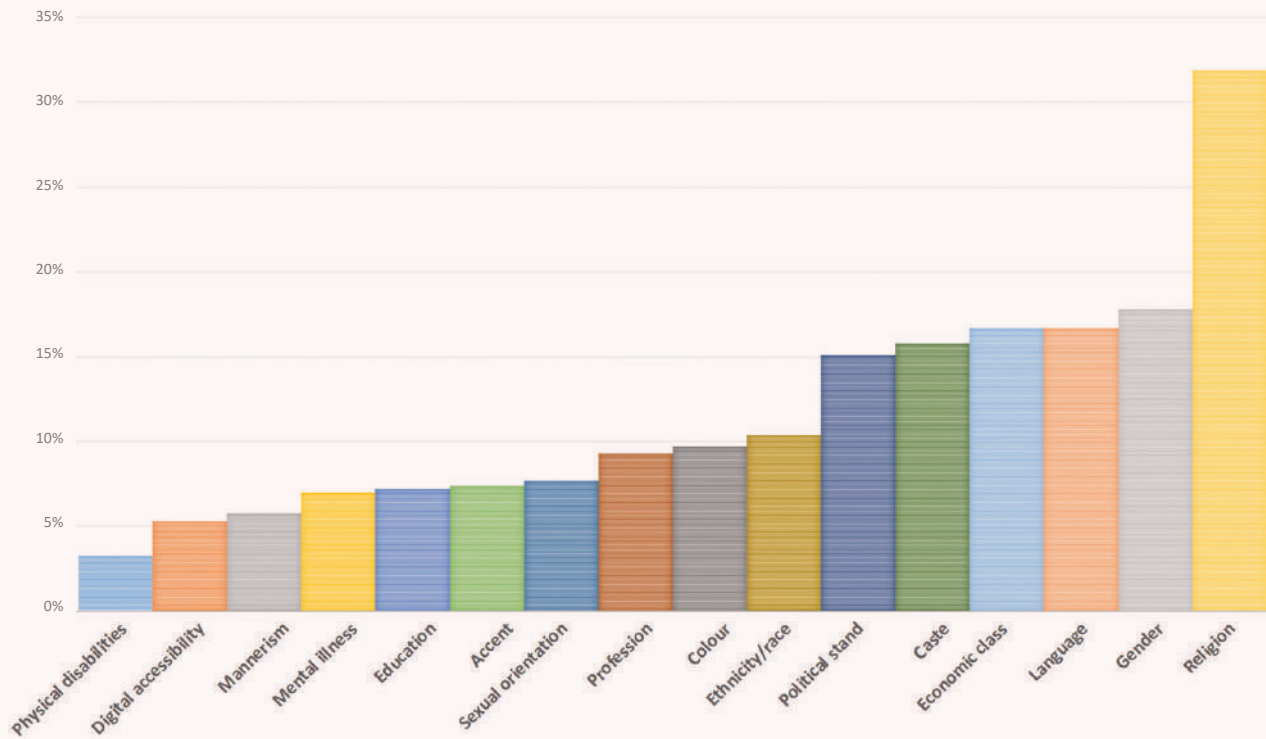
It was an online baseline research with seven questions, to get the pulse of the people

of India from different states regarding their experience of being included politically, socially, religiously, economically and so on. The data collected compels us to work at our shared humanity and belongingness as a country.

The **India Inclusion Audit 2022** was designed and executed by Dr Akeela P, Dr Rupa Peter, Nikhil Banerjee, Sumit Dasgupta, Kapil Arambam, Jamesmon PC OFM and Saji P Mathew OFM.



Do you feel excluded?

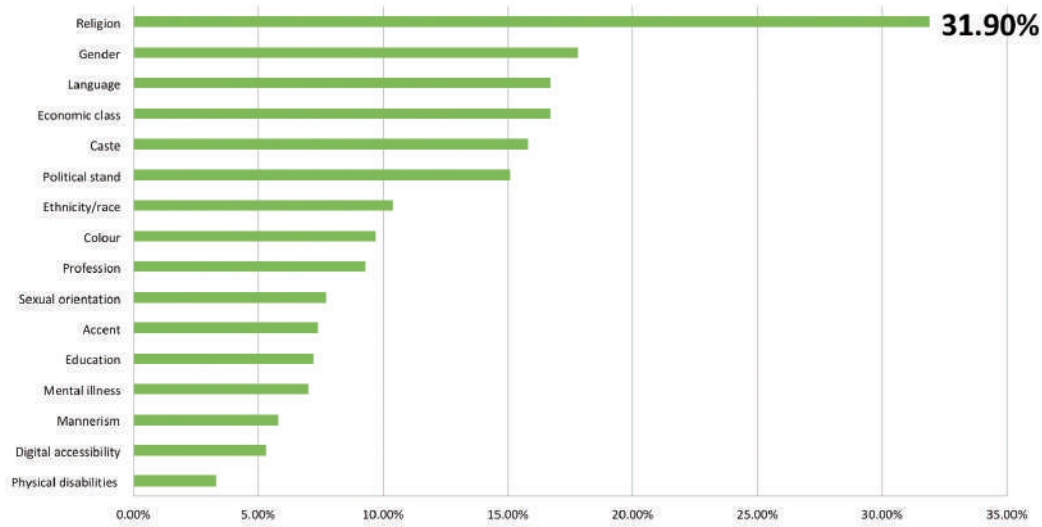


The Story of Exclusion in India

Dr AKEELA P

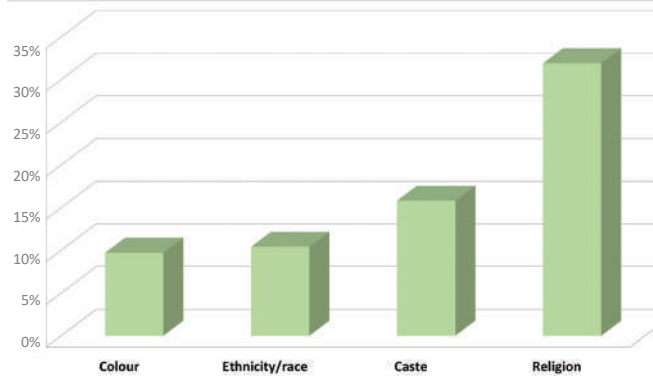
Our social sciences textbooks from grade one onwards ingrained in us how India is the seventh largest country in the world, second most populated country, and world's largest democracy. We are the epitome of multi-ethnicity, multi-linguality, and plurality of religions. We acknowledge and celebrate all the major religiously auspicious days. However, beneath all the diversity do we really feel being inclusive in India is the curious question we need to ask as we walk forward from the celebration of 75 years of Indian Independence.

The **India Inclusion Audit 2022** mainly focused on questions of exclusivity and marginalisation; and explored the grounds of exclusion.



Religion excludes more people than anything else

RELIGION is the number one factor participants felt that they are discriminated on by others. India is the birthplace of some of the world famous religions, like, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism; and we do have people following other major religion of the world namely Christianity and Islam. Our constitution gives the right to follow any religion and respect other religions. Yet people still feel outgroup from their own religions and by other dominant and powerful religions.



Though religion leads the chart, along with it caste, ethnicity, race, and colour too are grounds for marginalisation. Increasing incidents of honour killings are proofs of extreme exclusion on lines of caste and ethnicity. Peoples from the seven sisters of india (North East), Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands, often face racial slurs and namecalling, because others of them mainland India lack familiarity and knowledge of them.

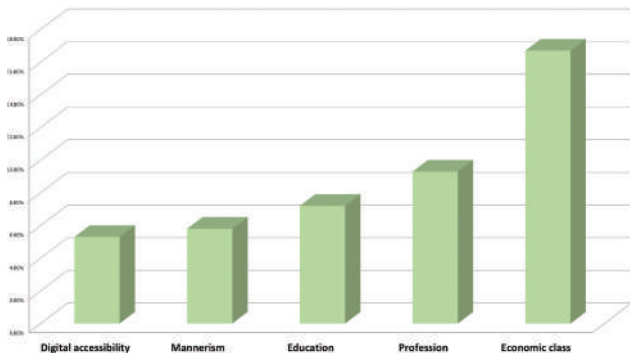
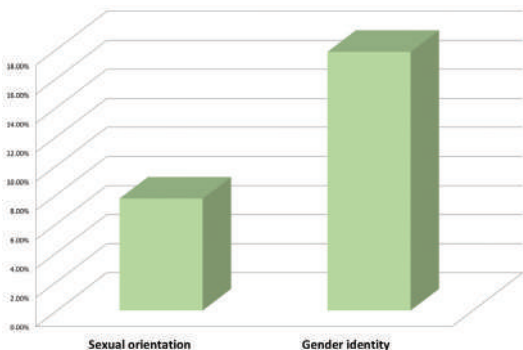
Due to colourism people, particularly women, face discrimination often by the relatives and immediate society. Fair skin is perceived as the sign of beauty, and it provides better prospects of groom and opportunities.

Considering GENDER, the data illustrates that a good number of population get discriminated because of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Women often are victims of glass ceiling at work places and in other spheres of life.

The society, governmental laws, and legal systems are still not geared up to understand, acknowledge, and protect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and others' (LGBTQ+) rights.

Same LANGUAGE-speaking people often end up being together and interacting only among themselves, which hugely excludes the rest. Some of the Indian languages, due to its thick dialect and phonetics, give rise to the phenomenon known as 'Mother Tongue Influence', thus people mispronounce English word; and that leads to discrimination and exclusion.

On ECONOMIC parameters India lives in two different worlds. According to the State of Inequality in India Report 2022, over 10% group



earn up more than 60% of the total wealth in India, indicating a vast wealth inequality gap over the past 40 years.

One's PROFESSION is linked with ones social status; either because of monetary position or because of the power and title it holds. Government employees have better marriage prospects; foreign education and jobs overseas are wow factors in social gatherings.

POLITICAL exclusion in a democracy would mean denial of rights, denial of political participation, denial of right to organise, denial of personal security, denial of rule of law, denials of freedom of expression and quality of opportunity. India, under the right wing government, is increasingly becoming politically non-inclusive. Now with the arrival of the large corporates the political mechanism runs for the benefit of the economically rich class, bringing in more and more alienation.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES and MENTAL ILLNESS are often related. The intersection of having a disability and living with a mental illness creates a unique identity, with complex needs and concerns. In addition to the obvious discrimination people with disabilities experience, they also have the pressure to adjust to a culture that engages in ableism.

In conclusion, we have excelled in technology, found cures for terminal diseases, invented satellites travelling millions of miles away into the space, yet our human history is marred with conflicts between various social groups. People have been killed in the name of religion, colour, and caste. Employability is still reliant on merely the knowledge of English and academic marks rather than emotional and social intelligence. If a nation is looking forward to develop and grow to be a great nation, becoming inclusive is not an option but an imperative. ■

COVER STORY

Does India Care About Colour?

JYOTHIKA KRISHNAN and PRAVALLIKA MANJU

Colourism is an often disregarded but very real problem faced by many people across the world. It could be as mild as a snarky remark on how they have tanned over the summer, to severe discrimination against them merely for their complexion. Colourism is deeply rooted in India and has been prevalent since the British rule and beyond, where the colour of one's skin determined their social status.

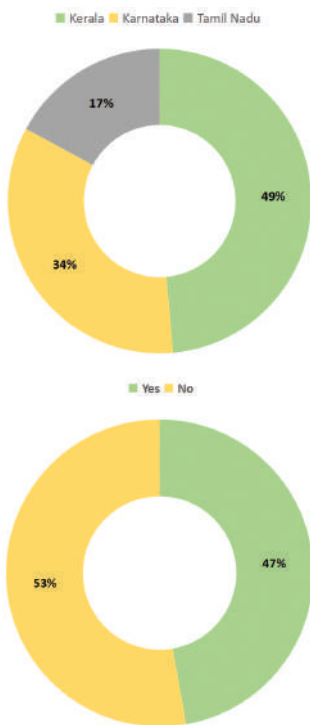
Even in the 21st century, one's colour can determine various social and cultural benefits they may receive, having serious implications on employment opportunities and marriage decisions.

According to the **India Inclusion Audit 2022**, 9.7% of people feel excluded because of colour. Out of these responses, 23.6% of the individuals were men, 74.5% were women and 1.8% identified as others. These responses came from individuals belonging to 14 different states out of which Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu had the maximum number of respondents (36%, 25.4% and 12.7% respectively) who felt sidelined or excluded on the basis of colour among other variables.

This exclusion starts with young children being taught that the lighter the colour of their skin, the more attractive they are. As they grow, this bias toward fairer skin gets reinforced. The prevalence of colourism in the Indian society is evident in movies, where no matter how dark-skinned other characters are, the female lead is always the fairest. This creates a notion that fairness is beautiful.

We also see advertisements of fairness creams like Glow & Lovely (formerly known as Fair & Lovely) that show young women preparing for job interviews by using their cream to become a few shades lighter. These ads not only prey on the insecurities of people, but may also lead one to believe that they must be fair and attractive to land the job of their dreams.

When asked if they were physically put out of space or physically treated badly because of their colour, 47.2% of the respondents said yes, while 52.7% said no. But it is important to note that out of the 55 individuals who cited colour as a cause for feeling excluded, 94.5% of the people observed other causes such as religion, caste, economic class and mental illness alongside colour. Only 5.4% of the respondents felt that colour was the singular cause of their exclusion. It is also interesting to note that the people who fell into the latter category belonged either to Karnataka or Kerala. The results of the audit only go to show that we continue to live in a society where those with lighter complexion are granted social privileges. ■



Top: Colour discrimination in three southern-most states of India

Above: Physically treated badly because of their colour

Political Inclusion Elevates Us as a Democracy

Often expression of one’s political stand publicly may put one in a compromising position because it is not in line with the existing dominant views.

Dr RUPA PETER

Inclusion elevates all – Elaine Hall

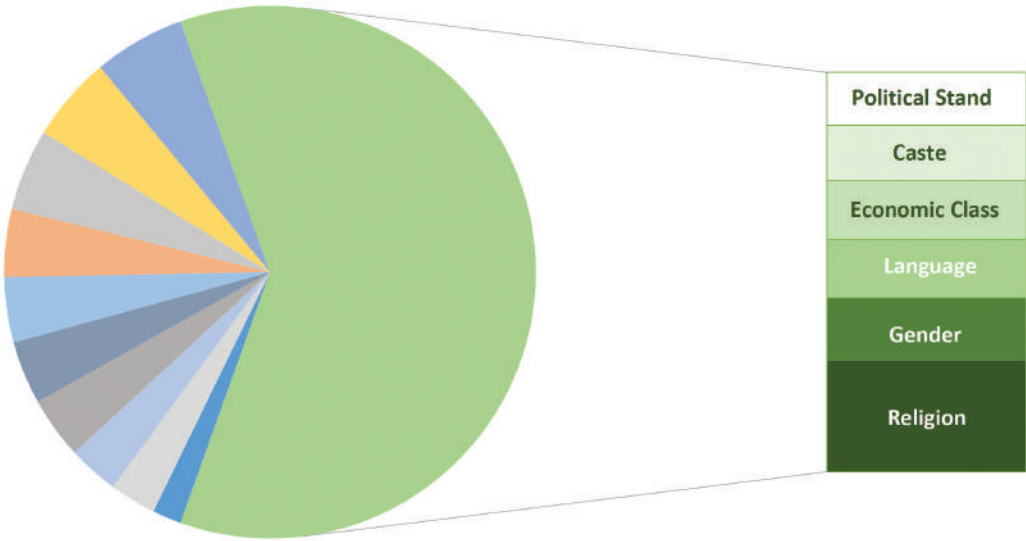
The **India Inclusion Audit** conducted by the *Together* magazine in the month of November–December 2022 throws new light on how diverse political views and ideas can lead to excluding behaviours in our society. 15% of the respondents felt that they have been excluded or sidelined because of their political stand which is based on the political ideology that they believe in. In the survey, exclusion due to political views and beliefs stands sixth right after religion (31.9%), gender (17.8%), economic class and language (both ranked at 16.7%), and caste (15.8%).

At the heart of every good democracy is the ability to discuss, agree, disagree, ‘agree to disagree’ and to dissent in a civilised manner. And at the heart of every elevating political discussion or conversation is the ability to have diverse views and engage with them effectively and inclusively. Without the co-existence of these two parameters, democracy as an institution falls short considerably.

India follows the multi-party system of democracy and most parties come with their own ideological standpoint which consists of their own doctrines, principles, views and belief systems. As of date, two distinct ideologies dominate the Indian political atmosphere—the

right-wing ideology upheld by political parties like the BJP which focuses on conservative, Hindu-nationalist elements with strong ideological and organisational links to Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS); and the centre-left social liberal belief system of the Congress. Extreme left as in the case of the communist parties are limited to a large regional presence in certain pockets of the country.

In today’s scenario, right-wing viewpoints purported by the party in power largely dominate public thought processes and hold sway over the majorly held public opinion, which in itself is plausible. Panel discussions on television sets abound with such ideological musings, if I may call that. Social media posts fan the nationalist fervour from time to time, connecting everything and anything under the sun -from the recent Gujarat assembly elections to Deepika Padukone’s wardrobe in the movie *Pathaan*—to right-wing belief systems. Not to mention, Whatsapp University and the enormous volumes of information, misinformation and disinformation that is continuously doing the rounds, on a regular basis. And people all over the country are not just lapping up all these ‘capsules of information’ but are also propagating them virally.



Six leading reasons for marginalisation in India

Now, the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression which includes the freedom to express your political views which is what media and the public, by and large, do so eloquently. But the issue arises when the statement of one’s political views or the expression of one’s political stand publicly puts you in a compromising position because it is not in line with the existing dominant views. Here again, media takes the lead with consistent muting of alternative viewpoints be it on news shows or the vitriolic panel discussions. This gains a faithful reflection among the public who follow suit diligently. Elizabeth Noelle-Newmann’s spiral of silence model explains this classic behaviour wherein divergent opinions from the status quo, especially political viewpoints which are perceived to be minority views are not disclosed because of fear of social isolation. This is what happens when divergent political standpoints are continuously frowned upon because the

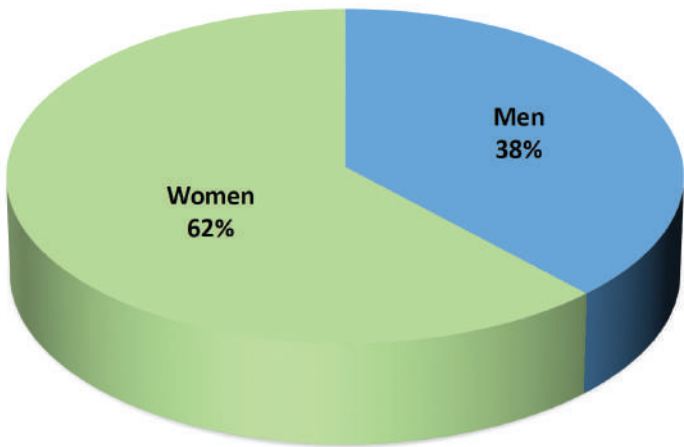
human need to be included (as opposed to being isolated or ostracised) often overrides the need to have a contrary opinion.

As a teacher of media studies, I often discuss politics with young people and I am happy to see that most of them have strong political leanings and are also unafraid to take a clear political stand or voice out their political views. However, at times, I do see that young people are not willing to entertain a divergent political view or even tolerate a different ideology during heated political discussions in the classrooms. This again creates the spiral of silence effect inside the classroom wherein divergent political views are slowly silenced. In my classroom, I insist that students open their minds to different viewpoints and look at different political perspectives and be more accommodating and inclusive of other people’s political views and that’s the same I would hope for my community, my country and for the world, in general. ■

Strange but True: Religion Excludes Its Own People Too

The greatest irony is that out of fear of being excluded because of your religion, you exclude others because of theirs.

MIKHAIL RAJARAM



Gender-wise distribution of religious exclusion

The widely accepted lyrical genius, Bob Dylan, once sang that *The Times, They Are a-Changin'*. In 1964 he wrote these immortal words and the song, if you listen to it now it rings true even today. If you ask the youth of today what they understand of religion, the first response is likely to be an unconscious wrinkling of the nose. A close friend of mine, when I asked him which religion he followed, once told me, 'My parents follow Islam, I guess I'm supposed to follow it too, but I don't.' If you question the young and young adults in any Indian urban setting you are likely to receive a similar reply. Following a religion is now an old school, uncool and nine out of ten times turns you into a right wing fascist in the eyes of the enlightened left. By now you wonder if this is a rant against



The running joke for women in Hinduism is that they should not feel bad for being excluded. There is a temple where Durga herself is removed from the sanctum sanctorum once a month.

the woke, I assure you that it is not! I seek to examine my own worldview as critically as I can. Any shortcomings are apologised for in advance.

The **India Inclusion Audit 2022** gave an overwhelming 30% response in saying that religion, often along with other factors is the leading reason for feeling excluded. Examination of the data shows that a large percentage of the respondents, perhaps because it is an online survey, are young. My understanding of the question would lead me to believe that these respondents feel excluded because they practice a particular religion and assuredly this is one of the reasons, but, there is another perspective, there is a section of the respondents who feel excluded because they are those who do not follow any form of organised religion at all.

Let's look at the interpretations one by one, starting from the obvious: the people who follow a particular religion feeling excluded. This is an expected response simply because the current powers are becoming more and more focused on using the influence of religion to hold onto power rather than focus on governance. It is far easier to hold onto power by creating a perceived threat than by actually putting in the effort to run a country. I have seen the induced myopia with my own eyes (pun not intended). People whom I considered as enlightened and wise in the ways of the world now claim that we are under threat, that we are on the verge of being wiped out and I am a fool for thinking otherwise. The greatest irony is this, out of fear of being excluded for your religion, you exclude others for theirs. Why else would you support the beef ban? Why

else would you disrupt a peaceful procession? Why else would you want halal certification revoked? It could be because you are an anarchist, but it's more likely that an IT cell has influenced your way of thinking.

Point two: examining the data obtained in the **India Inclusion Audit 2022**, 60% of those who cite religion as cause for exclusion are women. And this begs the question, are they excluded because of their religion or excluded from their own religion. Almost all organised religions have one thing that we can agree on, and that is viewing women as second class citizens. My parents brought me up to be open minded and accepting of all things natural. My own religion sees the feminine as sacred and yet will not allow a woman into a temple during her time of the month. The running joke for women in Hinduism is that they should not feel bad for being excluded. There is a temple where Durga herself is removed from the sanctum sanctorum once a month.

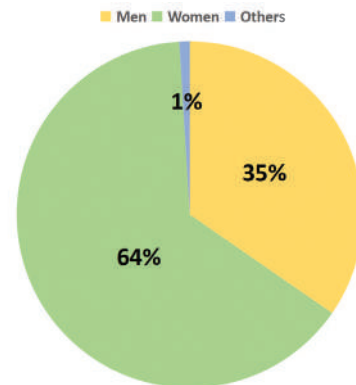
Religion and spirituality are separate. They have been made separate for reasons I have already mentioned. Among the youth of today there are two approaches, either there is a growth in agnosticism or there is a claim that they believe in god but not in religion. And this is perhaps the largest reason for exclusion. Not from social settings but the youth of today feel excluded from religious practice. They do not identify with rituals, do not see meaning in uttering words in languages they do not understand, be it Sanskrit, Latin or Arabic. They see God in their own way and this is a reason to be proud of. There are few things in life that are our own: among them comes our faith, or lack of it. ■

Whom Does Gender Belong To?

There is an entire semantic of respectability a woman must construct each time she leaves her home.

SUMIT DASGUPTA

I am sure we all think of ourselves as observant, vigilant, and intelligent creatures. We are on top of the proverbial food chain and we are the dominant species on this planet. We are outnumbered by ants and we are depleting this planet's resources at an alarming rate but we are number one while this journey lasts. But I digress—this piece is not about the planet. I am sure you already know where this is going. Let's look at the implication of my first statement and localise it. We are observant and intelligent creatures, but have you, have we, really looked and observed? Outside our own four walls? It might be difficult I admit, but humanity never thrived with blinders on. It thrives when we see, hear, and acknowledge everything around us (pardon me for being an ableist). If we look outside, we will notice construction workers, homeless people begging, food stalls going about their daily business, people going to work, children going to school and the unlucky ones going to work (although it is outlawed). One thing that we have all noticed but seemed to have maybe never properly acknowledged is the severe lack of women walking around or going about their daily business. The gender ratio of India, as of January 2021 according to the UN is at about 720 million males and 620 million females. The female population is at 48% while the male population is at 52%. This ratio is not bad when compared to other third-world developing countries. But when we look around, women are surprisingly missing. You can see them, walking and working but they are massively outnumbered by men. If in a metropolitan, urban city like Bengaluru it is this easily noticeable, imagine tier two and three cities. We can go one step further and include the data released by Statistia while talking about



Who is more excluded?

the same gender ratio in our country and it is revealed that for each 1000 males there are 1020 females. The ratio has skewed towards them for the first time in India's history. Yet the story remains the same. It seems that public spaces are not accessible to women.

Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets by Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade is a transformative book, to say the least. It tests the idea that Mumbai, the so-called city of dreams, the progressive city of millions is a safe haven for women. Lucid and compact, the book was born out of a three-year research project titled *Gender and Space*, undertaken by Phadke, Khan and Ranade. It cuts across location, class, and religious affiliations. Carefully dispelling the myth of Mumbai being a safe city that grants full access to its women, it proves that even in this cosmopolitan city, the access that women have to public spaces is, at best, conditional. The book challenges the idea that being benign or neutral, at least in the public realm, is actually value-laden, constantly putting

its women under a panopticon of continuous surveillance that one may evade, or conform to. How easy it is to be spotted as out of the ordinary, and how difficult it is to function, once one has been perceived as such. Eyes are always on the street looking out for those 'not like us' and there are so many of 'them'. The authors demonstrate the difficulty of 'the others' to use the city normally and freely. The list of oddballs on the street, who are whetted by the silent city every time they step out is inclusive and top-lined by one single group: 'all women'. To conform, and so to have open access to public space, Mumbai's every woman must be or appear to be young, able-bodied, Hindu, upper-caste, heterosexual, married, or marriageable.

The case in Bengaluru is the same even though it's not Mumbai—it is an urban metropolitan place that boasts of progressive values and prioritises the safety of women. A recent report by the *Deccan Herald* stated that Karnataka has seen a rise in crimes against women as per National Family Health Survey data, UN, and other official reports. The total number of cases registered relating to crimes against women in 2019 was 13,828. In 2021, this increased to 14,468. While 2020 experienced a marginal drop in the number of cases compared to 2019, the cases of crime increased by 1,788 in the following year, 2021. The government has proposed to tighten security, install CCTV devices everywhere and 'educate' the citizens of the state of the evils of abuse of women. These measures are hollow and do not do anything worthwhile. This report comes hot on the heels of the gruesome murder of Shraddha Walkar in Delhi. TV news pundits, experts, and Elon-Musk-wannabes pointed fingers at Shraddha, her parents, and Muslims but nobody questioned the very roots of the issue of gender, accessibility, and safety. There is an entire semantic of respectability a woman must construct each time she leaves her home. She must be or appear to be neutrally middle-class, not Dalit, not Muslim, not lesbian or queer in any way, and not disabled. On Bengaluru's streets, every woman must dress modestly and preferably be escorted by an equally respectable-looking man. She must be healthy, freely mobile, sexually inert, and, most importantly, have a good reason for being out of doors. She must never 'loiter'.

So, whose gender is it anyway? Who does the mantle of gender belong to? Well, if you ask Judith Butler, American post-modernist philosopher, and gender and queer theorist, they will tell you it does not exist and, in its non-existence, most probably belongs to the exploitative capitalist and patriarchal machinery that benefits out of this. They said that gender roles are performative, it's a cycle. Society prescribes gender roles long before the so-called gender is even established. People tell you that you are a woman even before you figure out you are one and therefore you perform or act as a woman and the world acknowledges it. Anything that deviates from the path will be derogatorily called 'deviant'. Gender roles are beneficial to power dynamics because they dictate what a woman should and shouldn't do. So, when it comes to accessibility and safety of women instead of making public spaces a better place for them it has limited them to their homes without realising that homes are not always a safe space for them.

What *Why Loiter* and the **India Inclusion Audit 2022** is trying to point out is that we must recognise that women's safety, accessibility, and gender are not a cosmetic issue. It is the assertion that a woman may not remain in the public realm without purpose. If spotted as such, she would be perceived as having a 'loose' character or would be putting herself at risk and the city would need to exert itself to keep her safe. Her risks are twofold: the first is from an assault on her modesty or respectability, and the second is that she may do something disreputable or immodest. Every woman enters public spaces in Bengaluru with this knowledge. The city is not designed (nor has it grown) with enough consideration for women. Nowhere is this more visible than in the lack of public conveniences. If women from all strata can't use a public bathroom or go to a public park without having to think thrice, then there's no freedom nor any equality for everybody. Questioning the lack of women on the streets of Namma Bengaluru is also recognising that a fundamental right given to the people of India by the constitution is being violated in plain sight and everyone seems to be silent about it or has quietly accepted it and that should not be the norm. ■

Social Inclusion Is Social Cure

The primary determinant for the exclusion of those living with mental health conditions has to do with our unchecked prejudicial and discriminatory stigmatization of them.

A FRANCIS OFM

The number of individuals living with mental health conditions in a shadow pandemic of mental health is alarmingly on the rise. The harrowing words of Dr T A Ghebreyesus, the Director General of WHO, 'Everyone's life touches someone with a mental health condition' hold a mirror image of the unfolding mental health crisis.

More people contracting mental health conditions would mean more people are being succumbed to social stigma, neglect and exclusion, besides suffering from an illness(es) that impairs their mental health. Social stigma, neglect and exclusion make the sick get much sicker.

Despite the reliable scientific data on the benefits of social inclusion in the treatment of people with mental health conditions, we turn a deaf ear to it. Social inclusion starts with destigmatising of mental health conditions through genuine human acts of caring and compassion.

The Plight

The plight of the people with mental health conditions, whether it was of Lorry (pseudonym) from my childhood memories who aggressively chased after those who triggered her, or our favourite 'crazy fiddler' who sits on the roof in the popular Broadway musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, or of anyone else, has never been any different from one of explicit neglect and exclusion. On that miserable fate which majority of them share, one small differing note might be added that the two broad categories that comprise the world's 970 plus million



individuals with mental health issues, the category of the 'any mental illness' (AMI) are slightly more fortunate than the 'severe mental illness' (SMI).

The AMIs, depending on the intensity of the illness and the treatment accessibility, are able to camouflage their illness, and function to the best of their abilities. Some extremely versatile personages who hold the beacon of hope in this category are, Vincent Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Abraham Lincoln, Virginia Woolf who though suffered from mental illness, still left their indelible footprints on human history.

Sadly, the SMIs, can neither camouflage their illness, nor manage their lives. Living in dejection and friendlessness, they wander on the streets, as social castaways scavenging from the household throwaway food to the filthy wayside garbage bins. Eventually they die a premature death, *as much as two decades early, due to a preventable physical illness*, documents WHO. It is estimated that eight million people die of mental illness, each year.



[T]he primary determinant for the exclusion of those living with mental health conditions has to do with our unchecked prejudicial and discriminatory stigmatisation.

Our Bias Causes Social Exclusion

The only treatment approach prevalent for SMIs until the 1960s, was to lock them up in mental health asylums. This practice focused not on providing them with quality treatment, but on ensuring safety and protection of the public.

Mental health asylums are known for their horrific living conditions; they are not only smelly, filthy, and crowded, but also not sufficiently conducive to heal the individual, notes Dr A J Frances, the chair of the DSM-IV Task Force. He writes, 'No surprise that it caused the emergence of the worst symptoms in people who were already troubled by mental illness.' Relating to his personal experience of witnessing their degradation, he calls asylums as 'disgraceful snake pits'!

Studies highlight that the primary determinant for the exclusion of those living with mental health conditions has to do with our unchecked prejudicial and discriminatory stigmatisation of them that they are unpredictably dangerous, aggressive, violent, prone to criminality, and many more discriminatory misconceptions we hold. Contrary to our implicit bias, data shows that the number of individuals with SMIs who become the victims of violence is much higher than the number of them becoming the perpetrators!

An Unrealised Dream of Social Inclusion

The dream of social inclusion and deinstitutionalisation in the management and treatment of the individuals with mental health conditions was at the heart of the reform intended in the 1960s in different parts of the world. Replacing of psychiatric asylums with community mental health centres were the immediate plan of action in realizing this dream. Instead of locking them up in the asylums, let them live and get the care in the

community. The success of this reform required the widespread decentralizing of psychiatric facilities into community-oriented clinical centres in cities, towns and villages.

Ironically, majority of the countries that envisioned the promise of the theory of deinstitutionalisation, hurriedly abolished the asylums, but fell short on their commitment to building up the community mental health centres. The result is, more individuals with SMIs are pushed on the streets, and in prisons.

Healing by Caring and Social Inclusion

Dispelling our misconceptions, which is fundamental to the process of inclusion, is not an easy task. These are so deeply imprinted in us, like in a stone-carving. But to begin with, we can focus on a tiny step of perspective change, like the one suggested by Alisa Roth, the author of the book, *Insane: America's Criminal Treatment*: 'One that goes from seeing people as inherently dangerous to treating them as human beings in need of help.' With our awareness of their shared humanity, we have already advanced in the process of inclusion.

In the same vein, Dr Frances who has done extensive research on mental health, suggests an effective way we could engage in the process of their social inclusion. While critiquing on the lack of political will in providing adequate care and housing, he prescribes to people to engage in the act of social cure. As a psychiatrist, educator, and author he writes his experience, convincingly: 'We can heal by simple human acts of caring and inclusion'.

The change of perspective, and the social cure, both, sound very promising. Still, a great deal of uncertainty will remain in the plight of people who live with mental health conditions, until the policymakers of the State invest in providing appropriate community mental health centres, and decent housing for the people. ■



Art by Joseph Joyson OFM Cap

Is Inclusivity a Wild Cry?

The voiceless are forced to be still voiceless and the have-nots are squeezed into naught.

JOSEPH JOYSON OFM CAP

ty in Meersel-Dreef of which I am a member, sheltered three Ukrainian families including babies during this war. The Belgian government strided to the rehabilitation and peaceful settling of the refugees taking time while her citizens generously poured assistance to the refugees with their resources notwithstanding cultural and linguistic disparities. Villages in the neighbourhood opened up their reserves so as to help the Ukrainian war victims. As a result, our storerooms were filled up with food and other amenities for the refugees. On our part, all of us took turns to cook food and care for them while the villagers kept on visiting them and assisting them to feel at home—a positive surge of fraternal values gripped our being with them.

People in Europe generally, may not be so adherent to religious life and practices. At any rate, many of them seem to be upholding values of inclusivity. Hand in hand, they come across challenges which prompt them to respond. It was painful for many a Belgian national when they heard about their national team defeated by the Moroccans at the World Cup Football Tournament in Qatar. Interestingly, on 27 November several youngsters from an immigrant Moroccan community in Brussels, capital city of Belgium, unleashed rampage, vandalised public places and property in a frenzy of euphoria over a winning Morocco. This odd experience sparked widespread criticism on imbalanced social responses targeting an inclusive host land. Ironically, this incident has been missed and misinterpreted by the social media as the reaction of a desperate group of Belgian fans against the Moroccan immigrants. At any rate, it is evident

that social media as an easily accessible and trending communication platform, is tending to augment carnage of inclusivity. Now-a-days, the lingos adherent to the right wing religious groups who use social media extensively, are glaring examples of domineering over an overly humiliated inclusivity. One can easily admit that the amount of damage brought about by the social media is enormous. Right wing activism is gaining momentum at the expense of inclusivity. Division and hate are the latest equations set forth by the religious fanatics against inclusivity. Verbal abuses surpassing the limits of reciprocity have become order of the day. A peaceful and creative attempt towards building up inclusivity is often jeered upon and strangled by means of murderous satire iced with hate, pet named 'troll'. Sadly, a number of people throw themselves into such weird practices and kill their ingenuity in an odd peer-feeling which in effect, sound to be a collective exclusivism.

The ongoing fishermen's strike at Vizhinjam in Kerala, entered its 100th day on 26 October 2022. A revitalised strike drew the attention of many while the state government, leading political parties and the right wing activists turned a deaf ear to the humanitarian plea of the suffering fisher folk. The fishers' families ousted from the Transshipment Terminal Project area in Vizhinjam, lost their homes and their livelihood. Despite warnings based on scientific studies, self-willed administrative bodies with vested interests pushed their way ahead without even keeping their word to rehabilitate the ousted fishers' families duly and marring the equilibrium of nature. Shore erosion has been accelerated since the beginning of the developmental works at the project area, threatening the lives of thousands along the coast. The fisher folks are pleading mercy while the government and allied agencies are adding further to their woes. Several fishers were brutally beaten up. Lately, many fishermen together with their Church leaders ended up facing false allegations and court cases. It is again a clear example of the age-old strife between the haves and the have-nots. Humanitarian concerns are often ignored. Those who are responsible hesitate to address problems which demand immediate attention and solution. Total

After Russia invaded Ukraine in February, over 1.3 million people around the world began studying Ukrainian in a show of solidarity. Interest in learning Ukrainian and using Ukrainian in crisis situations soared in the weeks after the war began, peaking in late March and remaining steady for the rest of 2022.

Among language learners, the global response to the war was united: Ukrainian was the fastest-growing language in countries far from the conflict, including Argentina, Japan, and Vietnam, and among Ukraine's neighbors as well. In the six months following the invasion, people studying Ukrainian grew 1651% year-over-year in Germany, 1615% in Poland, and 1515% in Czechia.

negligence or recourse to violent suppression has become the manner of dealing on the part of the administration. The voiceless are forced to be still voiceless and the have-nots are squeezed into naught. The stampede is on and the value of inclusivity succumbs to grave injury. Is inclusivity a wild cry?

Pope Francis said that invoking inclusion does not guarantee a real correction of the tendency to marginalise society's frailest members. 'Certainly, the rhetoric of inclusion is the ritual formula of every politically correct discourse. But it still does not bring about a real correction of the practices of normal co-existence: a culture of social tenderness struggles to grow,' he added. (Pope Francis' general audience at Vatican, 30 March 2022) The whole world witnessed to the Pontiff's words and actions favouring inclusivity. This was very vivid when he welcomed in 2015, two migrant families from the war-torn near-eastern country, to live in the premises of Vatican. Inclusivity challenges us at our face. It is a glaring gaze which demand a portion of our life and its cosy environs. The face of the other 'order and ordains' us, as the renowned French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas puts it around human sociality. Reciprocity is the positive output of inclusivity. It is a face-to-face encounter which reiterates that human beings are mutually responsible and that one cannot ignore the other. It invites us to a deliberate and positive action other than utterances. It is again a call to coexist. It reminds us that you and I are created in the likeness and image of God (Gen 1: 26–27). ■

Time to Add 'Gaslighting' to Our Personal Dictionary

Do you feel irrationally and absurdly powerless, and at times, stupid with certain dominant persons around you? It is time to take stock. You may be a victim of gaslighting.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

I just added *gaslighting* to the dictionary of my personal computer. Gaslighting is declared as the word of the year 2022 by American dictionary Merriam-Webster, and I know it would be a word that would be often heard from newsrooms, courtrooms, and at public conversations for a while, until someone else gaslights us. In 2018, the term was named a buzzword by *The Guardian* and shortlisted for the 'word of the year' by the Oxford Dictionary.

What Is Gaslighting?

To gaslight is to intentionally distort reality by manipulating someone or a group using psychological methods into questioning their own sanity or powers of reasoning often for one's own advantage. It is making someone or a group believe that what they are feeling, thinking, and seeing is not real. Anybody could be a victim of gaslighting: an employer, a business partner, a spouse, or a patient. Anyone in a position of power can gaslight another: a strong family member, a boss, people of influence in a community, etc. Sadly this sort of mental abuse is quite common in all sorts of relationships, especially in deep and intimate relationships. The very fact that this word has seen a 1740% increase in search and in usage in 2022 must alert us.

The origin of gaslighting is not in gas or in lighting; it is from a 1938 British play called *Gas Light* by Patrick Hamilton; it became a TV series in United States in the name, *Angel Street* in 1940s; then it was made into a more widely

known movie in 1944 also called, *Gas Light*. In the play as well as in the film, an abusive husband manipulates his wife to believe that she is gone mad through manipulative and psychological means, and even through physical means as dimming the gas lights in the room and asserting that she is imagining it.

Gaslighting involves an imbalance of power between the abuser and the person they are gaslighting. Abusers often exploit and exaggerate the stereotypes or vulnerabilities of the other; stereotypes and vulnerabilities related to gender, sexuality, race, nationality, and the like. Gaslighting is not an incident but a process, at times a slow process, which includes creating confusion, lying, deception, isolation, denial, accusation, and manipulation of all parts of the process. Means of gaslighting are subtle and confusing. It is confusing because it often comes from people who are close, caring, and trusted.

Mental health experts have been using gaslighting to explain the state of affairs in marital and other intimate relationships; but today gaslighting has entered the public, political and social arena more than ever before. The psychological manipulation of a people or ethnic community over a period of time can make them question the validity of their own thoughts, perceptions of reality or memories that they held as true. It can play down the self-esteem and confidence of people and communities; and the victims begin to form dependence on the perpetrators.



The Subtle Undoers of Inclusivity

The biggest threats to inclusivity are false narratives. Without calling a spade by its name no inclusivity is possible, we might, at best have pseudo nationalism or pseudo communities. When dealing with the horrors of apartheid in 1995, the South African government along with other sensible leaders established a court-like body and called it 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' to help heal the country and bring about reconciliation of its people. The leaders very well recognised that there is no possibility of reconciliation or inclusivity without first having the possibility of truth being spoken and heard.

The greatest undoers of truth, and thus inclusivity, are thought control, post-truth, echo chambers, and now gaslighting. Thought control is the practice by a totalitarian government or establishment of attempting (as by propaganda) to prevent objective and impartial information from being received, and in its place spread lies and emotionally charged information as official ideology and policies. Post-truth makes objective facts less influential in shaping public opinion; objective knowledge will have no effect on voting or policymaking. An echo chamber is an environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own; one never encounters or faces the other. Now the phenomenon of gaslighting completes the picture by forcing people, often the vulnerable ones, to doubt their memories, beliefs, feelings, or even sanity.

Signs to Watch Out

Gaslighting is so very subtle; and psychologists warn us of situations to be cautious about. When you have a 'Twilight Zone' effect whereby you feel that the situation is surreal, that it is happening on a different plane from the rest of your life, that in normal life it does not make sense at all, that it is not connected with life, then it is time to be cautious. Gaslighting could arrive in the garb of nationalism, religion, doctrines, and more.

Be cautious when people trivialize your needs and feelings, and sweepingly use a language that describes you or your behavior as crazy, irrational or overemotional. Be alert if you are feeling powerless and confused after leaving an interaction. Be cautious about people and groups that try to isolate you from friends, family and other support groups. A gaslighter may pretend not to understand or refuse to listen, or over-criticize your tone of voice (tone policing) when you are challenging them on something.

Gaslighting destroys the individuality of the victims. Kate Abramson's *Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting* argues that the gaslighter destroys even the possibility of disagreement of the victim. Right-wing governments of the recent past, be it Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Trump in the United States have partially held people sway through gaslighting. The Indian right-wing narrative is gaslighting millions to believe in a surreal past and insane future. With it inclusivity becomes a very distant dream. ■



The Joy of Giving

Love for others must be tempered with self-love.

MONICA FERNANDES

‘God loves a cheerful giver.’ –The Bible. The opposite is also true. Those who give of their time, money, energy and expertise derive happiness from giving. A few years ago a Gallup poll was conducted across 136 countries and with 200,000 respondents to correlate happiness with donating. It was found that as many as 90% respondents found happiness in donating.

Another study found that donating to charity had the same effect in terms of happiness as doubling of household income. For instance if you earned ₹25,000 and donated part of charity, you would be as happy as someone who earned ₹50,000 and did not donate. Even giving anonymously makes us happy. Prof Raj Ragunathan talks of two year old kids who were given goldfish crackers. A toy monkey was placed near the children. Most of them tried to give one cracker to the monkey. He concluded that human beings are hardwired to kindness.

‘It takes giving to be happy.’—The Dalai

Lama. Why does giving make us happy? One reason is that we want to make a difference. Another is because of reciprocity. The recipients love us better and are likely to return our thoughtful gesture with gratitude, kindness, trust and love. Givers harness a lot of good will, sometimes even unintentionally. This in turn increases their happiness and that of others. Their focus changes from ‘me’ to ‘we’. The ripple effect of good deeds enhances our joy.

Wharton Prof Adam Grant, who specialises in organisational psychology, cautions against indiscriminate giving. In his words we should be smart or ‘Otherish Givers’, not selfless givers. A selfless giver lacks self preservation as giving without a thought of looking after his health, his relationships with family and friends, his hobbies, his paying job to make ends meet is inviting burn out. He becomes inefficient and gets frustrated. His relationships also deteriorate. He seems to lack the giving filter. Love for others must be tempered with self-love.

Let us take two surgeons A and B. Both sincerely want to heal people and have altruistic motives in doing good work among the underprivileged. Dr A works himself to the bone. He does all the free consultations, operations and fund raising himself. Dr B trains his juniors and lets them perform operations under his watchful eye. He is efficient and delegates fund raising. He finds time to spend on himself and family. Obviously Dr B is the otherish giver.

Another issue that the selfless giver faces is that she feels manipulated by others and this results in frustration. My school classmate Meena was a couple of years older than me. She felt that I was a kid and so volunteered to do all my needlework assignment for me, besides her own. I readily agreed as it meant I would have fun spending time with my friends while Meena slogged. She did my needlework but was understandably irritated at the end of it.

Prof Ragunathan suggests that we employ ‘value enhancing strategies’ to increase the chances of seeing the impact of our generosity. If we donate for the education of an underprivileged child and ask the orphanage to keep us abreast of the progress the child is making in his education, we feel motivated to help another

child. Romila Palliative Care, Bandra, Mumbai reaches out to the elderly once a week in a program called the Silvers Circle. Volunteers teach chair exercises to the participants to keep time with a catchy tune. Quizzes and games are organised. Everyone has a blast including the volunteers who are able to see the impact of the work they are putting in. It’s a win-win situation.

‘To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.’—Mark Twain. The good news is that more people are givers than what Prof. Adam Grant calls ‘takers’. Takers are basically selfish people who do not share their talents, knowledge and resources. The joy of giving is evidenced by sociologist Wayne Baker and his wife Cheryl when they developed the ‘Reciprocity Ring’. The purpose is to share among a group of members. It has been used by individuals and also businesses. Let’s say one person wants to grow his business. He gets valuable inputs from another member. Another member requires information on good colleges for her children. This guidance is provided by a college professor in the group.

I conclude with the wise words of Charles Dickens: ‘No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of others.’ ■



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You Have a Duty to Tell People They Are Wrong

We have an epistemic duty to speak up, even when it makes us uncomfortable, even when it seems rude, weird, or exhausting.

Dr MARIANNE FURTADO DE NAZARETH

Fake news is a phenomenon that pervades our waking hours, now with social media being the norm as the go to, for so-called 'breaking news'. Salacious stuff about anyone from Prince Harry and Megan Markle or even if there's another epidemic wave of Covid flying across the seas from China to us. We have turned into a panic driven society where all kinds of rumours are turned into 'cold facts'. These may seem like small mistakes – so small that speaking up could seem more trouble than it's worth.

However, you may reach a different conclusion if someone expresses a false belief concerning a matter of great importance. It may be a social media discussion on which Covid vaccine is efficacious. It may be a neighbour worrying that a vaccine approved by international health agencies apparently changes our DNA, or a Twitter bot calling into question whether the Holocaust really happened. It may be your boss 'joking' that there's no need to educate women so they don't contradict you in the newsroom.

These are not small mistakes. In fact, you may think the subject matter is too important and the other person's belief too distant from the truth to remain silent. Even so, deciding whether to object can be complicated. You might worry about offending someone, or lack the time to articulate your disagreement. You may even find yourself in a conversational context so polarised that introducing an objection will likely backfire.

But sometimes there are better and stronger reasons for voicing our disagreements

with others. Sometimes we have an outright obligation to do so. You probably should correct your friend, even if speaking up strains your relationship, when they claim that cutting down hundreds of trees in Bangalore is needed for the infrastructure. And you probably should risk alienating your next door neighbour when she recounts advising her family members against vaccination because she thinks that a vaccine developed almost 'overnight' is dangerous. But how do we decide, in any given situation, whether to pipe up or instead let a false, unwarranted, misleading assertion pass? False, unwarranted beliefs are precursors to harmful consequences... we should, when feasible, prevent others from being harmed

Of course, it isn't always appropriate to correct someone's false beliefs: 'Testifying to all our disagreements would be weird, rude, and exhausting,' as the philosopher Casey Rebecca Johnson aptly says. Interrupting a private conversation between two colleagues only to pedantically set them straight about shopping for veggies from the grocer or from Big Basket, would likely violate other obligations we simultaneously hold, for instance to be polite, or to respect others' privacy. Conversely, politeness may become a secondary concern if those same colleagues are organic farmers where being aware of even minor price changes is of great practical importance.

When it comes to objecting to or correcting a false or unwarranted assertion, context matters. And context can mean: who we are, who the speaker is, what the assertion is about, the situation in which it is uttered, and how others

witnessing the assertion respond. These are all considerations that should be factored in and weighed against one another as we deliberate whether or not to voice our disagreement.

With so much complexity involved, we may wonder: is the duty to object worth taking seriously?

It is. There are two reasons why. The first is that false, unwarranted beliefs are precursors to harmful consequences. The second is that we should, when feasible, prevent others from being harmed. In fact, we can be even more specific: if someone faces harms of a practical nature, we have a moral duty to speak up; if these harms are of an epistemic nature, we have an epistemic duty to speak up.

If I relay my neighbour's poorly justified vaccine-sceptical advice to a student who believes what I tell him, I am doing something wrong. There is more to our epistemic duties than mere self-interest. If my student entertains a false belief after our exchange, and entertaining false beliefs is harmful, my testimony has put him in epistemic harm's way.

In fact, my poorly justified advice might produce a second and subtler harmful consequence. Since my testimony is in flagrant contradiction of the advice given by public health experts, there is a real possibility that the latter's credibility will be diminished in my student's eyes. My advice could weaken his trust in genuinely competent testifiers such as public health authorities, and so limit or damage his access to an indispensable source of justification for his beliefs about public health.

Typically, we want to avoid entertaining false beliefs. We want as many of our beliefs as possible to be as close to the truth and as well supported as possible. Why else would we incentivise learning, celebrate intellectual advances and accomplishments, reward correct answers, or prize knowledge over ignorance? Crucially, we do all these things not out of uncritical habit but because we recognise that knowledge and understanding are key ingredients of our intellectual wellbeing, and their

pursuit a virtuous endeavour. And so anything that stands in the way of our beliefs being true and justified puts us in epistemic harm's way.

This means that entertaining beliefs that are true and justified isn't just a noble aim, it's a goal we ought to actively pursue: an epistemic duty. Some of our epistemic duties are to ourselves. If I unquestioningly believe my neighbour's claim that drinking two litres of orange juice every day guarantees immunity to Covid-19, even though I know she has no medical training and that she relies on her non-expert social media peers for information, then I'm doing something wrong. I'm being negligent and doing a poor job of ensuring that my beliefs are justified.

But things become more complicated when it comes to matters that lie outside our sphere of expertise. If neither my student nor I are public health experts, then we both crucially depend on those who are, if we want to form warranted true beliefs about public health matters. This is sometimes referred to as the novice-expert gap. When non-experts 'don't know whom to trust', this gap becomes very difficult or impossible to fill.

So if my student regards me as an epistemic authority, and I abuse that authority by contradicting – and therefore discrediting – the testimony of public health experts, then I risk compromising his access to vital trustworthy testimony. Doing so would violate my obligation not to epistemically harm others.

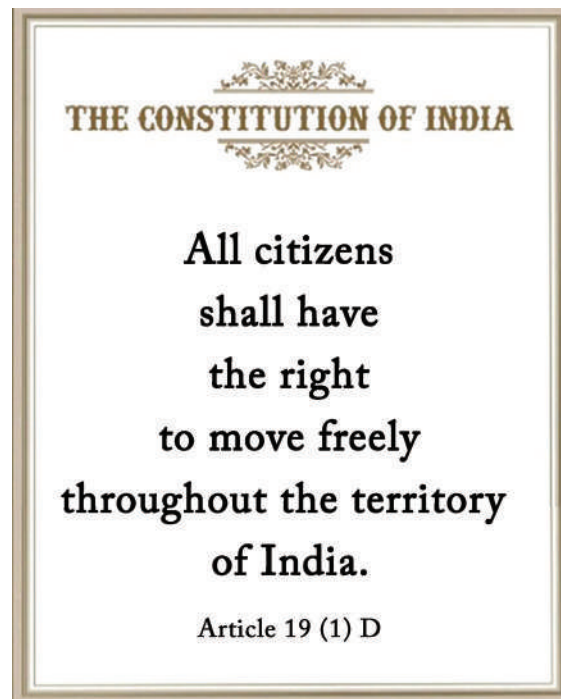
In an age of rising misinformation, as navigating expert testimonies becomes ever more difficult, we must be epistemically vigilant. We must be careful when it comes to our own beliefs. We shouldn't treat gossip and speculation as fact. We should be wary of far-fetched explanations.

Sometimes, we have an epistemic duty to speak up. Even when it makes us uncomfortable. Even when it seems rude, weird or exhausting. And even when it's about something as seemingly unimportant as the price of tomatoes. ■

Should Aadhar Curtail One's Constitutional Rights?

The lofty ideals of our Constitution have not yet affected political leaders, Government officials, and those seated at the head-table.

GERRY LOBO OFM



While on a journey towards my destination, the other day, on a Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation bus, my fellow passenger, a woman, was asked by the conductor for any proof of her identity in order to confirm the ticket she had purchased online. She had a copy of her Aadhar Card to present. However, because that Card was issued in Andhra Pradesh, the conductor said he required Karnataka State Aadhar Card as she was on the Karnataka State RTC bus without which she might not proceed. Instantly an elderly gentleman and I, both hailing from Karnataka, reacted strongly to the conductor on his refusal to accept the woman's identity proof. The conductor, of course, defended himself based on the orders he had received from the RTC department, which might be true. When a few more voiced out loudly their objections with anger, the woman was permitted to travel on. The unanimous voice that protested had only one thing to state, namely, that the Aadhar Card is a national provision provided to the citizens, irrespective of which state one belonged to, for obtaining benefits from

the government or for any other eventualities as proof. If it is permitted as one's proof in any government offices within the country, though not understood as National Identity Card as found in other countries, why should any officer be concerned about the State in which the Card is issued? Here is one incident, a case, and the government officials have not clearly issued particulars about the Aadhar and the usage of it, thus putting thousands of our citizens into difficulty, anxiety and fear even after several years of the existence of it.

The Government projects are but grandiose dreams channeled into the pipelines! If they are executed, they are confounding and fumbling; lip services, nothing more. The people, the beneficiaries, down the lane, allured by the mighty promises sadly land up in sleepless nights, dreary risks and go through fearful days. In order to obtain the benefits, supposedly in favour of the needy, experience nightmare and hazardous journeys, lining up for hours hoping to arrive at their turn with open hands, but finally only to end up in frustration. Not to miss a promised goodie from the political Santa Clauses, the needy stomachs rough it out immeasurably and patiently. Recently a villager recounted his awful saga of standing in the long queue for about nine hours in order to get his name registered for obtaining Aadhar Card which was supposed to be required for linking with the Voter's Identity Card. There was no clear announcement in the News papers, but word passed on from one ear to another brought fear into this villager. The outcome of all his strain and struggle, finally, was only to hear that the Government has not clearly stated. The government agencies by sounding unfounded announcements into the ears of the ordinary thus create fear and insecurity. The common man and the woman of our nation suffer the irrational orders of government officials. After all, in our country, only he or she down the street know clearly well the brunt of burning themselves on every day basis in the fire stoked by the privileged personalities reigning from above.

In a certain State of our Union the incumbent Government announces on a daily basis spectacular economic projects to which the ordinary mass of people, who presumably voted in the government, fall for them only to realize a little later that these are but death traps laid for the innocent and the distressed, and suffer graver injustice and ignominy. These bogey attractions having functioned for a time during which the spirits of the ignorant soar high hoping that the day of their prosperous future is here. On wooing the voters with these incriminating promises, the popularity of the political clout rises, but the voters die a sad death – the farmer commits suicide, a mother runs into debt from which she is unable to be freed, the school going child refrains from frequenting the school because she is unable to pay the fees. The socio-economic welfare measures which are easily announced on the front pages of the prominent News papers simply fall short of the real welfare measure the human beings need – human development comprising an environment of understanding, mutual trust and peaceful co-existence. However, those who benefit from these economic measures are those who are already mired in wealth and who have a soothing sail and a sumptuous ethereal prosperity. Robbing Peter to pay Paul has become a common, every-day exigency. Human development, for that matter even the economic development, remains only a dream, causing poverty and marginalization as near normal for a large portion of the population. This goes unseen and unheard of, untouched and un-attended to. To the leaders at the helm of affairs, their conscience hardly pricks; of course, a dead conscience feels no prick! Indeed, this is a sorry state of affairs prevailing in our country beneath the coloured clothing of the spectacular glamour, only to silence feeble minds, illiterate hands and the dusty feet!

The two-year Covid pandemic with its horrendous appearance and cruel charge on humanity had destabilized millions without mercy. People, gripped by fear, uncertainty of



To brag about the lofty ideals enshrined in the Constitution of our Nation is one thing; to dedicate oneself to those ideals in manner in which one treats another human person is another thing.

the morrow, struggled hard to see themselves and their loved ones alive. As if for the first time in human history, people of flesh and blood were brought to their knees making them realize the utter futility of anything that exists on this planet and acknowledge deep within their self that one is insecure, vulnerable and mere mortal. Having gradually passed from the Covid anxiety and hopelessness, and when one is just trying to stand erect and get on with the daily life, a compassionate approach in the relational dynamics in our society is what is most required. The establishment of a more humane form of governance, an attentive and watchful kind of administration, free and fair treatment rendered to every citizen is all that is wanting today. The public space both in terms of airing ones views as well as the spatial-temporal area need to be a meeting of humans, a convergence through conversation, a parliament of voicing concerns which affect everyone. This will eliminate impersonalism, anonymity and a feeling of being a stranger in a strange land. The voters exercise their privilege of franchise not only to derive welfare measures but also to live in a society in which equality, liberty and fraternity are potently manifested through words, deeds and the enactment of wise laws that protect every citizen.

To brag about the lofty ideals enshrined in the Constitution of our Nation is one thing; to dedicate oneself to those ideals in manner in which one treats another human person is another thing. There seems to be a deficiency in the culture of kindness, equity and fairness in the way national leaders and their bureaucracy function today. The citizens must be placed before all because it is they who are the Nation. The irony is that communications may bring people together, as it supposed to have done, but there can be no Nation where the neighbor is not counted as worthy in himself or herself.

The culture of elimination and exclusion has emerged in the world of easy communication in all sectors of life today, particularly in our country, and come to be considered as normal. Politics is to be people oriented system in which not only the economic well-being be the primordial end but with it, on equal terms, enable peaceful co-existence and harmony among the multi-faceted religions. Today the opposite is true. Politics has developed its own culture of empire building by usurping rights for oneself and extending one's power over people silencing their legitimate voices. The bureaucrats serving the Government execute policies without bending down to supervise at the grass root level how these policies are in place and to see how a beneficiary benefits from what is offered. Go where you want, one often witnesses harassment from these officers or those who are subordinate to them. The wound inflicted emotionally or psychologically by those in authority is never accounted for. It was painful to look at the face of that woman on the bus journey I mentioned above when her Aadhar card copy was not accepted just because it was issued in another State. The picture one gets at large as one traverses through the country we live in is that the other hardly counts and is normally tossed about as a play toy. The lofty ideals of our Constitution have not yet affected political leaders, government officials and those seated at the head-table. Perhaps the New Year 2023 could be a time for greater introspection on the part of all. Humanity cannot blind itself towards humanity. While continuing with welfare schemes meant for the people of a Nation in need, the announcers and executors of these must withdraw their avaricious consciences and itchy hands lest the wealth of a nation is not robbed off and the goodness of the earth is not depleted. ■



The Eye Balm

Fr KM GEORGE

Children who grew up in tropical Kerala's countryside might nostalgically remember a very soothing natural eye balm. As you see in the picture, very cool and balmy drops are formed on tips of the tender roots of ordinary grass that creeps on rustic stone walls. The growing edge, slightly oily, of the exposed roots collect dew drops at night and convert them to a balm. In the mornings children would go out to pick the tiny roots in order to anoint their eyes with the cool drops. Some children who are too sensitive to pluck the little roots would bow down, bring their eyes close to the grass and get them anointed. Imagine the starry eyes of the cute little ones being gently stroked by the tender, refreshing grass roots soaked in balmy drops of dew. It was glorious!

This intimate touch with nature brightens up not only our outer eyes, but also the inner ones. These sparkling dew drops are formed in the misty silence of deep and dark nights. The humble grass roots know how to befriend them in the same silence. To be anointed by them is to be initiated into still deeper layers of reality.

Our online school children, with bleary eyes locked down to digital screens desperately need this refreshing stroke of nature. Will we ever care to keep the atmosphere free from all pollution so that our kids will still find some balmy drops at the 'grass roots level' in all purity and freshness? ■

10 Must Watch Indian Films of 2022

NITHIN G TOM



In a year when the Indian film industry slowly started recovering from the pandemic, movie buffs were in for a treat as a number of OTT and theatrical releases came our way. Sadly, it was also a year in which Indian movie halls became propaganda hubs and cinema was used to spread hatred. Any true lover of this art form will know that cinema is meant to unite people and not divide. With that being said, here is my attempt at listing the ten Indian films of 2022 which I feel are a must watch:

(Note: Some films which premiered at film festivals in 2021 were made available to the Indian audience in 2022).

0 *Aavasavyuham: The Arbit Documentation of an Amphibian Hunt* (Malayalam)
Director: Krishand

This experimental Malayalam film can easily make it to the list of must watch Indian films

of this decade and not just 2022. The brilliance with which fantasy and realism blend in this mockumentary is a sight to behold. Rahul Rajagopal excels as the Homme Grenouille in this ecological fantasy. It sure reminds you of the Franz Kafka novella *Metamorphosis*. One of my favourite lines from the movie goes like this 'Kissing a frog to get a prince is the absolute waste of a beautiful frog'.

1 *Chhello Show* (Gujarati)
Director: Pan Nalin

India's official entry to the 2023 Oscars and the movie justifies the selection. Even without that tag this is a beautiful film that anyone with a passion for cinema will fall in love with. Pan Nalin might have been inspired by Giuseppe Tornatore's 1988 Italian film *Cinema Paradiso* but there is a lot of originality in this movie and it is not a cheap copy. It is a semi-autobiographical film about how the filmmaker discovered the magic of movies.



2 *Paka (River of Blood)* (Malayalam)
Director: Nithin Lukose

Nithin Lukose, the much-acclaimed sound designer turns director with this realistic crime drama. The movie stands out with its minimalistic treatment of the cycle of vengeance between two families. There is no over the top drama which you usually find in such movies. A perfect example of how a good filmmaker can turn the same old story into something new and exciting.

3 *Ariyippu/Declaration* (Malayalam)
Director: Mahesh Narayanan

Mahesh Narayanan is a genius who is at the top of his game with this excellent film. The making style resembles some of the finest Iranian films. Art has the capability to make the mundane seem romantic and vice versa which is on full display in this classic. Divya Prabha outshines everyone with her brilliant portrayal of Reshmi in this gem which talks about the complex layers of human nature.

4 *Gargi* (Tamil)
Director: Gautham Ramachandran

The movie tackles an interesting premise of what happens when one of your loved ones is

accused of sexual abuse. Sai Pallavi, one of the finest actors in India right now takes us on a roller coaster ride of emotions in this thriller. Kaali Venkat as the junior lawyer who helps Gargi has dished out one of the performances of the year. The movie is sure to haunt you for a few days after watching it.

5 *Dollu* (Kannada)
Director: Sagar Puranik

A simple film with a profound message. 'Dollu' focuses on the popular traditional art form of Karnataka's 'Dollu Kunitha' and how an artiste tries to preserve this tradition in his village when most of his friends are deserting him attracted by the glamorous city life. The film ends with a positive thought of breaking stereotypes to preserve our rich traditions and culture.

6 *Vendhu Thanindhathu Kaadu Part I: The Kindling* (Tamil)
Director: Gautham Vasudev Menon

Silambarasan and Gautham Vasudev Menon unite once again for a gangster flick this time. Although the story might seem a bit cliched for a movie about the Mumbai underworld, it is the way in which it is presented that makes all



Website



Instagram



Twitter



Facebook



the difference. Add to it some fine music by A.R. Rahman and you are in for something special. You also get to see some delightful romantic scenes, well that's Gautham Vasudev Menon for you.

7 *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (Hindi)
Director: Sanjay Leela Bhansali

This makes it to the list solely based on Alia Bhatt's performance. She delivers one of her career best roles as the mafia queen of Kamathipura. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's handling of the subject might seem a bit odd here and there while showing the red-light area with so much visual flair. But the film has its moments and is worth your time.

8 *RRR* (Telugu)
Director: S S Rajamouli

SS Rajamouli's magnum opus is the quintessential *Grand Indian Masala Flick*. Made

on a whopping budget of around ₹550 crore, this is the most expensive Indian film till date. It is a package with everything that an average Indian movie-goer hopes for. A typical example of cinema transporting you to an imaginary world where every adventure seems possible for the protagonists and making you forget the hardships of daily life for some time.

9 *Bhoothakaalam* (Malayalam)
Director: Rahul Sadasivan

The only horror film in this list. One of the finest horror films to come out of the Malayalam industry in recent times. Shane Nigam and Revathy excel as the mother-son duo who are facing psychological issues. The depressing tone of the movie and the pace at which everything unfolds might not be everyone's cup of tea.

Special Mentions

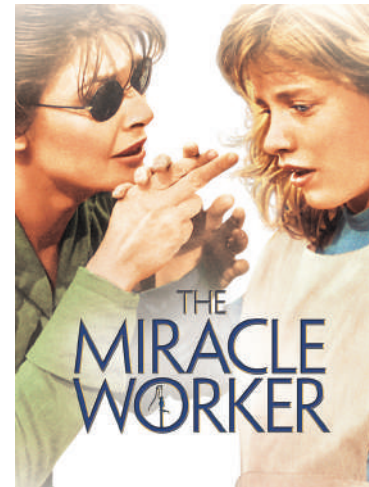
Puzhu (Malayalam), *Badhaai Do* (Hindi), *Ponniyin Selvan: I* (Tamil) and *Kantara* (Kannada) ■

HAVE A HUNCH



The Miracle Worker

AMRUTHA REDDY



I don't think Helen's worst handicap is deafness or blindness. I think it's your love and pity.' *The Miracle Worker* (1962) follows the life of Annie Sullivan in her attempts to teach the blind and the deaf, Helen Keller. The latter, having suffered severe scarlet fever causing her inability to talk or see, grows up frustrated without a chance to communicate with her outside world. The six-year-old girl is violent, stubborn, undisciplined and brash followed by random outbursts of things going her way. As a last chance before she is institutionalised, her family sends a letter to Perkins School for the Blind from where Sullivan is sent in order to teach young Miss Keller. Both of them get off on the wrong foot but eventually, come around and form a close-knit bond.

The way I would describe this movie directed by Arthur Penn is straightforward and raw. There is certain 'crudeness' to this movie with its long takes and dramatic expressions.

The plot, though simple, is enhanced with the theatrical acting of Anne Bancroft who's done an excellent job in playing the half-blind Annie Sullivan. Her character is strong, unconventional and determined and her teaching says the same. Even while meeting Keller for the first time, Sullivan pays no heed to common courtesies and begins by patiently observing and analysing the former. Her unbiased nature enacts no pity to the blind and the deaf but rather strengthens her resolve to make Keller stand on her feet. Perhaps, the plain black and white colours of the film allow the viewers to pay more attention to Anne Bancroft and her spectacular articulation. Added with over-the-top music, the movie is not as uncomplicated as it appears, keeping the audience engaged on how Sullivan would guide Keller.

The irony of this movie is how the love and affection of Helen's family have failed her. The parents' guilt and pity permit them to tolerate any tantrums of their disorderly daughter. She makes a fuss at getting what she wants and shows no remorse for her surroundings. Her parents don't think much about her capabilities because she is disabled. So much so that they don't even try to teach her basic mannerism. It's almost as if they treat their daughter like the doll she very much loves except now she's the moving doll. Isn't it ironic that the very people who should believe in her potential end up giving up on her?

That is why Annie Sullivan is called 'The Miracle Worker' because she really believes the child in front of her is a 'miracle'. She herself comes from a rough background along with the chronic pain of her half-blindness, she 'sees' Helen Keller as someone much more than just a 'blind and deaf girl'. Her conviction, tenacity and perseverance shows in the movie so well that the audience internally cheers both of them on. Annie Sullivan is truly the 'The Miracle Worker'. ■

10 Must Watch Web Series of 2022

NIKHIL BANERJEE

When it comes to taboo breaking and thoughtful video content, web shows have been playing a vital role in India in the last couple of years. In a country where television and the different movie industries are strangled by tight censorship, web series have been the go-to source of thought provoking entertainment for the millennials. Web Series are pursuing our boundaries of imagination and leaving the burden of virtues behind. Here are the 10 web series of 2022 that must watch before we start making the bucket list for 2023.



1 Stranger Things Season 4
Platform: Netflix
Episodes: 9
Language: English

With 9 episodes released in two volumes, this season of the series connects it directly to the first episode of the series that was released back in 2016. This is a must watch if you are into horror mystery thriller genre.



2 Inviting Anna
Platform: Netflix
Episodes: 9
Language: English

Inviting Anna talks about the life of Infamous American con Artist Anna Delvey, its fascinating to see how she tries to climb up the socio-economic ladder by fooling the rich in town. This is one of the most viewed series in 2022 in genre of biographies; and not as scaring and scary as 'Dahmer'.



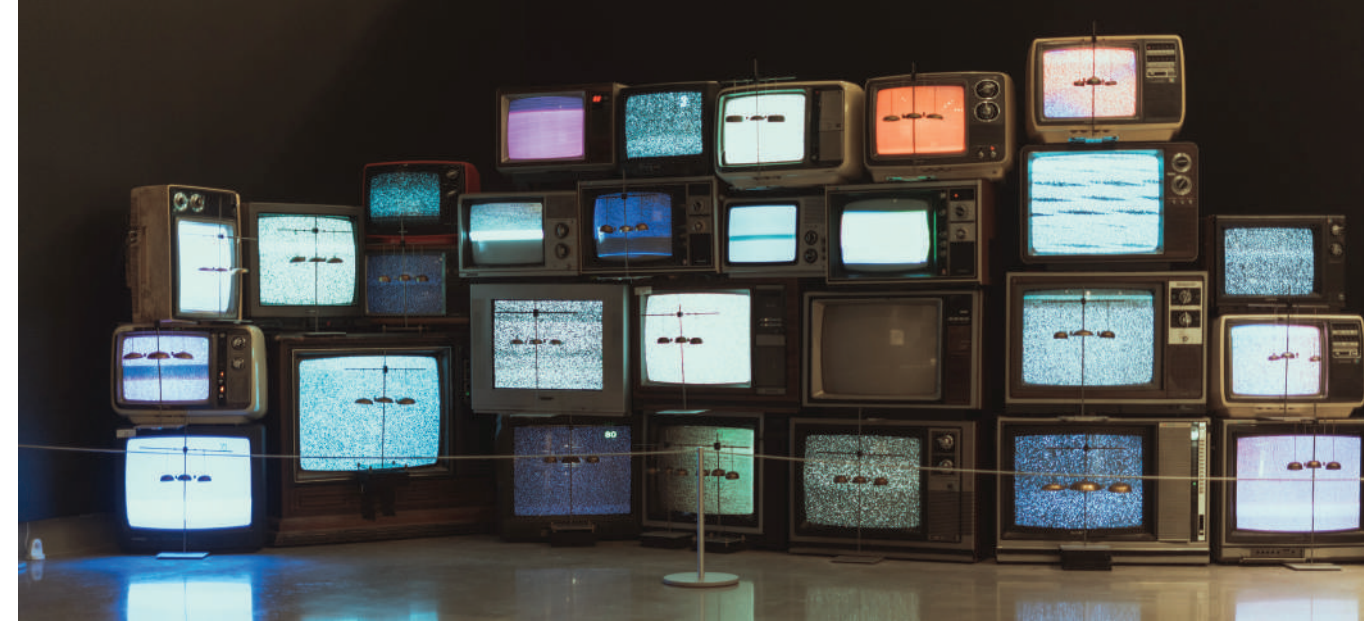
3 Euphoria Season 2
Platform: Disney Hotstar plus
Episodes: 8
Language: English

This season land in the best performance of Zendaya's acting career and keeps the audience on the edge of the seat until the 8th episode.



4 The Rings of Power
Platform: Amazon Prime
Episodes: 8
Language: English

That it is one of the most expensive webseries produced so far adds to the reason why one must watch these extravagant frames and storytelling pattern. this is a prequel to the famous film trilogy *Lord of the Rings*.



5 Suzhal
Platform: Amazon Prime
Episodes: 8
Language: English

Written and produced by Pushkar Gaytri combo, it talks about the story of a young girl who has gone missing and his sister is on a journey to solve the mystery and save her, this is one of the best indian series produced in the year 2022.



6 House of Dragon
Platform: Disney Hotstar plus
Episodes: 10
Language: English

This series is a prequel to the world wide phenomenon *Game of Thrones* This is one of the promising series that won't disappoint you as a game of thrones fan.



7 1899
Platform: Netflix
Episodes: 8
Language: English

Made by the producers of the series *Dark*, this is a must watch if you are into thriller mystery genre, the series tries to simplify, and revolves around Plato's Cave Allegory.



8 Wednesday
Platform: Netflix
Episodes: 8
Language: English

Its a spin off of the character from *Adam Family*, a movie which have come out in 1991. Backed by the performance of Jenna Ortega, it is a must watch if you are into surreal fantasy series



9 The Peripheral
Platform: Prime Video
Episodes: 8
Language: English

Made by the creators of *Westworld*, this series have a lot of mind blowing twist and turns that keep you at the edge of your couch through the 8 episodes of the season



10 TVF Tripling
Platform: ZEE5
Episodes: 5
Language: Hindi

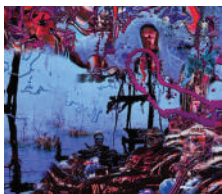
One of the best comedy series so far, the third season is full of clean jokes, that itself make it stand apart from other series released in the country this year. ■

Top 10 ROCK ALBUMS of 2022

KAPIL ARAMBAM

In these days of lo-fi, EDMs and Spotify, it's so easy to ignore rock n' roll. That's where, however, you will find all the energy, freedom of expression and all things guitars and drums and earth-shattering vocals. We are listing here ten albums that contributed to deck up the rock n' roll music landscape in 2022. Which one is your favourite? We did go far and wide to get this compilation based on the sheer creative process that goes into making an album with such technical as well as aesthetic expertise (listed in an alphabetical order of the band names):

1 **Album** Hellfire
Band Black Midi
Label Rough Trade
Genre Experimental rock, progressive rock, jazz fusion, post-punk



Hellfire received a score of 79 out of 100 based on 20 critics' reviews at review aggregator Metacritic, indicating 'generally favourable' reception. Steve Erickson of *Slant Magazine*

described the album as a 'concept album ripe for repeat listens' designed to be heard in its entirety, which 'engages with rock's history while simultaneously taking it in imaginative new directions'.

2 **Album** Welcome 2 Club XIII
Band Drive-By Truckers
Label ATO
Genre Southern rock



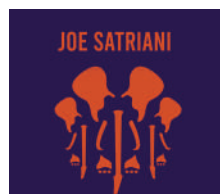
In *Pitchfork*, Grayson Haver Currin writes: 'Following a suite of timely sociopolitical screeds that delivered necessary messages to its Southern brethren, this century's most consistently great rock band digs deep into its own archival baggage. The result is a galvanising reminder that it didn't earn that honorific without catastrophe or controversy.'

3 **Album** Most Normal
Band Gilla Band
Label ATO
Genre Pop/rock

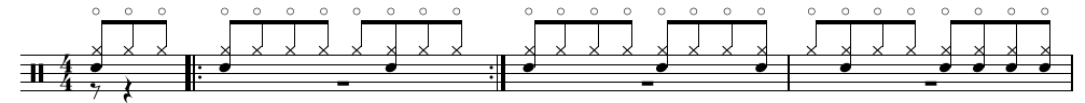


According to *Slant Magazine*, *Most Normal* is 'a work of defiant, purposeful weirdness, and even when glimmers of pop prettiness do occasionally shine through, like during the opening moments of *Almost Soon*, they're eventually buried under bursts of dissonance, melted psychedelia, and vocals that oscillate between the in-your-face and eerie detachment.'

4 **Album** The Elephant of Mars
Band Joe Satriani
Label Earmusic
Genre Classic rock



In one of the editorial reviews on Amazon, *The Elephants of Mars* moves, it swings, [and] it rocks! Satriani and his touring band, who all recorded remotely in separate areas of the world during lockdown, deliver an album-length journey that never dulls. [This album...] crackles with an exciting new energy, briskly traveling through stylistic roads that feel freshly updated, viewed through new eyes.



5 **Album** Strictly a One-Eyed Jack
Band John Mellencamp
Label Republic
Genre Rock



John Mellencamp, according to AllMusic, embodies the stubborn independence of an artist who unquestioningly follows his heart and his muse, and *Strictly a One-Eyed Jack* is the work of a man accepting the passage of time rather than fighting against it. As a songwriter and a performer, it's a gambit that works in his favour.

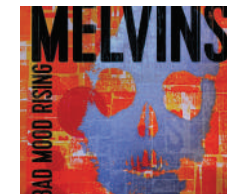
6 **Album** Portals
Band Kirk Hammett
Label Blackened
Genre Pop/rock



This debut solo EP from Metallica's Kirk Hammett is produced by himself.

In a review on *Metal Hammer*, this four-track album synthesises his biggest influences: metal, horror movies, classical music and the works of composer Ennio Morricone, whose *Ecstasy Of Gold* famously opens up Metallica's live show. The result is four compositions that each play out as a distinct musical novella.

7 **Album** Bad Mood Rising
Band Melvins
Label Amphetamine Reptile
Genre Rock, sludge metal, grunge



With *Bad Mood Rising*, Gavin Brown writes in *Distorted Sound*, Melvins prove that they're still releasing vital music, and it's cool to see them back on Amphetamine Reptile with such a vibrant, noisy and catchy record some 25 years after they last put an album out on the label. It would seem that they will continue to put music out on their terms for as long as they want, and long may that continue.

8 **Album** Will of the People
Band Muse
Label Warner, Helium-3
Genre Alternative rock



According to the *Classic Rock Magazine*: 'This is an album on which Muse master the wider range of future rock and pop sonics they've been toying with for the past decade and refine and define their current sound as neatly as *Black Holes & Revelations* did for their 2000s period. The UK-based *The Telegraph* mentions: 'Muse are a blockbuster band, and this is another box-office-demolishing spectacular—it would feel like self-denial not to surrender. Honestly, the end of the world has rarely sounded like so much fun.'

9 **Album** World Record
Band Neil Young & Crazy Horse
Label Reprise
Genre Pop/rock



Michael Gallucci of *Ultimate Classic Rock* says *World Record* 'doesn't go too deep' and 'can be messy and often unfocused', 'Young and Crazy Horse's allegiance to the material and themselves leads them to do what they've always done best: plugging in, following the leader and having a blast for 45 or so minutes'.

10 **Album** A Light for Attracting Attention
Band The Smile
Label XL
Genre Art rock, progressive rock, electronica, Afrobeats



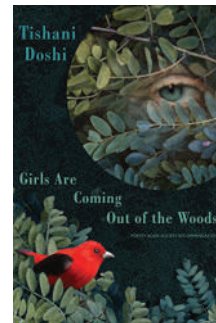
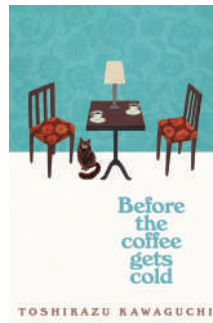
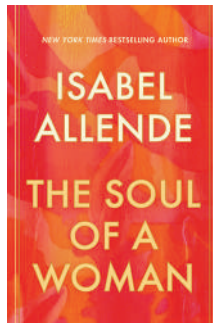
The Smile comprises the Radiohead members Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood with the Sons of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner. On Metacritic, *A Light for Attracting Attention* has a score of 86 out of 100 based on 23 reviews from critics, indicating 'universal acclaim'. *Pitchfork* awarded it their 'best new music' accolade. ■



The **Top 10 Rock Albums of 2022** list is in an alphabetical order of the band names.

10 Books to Add to Your To-read List This New Year

SINCHANA SHETTY



Much to Eliot's dismay, the year has ended with a bang and not a whimper. With new year around the corner and all the excitement it brings about, there is bound to be times of boredom. Boredom as you wait for your food delivery or on a metro about to reach home. A perfect partner to remedy the situation, naturally, is a book. Hard bound, aural or on screen, all types of books leave with you a story worth retelling and a time well spent.

When you can tell leisure will make its way to you on an unexpected day, unpack one of these books and watch the pages consume you. With varying genres and dates of publishing going as far back as a decade, here are some recommendations for everyone to make sure a story will tag along with you into the new year.

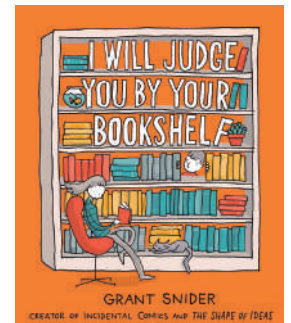
The Soul of a Woman

Isabel Allende

1 'When I say that I was a feminist in kindergarten, I am not exaggerating,' begins Allende in this collection of essays. A young woman who experienced the first wave of feminism when she came of age in the late 1960s, throughout her lifetime, she has witnessed the movement's accomplishments and writes about it passionately. She has also, through a course of three marriages and a defiant life, acquired knowledge about the benefits of embracing one's sexuality, knowing when to back off from a relationship, ageing gracefully and how to be a woman unabashedly. Told with a voice that is equal parts wise and rebellious, this is an essential but quick read.



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Before the Coffee Gets Cold

Toshikazu Kawaguchi

2 A coffee shop in Tokyo's back alley offers its visitors a one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience time travel. Four people arrive at the café with the intention of using the service. However, going back in time comes with its own set of risks. Examining the age-old question, 'What would you alter if you could travel back in time?', the novel tells a compelling story to all enchanted by its appealing cover.

Red, White & Royal Blue

Casey McQuiston

3 The romantic, satirical, and upbeat *Red, White & Royal Blue* is a breath of fresh air for lovers of rom-coms worldwide. It is about the President's son and the Prince of England who fall in love amid a world of scandal. From enemies to lovers to secret romance, with tropes to nestle yourself into for comfort, this book is a much needed dose of escapism for those into LGBTQIA+ and YA fiction.

Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods

Tishani Doshi

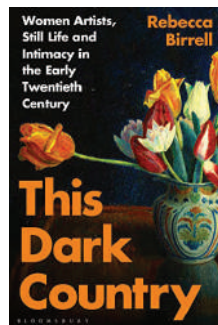
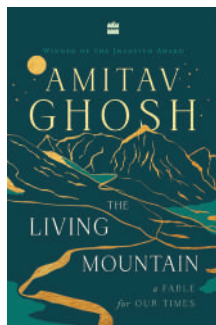
4 The sinews of nature and empathy are entwined and reading this collection of poems by Doshi, one can easily tell it came from a place that found solace in both. With a perfect balance of all things romance to macabre, most poems have a soft flesh of beauty.

Navigating body image, identity, childhood, womanhood with a deep appreciation to the city she inhabits; this collection is a celebration of themes: love, suffering and anger.

I'm Glad My Mom Died

Jenny McCurdy

5 In *I'm Glad My Mom Died*, McCurdy describes how she regained control of her life after facing challenges as a former child actor, including eating disorders, addiction, and a difficult relationship with her controlling mother. Narrated with a tone laced in dark humour and refreshing honesty, it inspires readers to be resilient, self-sufficient, and appreciative of everyday life.



I Will Judge You by Your Bookshelf

Grant Snider

6 Building on the well-liked literary comics featured on his website, Incidental Comics, writer-artist Grant Snider explores bookishness in all its manifestations as well as the love of writing and reading in this humorous collection of comics. I Will Judge You By Your Bookshelf is an ideal read for book lovers of all ages. It is bound to leave you with a laugh and new found appreciation for reading.

The Living Mountain

Amitav Ghosh

7 A brand-new tale by the widely acclaimed author Amitav Ghosh, *The Living Mountain* serves as a warning about how we have consistently exploited nature causing an environmental collapse.

This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century

Rebecca Birrell

8 Early in the 20th century, art served as means of catharsis for female artists. But for every female artist one can recall, there is another we are unaware of as women have always had to put hold on their artistic pursuits to become mothers and wives; their works of art now dusty in attics or archives.

For those who like a deep dive into history, Rebecca Birrell investigates the mechanisms

that construct and deconstruct our lives by bringing to light this innovative blend of group biography and art critique.

Never Let Me Go

Kazuo Ishiguro

9 For those who love a good mystery, Ishiguro's latest book is bound to leave you wanting more. In the idyllic English boarding school of Hailsham, Kathy develops into a young woman, away from the influences of the metropolis. But she and her pals Ruth and Tommy don't fully understand what Hailsham is until they leave the secure grounds of the school.

Ishiguro expertly explores the idea of a potential future through a compelling mystery, a heartfelt love tale, and a biting warning against human arrogance.

Vivian Maier: Out of the Shadows

Vivian Maier, Richard Cahan and Michael Williams

10 One of the masters of street photography, this book is the first attempt to contextualise Vivian Maier's photographs to paint a compelling portrait of the artist. The photographs in the book are filled with compassion, beauty and life. Whether you'd like to sift through pages admiring the photographs or carefully analyse them, this book will add perspective to your life through pictures and most importantly, understanding the woman behind the lens. ■



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.

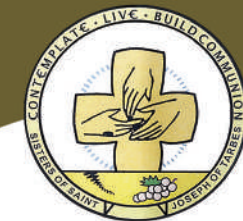
A Sister of St. Joseph of Tarbes (SJT) is called to:
Gather the scattered; Unite the divided with the motto: 'GOD ALONE'

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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