

together

a national family magazine

From the madness of **more** to the wisdom of **enough**

11

**Harnessing
the Power of
Composting for
Sustainability**

Dr Priyadarshini Pillai

15

**Building a
Sustainable Way
of Life**

Dr Marianne Furtado
de Nazareth

18

**Behind the
Buzzing
Honeybees**

Davis Kallookaran OFM

20

**Bees and the
Ecological
Balance**

Dr Sitavi Yathiender

together

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

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

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

EDITOR

Saji P Mathew ofm
editoroftogether@gmail.com
editor@togethermagazine.in

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Jameson PC ofm
John Sekar ofm

COPY EDITORS

Augustine Pinto ofm
Joy Prakash ofm

LAYOUT

Kapil Arambam

PLEASE NOTE: The views of writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the publisher.

DIRECTOR

Xavier Durairaj ofm

PUBLISHER

Basil Lobo ofm

MANAGER

Anthony Mathew Joseph ofm

PUBLICATION OFFICE

Franciscan Publications
St. Anthony's Friary
#85, Hosur Road, Bengaluru - 560095
Karnataka, India
manager@togethermagazine.in
info@togethermagazine.in
Mob: +91-88971 46707 / +91-77366 64528

SUBSCRIPTION

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

Pay online (NEFT) Transaction:

Franciscan Publications – Together, South Indian Bank, Branch: Christ University, A/c. No. 0396053000005736, IFSC: SIBL0000396, MICR: 560059010

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

ADVERTISING IN TOGETHER (PER ISSUE)

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

CONTENTS

June 2023 Volume 17 Issue 05

- 04 *Editorial: Weak People Create Hard Times*
SAJI P MATHEW OFM
- 06 *Breaking News: The 4Ds of Disconnection, Drugs, Demography and Diversions in Manipur* **KAPIL ARAMBAM**
- 11 *Cover Story: Harnessing the Power of Composting for Sustainability* **Dr PRIYADARSHINI PILLAI**
- 15 *Cover Story: Building a Sustainable Way of Life*
Dr MARIANNE FURTADO de NAZARETH
- 18 *Cover Story: Behind the Buzzing Honeybees*
DAVIS KALLOOKARAN OFM
- 20 *Cover Story: Bees and the Ecological Balance*
Dr SITAVI YATHIENDER
- 22 Ecological Friars
JOY PRAKASH OFM
- 24 *Prakruthi Mithra: A Symbiotic Relationship*
BABU JOSE PAMPLANY OFM
- 27 The Part and the Whole
Fr KM GEORGE
- 28 Politics of Crass Jibes and Foul Truth
GERRY LOBO OFM
- 30 Corruption Has Many Faces
LIYA THOMAS
- 32 Workplace Burnout
A FRANCIS OFM
- 34 The Culture of Saint Worship
SUSANNA MARIAN VAS

37

POETRY

Dawn of a New Era

JANANI VIJAYKUMAR

40

ART

Artful Education

JAMESMON PC OFM

36 IN STAMPS World Environment Day TOM JOHN



42 Elin Hilderbrand

The Hotel Nantucket

Author of 28 Summers



BOOKS

The Hotel Nantucket

NIKITHA ANTO

Weak People Create Hard Times

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

We keep doing what we do, because we have no clue of the actual consequences of our everyday life. We think we know but we don't. Do our actions and habits make life easier or harder? 'Tough times create strong men, strong men create easy times, easy times create weak men, and weak men create tough times.' These are lines from a postapocalyptic novel by G. Michael Hopf. Annotating these lines Aaron Mckie, a former professional basketball player and an American basketball coach, talks about a conversation he had with his friend about the future of their kids; his friend said, 'My grandfather walked ten miles to work everyday, my father walked five, I'm driving a Cadillac, my son is in a Mercedes, and my grandson will be in a Ferrari. My great-grandson will be walking again.' There are crucial lessons here for all of us.

The climate lesson is this, my grandfather lived in want; my father grew vegetables, did not waste food, recycled and reused whatever possible; I take the planet for granted, use up fossil fuel, waste food, make maximum profit, and I don't speak up about climate change; my son lives entitled, use and throw is the theory, discounts climate change; and my grandson will be drunk with power and pride like Icarus, and abuse the resources of the planet. My great-grandson will be in want again.

Are we racing towards a climate catastrophe? At this juncture of our life on this planet earth, the Icarus story from the Greek mythology perhaps be worth remembering. Icarus was a minor character in Greek Mythology, famous for not surviving the transition from boyhood to manhood. He was the son of Daedalus, an accomplished inventor, who produced an ingenious labyrinth. Even Daedalus could not find a way out of his maze. Because he was his father's son, Icarus faced the same fate. Daedalus built wings of feathers and wax to escape. In theory, the wings would allow Daedalus and Icarus to fly above the labyrinth and off the island to freedom. Just before their flight, Daedalus warned his son to be careful. If he flew too low, his wings would get wet in the ocean; if he flew too high, the sun would melt the wax and the wings would disintegrate. Icarus took off with all intentions of following his father's sage advice. Away they flew, escaping the labyrinth. Now that he could fly he grew in false prowess. Drunk with his newfound power, he soared higher in the sky, intending to reach the sun. Soon enough his wax wings got melted and he fell to his death. As the inhabitants of this earth, the earth, the ecosystem is our wings to fly, would we melt it with our own greed, mindlessness, and stupidity; and fall victim to a catastrophe? The call is to move from the madness of more to the wisdom of enough.

Climate Change Is Real and It Affects the Poor the Most

The rate and duration of warming observed during the twentieth century are unprecedented in the past thousand years. Increases in maximum temperatures, numbers of hot days, and the heat index have been observed over nearly all countries during the second half of the twentieth



Save energy at home



Walk, bike, or take public transport



Eat more vegetables



Consider your travel



Throw away less food



Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle



Change your home's source of energy



Switch to an electric vehicle



Make your money count



Speak up

Image: From the UN campaign for individual action.

century. Poverty and Climate Change, A joint report by United Nations, The World Bank and other international agencies, categorically point out that extreme events have increased in Asia, including floods, droughts, forest fires, and tropical cyclones. Reduced soil moisture in the summer may increase land degradation and desertification. Sea level rise and an increase in intensity of tropical cyclones would displace tens of millions of people in low-lying coastal areas of tropical Asia. The capacity to cope with climate variability and extreme weather events in itself is highly dependent on the level of economic development. Its adverse impacts will be most striking in the developing nations because of their geographical and climatic conditions, their high dependence on natural resources, and their limited capacity to adapt to a changing climate. Within these countries, the poorest, who have the least resources and the least capacity to adapt, are the most vulnerable. Projected changes in the occurrence, frequency, intensity, and duration of climate extremes (for example, heat waves, heavy rainfall, and drought), as well as more gradual changes in the average climate,

will notably threaten the poorest of the poor the most.

Climate Action Now

Climate change is of human making; we must explore ways to battle it. If the emissions have to stop, then we must stop the emissions, says, Greta Thunberg, the Swedish child environmental activist who is known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action for climate change mitigation. She refused to go to school as a protest. She boycotted school and went and sat in demonstration in front of the Swedish parliament. She persuaded her parents to adopt lifestyle choices that reduced their own carbon footprint. We must also do our bit to protect and safeguard our planet, for we do not have a planet B. It is important to hope for better days for our planet; but what is more urgent is action. Fifth of June is the World Environment Day. Environment Day 2023 is being hosted by Ivory Coast with the theme 'living sustainably in harmony with nature.' If we begin to act towards climate empowerment, hope for us and for the planet will emerge as a consequence.

The 4Ds of Disconnection, Drugs, Demography and Diversions in Manipur

A reflection on the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur

KAPIL ARAMBAM

Manipur has been in the news again, and as always, for all the wrong reasons. The ongoing crisis is more of an existential crisis for the Meiteis and Kuki people. It is also equally true to say that it is a textbook example of an ethnic conflict between the Meiteis, who predominantly live in the oval-shaped Imphal valley, and the Kukis who are 'from' and concentrated in Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts and elsewhere. This epicentre district is around 60 km from the capital Imphal valley.

First thing first. The Kukis, or the ethnic Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group, to be precise, have been up in arms against the Manipur government which they claim is controlled and dominated by the Meiteis. The government has been 'destroying' their homes and churches by justifying these acts with legal provisions related to forest protection. This is paradoxical but it is just the beginning. Incidentally, the government also claims the Kukis are occupying the hilly areas illegally. For outsiders, the whole issue will be anything but confusing if you are unaware about the dynamics of identity politics in a state where there are 33 officially recognised ethnic groups, and their antagonism for varying reasons as well as the additional tangible crises of ethnonationalism, drugs and demography.

Disconnection

Nobody can deny the fact that collective growth depends on negotiating and accommodating

the 'other'. India is undergoing this pessimism albeit intentionally by vilifying the Muslims. This is even truer in a multi-ethnic state like Manipur where there are always overlapping aspirations of different ethnic groups, often in the worst ways possible. Presently, the onus lies on those people in the governance and administration, and 'legal' constitutional instruments can offer a platform to help play a critical proactive role in resolving the crisis. The authority, unfortunately, is only bent towards making the space just perfect for exclusionary identity politics, for how unintentional it is and whatever rationale it has. The imperative is not on their competency now, while the cacophonous sound from all the directions is that some of these representatives are 'engineering' these crises for their vested interests.

If we follow the latest happenings, it exploded with a tribal solidarity rally organised by an apex students' organisation on 3 May in protest against the High Court of Manipur's move to concede a demand for scheduled tribe status for the dominant Meiteis. All the Meiteis do not even endorse this demand for affirmative action under the Indian Constitution. Still, a few things need to be reiterated here:

- People see the whole issue as a confrontation between the Meiteis and the tribals or sometimes as a fight between the Meitei Hindus and Kuki Christians. However, nothing can be further from the truth.
- Rather it is a fight for access to scarce



The most recent tension started when the N Biren government launched its war on drug campaign.

- land and other resources just between the Meiteis and the Kukis, at least for now, these are the two groups; and
- The rally was just a trigger while ethnic tensions have been brewing for a long time.

For the sake of argument, let's consider the Kukis are reasonable and their demands valid. Definitely their share of beneficial access will be reduced but they are indulging in wishful thinking if they consider the Meitei's demand will affect their land-ownership privileges. Just to clarify and repeat, not all the Meiteis are demanding for ST status.

Drugs

The most recent tension started when the N Biren government launched its war on drug campaign. The Kuki-dominated areas in Manipur border Myanmar, with a sizable Zo population and which also used to be the heroin hub until the Golden Crescent took over around two decades ago. In other words, at least the plantation and if not production, has shifted

to these areas crossing international borders. This has had several implications with even more severe consequences. Both the plantation and production processes are entirely done in Manipur now, with raw materials from the hills and mobile manufacturing units set up along the Lilong-Thoubal route. This lies on the Asian Highway 1 or National Highway 102 (formerly NH 39) in the valley region. From just a convenient international route for smuggling, we have now become one of the 'business' hubs in dealing with heroin. In the entire history of drug smuggling, nobody has ever said that an official act is going to be one of the best provisions against drug-smuggling MO.

While this campaign has been a step that the government considers to be one of their best practices, the situation is far from normal. This is referring to the relentless problems of drug plantation/production and addiction. Poppy cultivators and dealers in Churachandpur and the Burmese drug mafias who have found a home and haven in Manipur are not helping the case either. Newspaper

reports mention that poppy cultivation in Burma has escalated after the military takeover but that is a different story for now.

Demography

A crisis has started with protests for counter-demands and destruction of poppy cultivation yet this is just the tip. And this is where the problem lies—it is complex as much as multiple issues are involved in the crisis. In simple words, just as the poppy problem is destructive, Manipur has also a severe demographic imbalance and unsurprisingly it is the most acute in this district.

When the entire state saw a population growth rate of 18.7% in the 2011 Census, Churachandpur recorded a rise by nearly 39%. It is speculated that it will rise further with the number of Burmese people of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnicity entering India after the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état. Law enforcement agencies have been picking up groups of these Burmese people from here and there. It is a sheer humanitarian act to provide refuge to people who have come running for their lives but it is unacceptable to many sections of the society that the same ethnic people are overtaxing themselves with the crisis of 2Ps (poppy and population). In this regard, it is even more ironic that the recent violence has driven so many people out—particularly those who live in foothills and areas that lie adjacent to Meitei and Kuki villages—to take refuge in ad-hoc relief camps, irrespective of ethnicity as they run for our lives from onslaughts committed by two sides at once. That's 'double' displacement particularly for the Kukis.

For decades, the Meiteis have always been citing the case of the Tripuris (erstwhile Takhels). In their own land, the indigenous Tripuris have become a minority. Back home, with the 111-km long Jiribam–Vangaichungpao–Tupul-Imphal railway line nearing completion, in two years as per government's record, there are apprehensions that even the largest majority group will be losing their numbers and identity together. We comprised 59% of

the total population in 1951 but it has been reduced to 44% as per 2011 Census data. We will see more accurate numbers when the decadal Census report of 2021 is published. (PS: It is expected to be released in October 2023.)

Diversions

Recently, the Meiteis claim that the Kukis are as always playing the victim card. Yet in the last few days, ever since violence and destruction started after the 3 May 'tribal solidarity' rally, one of the most recognisable voices is that of the people seeking attention and validation. The 'people' means the Manipur public including those from all the ethnicities. Moreover, the so-called national media in India, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *Japan Times*, *the Independent*, *BBC*, *The Washington Post*, *the South China Morning Post* and others have been covering the conflict. It is as though Manipuris are waiting for miracles and saviours mostly from mainland India and elsewhere. Their inferior complexes and fervent appeal for others to 'understand' them and their issues has been crystal clear. In reality, people are occupied with their own problems, from a third-world country such as India to a superpower like Russia. Nobody is a saviour. Never really so. And the reason is simple: not many people like poor folks, not out of spite but more because of the lack of relevance of these literally poor people in their lives.

Manipur has been one of the states which is most vocal about the extrajudicial excessiveness of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in the Northeast. However, in the wake of the recent clashes, the Union government sent in 50 companies of Central Armed Police Forces and 105 columns of army and Assam Rifles. According to prominent Indian journalist Shekhar Gupta (Cut the Clutter, *The Print*: Rarest of rare: Modi govt intervenes directly in burning Manipur, controls law & order over own govt), this deployment is one of the rarest of rare cases that the Modi government is intervening into a state directly by invoking Article 355 and controlling the law-and-order crisis from New Delhi. Still, as always, the

personnels are on an ostensibly step to control the situation because the tension is today as simmering as in the last two weeks or so.

When India is playing a crucial role in one of its hinterlands, the role of the so-called mainstream media is nothing but appalling. The level of errors in their reporting in a place like Manipur is far worse than the fact that the Indian press freedom index has further slipped to 161st position in 2023. In conflict situations, the first thing people need to get rid of are misinformation and disinformation. Even if thousands of people are begging for attention in the 'mainstream' media, there is still no light at all at the end of the tunnel. Despite being smothered literally to the ground in the penultimate days of World War II, the Japanese people sprang back to its former glory in no time. It is only incomprehensible that all that many Meiteis want is a Scheduled Tribe status while irritating the people who they argue are not indigenous in the first place.

Next: When, Where, What?

In the last seven decades, the only thing that has remained constant is the fact that this erstwhile kingdom of Manipur has now become a constituent unit in the Union of India. Yet, there is no room for the people to become a productive society if everything from insurgency to ethnicity are tackled for short-term goals. The problems are going to persist because the region is underdeveloped and we lack the political will to make progress. The people must also express gratitude to India that has viewed the region as nothing more than a frontier and just a geopolitically relevant place and nothing more. Experts suggest that for a long-term solution there must be fool-proof peace and reconciliation mechanisms.

Breaking News: The conditions on the ground are neither improving or worsening as of 30 May and the worst affected people from both sides are only those taking refuge in relief camps now.



Harnessing the Power of Composting for Sustainability

Composting provides a safe means of waste management, utilizing microorganisms to degrade complex materials into organic and inorganic by-products.

Dr PRIYADARSHINI PILLAI

Composting plays a crucial role in agriculture and the recycling of farm wastes. However, the lengthy composting duration poses a challenge, particularly in the presence of materials that take longer to decompose, especially during co-composting. The addition of activators to raw materials can enhance the nutritional quality of compost. Furthermore, slow-mineralizing degradable organic materials should be assessed for their potential benefits in perennial or biennial crop production. Incorporating organic sources of viricides, fungicides, anti-nematodes, and antibacterial can also enhance compost quality. Lastly, extending the composting duration proves beneficial. Inadequate waste management practices have adverse effects on human health, causing air pollution, water contamination, and ozone layer depletion due to burning, thereby exacerbating climate change. Common conventional methods, such as burning, ocean disposal, waterway dumping, and roadside dumping, lead to insect infestations, offensive odours, visual pollution, and contribute to global warming. Organic waste transformation occurs through either aerobic or anaerobic processes, resulting in the formation of compost or biogas and biofertilizers, respectively. Composting provides a safe means of waste management, utilizing microorganisms to degrade complex materials into organic and inorganic by-products. These by-products, enriched with unique 'hu-

mic-like' compounds, differentiate compost from native soil, coals, and peats. Ultimately, composting serves as an environmentally friendly method to transform various degradable wastes into beneficial biofertilizers and soil amendments.

The composting process offers significant advantages over landfilling as a waste disposal method, particularly in safeguarding underground water from pollution. Composting reduces the presence of pathogenic microbes and chemical pollutants found in waste, ensuring human safety. Beneficial microbes present in compost absorb persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and endocrine-disrupting residues (EDRs) remaining in the soil during composting. The application of compost improves agricultural productivity and enhances soil organic matter content, thereby contributing to food security. Moreover, compost finds utility in bioremediation, plant disease and weed control, pollution prevention, erosion control, landscaping, and wetland restoration. Composting also enhances soil biodiversity while reducing environmental risks associated with synthetic fertilizers. Unlike natural and uncontrolled decomposition, composting is initiated and managed under controlled environmental conditions. However, challenges exist, including longer maturation time, offensive odour, prolonged mineralisation, thermotolerant pathogens, and nutrient deficiencies, which have hindered the widespread

Start Composting

If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production.

Pete Seeger

Regulations governing composting practices have been established globally to address health impacts. To improve composting, two key areas requiring attention are temperature regulation and oxygen flow control, which directly influence microbial activity.

adoption of composting in sustainable agriculture. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the advantages and disadvantages of composting compared to synthetic fertilizers. Further research is needed to explore odour-trapping techniques, rapid pathogen and heavy metal detection methods, and the use of specific nutrient-rich activators, antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, and anti-nematode agents. While composting offers numerous benefits, it also poses challenges related to climate change, carbon dioxide emissions, oxygen depletion, and offensive smells. Regulations governing composting practices have been established globally to address health impacts. To improve composting, two key areas requiring attention are temperature regulation and oxygen flow control, which directly influence microbial activity. Monitoring and optimizing the temperature for specific microbial functions and ensuring sufficient oxygen supply to minimize anaerobic activity are crucial. By addressing these concerns, composting can become an effective and sustainable waste management solution.

Waste and Its Effects

Waste is any unwanted solid, liquid, or gaseous substance. Poorly managed wastes have adverse effects on humans, animals, plants, and the environment. About 50% of wastes generated is organic, thus, the proper management of organic wastes will drastically reduce the volume of pollution arising from improper waste management.

Wastes affect the environment leading to severe hazardous impact on lives. Humans and animals alike are affected by these adverse effects, which can cause disease outbreak, reduction in life expectancy, and unsafe environment. Some

wastes may rot, but those that do not will smell and generate methane gas, which significantly contributes to the greenhouse effect. The

environmental and health impacts of wastes will be described subsequently. Wastes pollute the air, water, and soil. Air pollution includes odour, smoke, and dust. When solid wastes are burnt, greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide are released, these lead to ozone layer depletion and greenhouse effect. Hydrogen sulfide and methane are also released into the air. These substances are toxic to human lives.

It is reported that approximately 1400 people die daily due to water and water-related problems/disease. Wastes that find their way into water bodies such as rivers, streams, and oceans can have a disruptive influence on the water bodies by lowering the pH and causing toxicity to the aquatic inhabitants and humans that use the water.

Composting and Its Impacts

Waste Reduction: Composting provides a sustainable solution for managing organic waste. By diverting organic materials such as food scraps, yard trimmings, and agricultural residues from landfills, composting helps reduce the volume of waste that would otherwise contribute to landfill congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Soil Enrichment: Compost is a valuable soil amendment that improves soil health and fertility. It enhances soil structure, increases water-holding capacity, and promotes nutrient retention. Compost also introduces beneficial microorganisms to the soil, enhancing its overall biological activity and supporting plant growth.

Nutrient Recycling: Composting allows for

the recycling of nutrients found in organic waste. As organic materials break down during composting, their nutrients are transformed into forms that plants can readily absorb. These nutrients are then reintroduced to the soil, closing the nutrient cycle and reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers.

Environmental Protection: Composting plays a crucial role in environmental protection. By diverting organic waste from landfills, composting helps reduce the production of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Additionally, compost-amended soils have the capacity to sequester carbon, mitigating the impacts of carbon dioxide emissions.

Water Management: Compost-amended soils have improved water-holding capacity and drainage, reducing the risk of soil erosion and water runoff. By enhancing soil structure and reducing water runoff, composting helps protect water quality by minimizing the leaching of pollutants into groundwater and surface water bodies.

Sustainable Agriculture: Compost provides a natural and sustainable alternative to synthetic fertilizers, reducing the reliance on chemical inputs in agriculture. It promotes soil biodiversity, supports beneficial microorganisms, and contributes to long-term soil health, thereby fostering sustainable farming practices.

Circular Economy: Composting exemplifies the principles of a circular economy by transforming organic waste into a valuable resource. It closes the loop by returning organic matter back to the soil, completing the cycle of natural nutrient replenishment and promoting a more sustainable and resource-efficient approach to waste management.

Composting Methods

There are different composting methods, with each method having its advantages and dis-

advantages. Therefore, the method that best suits the goal of the researcher and the type of material to be composted dictates the composting method to be adopted. Some of the composting methods are enumerated below.

Indian Bangalore Composting: The Indian Bangalore composting method was developed at Bangalore in India. The method is majorly recommended for the composting of night soil and refuse. The composting is carried out by digging trenches or pits about one meter deep where organic residues and night soil are put in alternate layers. The pit is finally covered with a 15–20 cm thick layer of refuse. The materials are left in the pit without turning or watering for three months. During this period, there is a reduction in the volume of the materials, and more night soil and refuse are placed on top in alternate layers and covered with mud or earth to prevent loss of moisture and breeding of flies. This type of composting takes about six to eight months to obtain the finished product. This method is laborious and expensive to support.

Vessel Composting: In-vessel composting refers to any type of composting conducted in an enclosed area such as a container, building, or vessel. In-vessel methods depend on a variety of forced aeration and mechanical turning techniques to enhance the composting process. This method is labour-intensive and expensive.

Windrow Composting: Windrow composting is conducted by placing raw materials in long narrow piles or windrows, which are turned regularly. The mixing of the materials allows aeration into the setup. A typical windrow composting set up should start from 3 feet in height for dense materials like manures and 12 feet high for fluffy materials like leaves. It is difficult, and costly to support, but it is rapid and retains heat.

Vermicomposting: The term refers to the use of earthworms for composting degradable organic

Building a Sustainable Way of Life

Dr MARIANNE FURTADO DE NAZARETH

matters [64]. Earthworms can degrade practically all kinds of organic matter by feeding on them. They can eat their body weight per day. For example, earthworms that weigh 0.1 kilogram can eat 0.1 kilogram of residue per day. The excreta of the worms—termed ‘castings’—are rich in nitrate, as well as available forms of phosphorus, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, which improve soil fertility. The existence of earthworms in the soil promotes bacterial and actinomycetes growth.

Static Composting: This is a traditional method of composting where wastes are composted aerobically using passive aeration (little and infrequent turnings or static aerations like perforated poles or pipes). This method is time-consuming, though it is a simple way of composting, which has low operational and capital costs compared to vermicomposting, windrow, vessel, and Indian Bangalore composting. This method simply involves the formation of a pile of raw materials and has a low requirement of labor and equipment. Aeration is based mainly on the passive movement of air through the pile, thereby degrading the organic matter slowly.

Sheet Composting: Sheet composting release the benefit of decayed organic material without building a composting pile. In this method, organic matters such as leaves, garden debris, grass clippings, weeds, and vegetative food are thinly spread directly onto the soil as a mulch. The organic materials are then tilled in with a hoe, spade or garden fork and left to decay there, rather than in a heap or container. One or more layers of organic material(s) are spreads over the growing area, watered thoroughly and left to decompose until planting time. More layers of organic materials are placed at the bottom layers decompose thoroughly. The method is cheap and straightforward.

Indian Indore Composting: Indian Indore method involves a mixture of raw materials such as plant residues, animal dung, and urine, earth, wood ash, and water. All organic wastes available on a farm such as weeds, stalks, stems, fallen leaves, pruning, chaff, fodder leftovers are made into a layer about 15-cm-thick until the heap is about one and a half meters high. The

heap is cut into vertical slices of about 20–25 kg for the night rest. The bedding is taken to the composting pits and filled layer by layer within a week. Enough quantity of water is sprinkled over the materials in the pit to wet them. Moisturizing of the compost is done only three times throughout the whole period of composting. The moisturizing is done on the fifteenth day after stacking the compost pit, on the next 15 days after the first moisturizing and finally after one month after the first moisturizing. This method is labour-intensive and time-consuming. It is also prone to flies, and pest disturbances and wind can lead to loss of nutrients.

Berkley Rapid Composting: This is a fast-composting method. Here, materials compost faster if the size is between 0.5–1.5 inches in size. Soft, succulent tissues do not need to be chopped in very small pieces because they decompose rapidly. The harder the tissues, the smaller they need to be chopped to enhance decomposition. Once a pile is started, nothing should be added because it takes a certain length of time for the initial materials to break down, and anything added has to start from the initial breakdown stage—thus lengthening the decomposition time for the whole pile.

Inadequate waste management practices pose risks to both the environment and human well-being. However, there is a growing global focus on improving environmental and human health through safer waste management methods. Composting, as a form of organic fertilizer, holds great promise in achieving this objective. By shifting from chemical fertilizers to compost, significant benefits can be realised, including reduced release of toxic chemicals into the environment. Nonetheless, there is still a need to raise awareness about the potential of composting technology to ensure its widespread adoption by farmers. To enhance composting practices, several recommendations are proposed to drive its improvement and effectiveness.

Dr Priyadarshini Pillai is a professor of botany; undertakes researches and promotes environmental activities that are sustainable

As the world becomes increasingly aware of environmental and social issues, more educators are opting for curriculums that prioritise sustainability and ethical practices, while encouraging their students to buy products that reflect these priorities.

In a global consumer survey, more than 71 per cent of respondents reported making modest to significant changes to their consumption behaviours to live more sustainably. While this shift in consumer behaviour presents opportunities for businesses, there is a growing need for the younger generation to be sensitised on simple sustainable practices, presenting them with methods minus any obstacles and thereby capturing their interest.

What are the consequences of failing to act now? Environment, Social and Governance

(ESG) issues have risen to the top of the corporate agenda in recent years as a confluence of factors from geopolitical tensions to climate change, supply chain disruption to rising stakeholder expectations dominate boardroom conversations. Therefore educating students to be sustainable, helps them also to seek opportunities in this new business landscape.

Four years ago two ‘Old Boys’ from St. Joseph’s Boys High School, Bangalore, started what they called a Sustainability lab—Sustainable Environment Education Foundation (SEEF). This was a series of online workshops with the 11th and 12th standard students of St Joseph’s Boys’ High School and maginalised schools in the city. It was purely academic, but today’s students are very keen on living sustainable lives themselves. Modules on Rain Water Harvesting, Composting, Growing organic vegetables, a Solar dryer which would make drying for farmers quicker with much less loss and Women’s Menstrual Health were the modules which were handled by various professionals in the field.

But soon Vijay Nazareth and Lloyd Lobo, both who are based in the US, and are Old Boys who spearheaded the program, realised that a hands-on experience would make the lesson much more enjoyable and leave a lasting impression on the students. That’s when we decided to give our farm out for free to the programme, to spread the word on sustainability, as the planet is literally gasping for life, on so many different levels.

On our two acre farm in Hoskote we got three large compost pits dug out to give the kids a hands-on experience of turning both garden waste and kitchen waste into compost. Labour was called in and five feet deep, rectangular pits were dug and lined with brick. The base of the pits were unlined to allow the leachate (liquid) of the waste to seep into the ground, leaving no smell at all. Composting is a controlled, aerobic (oxygen-required) process that converts organic



materials into a nutrient-rich soil mulch through natural decomposition. The end product is compost—a dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling material.

Food scraps like the skins and waste of fruits and veggies—the skin of a sweet potato, the skin of your banana, the rind of the water melon and mango, all can be composted. Additionally, tea bags, coffee grounds, eggshells, dead flowers—even human hair, all make a wonderful compost for your garden or your potted plants. Keeping food out of landfills can help fight climate change, and luckily, it's an easy solution for your home food waste. It doesn't matter if you're in a suburban home or a tiny apartment, it's so easy to compost your wet waste, rather than throw it into the landfill. This was taught to the kids through zoom classes first, but they wanted to jump into the pits and aerate the waste, to get a feel of the process. In minutes they realised that there was no unclean smell or odour, handling the waste.

Water is a precious, essential and an abiotic component of the ecosystem. Today we all are heading toward the scarcity of freshwater and this is mainly because of the lack of water conservation and pollution of water bodies. So, RWH teaches us not to waste a drop of water and start conserving water for further use.

The process of rainwater harvesting involves the collection and the storage of rainwater with the help of artificially designed systems that collect run off naturally or in man-made catchment areas like the rooftop, compounds, rock surface, hill slopes, artificially repaired impervious or semi-pervious land surface.

To show them how each home can help themselves get sufficient fresh water, the simple method of Rainwater Harvesting interested them, as without water there IS no life. The usual cry of—'what is the government doing about fresh water supplies?' was voiced by the kids. Taking them around the farm they were amazed with how simple it was to harvest the rain. The fresh rain water that had been channelised from the roof of the little house on the property, into a huge 15 lakh Sintex tank, poured out from a tap, with which they washed their hands and faces.

Injection wells on the property filled up with the overflow, helped raise the water table back to initial levels like magic. The farm was suffering with dried bore wells, but now with concerted RWH, the bore wells had sprung back to life. Not a drop of water falling on the property was lost and all the rain either sank into the soil or was collected in the tanks. There was an initial expense the kids realised, but the positives would pay back, in a matter of a few years. Even the caretaker who has lived on the land for 30 years was thrilled with the results of RWH.

Organic veggies are grown, showing the kids that excellent quality vegetables can be grown with just using the compost from the pits. Brinjals, radish, different varieties of gourd, and of course drum stick and malabar spinach grew well on the land teaching the kids how just a little effort and they could get their own organic vegetables. Sambhar with the spinach or radish is cooked in front of the kids, on a small gas burner and all get a taste of freshly cooked veggies in sambhar. To round off their meal they get bananas and automatically they learn how to take the skins to the pits to turn into compost.

Sustainability is one of the most popular lifestyle choices of the past decade and will hopefully become second-nature to us all in the coming years. As we transition from lives of convenience and fast-fashion to lives of environmentally conscious choices, sustainability will continue to permeate almost all of our daily decisions. Sustainable living is achieved by making choices that aim to reduce our individual and collective environmental impact, by making positive changes to offset climate change and reduce environmental damage. It is the perfect way to reduce our carbon footprint and make better use of the Earth's resources, to minimise the environmental damage that can be caused by our lifestyle choices.

Join us at our learning and innovation centre in Hoskote, which provides the perfect setting for knowledge sharing, networking with peers and exchanging ideas for free. Contact: mde.nazareth@gmail.com

Dr Marianne Furtado de Nazareth is the former assistant editor of *The Deccan Herald*, and dedicates quality time and effort for sustainable environmental practices.

The Bee World

If the bee disappeared off the face of the Earth, man would only have four years left to live.

Albert Einstein



Behind the Buzzing Honeybees

Keep a beehive at your home and contribute your might in preserving nature.

DAVIS KALLOOKARAN OFM

Have you watched a honeybee close up? They have two large compound eyes and three simple eyes, or ocelli, located on top of the head. Keen eyesight is complemented by two sensitive odour-detecting antennae. The honeybee is remarkable for the dancing movements it performs to communicate information to its fellow bees about the location, distance, size, and quality of a particular food source in the surrounding area.

A beehive; the way it is built, maintained and protected, the various types of bees: queen bee, female bees/workers and male bees/drones distribution of duties and responsibilities their care for the young and savings for the future, take us into a world of amazement and wonder. In a broad sense honeybees include all bees that make honey. In a stricter sense, honeybee applies to any one of seven members of the genus *Apis*—and usually only the single species, *Apis mellifera*, the domestic honeybee. This species is also called the European honeybee or the western honeybee. In India there are four types of honeybees found in common. Bees are social insect live together in colonies (beehives) manifesting group integration, distribution of labour and overlap of generations.

Honeybees have two sexes male and female. There are two castes among the female honeybees—known as workers, which are females that do not attain sexual maturity, and queens, females that are larger than the workers. The males, or drones, are larger than the workers and are present only in early summer.

The workers and queens have stingers, whereas the drones are stingless.

Queen honeybee stores sperm in a structure known as the spermatheca, which allows them to control the fertilisation of their eggs. Thus queens can lay eggs that are either unfertilised or fertilised. Unfertilised eggs develop into drones, whereas fertilised eggs develop into females, which may be either workers or virgin queens. Eggs destined to become queens are deposited in queen cells, which are vertical cells in the honeycomb that are larger than normal. After hatching, the virgin queens are fed on royal jelly, a substance produced by the salivary glands of the workers. When not fed a diet consisting solely of royal jelly, virgin queens will develop into workers.

For all types of honeybees, eggs hatch in three days and then develop into larvae that are known as grubs. All grubs are fed royal jelly at first, but only the future queens are continued on the diet. When fully grown, the grubs transform into pupae. Queens emerge in 16 days, workers in about 21 days (on average), and drones in 24 days. When a new queen is emerged in a beehive they form a new colony. The queen bee lays up to 2,000 eggs a day. Though the lifespan of a honeybee is 30 to 60 days the queen lives for three to five years.

Honey is delicious and there will be hardly anyone who does not enjoy its sweetness. We have been consuming honey for thousands of years as a natural sweetener for its abundant nutritional and medicinal benefits. It is an excellent substitute for natural sugar and a great

source of carbohydrates such as glucose. Honey is rich in carbohydrates of natural origin, these are composed mainly of fructose and glucose. In addition, it contains a significant amount of vitamins and minerals such as vitamin B2, niacin, vitamin B6, folic acid, vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, zinc, iron, potassium and magnesium. Honey is also composed of amino acids, antioxidants, minerals and enzymes that can influence the relief of the symptoms of a cold or flu. It also provides organic acids, such as acetic acid and citric acid. Using honey to replace refined sugar is the best option, not only does it give food a special flavour, it can also enhance the flavor and is the most natural and healthy option.

Honey is obtained and produced by honeybees. These collect the nectar of flowers and from the sap of some trees such as oak or holm oak. Once the nectar has been collected, the bees transport it to their hives and concentrate it in the cells. Today a large variety of honey is available with specific taste and flavor from mustard, leechi, jatangi, kharang, and neem.

The use of honey is very varied, from sweetener to medicinal remedy, and even as a beauty treatment. We can use honey as a powerful antibacterial given its important content of inhibins (hydrogen peroxide, flavonoids and phenolic acids). Honey has attributes of anti-inflammatory properties, it can be used to reduce muscle inflammation and thus reduce the discomfort they cause. Consuming honey with lemon juice facilitates the digestion of food, helps relieve acidity and promotes intestinal transit. Honey together with hot milk, helps us to calm coughs and sore throats, thus many medicines include honey in their composition.

Honey and wax the bees provide to humanity is actually nothing compared to the pollination they do visiting millions of flowers

day in and day out. Almost 80% of pollination is done by bees. Bee keepers in different countries have taken up pollination duties using their beehives. Undoubtedly bees sustain the world and keep it going.

Though these tiny insects contribute so much to keep the eco system in balance, bees are being wiped out from the face of the earth at an alarming rate. A recent survey showed that 50 million bees—more than seven times the world's population—were wiped out in a few months during winter 2018-19. This is more than one-third of commercial US bee colonies, the highest number since the annual survey started in 2000. This trend is going upward. Use of pesticide for crops is the major cause for this suicidal development.

We as Franciscan friars in India promote bee keeping among farmers, not only for additional income, but also for better crops by pollination and to make families healthier. We at grass root levels promote this plant-bee collaboration for the sustenance of the world. We promote stingless beehives. It is not labour intensive, it is easy to maintain and maintenance free -only harvesting honey once in a year. Stingless bees' honey is very rare, medicinal and so expensive. Keep a beehive at your home and contribute your might in preserving nature. There is much to learn from bees; they are sacrificing their savings for us and for our well-being.

The major part of the food we consume is a result of the contribution made by these tiny insects. Bees need plants that bear flowers and the plants need the bees for their pollination and survival. If bees disappear from the face of the earth, thousands of different kinds of plants and trees would disappear and consequently no production of food and hunger will prevail. Bees dying away at an alarming rate are dangerously affecting food production causing huge loss for farmers.

Davis Kallookaran OFM works at grass-root level in promoting ecologically sustainable organic gardens.

Bees and the Ecological Balance

Without honey bees our gardens would be bare, our plates empty, and the ecological balance completely upset.

Dr SITAVI YATHIENDER



An ecosystem is the structural and functional unit of the environment where living organisms interact with non-living components and maintain a balance. Anthropogenic activities like industrialisation, urbanisation, pollution, agricultural intensification, deforestation, and soil erosion have played havoc to the rich biodiversity of our country. Flora and fauna play a significant role in our lives and we have to be sensitised to protect their habitats. Keystone species play a specific role in an ecosystem and help in its sustenance. Human interference on many keystone species are causing damage to the environment and also increasing their risk of becoming endangered or extinct. Honey bees existence contribute to the natural ecosystem functions, as they are an important keystone species for the pollination of crops.

The honeybees, are insects of an order Hymenoptera, which also includes wasps and ants. The anatomy and morphology of the honey bee helps it to co-exist and lead a symbiotic relationship with other organisms on earth. Honey bees possess several salient features which make them good pollinators. Foraging worker bees are always on the hunt for nectar from flowers. Their proboscis or tongue is long and helps them reach the nectar in the center of the flower. They collect nectar from various flowers and process it into honey by evaporating excess water, transforming it into a viscous, concentrated energy source. Additionally, they add valuable enzymes to enable long-term

storage for the sustenance of the colony. During the honey flow season, they store the excess honey in special wax-capped cells in the honey comb.

While collecting the nectar the bees are providing a great service to the plant as they brush against the pollen. Their furry legs and bodies are suitable for brushing off the pollen, as they visit other flowers aiding in pollination. Pollination is the process by which the pollen grains from the anther of the stamen (male reproductive organ of the flower) reach the stigma of the ovary. Honey bees help in the pollination process while collecting nectar for honey. Nectar and honey are good substitutes for sugar and since nectar is directly got from plants vegans prefer it to honey. Apart from providing honey, royal jelly and pollen they also produce beeswax, propolis and venom.

India is gifted with a rich biodiversity of both solitary and social bees like honey bees having several species under the genus *Apis*, indigenous to India. About 80% or more of the crop plants depend on insect pollination and native bees are efficient pollinators providing a stable ecosystem enabling plants to produce seeds and fruits.

India is home to three species of *Apis* under family *Apidae*

- The rock bee (*Apis dorsata*).
- The Indian hive bee, (*Apis cerana indica*)
- The little bee, (*Apis florea*).

Unfortunately honey bees are currently on decline and we are reminded of the Albert

Einstein's quote, 'If the bee disappeared off the face of the Earth, man would only have four years left to live.' In addition to providing valuable commercially important hive products bees ensure food security and to conserve the biodiversity and ecosystem.

They contribute to the rich biodiversity and are linked both directly and indirectly in the food chain. But as vectors of pollination, they contribute to the reproductive cycle of many plants, which provide food for other organisms. Without honey bees our gardens would be bare, our plates empty and the ecological balance completely upset.

They provide habitat to a number of organisms. Street trees and trees in forest are visited by honey bees, and their role as pollinators is vital to the growth of these trees. If Bees disappear, small organisms who depend on these trees for food and shelter would also disappear along with.

Bees procure honey and store it to feed their colonies during the cold winter months. Like humans a number of organisms also raid the bee hives for honey and also feed on the bee larvae. Bees are prey to a number of organisms who feed on them and they are themselves primary consumers feeding on the nectar of the flowers thus forming a part of the food chain.

Honey bees which form a crucial part for food production, human livelihood and biodiversity are under great threat especially by humans due to various factors. Decline in numbers is due to, increase in temperature

associated with climate changes, encroachment of forests, industrialisation, negative agricultural practices like monoculture and excessive use of pesticides all contribute to the diminishing numbers of honey bees in nature. Infestation by disease causing organisms and predators, habitat loss, competition among native and introduced species, improper disposal of waste contaminating the environment are all adding to the decline in honey bee numbers.

Researches also report that concrete and glass buildings increase the temperature, alteration in the local climate, hostile treatment and conflict with humans in urban areas, pollution and excessive population all are silent contributors that bring down the population of honey bees.

Understanding how bees react to anthropogenic stressors, public awareness, providing honey bee-friendly habitat in gardens, growing bee friendly native plants and colourful flowers which attract the bees more than hybrid varieties, use of bee box in consultation with a beekeeper are some of the ways we can adopt to be bee friendly.

Existing green spaces and trees have to be preserved and we need to create habitats to save these industrious bees. Efficient long term strategies are needed to reduce the decline of honey bee populations.

Dr Sitavi Yathiender is the Head of the Departments of Zoology & Genetics at Jyoti Nivas College, Bangalore.



Ecological Friars

That the bees not perish of hunger in the icy winters, St Francis commanded that honey and the finest wine should be set out for them.

JOY PRAKASH OFM

Lenin seems to have admitted on his deathbed, 'To save our Russia, what we needed was ten Francis-es of Assisi, and we should have saved Russia' (Lenin admitted to a Hungarian priest, who had been a former classmate). In a similar vein a fellow-communist and writer, Philip Toynbee, while comparing the present condition of England to the thirteenth century, when the Franciscan Friars rejuvenated it, says, 'What the country most needs now is an order of ecological friars who will go around the country similarly rejuvenating it. Indeed, one real, existing ecological friar is worth more than a whole Movement for the Encouragement of Ecological Friars, with its many committees and a whole list of distinguished patrons' (Quoted in *Holiness* by Donald Nicholl).

We Franciscans have inherited from our protagonist, Francis d'Assisi, his respect for creation. His actions and writings indicate deep esteem for every creature. He saw in each one the image of the Creator, and this image is what

Francis revered in every created thing, as some incidents cited below from his life indicate: He spared lanterns, lamps, and candles, unwilling to use his hand to put out their brightness which is a sign of the eternal light.

He walked reverently over rocks, out of respect for Him who is called the Rock. When it came to the Psalm verse 'You have set me high upon the rock' (27:5c), in order to express it more respectfully, he would say, 'You have set me high under the feet of the Rock.'

When the brothers were cutting wood, he forbade them to cut down the whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again. He commanded the gardener to leave the edge of the garden undisturbed, so that in their season the green of herbs and the beauty of flowers may proclaim the beautiful Father of all. He even ordered that within the garden a small garden should be set aside for aromatic and flowering herbs so that those who see them may recall the memory of the eternal saviour.

He picked up little worms from the road so they would not be trampled underfoot. That the bees not perish of hunger in the icy winters, he commanded that honey and the finest wine should be set out for them. He called all animals by a fraternal name, although, among all kinds of beasts, he especially loved the meek. (*The Second Life* by Thomas of Celano)

Besides all this, Francis told his brothers to 'be subject to every beast and wild animal' (salutation to the virtues) and in his Cantic of the Creatures he sang of 'our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us'. The idea of being subject to the natural world and governed by it is far from the attitude of mastery and exploitation that shapes our present worldview, but it is essential for the survival of life on the planet.

Humankind will have to engage in a balancing act: withdraw from overexploitation and also engage creatively so that the earth is still a home for all. In his ground-breaking Encyclical *Laudato Si* Pope Francis writes that 'in our relationship with the world...if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism but something more radical: they were a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled' (n 11).

To conclude, I turn to the wise words of English historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), taken from his last interview before his death: 'In order to keep the biosphere inhabitable for the next two million years, we must begin to follow the example of Saint Francis, among the best of all human beings who have lived in the West. Given the example that Saint Francis has left us, we must follow with our hearts, for us we can rescue the earth' (Interview; Journal ABC, 1972).

SHALOM HOME STAY
Majorda Beach, Goa.

TAKE TIME OFF
Relax
Enjoy Goan Hospitality

Phone: +91-9822586596 | shalome80@gmail.com | www.rainbowsendgoa.com

Prakruthi Mithra

A Symbiotic Relationship

I am afraid, that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, more than ever before, are falling into deaf ears.

BABU JOSE PAMPLANY OFM



St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) had his feet on the earth and his heart turned to God as he composed his famous *Canticle of the Sun*, to express his special love for Creation as well as his appreciation and gratitude for the creator, the intelligence behind the brilliant design of this magnificent universe. St Francis writes: ‘Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and You give light through him. ...Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which You give Your creatures sustenance. Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure... Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs’. This around 800 years old yet wonderfully voiced worldview of St Francis made him known as the Patron Saint of the Environment.

Inspired by this canticle of St Francis the encyclical *Laudato Si’* published by Pope Francis in 2015 focuses on the care for the natural environment, the earth and all peoples of the world. The encyclical’s subtitle, ‘Care for Our Common Home,’ fine-tunes its focus lenses on things that really matter to our world. This centuries old *Canticle of the Sun*, of St Francis which was a reminder to us to admire, thank and praise God for creation then has in our time evolved into *Laudato Si’* of Pope Francis as a warning and a wakeup call to everyone to care for the creation

that makes our lives possible and arouses our responsiveness to questions of relationship between we, God and the world we live in.

In my understanding the canticle of the sun or also known as the canticle of creatures is a profound invitation to a new and reconciled relationship; in one word, peace. There is no better bestowal of peace than that which emerges from nature: the sound, the silence, the serenity and every aspect of nature; and there is no wonder why the Prayer for Peace is attributed to St Francis. It is simply and amply clear that we are guilty of disregarding nature if we do not experience the tranquility that nature renders to us. When nature is viewed holistically and inclusively as our common home just like St Francis who saw the sun, the wind as Brother Sun, Brother Wind, we build a loving and lasting reconciled relationship, a special kinship with God’s creation and be like St Francis’ instruments of peace.

St Francis of Assisi as we can see from his life was moved by the intrinsic value of all life as an expression of creative love and the deep bond of friendship, respect and reverence between him, creation and God as it is evident in all that he said and did. The lively and symbolic display of the birth of Jesus, the prince of peace on earth in 1223 by St Francis is yet another act of being down to earth with a heart turned to God. Since then the making of cribs has become for the church a rich tradition of spreading peace and joy to the world. St Francis did not want to be the master of anyone but the brother

of all. For, the suns, wind, water, fire, earth, are not simply natural elements, but also symbols of the forces that work in our innermost being. St Francis of Assisi engaged with these forces of nature which are sometimes destructive. Neither water, nor wind nor fire, nor even death frightens him. He was a rare and special person who welcomed death as ‘sister death’. When he was dying, the Joy of knowing that sister death has come to his cell he did not forget to seek pardon from his brother body which bore the brunt of all his sacrifices, fasting and penance and desired that he be laid naked on the naked floor. Even at the hour of his death St Francis was busy reconciling himself with the forces of nature with song in his heart and this reconciliation led him to realize that he himself was one of many creatures, and he was close to them. And for this reason St Francis of Assisi remains as reminder for all of us about the need for an ecological conversion and *Laudato Si* invites us not only for a sort of conversion of heart but also shows us how to embrace the path of ecological conversion so as to hug the earth and all that live therein.

In our obsession to make everything and everyone in the world straight and perfect, without realizing that there is nothing in this world that God has created which is straight and fitting to our inbox thinking and our perception of perfection has often made us all people with a straight face. In our selfish pursuit for comfort, we have evolved our concept of straight jacket perfection with deep seated prejudice

on the round and curved created world and we find it hard to align ourselves to the earth, the sun and the stars as none of those in the created world are straight and perfect to our concept and comfort driven calculations. This attitude and outlook of ours is creating a distance and a disconnect between God, others and the created world is a stark reality that constantly stares at our face.

The ABCD of life is, After Birth Certainty of Death. To learn from nature that after the sun sets there will certainly be a sunrise and there is certainly this magic light at dawn and dusk when you can see the light even when you can’t see the sun. Nature will teach us survival techniques to sustain ourselves, to push back the frontiers of human endurance to the edge of possibility. That if we embrace the earth as the roots do, we can grow and be firm, and we can flourish and flower and be fruitful and multiply. Nature is like a valley that echoes; what you do in life with nature echoes and reechoes now and for eternity. You will know what I mean if you ever persevere in caring for a creature, a dog for example, you are sure to get back in full measure and overflowing with all the love and attention you give it. Such an experience opens a window to you that demonstrates the goodness and gentleness of nature and its creatures.

Prakruthi Mithra (friend of Nature) since 2014 is an initiative in the spirit of *Laudato Si’* by the Franciscans (OFM) at the foothills of Wayanad Kerala which now fulfills its objective of demonstrating the goodness and gentleness

of nature with gratitude and joy. Prakruthi Mithra is a Franciscan mission venture of caring for creation in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi. It is a paradise for nature lovers and it offers the apt ambience for a nature friendly feel. Prakruthi Mithra makes a sincere effort on getting people to love nature and restoring ecology... or in other words, introducing the concept of Eco-restoration and an invitation to be a friend of Nature, embracing an eco-spiritual lifestyle for life. At Prakruthi Mithra the sound of the rain... running streams... chirping birds will surround us with silence and the sentiments of solitude... ..the green carpeted tea gardens by its side, the coffee and shady trees around... with its cool and pleasant weather even in the middle of Summer Prakruthi Mithra is a great place to unwind and fall in love with the silence, the sound and the beauty of nature.. Prakruthi Mithra strives to nurture a culture of conversion for restoring nature. At Prakruthi Mithra we make every effort in rebuilding our human capacity for cultivating that little curve that makes smiles possible.

By our presence at the edge of a tea garden valley in Wayanad blessed with beauties of nature and many of its creatures we proclaim to every human person, the crown of creation, that protecting and preserving nature and the environment—is a favour that we do to ourselves. Restore nature and nature will restore you, the opposite being the obvious... Destroy nature and it will not be able to hold you up —this is the gospel we preach to the ends of the earth (Mk.16:15). This beautiful and explicit recognition of our complete dependence on the Earth and the environment as our common home is the theme song of our being and becoming at Prakruthi Mithra. We teach the young and old to recognise from a touch me not plant (*Mimosa pudica*)—how sensitive and shy it is. There was a time when we humans thought that it's only we who can feel the pain of another, that it's only we who can show sympathy, solidarity and take this risk and challenge to sacrifice one's life for the sake of another. Now time has come for us humans to

realize that the creatures of nature are outdoing us humans in showing sympathy, solidarity and making sacrifices without expecting anything in return. Simply put, be kind to nature and all its creatures and nature will be kind to us and without even knowing it we will become a kind natured person. Just as a simple smile can make you look more beautiful than any makeup; simply be deeply in love with nature and you will be beautiful from the inside, yes embrace the earth like the roots and you will see the fruits. An inclusive reciprocity devoid of cruelty to all living beings calls for ecological conversion—Nature will in all probability do well without us but we will not be able to do well without nature for this reason at Prakruthi Mithra we encourage and engage everyone who is associated with us to be a petal of Peace. If only we live to learn once more that a curve on our face and lips can make smiles possible, the world would have been spared of many strange and straight faces and nature would have regained its real beauty once again.

Our aggressive pursuit for progress and personal comfort is also our submission that obviously we know nearly nothing about the fact that the 'have-nots' of the world are increasing greatly both in number and in degree of misery. The connection between environmental degradation, poverty, and our moral obligation to one another should cause any thoughtful person to worry about the serious situation of the world in which we live in. Though worldwide, environmental awareness is growing. It's already in a state of too little too late. I am afraid, that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor more than ever before are falling into deaf ears. We can only hope that as individuals we will find the strength to keep doing what we can to make this world our common home and that the words of Pope Francis, expressed so beautifully to all the world's people in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, may inspire us to find ways to abandon many of our selfish ways and find our way together into a restored future for nature.

Babu Jose Pamplany OFM is the director at Prakruthi Mithra eco-spirituality centre, Wayanad, Kerala

THE PART AND THE WHOLE

FR KM GEORGE

This morning, I broke a plate by sheer accident. I was about to fix my simple fruitarian breakfast with homegrown papaya and pineapple. Fingers still slippery with fruit juice I tried to grip the plate. Ooops! It fell and was smashed into a hundred pieces! (See the picture).

A moment of embarrassment with some flashback memory of parental scolding! Then I bent down to clean it up, but got totally puzzled. Where are all the shattered pieces of my cute plate-friend of a decade? All the sad bits and pieces I saw on the floor do not add up to make my lovely companion! I even brought a similar plate from the kitchen just to compare.

'The whole is greater than the part', states the fifth axiom of the great Greek mathematician Euclid. Yes, but what happens when all parts are put together? Do they make the whole? We are so used to dividing birthday and Christmas cakes that we might say yes too.

A scientifically meticulous person may be able to restore my plate quantitatively from its scattered bits. But for me it wouldn't make the whole anyway.

Great philosophical and spiritual visionaries go beyond Euclidean geometry and tell us that the parts don't add up to make the whole. It seems all religious dogmas and scientific theories are seeking the whole. But in the case of religions, most of them seem to proliferate laws, rituals, and taboos by indulging in more and more sectarian bits and parts that fragment the humankind. In science they are in unending



search for the bigger and bigger dimensions as with James Webb Space Telescope or the infinitely smaller and smaller building blocks of matter as with the Large Hadron Collider beneath the snow-clad Alpine mountains. But what about the Whole? Do all the fine-tuned parts add up to reveal the Whole? It simply slips away both at macro and micro levels?

Incidentally, for the first time in about ten years of my friendship with the broken plate I looked closely behind the spare plate and read the tiny inscription: 'Break & Chip Resistant... Made in USA.'

POLITICS OF CRASS JIBES AND FOUL TRUTH

From the last General Election to the Karnataka election held in May this year, the trend has deteriorated and the standard of public discourse in the country has reached the drainage level.

GERRY LOBO OFM

As the summer heat wave soared almost to the boiling level this April, the political heat wave also reached a point when leaders loud-mouthed not only rhetoric but also vomited crass jibes at opponents as electioneering took place with magnificent road shows and public meetings. False, partisan and communal statements were made during this campaign which created a climate of hate leading to burning of party flags and public property by some fringe groups. In recent years, the language used by public figures has become vicious and personal. The aggressive rhetoric is often based on half-truth. Instead of bringing people together, the offensive or inappropriate language used by political leaders only breeds anger, hatred and division in society.

Highly undesirable and insulting language used by those holding high offices in our country these days not only towards opposition parties but also against the opposing social and religious groups has become a common phenomenon. Our respected Prime Minister some years ago branded the Congress party as 'termites.' Aam Aadmi Party leader had once called the Prime Minister 'a coward and a psychopath.' Sonia Gandhi had once remarked about the incumbent government and its leaders as 'merchants of death.' When the present Prime Minister was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, he named Sonia Gandhi as a 'Jersey Cow.' Sadly enough our Prime Minister never misses an opportunity to run down and poke sarcastic fun at Rahul Gandhi. The latter, in his turn, is no less in running down the Prime Minister; so much so, that he seemed to have defamed the surname 'Modi' for which he is punished by law and disqualified as the Member of Parliament. The Congress President, Mallikarjuna Kharge, naming the Prime Minister as a 'poisonous snake' or his son, Priyanka Kharge, calling the Prime Minister as 'Nalayaka' (Inept or Useless Son) or the Karnataka Minister, B.P.Yatnal naming Sonia Gandhi as 'Visha Kanya' (Venemous Woman) during the election campaign, do not speak well of educated and public faces in our country. The often call for 'Congress Mukh Bharat' by the Prime Minister and some other stalwarts is a reflection of non-democratic stand and an authoritarian ideological aggression and does not in any way speak of a distinct statesman in high position. In a democratic set up which our country has stood for 75 years, the Prime Minister should in no way contribute to a political discourse which advocates for an opposition-free country. Nehru once wrote: 'In public life we must presume the bona fides of each other...I trust that all our criticisms will be based on policy and not on personalities.'

It seems to me that many political leaders are regularly using offensive languages in public, particularly during the election campaigns, as is the case during the Karnataka election season, to show they are expressing their true feelings and to project themselves as different from their opponents. Everyone is claiming to speak the truth but one discovers only hypocrisy and blatant lies. As someone calls it, it is the 'foul truth by the loud-mouthed politicians.' It is only a populist rhetoric and narrow interest in electoral politics. This has become the present day political culture consisting of anger and abuse. Our statesmen have

become political masters using as many baseless accusations and all the wrong words. From the last General Election to the Karnataka election held in May this year, the trend has deteriorated and the standard of public discourse in the country has reached the drainage level.

'Democracy does not mean holding and winning elections. The quality of a country's democracy is judged by the way leaders and managers of democratic institutions publicly adhere to democratic norms and values in principle and in practice. The language used by political leaders in a segmented democratic country needs to reflect decency and respect for differences of views and opinion; and inevitability, importance of other political groups... When public discourse of a country gets vicious and partisan, democratic polity as a whole starts to fall apart,' states Ashok Swain (Professor of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden).

Questions of free speech have become particularly fraught in the age of social media. Alarms have been sounded regarding the use of inappropriate language. What the political correctness as a form of censorship for the right wing is, for the left it is a means of striving for a safe and inclusive language. However the pivotal question is: where do we draw the line? We are free to speak, but not without consequences. We also want, and arguably deserve, to see exemplary behaviour from our elected representatives both within the Parliament and outside the house of democracy. There seems to be no universal code of conduct which is established and upheld which in turn lets the politicians speak their tongue. And that's a shame.

According to historians the ancient Greece is the first example of democratic society. In this same period there was the rise of the

Questions of free speech have become particularly fraught in the age of social media.

sophists—a group who offered to teach people for the sake of earning money. The sophist's education centred

on language; they taught people to become masters of persuasion. Essentially training their pupils to use rhetoric to talk themselves out of different situations, many of which related to legal disputes, was their intent.

Today, this same technique is employed by politicians in all countries. They use political lingo and spiel to disguise clear meaning and hide genuine sentiment. Of all the faults of political language, perhaps the biggest is freely throwing out disrespectful and defaming language with strong and cutting names. Under the cloak of rhetoric, real decisions with real consequences are hidden. By the use of this rhetoric our leaders evade accountability. Well, there may be no perfect solution to the question of language in the political discourse and debate. However one should begin with being a little less outraged and be of no profanity, and a little more concerned about the human person who represents human people by keeping politics from the real person and his or her honour.

One must remember that the words sent out into the public sphere by political personnel create ripples. The more high profile the speaker is, the bigger those ripples become, almost leading up to a flame of fire. Politicians particularly in our country must learn to set a tone deciding what is or is not a decent language on public appearance. When a high-profile politician makes racist comments, for example, then, inevitably, the public will also feel validated in repeating the same sin, as it has become so common in our Indian society today. Let us know that offensiveness does exist when bad language is used to defame another person. Human persons, after all, are made of flesh and blood, not of wood or stone!

Corruption Has Many Faces

LIYA THOMAS

'Corruption is like a ball of snow, once it's set a rolling it must increase.' —Charles Caleb Colton

Corruption comes in many shapes and sizes; and it occurs in every civilisation, and in every country in the world. Corruption is an abuse of entrusted power or position for private gain. It involves bribery and dishonest behavior or use of one's public office for personal benefit or benefit of a group of people rather than for public interest or common good. Corruption places private economic interest over public interest. Corruption no more shocks us: it is common to see public servants demanding or taking money or favors in exchange of services, politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs and contacts to their sponsors, friends and families, or corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals.

Political or administrative corruption not only leads to the misallocation of resources, but it also affects the manner in which decisions are made. Political corruption is the manipulation of the political institutions and the rules of procedure, and therefore it influences the institutions of government and the political system, and it frequently leads to institutional decay. Political or administrative corruption is when laws and regulations are more or less systematically abused by the rulers, side-stepped, ignored, or even tailored to fit their interests.

Corruption affects societies and individuals politically, socially, environmentally, and economically. Politically, it refuses a nation its freedom and rule of law. Socially, it stops people's participation and trust in government. Environmentally, it denies people's chance for a healthy environment and sustainable future. Economically, it skews people's opportunity to develop and grow wealth. There are different types of corruption.

Bribery

It is an act of dishonestly persuading someone to act in one's favor by payment or other inducement. There are many equivalent terms to bribery, like kickbacks, gratuities, sweeteners, pay-offs, and grease money. These are payments needed or demanded to make things pass swifter, smoother or more favourably through the state bureaucracy. By greasing palms corporations and business interests can buy for instance political favours and escape the full burden of taxation and environmental regulations, or buy protected markets and monopolies.

Embezzlement

It is an act to steal, misdirect or misappropriate funds or assets placed in one's trust or under one's control. It is direct stealing of public fund. Embezzlement is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he is employed, and from resources he is supposed to administer on behalf of the state and the public. However, disloyal employees in private firms can also embezzle money and other resources from their employers.

The general public is deprived when public funds are embezzled, but no individual property is stolen, and thus individual citizens will have no legal right to present themselves as forfeited. This points to one of the dangers of embezzlement. There will have to be a political will as well as an independent judiciary and a legal capacity in order to clamp down on embezzlement. There have been cases of large numbers of former state enterprises have been handed over to friends and family of ministers and presidents, for symbolic sums of money and in the name of privatisation.

Fraud

It is an act of intentionally and dishonestly deceiving someone in order to gain unfair or illegal advantage. It is a broader legal and popular term that covers more than bribery and embezzlement. It is fraud for instance when state agencies and state representatives are engaged in illegal trade networks, counterfeit and racketing, and when forgery, smuggling and other organised economic crime is propped up by 'official' sanction and involvement. It is fraud when ministers and top bureaucrats take a share for closing their eyes on this; it is serious fraud when they have an active role in it.

Favouritism

It is a mechanism of power abuse implying privatisation and a highly biased distribution of state resources. Favouritism or cronyism is to grant offices or benefits to friends and relatives, regardless of their merit. Favouritism is related to corruption insofar as it means power abuse in the form of an undemocratic and privatised distribution of resources. Favouritism favours friends, family and anybody close and trusted. In the political sphere, favouritism is the inclination of state officials and politicians, who have access to state resources and the power to decide upon the distribution of these, to give preferential treatment to certain people when distributing resources.

Collusion

Collusion involves a horizontal relationship between bidders in a public procurement, who conspire to remove the element of competition from the process. Bid rigging is the typical mechanism of collusion in public contracts: the bidders determine between themselves who should win the tender, and then arrange their bids – in such a way as to appear that the designated bidder is selected by the purportedly competitive process. It is an arrangement between two or more parties designed to achieve an improper purpose which includes influencing improperly the actions of a state or organisation.

Extortion

Corruption in the form of extortion is usually understood as a form of extraction. It is for

instance when mafias are able to impose their influence upon individual state officials and entire state agencies through threats, intimidation and targeted assassinations. What they obtain in return may be preferential business opportunities and privileges, and freedom from taxation, regulations, and legal prosecution.

When a state or organisation is corrupt and strong, the ruling class benefits the most from corruption. The elite uses the state apparatus as its instrument to extract resources from society, and it does so for the benefit of the rulers. This applies where the state is not only the strongest force in society, but also where a ruling elite has developed into a dominant and ruling class in control of the powers of the state. That is, the more political power is concentrated exclusively in the hands of a few individuals, the greater the temptation for power abuse, selfish wealth-seeking and primitive extraction.

When a state or organisation is not only corrupt but also weak, the main beneficiaries of the resources extracted, privatised and consumed are not the political and state-based elite, but state resources are depleted and distributed to various powerful individuals and groups according to the power configurations in each country. Here, politically strong and organised groups will for instance be able to challenge state authority from below through corruption. When private citizens, commercial businesses and various interest groups are able to buy national and public resources cheaply, to buy exceptions, privileges, immunity and impunity through the use of kickbacks and mafia methods vis-à-vis public officials, the state or organisation will be eroded.

Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis. Transparency International, a global civil society organisation which works in over a hundred countries and fights against corruption, says, 'Corruption is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world. It undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector and private sector development and particularly hurts the poor.'



Workplace Burnout

A consistent healthy practice of self-care, however, could be a competent coping strategy for managing burnout.

A FRANCIS OFM

Burnout, is alarmingly on the rise, ballooning to a record high, reports global media. Terms like *guolaosi* (Chinese word for ‘work-related death’) and *karoshi* (Japanese), are resurrecting in the media, cautioning individuals to be on the guard against the unmanaged chronic work-related stress. Reports suggest that annually one million people die by overwork in China, with lack of work-life balance, and as much as 120,000 in the US. The WHO presented the statistics of 745,000 deaths worldwide in 2016, from stroke and ischemic heart diseases due to working long hours. A survey undertaken by the US Think-Tank Future Forum in February 2023, revealed that among the 10,243 global workers who participated, 42% of them experience burnout, the highest since May 2021.

Incidentally, the hybrid and remote work culture of the pandemic is blamed for the disastrous spike. Obviously, the work-from-home transitions, financial anxiety from potential job loss, lack of in-person support from colleagues, zoom fatigue, etc., constantly expose workers to the pernicious consequences of burnout.

Burnout, ‘the great exhaustion’ as called by McKinsey and Company, however, is not the exclusive creation of the pandemic. It was there in the pre-pandemic world. Looks like, it will continue to exist, unless we change, reframe, and redefine our existing work culture. A consistent healthy practice of self-care, however, could be a competent coping strategy for managing burnout.

What Is Burnout?

Herbert Freudenberger, who coined the term in 1974 described it as the physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. The 11th revision

of the International Disease Classification (IDC), defined burnout as ‘a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.’ As a built-up stress, it manifests itself in real time, in three specific dimensions: feeling of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job and reduced professional efficacy.

Experts warn us of the grave impact of burnout on human health and wellbeing. It affects us adversely from impaired immunity to sleep disturbances, musculoskeletal diseases, gastrointestinal issues, chronic fatigue, cardiovascular diseases, and a wide range of psychological and behavioral disturbances. Substance dependency and suicide could be its potential companions.

Chronic and Workplace

The words ‘chronic’ and ‘workplace’ hold the key in understanding what burnout is about. It is not about any stress which we randomly undergo. For example, we all have those typical mornings we wake up feeling not interested in going to work, wanting to stay in bed. Those are the ‘lazy days,’ which are not to be mistaken with burnout. The maker of burnout would be more serious in nature such as a lingering disinterestedness in work, persisting cynicism thinking out it, experiencing dread or panic about the thought of work, waking up feeling sick, lack of confidence and feeling incompetent about work.

The WHO links burnout primarily to the ‘workplace’ context, to the mismatch of multiple work-related components like heavy workload, long working hours, insufficient resources, toxic workplace etc. Michael P Leiter, and Christina Maslach, authors of the book *Banishing Burnout: Six Strategies for Improving Your Relationship with Work* present six sources of burnout at work: ‘Lack of control, values conflict, insufficient reward, work overload, unfairness and breakdown of community.’

The hardest obstacle individuals encounter in the amelioration of burnout is its systemic etiology. Obviously, tackling the sources of burnout is not entirely within the control of the employees. Employees cannot decide on their workload, or determine the recognition they

deserve for their achievements. It solely falls within the parameters of the employer’s vision of how he wants to run his business. At the best of his ability, an employee could take note of the workplace toxicity, address it with the employer for positive change. But it can’t be guaranteed that today’s profit-controlled work culture would heed to such concerns.

Healthy Self-care Habits

It is proven that our commitment to the daily practice of self-care could help us manage burnout effectively. While rest, relaxation, resilience, and overall wellbeing are the motives, prudence should be exercised that our focus on self-care is not reduced to any one area of our life. Uncompromisingly, a well-thought-out holistic approach is needed. For example, we see millennials having a penchant for physical exercise which is highly desirable for anyone wishing to manage stress. Physical, though is not enough. We need to expand our healthy self-care habits to the wellbeing mind, spirit, and soul too.

An all-inclusive package sounds unattainably time-consuming. But it is quite doable, and falls in place with intentionally committing to many of the activities we do habitually. Sleeping sufficiently, eating healthy, building positive relationships, and finding quiet space and time are fundamental to a meaningful life.

Taking time to reframe our toxic self-critical and self-defeating thoughts would require only five to ten minutes of a daily mindful meditation practice. But the tremendous psychological and emotional benefit of this activity of cognitive reframing, living in the moment, and total acceptance is invaluable.

A 30-minute leisure walk (nature walk) is a no-cost and effortless activity compare to going to a gym, but it produces tons of physical energy and happy hormones like oxytocin, dopamine, and endorphin. We therefore don’t have to feel exhausted thinking about inventing heavy self-care packages to combat burnout.

Burnout as an ‘occupational phenomenon’, as called by WHO, is a reality, and in today’s work culture no one is insulated from it. We can, but, manage it, with the practice of healthy self-care habits.

The Culture of Saint Worship

SUSANNA MARIAN VAS

Being Catholic offers the remarkable gift of an expansive celestial community, with countless friends and role models in heaven. Depending on one's geographical location or parish, familiarity with certain saints may vary. However, when your puzzled nephew asks about why St Sebastian's candle rack is adorned with a vibrant array of melted wax while St Francis of Assisi's remains mostly bare, it makes you wonder. Moreover, witnessing a procession for a saint on Corpus Christi Sunday raised contemplation regarding the extent of our devotion to these holy figures.

Is there a possibility that our veneration of saints has traversed beyond its intended purpose, veering into the realm of obsession? These musings prompted me to reflect upon the imbalance between reverence and potential excess in our interactions with these heavenly intercessors and deliberate how church leaders/pastors can help.

Diversify the Nomenclature

The Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore and the Diocese of Chingleput have 25 Antonine churches between them. If we cast our nets a little wider, we will encounter a refreshing set of patrons and thereby redeem many saints and Marian titles from obscurity.

My aunt and I visited a majestic church under the patronage of the Divine Mercy and didn't find an image or statue of St. Faustina, the mystic who witnessed the Divine Mercy apparitions. When we asked the sacristan where we could find one, it turned out he didn't even know who Faustina was. However, the same church had a statue of St Anthony (and three other saints) on the altar.

Dioceses could insist that no more than 'n' churches should bear the same title. Even though St Anthony is a Franciscan saint, Franciscan churches and establishments can afford some healthy variation. After all, their order has

the highest number of saints, not to mention the longest canonisation queue.

Switch Up the Devotions

Many Catholic churches in Chennai dedicate certain days of the week or month to the veneration of particular saints. While it's wonderful to acquaint people with their friends in heaven, care should be taken to moderate the devotion lest it should morph into superstition and cultish adoration—especially in churches dedicated to St Anthony and Our Lady of Good Health. In the worst cases, Mary and the saints lapse from intercessors to demigods and brand ambassadors, and the church begins to toe the line of commercialism. If you feel stuck in a rut, popularise different novenas, litanies, and prayers. Rotate some, replace others.

Some regulars might make themselves scarce due to disappointment and lopsided faith, which might not be entirely their fault. It would help to identify the no-shows, reach out to them, and help them articulate their faith the right way.

Make the Church Christ-Centred

I visited a shrine with a downstairs chapel where St Anthony occupies centre stage (directly behind the altar table) while the tabernacle is sidelined. People ascended the altar, revered St Anthony, and walked past the Tabernacle without so much as a glance or a bow.

Architecture and décor influence how we perceive and interact with a space. The size and spatial coordinates of statues and pictures matter. As far as possible, reserve the altar and its immediate vicinity for Jesus. Place saint statues along the side walls and ensure they do not outsize those of Jesus or stand at a higher elevation.

Place Christ at the Heart of the Liturgy

The Catholic liturgy honours Mary and the

saints through solemnities, memorials, and optional memorials. The missal prayers, read aloud during the mass, honour the saints succinctly and memorably without detracting from the focal point of the liturgy—Jesus.

Although the rosary is the most prevalent and powerful personal devotion, we do not interrupt the mass with it. So should be the case with other devotions. Interpolating intercessory prayers to a popular saint in the liturgical elements can fuel the perception that the mass is for the saint. And instead of treating all masses equally, masses on certain days of the week become more 'auspicious' because they give prominence to saints. Non-liturgical devotions can always take place after the mass. Those who are interested can participate.

The actions of sitting, standing, and kneeling at mass are not arbitrary. We kneel during the Liturgy of the Eucharist and after communion out of reverence for the real presence of Christ. Kneeling during prayers to saints (in the middle of the liturgy) is an unconscious way of equalising veneration and worship, the latter of which is due to God alone.

A friar-friend told me a joke about someone receiving communion, making a beeline for St. Anthony's statue, and praying to the saint for Baby Jesus. While this simplicity can be occasionally amusing, it is a cause for concern. Personal interactions, homilies, and Sunday announcements are the best times to catechise the people about aligning their personal devotions with Catholic beliefs and teachings.

Regulate Religious Articles and Prayers

A shrine to St Anthony in South Chennai was selling *yantras* featuring St Anthony, St Michael the Archangel, St George, and Our Lady of Good Health on four corners of a sacred geometric diagram. When my aunt and I enquired about it, one of the storekeepers informed us it was a good-luck charm to be placed at the house entrance. Her face darkened when she realised we were not prospective buyers but offended Catholics. 'If you have a problem, complain to the priest. He's standing just outside!'

Aside from *yantras*, there are pamphlets

A *yantra* featuring saints ▶



and the occasional WhatsApp message linking specific actions (novenas, pilgrimages, prayers, etc.) to potential positive or negative outcomes. Vetting devotional materials is a way for the pastoral team to protect the faithful from spiritual harm. It allows them to identify and address any materials that may contain erroneous teachings.

By carefully reviewing these materials, the priests can guide the people towards authentic and trustworthy resources, reducing the risk of spiritual manipulation and preventing the proliferation of beliefs and rituals deviating from genuine Catholic spirituality that could confuse, divide, or mislead the faithful.

Don't Err on the Side of Diplomacy

Troublesome beliefs and practices with regard to saints are often ignored or even defended because they have become part of the local culture or because they are financially advantageous. Disrupting the 'norm' might cause a massive upset. While inculturation is desirable, all efforts in this regard should be in line with the broader teachings and directives of the Catholic church.

A gentle, non-confrontational approach will help people—Christians and non-Christians, educated and uneducated, young and old, cradle Catholics and recent converts—develop a balanced and reasoned approach to the faith. You'll see the fruits of your labour when, instead of treating the saints like genies and vending machines, your people desire to emulate their ardent love for Christ.

IN STAMPS

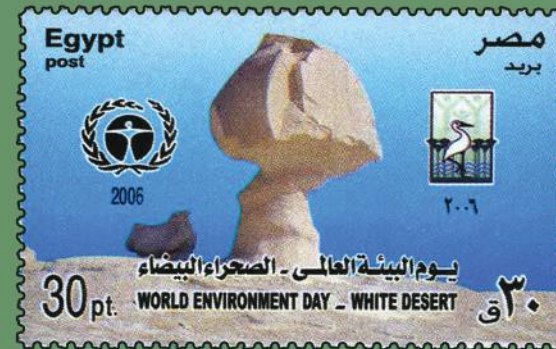
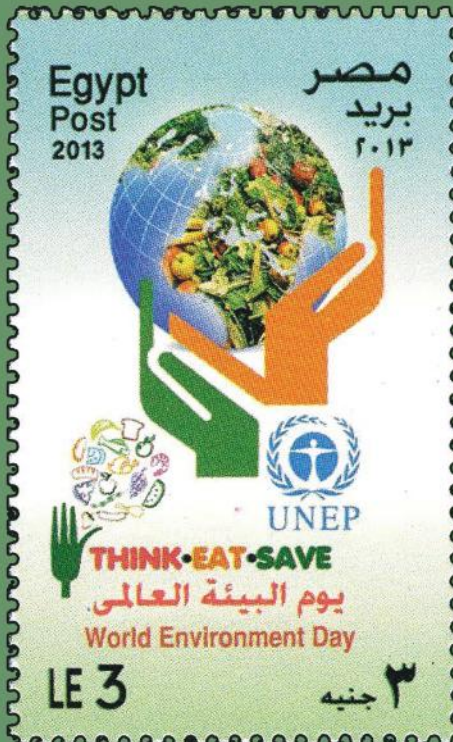
5 June

World Environment Day

World Environment Day (WED) encourages awareness and action for the protection of the environment.

First held in 1973, it has been a platform for raising awareness on environmental issues as marine pollution, overpopulation, global warming, sustainable development and wildlife crime. The World Environment Day is a global platform for public outreach, with participation from over 143 countries annually. Each year, the programme has provided a theme and forum for businesses, non-government organisations, communities, governments and celebrities to advocate environmental causes.

TOM JOHN



Dawn of a New Era

JANANI VIJAYKUMAR

There once was a maiden young and green
beautiful as she,
she was everything that none has ever been
kind hearted that she was
she shared her wealth just because
the birds and bees and flowers we see
corals, fishes and turtles of sea
the lions, tigers and deers alike
worms and blooms, everyone psyched
thankful, grateful, in harmony they lived
all together as one big family indeed.

Million years went by this way
until the apes decided to evolve one day
she stood witness and helped harness
the skills to dispel all darkness
with a honed mind from habilis to eructus
to sapiens, beings multiplied in surplus
emerged the modern men and women
with superiority solemnly unbidden.

Their fire, wheel and blades came first
civilisations flourished, expansively, unchecked
her peaceful, united little - big beings of old

ran, hid, or did everything told
Mother as she'd become to the old and new
she knew not how to contain this unfathomable
advent
the new beings explored and grew
leaps and bounds unheard before;
child of hers that they always would be
Humankind as they came to be
she let them head the household in good faith
she crowned them, bejewelled them, until, they
betrayed...

Encompassed in entirety of self satiating needs
Humankind went on a rogue spree
He hunted, cut, encroached and stole
He drove away his brothers and sisters from home;
He made them starve, homeless, endangered and
extinct
until the suffering silent species begged to saintly
Mother green.

But there she stood, beaten and bare
Stripped of her beauty that was once so rare
Her once abundant lush stream of hair

Lay tangled, dried, with none to care
Her soft, supple, enriching skin-
lay buried in harsh, dull concrete;
her blue, beautiful, beaming crown
lay burnt, damaged, with smoke and soot.
robbed of her riches
crippled in her crutches
she heaved, convulsed,
and wept with acid tears.

She weeped for the children lost
who were suffocated in plastic discards
She weeped for the children extinct
who were hunted and mercilessly marred
She weeped for her ragged ozone blanket
torn apart by savage hands without hearts
she sobbed in solemn helplessness
until there weren't any tears left to spare.

She boiled and erupted with volcanic wrath
overwhelmed in despair she unleashed tsunamic
spite

flared with fury she flooded their homes and crops
dissed by the disservice she dished new diseases
plagues, famines, earthquakes and droughts,
warfare, pestilence, hurricanes and floods,
She unleashed everything, with her every being;
To make them learn or perish, she'd hoped to
accomplish
but alas! the ignorant inglorious indefatigable
intrepids

Refused to relearn, regret or reform.
Disheartened she is, but deterred she's not
for her best laid plans of vengeance await
force of nature exists in all of us,
She exists all around us.

The time is here
Ticking faster than ever.
Time to deploy the sacred Rs
Regret, Repent, Reform, Rebuild
(Review, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)
The era of Redemption is born.



Artful Education

JAMESMON PC OFM

The artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist. —Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

The most satisfying memories I had from my school days were the hour for art and crafts. Many of us used to look forward to that period, where we could indulge in creativity with a kind of freedom that other subjects could never provide. Of course, we had an art teacher, till we finished our 8th standard. We had two art teachers and both had their own unique way of conducting art classes.

I never realised at that time that art was actually the basis of any learning. Most probably the authorities in school too might have had the belief that artistic endeavours were supposed to be a compartmentalised affair, and to be given as a separate dose of education, may be even considered as a leisure time, to have a break from more serious study. Little we had known that artful learning was the basis of everything.

I recently came across a book, *Art: The Basis of Education* by Devi Prasad. It was published in Hindi in 1960–61 and because of the interest shown by non-Hindi speaking teachers across the world, who were really interested in finding the true meaning of learning, Devi Prasad got it published in English language. The book might be an eye-opener for many a teachers. His experience of being a teacher for almost 16 years gives this book the aura of a classic. In the foreword to this book, Zakir Hussain (the former President of India) says that, 'The kind of art this book deals with is not that which is taught two or three days a week in classes for an hour or so. It is that art which is a lifelong discipline—a *sadhana*. The author has experience of Tagore's world as well as Gandhi's and has the

courage of putting life into art and transforming life into an art.'

Real learning, it seems, is not consisted of just reading and mugging up a lot of knowledge, devoid of any real time experience. I was fascinated by the behaviour of my grandnephew recently, when I visited home for my holidays. One of his aunties gifted him with a toy car and within few minutes, he had dismantled it into pieces. He was curious to know the working of that little machine, if we could call it. His parents, my niece and her husband, told me that he had a fascination for earth movers. There is a certain guy, in a Youtube channel, who keeps on presenting all kinds of earth movers in an interesting manner, that could be understood by kids. My grandnephew, gifted with a toy earth mover, now mimics this act with his toy, trying to move sand or tiny stones around his home.

There is another programme, that too in a YouTube channel, a big hit among the kids, where the kids themselves review toys that they have come across. The presenting kids are quite serious about the way they talk about each toy and millions of kids around the world watch this programme. What is happening is something beyond the class room. Devi Prasad in his book on Art as basis of education points out: 'The principles of education worked out by Tagore had totally rejected the notion and practice of teaching based on textbooks. For Tagore, education was a process of learning rather than a mechanical method of thrusting information into, what are supposed to be, the empty minds of children and adults. According to Tagore, the best textbook is life itself, and nature, of which we are an integral part; so also our cultural heritage and its significance in the ongoing



processes of our lives. May be a time has come where our children should be redeemed from their class room routine and ordeals, the so-called education.'

The best learning experience in India, to this day, is provided by the dream project called Shantinikethan by Rabindranath Tagore, where a holistic and inclusive approach to education that emphasizes the integration of arts, humanities, and nature is found. At Shantinikethan, the approach to learning is unique, flexible and individualised, unlike the rigid and one size fits all approach we see elsewhere. There is always an effort to avoid rote memorisation of learning materials. Students are encouraged to experiment and explore a spectrum of disciplines that includes literature, music, dance, fine arts and social sciences.

The curriculum at Shantinikethan integrates academics with creative arts. The point is, art is not an option that one can opt out, considering it as unimportant or not serious enough. Every student is asked to engage in a wide range of cultural activities, including theatre, music, dance, art exhibitions. Over all, the learning atmosphere at Shantinikethan is characterised by its harmonious blend of nature, arts, education. So, Devi Prasad says, 'Given the social structure and values nurtured by the so-called modern educational system, which ignores the role of art in the development of the personality of the child, his or her natural creativity tends to end with the beginning of adolescence. If that

quality in children is to be retained, the educational system that exists today must be totally overhauled, nay, revolutionised.' (Devi Prasad in *Art: The Basis of Education*)

From pre-historic times, humans have tried to communicate their inner world and world around them, not through words or any other medium but through scribbling on cave walls. Scribbling or doodling is one of the most basic means of human expression, exploration, and understanding of world around us. Children do it spontaneously and it's not simply being playful, but an activity by which they express what is within them and their way of communicating their inner world to the world around them. We need to place art (whether, fine arts, music, dance or theatre) at the core of our education. It fosters a deep appreciation for beauty, cultural diversity and interconnectedness of all knowledge.

There is an anti-aesthetic movement that we find among the people who indulge in terrorism. The best example we find today is the destruction of works of art at museums, mosques, churches and archaeological sites by the ISIS. Rote learning or mugging up of anything, be it secular or religious materials can only create monsters out of our institutions. Aesthetic sensibilities (like art), are to be given the importance that it deserves in order to mould individuals who are integrated and well balanced.

The Hotel Nantucket

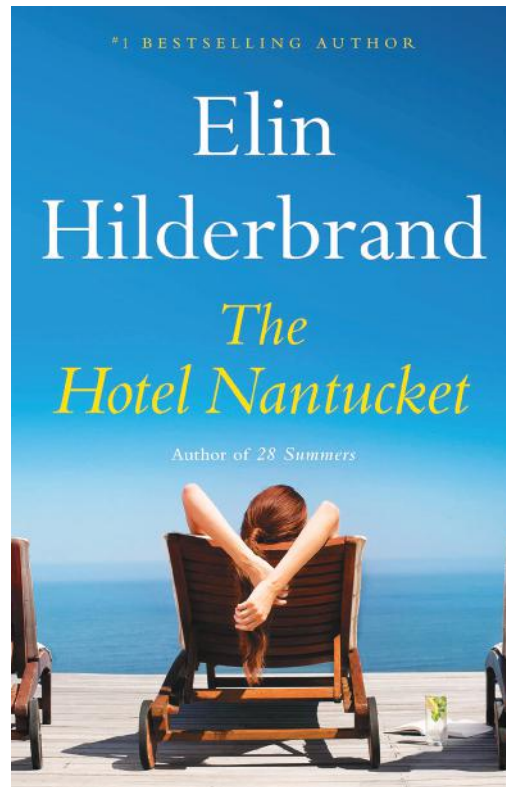
NIKITHA ANTO

The best part of the Hotel Nantucket was the staff. It may have taken me fifteen years to realize this, friends, but realize it I have: Hotels aren't about rooms. They aren't about amenities. They're about people... – Shelly Carpenter.

The Hotel Nantucket is written by the international bestselling author, Elin Hilderbrand and is published by Little, Brown and Company. The genre of this book is fiction.

A billionaire from London, Mr Xavier Darling, invests in an age-old hotel on an island, the Hotel Nantucket, which caught fire in 1992. The hotel is believed to be haunted by a spirit since then. He then turns this almost-ruined building into a splendid hotel with luxurious facilities that anyone would want to experience. He appoints Lizbet Keaton, as the general manager and asks her to choose the rest of the staff. Xavier tells Lizbet that they have to get the five-on-five rating from this famous travel blogger under the pen name of 'Shelly Carpenter,' and none of the hotels have ever got that rating. Hence, the entire staff works towards perfection, every single day, with the dire anticipation of Shelly's arrival.

Grace Hadley, the hotel's ghost, was a 19-year-old chambermaid who died in the fire and is stuck in the hotel as her death was not acknowledged. Not only does Grace have a story, all the other staff members too have their own complicated back stories. For instance, Lizbet



has a bad romantic past, Chadwick the rich kid's story is a tragedy, Eddie who is the front desk member faces financial trouble due to her father's death. In short, the book has a bundle of short stories within the story. All these back stories add layers to the main plot, keeping all the readers entertained and engaged throughout the whole reading process.

It might appear to be a tad bit difficult to dive into the book in the start due to the absence of a single narrator, but it does get easier with every page. The author manages to tie up all the loose ends of the story into a well-rounded ending, answering every question that the reader might have had in their mind. The identity of Shelly Carpenter is revealed too, and personally I never could have guessed it right. All in all, the book is well written, simple to read, and my current favourite. It is the perfect book to read during this summer.

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



LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR AT THE SERVICE OF THE ELDERLY POOR!



In 1839 in cold winter, Jeanne Jugan met and found God in the face of a poor elderly woman, blind and paralysed. She gave her bed to the poor woman, opened her home and her heart to her. Since then, many elderly people were welcomed by Jeanne Jugan and her daughters who are called "Little Sisters of the Poor" present all over the world in 32 countries. Jeanne said, "It is so good to be poor, to have nothing and to count on God for everything." She literally lived her saying and taught her daughters to trust in God's divine Providence.

**"Whatever you do to the least of my brothers you do unto me."
Would you like to take care of Jesus in the elderly poor?**



**If you hear the call to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan,
COME AND SEE!**

Little Sisters of the Poor

26, Hosur Road, Richmond Town, Bangalore - 560 025

✉ bangalorelsp1900@gmail.com

☎ 080 - 22270273



INTEGRO
INFOTECH & CONSULTING



MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE



**UNIQUE
MOBILE
APP DESIGNS**

MOBILE APP DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

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

- User friendly platform based development that enables institutions and NGO to update NEWS directly
- Send NEWS and Notification directly to your target customer base [Students or Donors or Collaborators]

BUILD YOUR NETWORK AND SOCIAL MEDIA VISIBILITY

- As news and notifications in the APP are quick share enabled for all social media platforms
- Engage your stakeholders efficiently and Effectively – Send NEWS, PHOTOS & VIDEOS directly to their mobile phones.

WHY INTEGRO INFOTECH?

- Customised APP Development, each APP is unique
- Unlimited Storage for NEWS and Events
- Unlimited Push Notification Alerts
- APP based contact form /reply form/application form...

CONNECT WITH US
FOR YOUR NEEDS



Martin Patrick
Manager Marketing



marketing@integro.co.in



888 426 7304, 80 50074851



www.integro.co.in