

RNI No. 56987/92

# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

Vol.29 Issue No.41 ■ (Total Pages 24) ■ Mumbai, 12 - 18 October, 2020 ■ Rs. 10

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

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# Hathras Rape – An Instrument of Oppression

by Don Aguiar.

**R**ape has been used the world over as an instrument of oppression. An exercise and demonstration of power that the rich and powerful have over the weak and poor. Of the upper castes over the lower castes. Of the entitled royalty over their subjects.

**A very peculiar aspect of the deep rooted caste system in our country is the fact that a person from the upper caste will not have water served to him by the lower castes, or allow their shadow to cross his path; He will not allow a person from the lower caste to walk on the same side of the street or draw water from the same well. But he has no hesitation whatsoever in inserting himself in the lower caste woman.**

In exercise of his power might and right!

**Dalits — formerly known as “untouchables” — are particularly vulnerable to caste-based discrimination, and Dalit women are singled out for sexual attacks thousands of times a year, according to human rights organizations.**

Gruesome reports of rape, often followed by retaliatory violence if vic-

tims or their families speak out, have become painfully familiar in India. Whether a rape report rises above the din to receive national notice is often determined by class and caste dynamics.

A 19 year old woman from a north Indian village who was reported to have been dragged from a field and raped by a group of men died of her injuries at a hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday, 29 Sept. 2020 triggering nationwide outrage again after years of what experts describe as a gang rape epidemic in India.

The 19 year old woman was Dalit, the lowest caste in India's Hindu hierarchy, was cutting grass to feed the family's five milk buffalo in Hathras when she was taken away by a group of upper-caste men on Sept. 14, according to her brother, Satender Kumar.

Her tongue was cut and her spinal cord was broken after she was dragged by her neck with a rope, Mr Kumar, her brother said. She had been transferred to the hospital just a day before,

two weeks after she was gang-raped and mutilated by higher caste men near their village in the Hathras District in Uttar Pradesh State. He said that arrests came only after days of complaints to the police. His sister was initially treated at a hospital in Uttar Pradesh before being transferred to New Delhi.

After the woman died in the hospital in New Delhi, her body was taken back to Uttar Pradesh, where the police seized her body in the early hours Wednesday and took her to be cremated without the family, ostensibly to try to keep the case quiet, Mr Kumar said.

“They took the body by force, assaulted the family members, and cremated my sister in the night itself,” her brother said. “Police did not allow us near the cremation place.”

The Hathras police did not immediately comment on the family's accusations. But the district magistrate, Praveen Kumar Laxkar, told reporters on Wednesday that it was untrue that family members were not allowed at the cremation.

Hundreds of protesters from the Bhim Army, a party advocating for the rights of Dalits, thronged the Delhi hospital where the woman was treated and clashed with the police. A leader of the Bhim Army, Chandrashekhar Azad, urged Dalits across India to take to the streets to demand that the attackers be hanged.

The police chief in Hathras, said that four men had been arrested on charges of gang rape and murder. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that “strictest action” should be taken against the attackers, according to a Twitter post by Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and a top elected official and a leader of Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and in



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# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

Vol.29 Issue No.41 October 12-18, 2020 Rs.10/-

99, Perin Nariman Street, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.

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(Contd.. from p. 2)

another tweet he said that a special investigative team had been formed to take on the case and that a report would be delivered within a week.

But justice is unlikely: Of the tens of thousands of rape cases reported in India annually, only a handful result in prosecutions, National Crime Records Bureau figures show. Activists say the true scope of the problem is far worse, as many cases are never reported because of the stigma of sexual violence in India.

When action is taken against suspects, it is often by vigilantes or by police officers acting extra judicially, in killings that are usually widely praised but that also point out the justice system's inability to deal with rampant sexual violence.

A student's shocking gang rape aboard a bus in New Delhi in 2012, which later resulted in her death, galvanized a nationwide protest, with demonstrators clamouring for reform. But the country's overburdened court system continues to move slowly. Four men convicted in the 2012 case were hanged in late 2019, after exhausting their appeals.

The police killing of four suspects in the alleged gang-rape of a 27-year-old

veterinarian last year in the southern state of Hyderabad was widely cheered as a swift workaround to Indian justice.

The 19 year old Dalit woman's death this week followed a string of disturbing rape reports in India as the country struggles with the coronavirus pandemic. In one case, in the southern state of Kerala, an ambulance driver is accused of raping a Covid-19 patient while taking her to the hospital. In August, the mutilated body of a 13-year-old was found in a sugar cane field in Uttar Pradesh, near the border with Nepal. In July, a 6-year-old girl was kidnapped and raped in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, and her eyes were severely injured in an attempt to keep her from identifying her attackers.

**The virus in our politics is more grievous than the virus in our bodies that harm the entire system. Cover up! Cover up! Cover up! Everywhere till the truth is buried. Everything and anything becomes right with the powerful and the mighty in the country ..... Men in uniform has no respect even for a dead body and the family members of the dead. A laughing stock in front of the world. Let's condemn the horrifying act and hope for justice.**

# Holiness within My Reach!

**C**hristus vivit (*'Christ is Alive'*) is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held from 3rd to 28th October 2018. In this Papal exhortation of young people, Pope Francis mentions a young Italian boy, in order to drive home the dangers that await the modern day youth. "This inspiring boy was well aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising, and social networking can be used to lull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity.....Yet Acutis knew how to use new communication technologies to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty." Pope Francis declared that Carlo Acutis, the 15 year old, was a role model for young people who are often tempted by the traps of "the self-absorption, isolation and emptiness of pleasure."

Carlo Acutis was born to Andrea Acutis and Antonia Salzano on May 3, 1991, in London. But the family moved to Milan when he was still an infant. Like any other youngster he loved soccer and video games. He was blessed with a great aptitude for computers and later on in life, he put his skills to good use by creating an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world. Writer Meg Hunter Kilmer provides us glimpses into his short life.

Meg paints a charming picture of a lovable and good-natured boy, with a passion for sharing his love of the Eucharistic Lord. Carlo's mother Antonia admits that her son had a deep love for Jesus, even though the family did not practice the Faith. Carlo rarely missed daily Mass and was a regular at Sacraments. He wanted to visit every church he came across, wherever they went. He insisted on

carrying flowers with him to place at the feet of Mother Mary! Carlo's deep love for Mary, whom he called 'the only woman in my life', led the family to visit different sites of Marian apparitions all over Europe.

At the age of 11, when Carlo received the Holy Communion, he realized that many people were reluctant to attend Mass. He expressed his dismay with, "They'll stand in line for hours to go to a concert, but won't stay even a moment before the Tabernacle." Driven by this thought, he decided to do something to draw more souls to Jesus. His young mind reasoned out that people would not want to stay away from Holy Mass if they knew of the Eucharistic miracles. He said at that time, "The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become

like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven." Building a website to attract people to Mass was the next step!

He promptly launched the new project of researching and documenting these miracles, dragging his parents from one shrine to another in order to get pic-

tures for his website! As a result of his technical knowledge and hard work the website came into existence with one hundred and fifty documented miracles. It was eventually developed into an exhibition, travelling the whole wide world! It is surprising that with so much on his hands, this friendly, outgoing kid still found the time to bicycle around touching lives and offering the troubled, a shoulder to cry on. It is said that Carlo hungered for heaven! He would say, "We have always been awaited in heaven!"

When he was 15, he was down with Flu, which was diagnosed as an untreatable Leukemia. He was not upset but was ready to go home because, as he told his mother, he had not wasted a minute of his time on things that did not please God! He was happy to die! He died on 12 October

2006. He had chosen to be interred at Assisi as he loved the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. The world looked up to this young life expectantly. In 2013 a Brazilian child suffering from a rare congenital anatomic anomaly of the pancreas was healed, allegedly with his intercession. This miracle came to be accepted by the Pope and Carlo Acutis was declared 'venerable' in 2008, firmly on his way to Sainthood.

The tomb of the young Italian known affectionately as a "computer geek saint," lies in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, Italy. It was opened on 1st October to enable the public to venerate his relics before his beatification, scheduled for 10th October. Bishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi celebrated a Mass for the opening of the tomb, saying that "today Carlo becomes in some sense visible again, the beauty of his presence among the angels and the saints. Carlo helps us to follow his footsteps and convert to Jesus." The teenager's "mortal body," as described by Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi is destined for resurrection. He elaborated that by beatifying someone the Church proclaims that that person is in Heaven and able to plead to God on your behalf if you pray to him.

As the news of the impending beatification of this teenager spread through the world, many aspects of his life came to light. When Acutis' body was exhumed for customary investigations before his beatification, they found him clothed in his customary clothes- jeans and a simple track jacket! Another fact rapidly being circulated among the believers is the absence of corruption in the mortal remains. Fr. Carlos Acácio Gonçalves Ferreira, the rector of the shrine where Carlo's tomb is, has thrown light on both these developments. He said that his body was discovered "fully integral," though not



by Vera Alvares





## Challenges to mankind during Covid-19 pandemic

The Coronavirus or Covid-19 has created numerous challenges for people all over the world. The outbreak of the virus was first located to the Wet Markets in Wuhan, China in December 2019. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organisation declared this infection a pandemic.

As the virus and its symptoms remained undiagnosed and unclear, the virus spread not only in the neighbouring countries but worldwide causing numerous restrictions and challenges in the daily life of people. The symptoms of the virus are similar to the common cold and fever (diseases like

SARS or MERS), like running nose and respiratory illness, which made it even harder to control the spread and provide the secure means for its treatment. The measures to stay protected from the disease were to self-isolate if mild symptoms occurred, or to admit oneself in Covid-19 hospitals, in case of severe cases, or just by practicing social distancing, remaining quarantined and washing hands and staying clean.

With more than 8.60 million confirmed cases globally and more than 3.85 lakhs cases in India, the outrage of this virus is not stopping anytime soon or until a vaccine is not discovered for the treatment. It has also posed a lot of challenges for the people admitted to hospitals for their COVID-19 tests and medication.

As the WHO guidelines provide for the role and responsibilities of the healthcare workers, it highlights certain rules for them to follow in ensuring occupational safety while providing utmost care to the ones who are suffering from respect, compassion and dignity.

—Jubel D'Cruz,  
Mumbai

## RSS planned brutality of Yogi-raj

The brutality with which the high cast gang rapers, senseless police force and the Andher Nagari U. P. government has dealt with the dalit girl Manisha Valmiki, once again proves that the teaching of Golwalkar Guruji of the RSS in his book "We and our nation hood" (1939) is being practiced in the country today. The BJP Sarkar wants to reduce this country to a miserable state economically, cul-

turally and even educationally. Following the Manusmriti. The aim is: only a few top cast rich will survive to rule the rest! Notebandi GST, impoverishing the banks and selling off Government companies and corporations, are aimed at Brahman Raj in the country! Ignoring the poor to die in coronavirus days has only helped the government to achieve the same satanic purpose! The RSS has officially disowned the book by Golwalkar "We and our nationhood" in 2006. That seems to be their usual lie, jhute! Its ideology is carried on!

Hence the whole country is rightly searching for a substitute to the BJP government. 2 days ago all opposition parties and NGOs came together at Jantar Mantar demanding justice for the Hathras girl. Let us hope that is the beginning of the collapse of the 'Hitlery' government in India!

INQUILAB ZINDABAD!

— Michael G,  
Samaj Shuddhi Abhiyan, Vasai.

## Start preparing for partial opening of churches

In his address to the clergy, Sep 25, Cardinal Oswald Gracias said that while the pandemic was still raging there is a possibility of partial opening of religious places in the coming weeks. The cardinal told the clergy to start preparing for this eventuality by discussing and putting in place the standard operating procedures (SOPs) mandated by the state govt. He suggested one-third of the church's capacity as the upper limit for attendees. The cardinal also suggested holding services in the open on church grounds, wherever available.

In Goa several churches have made a cautious opening with only about 40 parishioners permitted to attend each service. And though the number may seem very small, it is better to err on the side of caution, under the present circumstances. At

(Contd.. on p. 7)

(Contd.. from p. 4)

intact. He also spoke of the way that the remains are presented. "For the first time in history we will see a saint dressed in jeans, sneakers, and a sweater," the rector said. "This is a great message for us; we can feel holiness not as a distant thing but as something very much within everyone's reach because the Lord is the Lord of everyone."

"Carlo is a boy of our time. A boy of the internet age, and a model of holiness of the digital age, as Pope Francis presented him in his letter to young people around the world. The computer ... has become a way of going through the streets of the world, like the first disciples of Jesus, to bring to hearts and homes the announcement of true peace, that which quenches the thirst for the infinite that inhabits the human heart," Sorrentino said.

**W**hen the Nirbhaya incident happened in 2012, the whole nation was aghast at the brutal gangrape of a young girl. Spontaneous protests were organized across the country. Enough is enough, we want justice, etc., etc. And then, the madness continued. Incidents of rape, sexual harassment, crimes against women never stopped. And now, a 19-year old girl was brutally raped, badly injured and killed, in Uttar Pradesh.

Once again protests have erupted across the country. The manner in which the U.P. have handled this case has come into question. It's seems like the U.P. police have lost their soul. How else does one explain the treatment meted out to the 19-year old rape victim and her family. Cremating the body late at night, without letting the family members perform the last rights, not even, to pay their last respects to the dead. **In a stunning revelation, the police now state that the rape never happened. How much more insensitive could they get? Such heartless acts on their part need to be condemned.** Needless to say, all those responsible for the manner in which this case was handled, the cremation, etc., and the rapists, must be brought to book and the most stringent punishment meted out to them.

Close on the heels of this incident and in fact, hardly had the victim's body turned to ashes, another brutal rape of 22-year old student has taken place in Balrampur in U.P. What are the U.P. Police doing?

Let's look at the broader picture. Why



is it that such incidents of rape, sexual harassment, molestation, etc., continue unabated in our country? And, this limited not only to the state of Uttar Pradesh but it's happening all across the country.



**Melville X. D'Souza**  
- Orlem, Malad West

The chief minister of Maharashtra stated the other day, that such incidents would not be tolerated in Maharashtra. Good, reassuring words. Incidentally, on that very day, there was a report in the newspapers that Maharashtra tops the list of crimes against women, according to the 'Crime in India' report for the year 2019.

One would only hope that all state governments would take all necessary steps to protect women, children, senior citizens, in fact, all citizens this country. It is their responsibility.

Why do such crimes take place in the first instance? It seems to be a social problem. The police are there to maintain law and order, but one would tend to ask what can the police do about such crimes? The least the authorities which includes the Judiciary, could do to stop such crimes, is to deliver instant justice to the victims by speed-

ily bringing the culprits to book. This would send out the right message to others intending to commit such crimes. But, what about the sensibilities of the public? They need to do some serious soul searching. Their attitude needs to change. They need to understand that a woman is somebody's daughter, somebody's sister, somebody's wife; she also has the Right to live. Nicole Kidman rightly says, "Violence against women is an appalling human rights violation. But it is not inevitable. We can put a stop to this." Do we have the will to do that?

I found the following post quite relevant to the present situation. This is what Harini Muralidharan, Senior Director - Human Resource Business Partner, Juniper Networks IEC, says, "**Someone asked me, which is the worst crime in this world? I said it's rape because it's the only crime where victim gets the punishment**".

We have has too many incidents of women at the receiving end. **Enough is enough. The bottom line is, Crimes against women have to stop, wherever they may be. Period!**

(Contd.. from p. 5)

St Alex's Church Calangute ( my holiday parish) parishioners desirous of attending mass are required to give their names with details of age, competitors, if any and the vaddo to which they belong. Each day about 40 parishioners, belonging to a Samudai or small Christian community, are selected to attend the service. The animators coordinate all activities in the Samudai and inform the parishioners about the date and time they have to be present in church and all the protocols they have to observe.

We may adopt some of these practices in our churches. Many of our churches have grounds, even very large grounds like IC church Borivili. However, it will be prudent to restrict the maximum number of attendees to 100 as social distancing after the mass may be compromised with people exchanging pleasantries outside the church, which must be avoided

—Prof Robert Castellino  
Orlem Malad

## Crime against women

The recent brutal Hathras gangrape of a 19-year-old Dalit woman brings shame to humanity. After the 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape case, fast-track courts and a tougher rape law that included death penalty was enacted. Despite continuous media coverage, the case took over seven years, the average being much higher. Governments have changed but nothing much has been done to improve the justice system. Crime statistics indicate the situation has got worse. There is no political will to enforce the laws. Unfortunately, even a heinous crime like rape becomes a political issue in India. Parties start exploiting the situation for political gains. People are fed up with the hypocrisy shown by the ruling parties.

Is CM Yogi Adityanath's intelligence machinery so poor that he didn't know what his administration

was doing in the dead of night? As per Hindu traditions, no cremation takes place after sunset. Then why such hasty cremation? Is CM Yogi Adityanath helpless before the high and mighty in his state? The Uttar Pradesh government has much to answer for. The matter had not even died when another heinous rape and murder took place in the same state a few days later. Taking suo motu notice, the HC has asked top officials to appear before it on October 12. Why not today, when the SC can function at midnight to hear a terrorist's plea? Only a quick justice can pacify the people. Heads must roll to fix accountability .

The rape and murder exposes the disgusting manner in which crime against women is being approached and dealt with by the UP police which seems to have become a trigger-happy force since Yogi Adityanath took over as the Chief Minister. Not only was it outrageous to have cremated the young woman in the dead of night without her family's consent, but it has also stripped down every value that a human holds. Under the Yogi government, the state has witnessed a 27.9% rise in crime against women, especially those of Dalits. The UP CM must ensure the safety of women, and the state police must be held accountable.

Let us all unite and fight for justice for this young Dalit woman.

—Jubel D'Cruz,  
Dombivili, Mumbai

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## Fratelli Tutti (Brothers All)

Pope Francis has called for a better kind of politics, a more open world, and paths of renewed encounter and dialogue in his latest social Encyclical, that he hopes will promote a re-birth of a universal fraternity and social friendship!

Titled Fratelli Tutti (Brothers All), this 8-chapter/45,000-word document proposes an ideal world of fraternity where countries are able to be a part of a larger human family! The Encyclical was released on 04 October 2020, feast of St. Francis of Assisi!

Pope Francis explains that the words Fratelli Tutti were taken from the sixth of 28 admonitions that St. Francis of Assisi gave his friars; words that offered them a "way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel!"

But he focuses in particular on St. Francis' 25th rule: "Blessed is the brother who would love and fear his brother as much when he is far from him as he would when with him"! He re-interprets this as calling, "for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and history!"

In a novelty for an Encyclical, Pope Francis revealed, "I had incorporated a number of letters, documents and considerations received from individuals and groups throughout the world."

He closes his Encyclical by saying that he felt inspired not only by St. Francis his namesake, but also by non-Catholics such as Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, and Mahatma Gandhi!

He closes his Encyclical with two Prayers: To the Creator, and an 'Ecumenical Christian Prayer', so that the heart of mankind may harbor a spirit of fraternity!"

—Dr. Trevor Colaso,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai.

# Indian Civil Society is being Murdered!

**C**IVICUS is the well-known global alliance of civil society organisations that strives to promote marginalised voices specifically in the Global South; it has members from over 170 countries. A report which was recently published by them entitled ' *Punished for speaking up: The ongoing use of restrictive laws to silence dissent in India* ', highlights the tremendous increase in judicial harassment of activists, journalists, and protesters. The report regards the political environment of the country as becoming increasingly repressive. It speaks about the arrest and detention of activists particularly in the light of the Citizenship Amendment Act and raises concerns about the violations in Jammu and Kashmir. Above all, the Report observes India's slide towards authoritarianism through the conflation of dissent with anti-nationalism and smear campaigns against human rights activists. In 2019, the CIVICUS Monitor had downgraded India's status on space for civil society from 'repressed' to 'obstructed'

The latest report was compiled based on data submitted by CIVICUS members, civil society groups and human rights defenders in the country. This is coupled with media monitoring of news sources, data from the UN and international human rights NGOs monitoring India. The Asia-Pacific Civic Space Researcher of CIVICUS, Mr. Josef Benedict said at the release of the report that, " *It is appalling that human rights defenders are locked up in overcrowded prisons and continuously denied bail despite calls by the UN to decongest prisons and release political prisoners during the pandemic. Holding them at this time puts them at serious risk of contracting COVID-19 and adds another layer*

*of punishment for these activists, who have been detained just for speaking up for human rights*"

The report examines the vaguely worded laws that provide broad powers to authorities to make arrests and deprive activists of their right to bail. These are the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, (UAPA), Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, the National Security Act (NSA), and the Public Safety Act (PSA), which is applicable in Jammu and Kashmir. It notes the use of state resources to sustain its persecution of human rights defenders and critics. Benedict added that, " *The laws are incompatible with India's international human rights obligations as well as India's Constitution. Not only are the laws themselves inherently flawed, but their implementation makes it clear that they have become tools for judicial harassment, rather than for preventing or addressing criminality.*"



BY FR. CEDRIC PRAKASH SJ

India's vibrant civil society, particularly the NGO sector, has for several years been seen as a threat to successive Governments and other vested interests. Since 2014 however, ever since the BJP began to exercise its clout and control on the Government and virtually on all Constitutional bodies in the country, (including the Judiciary) - the writing was, time and again on the wall. Today, in India as the CIVICUS Report highlights NGOs and civil society leaders are intimidated and threatened; attacked and even killed; tedious investigations and fabricated cases were framed against them; police custody and incarcerated in jails - all this and much more. The only apparent fault is that, these groups and individuals have been very zealous in their commitment to the poor, the excluded and the vulnerable in society; they have been vocal and visible

in exposing the brutality of a corrupt and incompetent regime and their ilk! Standing up for Truth and Justice and for the rights and freedoms of all, as guaranteed by the Constitution, seems to be an absolute 'NO' where an authoritarian regime is concerned. They leave no stone unturned to ensure that!!

The CIVICUS Report would have been much stronger, if it would have taken into account all that has happened against civil society in India, just in the month of September 2020; there has been a well-orchestrated but frightening campaign intended to denigrate civil society and the significant role being played to promote the values and the freedom enshrined and guaranteed by the Constitution; its efforts to protect the wealth of India's pluralistic fabric and above all, its courage to stand up against the powerful and other vested interests. In just about a month the nation has experienced of how those who protested the anti-Constitutional CAA were named in fabricated charge-sheets by the Delhi Police for 'apparently' fomenting riots in Delhi, last February; some of the civil society leaders like Umar Khalid were even arrested. Then there was case of Amnesty India having to close down its operations in India; the FCRA being made more draconian and a judge of the Madras High Court simply lambasting those NGOs that take a stand for human rights, justice and peace! The civil society movement in India is not just being muzzled and throttled but being actually murdered in the country today! It is another nail in the coffin where Indian democracy is concerned

Towards the end of September 'Amnesty International India' had to wind up its operations in the country, because the Government had frozen its bank accounts. Most thinking Indians

(Contd.. on p. 22)

# Endless Sufferings Of Women Should Come To An End

**G**andhi said that the country would be free only when women walk freely at midnight. On this Gandhi jayanti day, raise your voice for justice for women. In the Hathras horror, a twenty two year old woman was gangraped, brutally beaten almost to death, allegedly had her tongue cut to prevent her from telling the truth and ultimately killed. Her only mistake was that she was a woman.

Rape is undoubtedly a heinous crime and an issue of great concern in India today. Despite enacting new laws with stringent punishments and setting up fast-track courts, things have not changed much. With more rape cases are coming to the fore and covered in the news, few questions always come to our mind. Is it only the pervert individuals who are responsible for rape cases or is it that our criminal justice system is inept. The question that follows is even more thought-provoking. Is it not because of the delay in legal proceedings that make criminals feel that they will not be convicted in their lifetime.



*Jayanthy Subramaniam*

However for rape and murder which is the most heinous crime death castration appears to be right punishment. For a crime of rape the right punishment of the convict should be castration. The excision of that organ or by chemical treatment and followed by tattooing in a very prominently visible part of the body the word 'rapist' is the right one to defame the culprit in the best way possible. Rape of women and minor girls are taking place regularly in such large numbers throughout the country that every sensible citizen should think over it and force the law-



makers so that criminals indulging in this crime may have to repent throughout their entire life and be shamed by all.

We note that it would be unconstitutional and inconsistent with basic human rights treaties for the state to expose any citizen without their consent to potentially dangerous medical side effects. However, it is time to punish rapists most severely so that such mistakes will not recur. The nation, which had almost got immune to rapes, with

one rape taking place in the country every 22 minutes, has suddenly woken up from the deep slumber after the gory Delhi rape case. And now, India is giving unanimous call to the government to dole out severe punishment to the rapists and to plug the lacunae in the anti-rape laws.

Any meaningful attempt to protect women against rape must engage with gendered notions of power entrenched in our families, our marriages, our workplaces, our educational institutions, our religions, our laws, our political parties and, perhaps, worst of all, in

our minds. There are many violent manifestations of these entrenched patterns of power in our society and while rape is certainly one of them, it would be a great disservice to empowerment of women in this country to not attach the same kind of urgency and significance to gender violence beyond rape.

Any sort of violence against women must criminalise all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against all people and minimise the potential for re-traumatisation of the victim. The two-finger test of victims of sexual assault during medical examination should be banned. Amnesty's other suggestions to the Commission include: explicitly recognising rape by an official as torture, and removing immunity from prosecution for sexual and gender-based crimes, including for members of the police or the armed forces.

Rape is about power, violence, intimidation and humiliation. Attempts to reduce the incidence of rape by controlling the sexual urge of men are bound to be ineffective because they invoke a very shallow and inadequate understanding of rape. There is no doubt that rape is a most heinous crime.

# Positive Cheque System

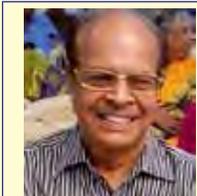
## coming into force w.e.f 01/01/21

and to that extent the balance in SB/ sort of payment.

In order to check banking fraud, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to introduce from January 1, 2021, the 'positive pay system' for cheque, under which re-confirmation of key details may be needed for payments beyond Rs 50,000. Availing of this facility would be at the discretion of the account holder. However, banks may consider making it mandatory in case of cheques for amounts of Rs 5 lakh and above.



Under the positive pay system, the issuer of the cheque will be required to submit electronically, through SMS, mobile app, Internet banking or ATM certain minimum details of that cheque like date, name of the beneficiary, payee, amount to the drawee bank. These details will be cross-checked before the cheque is presented for payment. In case any discrepancy is flagged by cheque truncation system (CTS) to the drawee bank and presenting bank, redressal measures would be undertaken. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will develop the facility of positive pay in CTS and make it available to participant banks.



C.K. Subramaniam

Banks, in turn, shall enable it for all account holders issuing cheques for amounts of Rs 50,000 and above. While availing of this facility is at the discretion of the account holder, banks may consider making it mandatory in case of cheques for amounts of Rs 5,00,000 and above. It is like DD / PO and you can write the name of the beneficiary yourself

CA is blocked like ABSA and when actually presented the account is debited and the beneficiary gets a feel of assurance of payment received.

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The RBI further notified that only those cheques that are compliant with positive pay system instructions will be accepted under the dispute resolution mechanism at the CTS grids. Banks, however, will be free to implement similar arrangements for cheques cleared and collected outside CTS.

## Investigative journalism

Investigative journalism has reached new heights in this country especially with Sushant Singh Rajput's [SSR] mysterious death which is dominating the media for the past few months with no sign of abatement in the near future. All TV channels literally went overboard with screaming headlines – Justice for Sushant dominating all prime time space in the initial stages. Such media frenzy has never been witnessed before even during 2014 general elections. One of the highly respected journalists with decades of experience has called them vultures. What started as a suicide and then turned into suspected murder has now taken a different turn with SSR being hardly talked about. With the involvement of Narcotics Control Bureau [NBC] the focus is shifted from SSR to Bollywood.

The CBI took over the investigations due to the shoddy job done by the Mumbai Police. The premier investigating agency is sidelined by the NCB and it is all about the Bollywood. Based on certain chats which the ED came across, the NCB has gone hammer and tongs after a select lot from the tinsel world. Some big names gave enough fodder to the crazy TV channels some of which have drafted dozens of reporters to trace and chase every possible movement of these celebrities. From morning to night we have this running commentary [which can shame the best commentators from the cricketing world] and a couple of anchors almost split their vocal cords shouting at those who do not subscribe to their views or perception. A couple of channels present the case in a sober and matured manner.

The movement of the actresses are monitored and you hear the reporters yelling – she is here now; she is moved out of her car; she has worn a particular attire with full description of the floral prints etc. One channel was showing how many hours, minutes a particular celebrity was inside the NBC guest-house and when she finished someone was shouting 'I can see her side profile' and waiting to leave. This tamasha has been going on day and in and day out. The other pressing issues plaguing the country have been put on the back-burner, perhaps [repeat perhaps] at the behest of the government which is facing some uncomfortable situations on many fronts like the economy, GDP,

## IEWS on NEWS

pandemic, border issues, farmers agitation etc. It is sad how the media can be manipulated. The blame must be shared by them.

In this case sensitive information on the ongoing investigations is selectively leaked. How can the chats of an individual be made available to the media? Every individual is entitled to his/her privacy. Some of the channels have claimed that they have found certain clues which even the agencies did not find. This means the data has been made available to the TV channels by the service providers themselves and if this is true it is a very serious matter. The government agencies have the right to get such data but private channels getting them makes things murkier. I wonder which Police Officials will share information with the media men at the cost of their jobs or the Mobile service providers take the risk of parting with the information unless there is financial gain involved. Mind you these channels are champions of anti-corruption movement. Information such as what questions the agency will ask is also given out. With such information the accused is well informed in advance and can, with the help of legal luminaries come prepared for the grilling. This is something which is hard to comprehend. With private chats being available with all and sundry should the affected individuals [celebrities in this case] not seek legal remedy from the courts for the breach of privacy? Irresponsible anchors must be pulled up by the Courts. TRPs alone should not be their sole aim.

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### Something cooking?

The 'interview' meeting between Sanjay Raut, one of the most powerful faces in the Sena and the out-of-job ex-CM of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnis recently has raised many eyebrows in the political circles. Not long ago the interviewer had bad mouthed the friend-turned-foe BJP and it looked like the divorce between the two erstwhile partners has ended for good. But in politics, nothing is permanent. What really triggered this much talked about interview [talks actually]? The MVA government anyway was a compromise of sorts to snatch the Chief Ministership from the BJP and the Congress saw it as an opportunity at rehabilitation in the long run.



by Marshall Sequeira

BJP now says it was a political meeting not an interview.

With too many differences among the Aghadi partners, there was always an element of uncertainty. Perhaps the assertion by the elder statesman Sharad Power from time to time could have unnerved the Sena. Issues like the pandemic, Sushant's death etc saw that all the Aghadi partners were not on the same page. Even the Kangana issue was not handled in a dignified manner. The ruling party functionaries cannot use intemperate language against an adversary. The latest trigger could be the whole-hearted support by the Sena to the controversial farm bills with the other two partners vociferously opposing the bills as they view these as deleterious to farmers' interests. The BJP may have seen this support as an opportunity to get close to Sena their oldest ally [remember the other old friend SAD has walked out of the NDA]. Some astrologers had openly said this MVA could not go beyond one year and the BJP subscribed to this view.

Will the two former buddies ultimately bring back the saffron unity once again? Mind you, there is commonality in their core ideologies. The only question that will possibly matter is who will be the Chief Minister in the event of a rapprochement between them. The Sena broke ties with BJP precisely for the coveted post. The BJP on the other hand remained steadfast till the very end and not budged an inch – not even considering two and a half year term each. Who will blink first? Surely, Sena may not as it will be a huge climb down. On the other hand, the BJP has nothing to lose. They will take a long term view of a future gain should they contest the next elections together. Even if it is 'status quo', it will keep the NCP and the Congress on tenterhooks and they will not be able to blackmail the Sena with withdrawal of support. This could see a dilution of 'Pawar' politics in the State.

# India's Poorest Children went to Work as the Virus Closed Schools.

by Don Aguiar.

Every morning in front of the public housing apartment blocks on the outskirts of the city of Mumbai, a swarm of children pours into the street. They are not going to school. Instead of backpacks or books, each child carries a filthy plastic sack.

These children, from 6 to 14 years old, have been sent by their parents to rummage through garbage dumps littered with broken glass and concrete shards in search of recyclable plastic. They earn a few rupees per hour and most wear no gloves or masks. Many cannot afford shoes and make their rounds barefoot, with bleeding feet.

**"I hate it," said an 11-year-old boy praised by his teacher as bright. But in March, India closed its schools because of the coronavirus pandemic, and this boy had to go to work.**

In many parts of the developing world, school closures put children on the streets. Families are desperate for money. Children are an easy source of cheap labour. While India and other countries debate the effectiveness of online schooling, hundreds of millions of children in Indian and other poorer countries lack computers or the internet and have no schooling at all.

**United Nations officials estimate that at least 24 million children will drop out and that millions could be sucked into work. The surge in child labour could erode the progress achieved in recent years in school enrolment, literacy, social mobility and children's health.**

**"All the gains that have been made, all this work we have been doing, will be rolled back, especially in places like India," said Cornelius Williams, a high-ranking UNICEF**

official.

Child labour is just one piece of a looming global disaster. Severe hunger is stalking children from Afghanistan to South Sudan. Forced marriages for girls are rising across Africa and Asia, according to U.N. officials, as is child trafficking.

In India, **the government has also shut down early childhood development centres for the poor.** In recent decades, India had built a nationwide network of more than one million anganwadis that provided millions of young children with food, immunizations, clothes and some schooling, and contraceptives for poor women. But most anganwadis now remain closed.

School-age children in India are now performing all kinds of work, from rolling cigarettes and stacking bricks to serving tea outside brothels, according to child activists. Most of it is illegal. Much of it is hazardous.

India already had a serious child labour problem because of high poverty levels, its population of 1.3 billion and its dependence on cheap labour. Shadowy fireworks and cigarette factories, textile, sweatshops and loosely regulated construction sites often employ children. The authorities had been cracking down and enrolling children, especially girls, in school.

**A teacher said, "The whole ecosystem around kids is breaking down."**

On a construction site two brothers aged 12 and 10, struggled under heavy loads of gravel. With a grimace, they hoisted a bucket atop their heads. Their skinny legs nearly buckled. They squinched their eyes tight, looking like they are about to cry. Around them stood men three times his age, just watching. They get headaches and

can't sleep at night. Their body tingles. The older of the brothers seems to have glimpsed his new future.

**They fear that even if school re-opens, they will have to keep doing this, because of the family's debt.**

**Many child experts said that once children drop out and start making money, it is very difficult to get them back in school. India has ordered elementary and middle schools to remain closed indefinitely, affecting more than 200 million children, though some government teachers are making house calls and teaching in small groups. The central government has allowed high school students to visit teachers on campus, but many states have said no to that as well.**

Government officials say the coronavirus leaves them little choice. New infections sometimes reach nearly 100,000 per day. Officials say children would have difficulty maintaining social distancing. "They can end up becoming vectors of virus," said Rajesh Naithani, an adviser to the education ministry.

Child rights activists say it is remarkable how little the school closures are being discussed. **Speeches by India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, and top ministers usually focus on opening up the economy, not the schools.**

Many of the parents say that they are under tremendous pressure to put their idle children to work. "We need their wages," said an underemployed mason and the father of the two boys. "Without them, I wouldn't be able to cobble together two meals."

Employers can smell the desperation. India's economy has contracted more than any other major economy. Wages are plummeting.

A labour contractor, said that parents keep arriving on his doorstep with



(Contd.. from p. 12)

school-age children. One morning in mid-September, a man showed up with his son and daughter, 12 and 8. The labour contractor said the children stood quietly in the doorway and looked at their father "like they were being prepared to be thrown into a fire." He says that if he does not find jobs for children because it is illegal. But in this case, fearing the family might starve, he guided them to a truck stop that was looking for a tea server. The 12-year-old boy now works there.

In India, children under 14 are not allowed to work unless it is a family enterprise, like a farm, or in a few other rare circumstances, such as child acting. They are barred from dangerous workplaces such as construction sites and cigarette factories. But because of the disruption caused by the pandemic, UNICEF officials said, there are fewer workplace inspections.

**Many children now dread getting up in the morning. It is like their childhood has suddenly ended.**

On a recent morning, an 11-year-old boy, stood in an empty street in Taloja, an industrial hub in Maharashtra, India, the sun rising over his left shoulder. The vacant look in his dark brown eyes said: What am I doing here?

His father, a lifelong garbage scavenger from one of the lowest castes, towered over him, lean and glassy-eyed, arms covered in blue home-made tattoos.

"You ready?" his father asked. The boy slowly nodded. "Where are your shoes?" The boy looked down at his bare feet. "I don't have any," he said.

His father said the work was "not respectable" but he wanted to keep the boy out of trouble and needed the extra hands.

"He sifts well," his father said as he watched the boy scrounge a plastic

bottle out of a refuse pit, flatten it and drop it into his sack. Later that day, the boy extracted a pair of ratty slippers from a garbage pile and wore them. They almost fit.

While the boy was picking through another dump, a group of boys about his age passed by. They wore backpacks and crisply ironed shirts. They were off to see a private tutor. The boy rested his bag of crushed bottles on the pavement and stared for a moment.

**"This is the shame," said the boy's teacher. "Kids who weren't scavenging for garbage are doing it now. Schools need to be reopened."**

"The boy is a good student," his teacher added. "His absorption power is very good. His vocabulary is very good. He has a high I.Q. He says he wants to be a doctor and he could do it, if he has the right facilities."

**After a morning of scavenging, the boy paid a visit to his school in outskirts of Mumbai's busy centre.** The school was windblown and deserted.

The only person around was the caretaker, a middle-aged woman in a sari smoothly sweeping the courtyard.

From a giant ring of keys, she pulled one out and unlocked the sixth-grade classroom. The boy walked in. His eyes adjusted to the dark. Water was pooled on the floor. A map of India, the paint chipping off, clung to a wall. To another visitor, this school might have seemed shabby. But not to this boy.

**"I really miss this place," he said.**

**He walked out, sack over his shoulder, too-big slippers scraping the ground, back into the noisy streets.**

The virus deprives lakhs of children a day and the solution exist. It's called "school". But you won't hear about it in the media because education or hunger doesn't bother the rich. Poverty exist not because the government cannot provide decent education and feed the poor, but because the government cannot satisfy the rich. **It's time to evaluate our priorities.**

## LETS TALK MAKEUP

Many mistakes are made while applying makeup, we mix up the steps on what goes on first and what goes on last. Let's make it easier just for you!

1. **Colour Corrector:** They come in different shades to even out the skin tones on your face. For example, darkness, redness, etc.
2. **Foundation:** While selecting your foundation apply it on your neck, to find the right shade since that's the closest to you face.
3. **Concealer:** Make sure your concealer is 2 or 3 shades lighter than the colour of your foundation.
4. **Eyeliners:** The various shades of eyeliner have evolved over the years. Today you'll find eyeliners of each and every colour available. Black is the most common but if you're going for a more natural look, pick a brown shade and you will not regret it.
5. **Mascara:** Always curl your eyelashes with a eyelash clamp before using mascara. If you're afraid of using a clamp, use a spoon to lift your eyelash & apply your mascara while it is lifted.
6. **Lipstick:** Pink and nude shades give a natural look, whereas, a dark shade will give you a bold look.

— Kimberly Linhares

## Archbishop Filipe Neri urges promotion of New Directory for Catechesis



Most Rev. Filipe Neri Ferrão, the President of the CCBI, releasing the Directory for Catechesis.

### Directory for Catechesis Released in India

Benaulim, Goa, 1 October, 2020 (CCBI): Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrão, the President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) and the Metropolitan Archbishop of Goa and Daman, urged the Church in India to promote the new Directory for Catechesis, which was promulgated recently by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. Archbishop Filipe was speaking on the occasion of the release of the new Directory for Catechesis in India, which was held on Thursday, 1 October, 2020 at Shanti Sadan, CCBI Secretariat Extension, Benaulim, Goa.

"The publication of this updated Directory for Catechesis will be of real assistance and support to the renewal of catechesis according to the exigencies of the present time. The new Directory is highly relevant for our catechetical and new evangelization ministries at the parish, diocesan and religious congregation levels," said the Archbishop. He also appealed to popularize the use of the new Directory so as to make the faith formation ministry more relevant and effective.

The new Directory for Catechesis is the revised version of the General Catechetical Directory of 1971 (GCD) and the General Directory for Catechesis of 1997 (GDC). In the year 2015 the CCBI had prepared a comprehensive National Catechetical Directory ("Fostering the Faith of a Pilgrim People"). The new Directory for Catechesis contains norms, principles, directives and guidelines for effective and orderly catechesis in schools, parishes and dioceses. It is a useful resource material for priests, religious, catechists and all those who are involved in the catechetical ministry of the Church.

The Directory for Catechesis is published in India by the CCBI. For copies kindly contact the CCBI General

Secretariat or call Mobile no. +91-9886730224.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Alathara  
Deputy Secretary General,  
Conference of Catholic Bishops of  
India

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# Let's eliminate bribery from its roots

“**G**od made man, man made money, and money made man mad.” Did you get the meaning of this sentence? If you have got it, then you can get an idea about the theme of this write-up.

The world today is dancing on the rhythms of money. This money has created a number of problems in our society. If you have money, then only you can proceed in your life and if you don't have it, then you need to face a number of problems in life.

Money has become more important to people in such a way that they have forgotten about humanity. If you spend some time out of your home, then you will realise how much this bribery and corruption is spreading in society. This is an outcome of the irresponsible government. If they really don't know how to balance rates of essential items with the occupation of the populace, then it is a big question that why they are still sitting on the chairs? If you look outside, you will notice that there is corruption in each and every field. This is providing a wrong message in the populace. People have started re-thinking that corruption can survive them in this highly expensive society. If you are going through any type of documentation work related to the government, then you will need to provide money at every step. Each signature of an honorable person will ask you for money. If you refuse to pay, then you will be on their waiting list. No one will help you or show humanity to help you out. Your work will always be in a pending condition.

Is this really a living place? If the world only knows the language of money, then is it really a life you are living? If you don't wish to find answers behind this, then you are also one among them. You are only providing food to their roots. One day these roots will increase to such an extent that it will become impossible to find

a way through all this. The best way to avoid bribery and corruption is to take strict action against it.

Yes, we can stop this ongoing chain. What we need to do is just live in unity. Say 'no' to each corrupted person. Avoid them in society. Create a group of polite people. Select an appropriate candidate in elections.

These ways can surely lessen the ration of bribery and corruption. If you cannot stop it, then at least don't let it grow further. Stop giving money to corrupted officers and all those who are a part of this corruption. Always think about the next generation.

In general terms, bribery means the exchange of cash, material or goods in return of a favour that is otherwise impossible or hard to attain. However much we say that we are against bribery, against giving or taking any kind of bribe, deep down we all know that we are either accepting or offering a bribe in some way or the other.

Many people still attach a stigma to the practice of bribery without realising that they often unwittingly practice it themselves. A child is promised a toy in return for a good performance in his studies. Gods are offered bribes in return for compliance with the wishes of the devotee. Many unscrupulous and rich people build temples for gods to win their favour. Whatever may be the publicly pronounced motives for such undertakings, a strong motive for winning favour from gods cannot be denied in most cases.

It is nearly impossible to find a person who has neither given nor accepted any kind of bribe in his or her entire lifetime. If you want your child to get admitted to a good school or col-



lege, then you have to offer a bribe. If you want a seat allotted in a train, you have to offer a bribe. If you want to get rid of the crimes you have committed, you have to offer bribes.

In fact, you even bribe your child with chocolate to get the work done. Bribery thus starts from the household itself. When a child will see his or her parents offering a bribe, what outcome do you expect?

The most important reason for corruption is the never-ending chain of bribes that are offered and accepted throughout the country.

In a country like India, where bribery is the major source of income for most of the government officials and public servants, we cannot expect the government itself to do away with this corrupt practice. But the citizens cannot complain that the government and government officials are involved in the corrupt practice of bribery because it is the citizens who offer a bribe to these public servants. If the citizens themselves stop offering bribes, the roots of bribery will diminish in no time.

It is essential for parents at home and teachers in school to teach the children the importance of honesty so that they do not offer or accept bribes in their lifetime. Slowly but steadily, the practice of offering and giving bribes can be eliminated from its very roots if people join hands and take an oath to eliminate this practice by hook or by crook. But the bitter truth remains; we ourselves cannot imagine our life free from this practice so how do we expect to abolish it completely?



by Jubel D'Cruz

The boy and his parents returned home, after meeting a girl for a marriage proposal.

Immediately, they received a call from the girl's side informing them that the girl is not interested in the proposal.

The father of boy asked his son. "What happened? During the function, both of you said you liked each other and after wards you had a private conversation with her. What happened there?"

The boy said. "Nothing pappa. There was an old man's photo framed and hanging on the wall. I asked whether it is her grandfather. She left the room without answering."

Meanwhile, in the girl's house her father asked her. "Why have you said no after agreeing initially?"

The girl said.

\*"The idiot could not recognise even Mahatma Gandhi's picture.

\*Bottomline is present day girls are smart\*..

\*\*\*\*\*

A drunk staggers out of a bar and runs into two priests. He goes over to the first priest and says, "Dude, I'm Jesus Christ!" And the priest says, "No son, you're not." So the drunk goes over to the second priest and says, "Man, I'm Jesus Christ!" Then the priest says, "No son, you're not." Finally, the drunk had enough and said, "Here, I'll prove it." He walks back into the bar with both priests and the bartender looks up and sees the drunk and says, "Jesus Christ, you're back AGAIN?"

\*\*\*\*\*

There was a preacher who fell in the ocean and he couldn't swim. When a boat came by, the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?" The preacher calmly said "No, God will save me." A little later, another boat came



by and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?" The preacher replied again, "No God will save me." Eventually the preacher drowned & went to heaven. The preacher asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "Fool, I sent you two boats!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Maria, a devout Catholic, got married and had 15 children. After her first husband died, she remarried and had 15 more children. A few weeks after her second husband died, Maria also passed away. At Maria's funeral, the priest looked skyward and said, "At last, they're finally together." Her sister sitting in the front row said, "Excuse me, Father, but do you mean she and her first husband, or she and her second husband?" The priest replied, "I mean her legs."

\*\*\*\*\*

Two guys are walking through a game park & they come across a lion that has not eaten for days. The lion starts chasing the two men. They run as fast as they can and the one guy starts getting tired and decides to say a prayer, "Please turn this lion into a Christian, Lord." He looks to see if the lion is still chasing and he sees the lion on its knees. Happy to see his prayer answered, he turns around and heads towards the lion. As he comes closer to the lion, he hears the it saying a prayer: "Thank you Lord for the food I am about to receive."

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: What does Mortal Kombat and a church in Helsinki have in common?

A: Finnish Hymn!

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: How does Moses make his tea?

A: Hebrews it.

\*\*\*\*\*

One Sunday morning, Satan appeared before a small town congregation. Everyone started screaming and running for the front church door, trampling each other in a frantic effort to get away. Soon, everyone was gone, except for an elderly gentleman who sat calmly. Satan walked up to the man and said, "Don't you know who I am?" The man replied, "Yep, sure do." Satan asked, "Aren't you going to run?" "Nope, sure ain't," said the man. Perturbed, Satan asked, "Why aren't you afraid of me?" The man calmly replied, "Been married to your sister for over 48 years."

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: What's the difference between a good lawyer and a great lawyer? A: A good lawyer knows the law. A great lawyer knows the judge.

source: <http://www.jokes4us.com/peoplejokes/lawyerjokes/lawyerone-linerjokes.html>

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: Why are lawyers like nuclear weapons?

A: Once launched, they can't be recalled.

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# Birthday Cake



## Ingredients:

250 gms maida  
200 gms sugar  
4 eggs  
120 gms butter  
1 tsp. baking powder  
350 gms raisins  
100 ml rum  
Few drops of vanilla essence  
150 gms lemon peel  
50 gms walnuts  
50 gms crystallised cherries

## Method:

1. Grease a cake tin and sprinkle a little maida on the surface. Place a sheet of paraffin paper at the bottom.
2. Cut the cherries, walnuts and lemon peel into small pieces and immerse them along with the raisins in the rum.
3. Cream the butter and sugar along with the vanilla essence.
4. Add in the eggs gradually mixing all the while. Fold in the maida and baking powder. Mix in the rum with all the ingredients soaked in it. Pour the cake batter into the tin and bake at 160° C for about 15 to 20 minutes.

# Carmel "Hydroponics Project" for Mangalore environment

The post-Covid world needs a host of new innovations and ideas. Keeping the need of the hour in mind Mount Carmel Central School encourages and supports the young for experiential learning. Mount Carmel Central School, Maryhill in Mangaluru, to make youth more aware and environmentally sensitive, introduced "Hydroponics – Horticulture without Soil" as an activity recently. The Church too for long has been advocating promoting better envi-

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-cGg1Clzb8&t=12s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-cGg1Clzb8&t=12s) for the details of the work done by the students. The main learning outcome of the project is to gain knowledge on the modern techniques of farming that can be grown indoors or in a greenhouse. Hydroponics is one such method that the growers will take full management of the environment - climate, temperature, lights, ventilation, and so on. Benefits of hydroponics:



\* Plants grown in water can grow faster and healthier than plants grown in soil because they don't have to fight soil borne diseases and can obtain all essential nutrients in proper proportions.

\* All the food and water they need are given directly to their roots.

\* The root systems stay smaller, so each plant can concentrate its energy on producing plant mass, rather than roots.

ronmental habits the world over. Centered on the Green environment – Clean environment; Hydroponics is a method of growing crops without soil by using mineral nutrient solutions in an aqueous solvent in water. Many students participated in the project enthusiastically, the freedom of selecting the seeds among the two crops coriander and methi (fenugreek) were given to them. The students recorded various stages of plant growth, also took the photograph as well as video

graphed the germinating phases of the seedling. It took approximately fifteen to twenty days for the harvest.

The students expressed, that the project was very innovative and helped them to develop life skills of maintaining a kitchen garden in limited space. Kindly click on the YouTube link <https://>



\* Plants can be grown anywhere.

It is observed that this trend can bring dividends in the future and younger people need to develop an interest, knowledge, prowess and love for nature and environment for a better quality of life and world.

-Press Note by Institution.

# Eco-Spirituality-The New Normal

Our spiritual journey is not only one of hospice workers for a dying culture, but also one of midwives who sit at the bedside of emerging structures and birth them so that they can become the scaffolding for a new vision of the world.

## I. Introduction:

Earth, spinning tirelessly for 13.7 billion years in space, has a long history. The Earth was born of an explosion (Big Bang Theory) in the mother star 450 crore years ago. The Earth is a living entity and she has consciousness. She is not simply mud and rock but according to the Indian perspective she is a Mother-*Dharti Maa*. Earth as a mother has been embracing us, nourishing us, nurturing us and giving us greater capacity to change the atmosphere and to add to it. In the story of Earth and of Life, we have already experienced three eras of life i.e. **Paleozoic Era** (ancient life), **Mesozoic Era** (middle life) and **Cenozoic Era** (recent life). The universe is groping its way toward a New Geologic Era. According to Teilhard de Chardin the universe progresses by breakthroughs, and leaps forward in Evolution and Consciousness. In the late 1980's, Thomas Berry named this new kind of consciousness, that leads to a new geologic era, as the **Ecozoic Era**. *Ecozoic* is a term that suggests a vision of how the human-earth community could be, not necessarily how it has been in the past. We live in a time of profoundly dysfunctional and maladaptive geological force. The challenge before us humans is to consciously prescribe a future life-enhancing, regenerative new cosmology and a vibrant Earth community and we are genetically endowed for cultural or transgenic solutions, as to how to live. At present, Eco-Spirituality seems to be the best solution and the New Normal.

## II. What is Eco-Spirituality?

Eco-Spirituality is a way of life that keeps body, mind and soul in sync. It has to do with relationships i.e. a trip-

tych of Relationships with God (faith), with other human beings and with creation (justice) and see to the well being of all. It is similar to the Francis of Assisi Spirituality of Relationships. It is finding God in all things and all things in God (Ignatius of Loyola Spirituality), as God's love permeates all created things and all other persons. Eco-Spirituality is a way of life, a way of living our life in relation to our home the Earth. The Isa Upanishad also speaks of everything in God and God in everything (*Isa vasyam idam sarvam*- God dwells here everywhere). Tribal tradition considers the Earth as spirit-filled. God is Emmanuel i.e. God with us. According to Hildegard of Bingen the *World is God's Playground*. *The world is charged with the grandeur of God*, says Hopkins. The Bible too says the same, Love God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and your neighbour as yourself; and all God's creatures are our neighbours,-*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* i.e. the World is one family.

God and human beings are involved in rebuilding the human community as a new creation. The Earth nourishes those who care for the whole, but on the other hand, Mother Earth removes anything that is not working for the wellbeing of the whole e.g. Far back in history, the earth was dominated by dinosaurs who made life on the earth brutish and short. As such, 65 million years ago, Mother Earth with the help of an asteroid obliterated, the giant dinosaurs, in order that many varieties of smaller animals could thrive. When the wicked grow in leaps and bounds, God intervenes. We humans are part of the web of life and are fully interconnected with the biosphere. When we connect with ourselves and with

others i.e. all God's creatures, we automatically connect with the Divine (God) because the Divine is in us and in all His/ Her creatures. "Contemplation is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things"-Thomas Merton. In a nutshell, Eco-spirituality is a more personal and engaged spirituality. It is a combination of Science, Art, Mysticism and Religion, an immersion in God and nature. Eco-Spirituality makes it possible for us to love God without having to turn away from the world, and to love creation without having to fear that we are in any way forsaking the call to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of God. Eco-Spirituality calls us to focus simply on performing each act with integrity and purpose.

## III. Stalwarts of Eco-Spirituality:

We stand on the shoulders of giants because our ancestors have discovered Earth's great geological story within which we think and act today. Some living thinkers today are Brian Swimme, Rosemary Reuther, Miriam MacGillis, Matthew Fox, Sallie McFague, Evelyn Mary Tucker, John Grim, Diarmuid O'Murchu, Ilia Delio and others. But we shall concentrate here on just two giants i.e. Teilhard De Chardin and Thomas Berry.

### 1. Teilhard de Chardin:

a French Jesuit, a Paleontologist, a theologian, a mystic, a prophet and a geologist was far ahead of his times, which is why his congregation exiled him from France to New York. Thank God today three Popes namely Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have now accepted Teilhard's work. Teilhard was of the opinion that the universe is alive. He focused on bridging the gap between science and religion, in order to make it a vital force of daily living. He looked forward to the convergence of the



(Contd.. from p. 18)

Cosmic Christ and Omega (*He is the Alpha and the Omega*). For Teilhard evolution was a sacred story, one that encompassed galaxies, planets, myriad life forms and humans. For him all matter was sacred and permeated with divine presence. There is a psychic /spiritual dimension in each and every creature. When we experience creation through our senses, we experience the divine. For Teilhard, creation itself becomes a primary scripture, a primary revelation and a source of awe and wonder. Through appreciation of science, we are able to see with new eyes, and to understand that at the heart of the universe lies an emergent energy. This is the heart of God, or as Teilhard called it, the *Divine Milieu*. In other words, this is the dynamic integration of contemplation in action. His cosmic vision expanded our sense of the divine's numinous presence, and laid the foundation for an evolutionary faith. Teilhard thus called for a new exegesis of creation and a new literacy that integrated faith and science and called forth the emergence of a sacramental imagination. Teilhard's understanding of the noosphere, which is a layer of mind, action and love encircling the globe i.e. the sphere representing the interrelationship of human consciousness; has today, through scientific insights and means, extended and expanded worldwide. Teilhard saw that the universe is a sequence of irreversible events best understood as a narrative. This narrative is held together by gravitational attraction into a state of relentless transformations and expansions that contain the story of the universe in a never ending sequence of transformations. The divine radiates from the very matter; and matter suffused with divine energy, reveals the dimension of God.

## 2. Thomas Berry:

a man of towering intellect, profound conviction, a passionate heart and a global prophet, calls us to reinvent what it means to be human. He was the first to articulate the New Sto-

ry in an essay in 1978, and then later in his signature work, *The Dream of the Earth*. With co-author and evolutionary philosopher Brian Swimme, he wrote *The Universe Story*, describing and celebrating the unfolding cosmos, from the primordial flaring forth to the Ecozoic Era (a term he coined).

Like Teilhard, Thomas Berry trusts the evolutionary process, while seeing our human participation in a much more proactive mode. We humans have a direct responsibility for the evolutionary process and we need to be vigilant and informed in the awareness we bring to what is essentially a co-evolutionary enterprise, a collaborative endeavor, with God, creation and humans all working together to bring about the new heaven and the new earth. For Berry this universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects, which is why we need to show deep respect and reverence for the whole of creation.

Berry and Swimme also talk about the paradox of creation and destruction. It is said that Thomas Berry was imbued with the spirit of Teilhard de Chardin, the intellect of Aquinas, the Eros of Hildegard, the humility of Francis, the science of Einstein and the courage and imagination of Jesus.

## IV. The Scope of Eco-Spirituality in Daily Life:

Deep experiences change us every day. All we need to do is know, notice, pause and open wide our five senses to see-see, hear, smell, taste and touch the divine in creation all around. The scope of Eco-Spirituality is very wide. It invites us to connect with / heighten our awareness with the unceasing flow of God consciousness. *The best way to love God is to love many things*, says Van Gogh. We are invited to express a gesture of aliveness in whatever modality we wish e.g. words/ movement/sound and song/poem/prayer, solitude, drawing/ painting. Creativity is the nexus from which our vision for a new civilization / the new normal is born. We are called today to create a fresh and vibrant beauty that was not here before. Eco-spirituality challenges us to plunge

courageously into deep wells of wisdom-from Science, Religion, indigenous peoples, women, mysticism and art; to realize the creative energy of the divine bubbling up and pulsating through every molecule and people on this sacred Earth. Eco-Spirituality unleashes vitality, creativity and playfulness. It is egalitarian and pluralistic, rejoicing in the manyness of beings that interconnect in a rich cosmic community. It is a spirituality needed for an ecological peacemaking and a just world community.

## V. Conclusion:

Eco-Spirituality challenges us to focus on Integral Ecology. Guided by the wisdom of Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin we are invited to celebrate the capacity of a listening heart (using Generative Listening and Generative Speaking of Otto Scharmer's Theory U). We are called to develop our relationships in and through mutually enhancing relationships i.e. women's wisdom drawing us together into circles of inclusion, indigenous wisdom-who celebrate the presence of the divine in its many manifestations, the wisdom of our traditions-Christian, Muslim, Judaism and all other religions, the wisdom of Science Evolutionary Faith and Quantum Physics. Ecology, climate change, modes of understanding, pottery, clay, drum-making, gardening, baking, cooking, and food everything comes under the purview of Eco-Spirituality, as long as we are conscious of the Triptych Relationships with God, with other human beings and with creation. **"Our spiritual journey is not only one of hospice workers for a dying culture, but also one of midwives who sit at the bedside of emerging structures and birth them so that they can become the scaffolding for a new vision of the world."**- Jim Conlon

Dr (Sr) Mudita Menona Sodder  
RSCJ  
JPIC Coordinator, Indian Province,  
Sophia College Campus, Mumbai.

# Royal Christian Family MATRIMONIALS - GROOMS

**7168. USA :** US Citizen Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in June 1985 ) Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 73 kgs, Fair, Edn. M.Sc., working for a Global Pharmaceutical Company. Contact email : lspinto84@gmail.com

**7028. ABUDHABI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1985), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Diploma in Mechanical Engineer, working as a Stores Officer in Shipping Company. Contact email : pjmpraveen@gmail.com

**7165. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in October 1979 ) Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 63 kgs, Fair, Edn. B.Com., Post Graduation in Supply chain & Ship Management, working as an E-commerce online support. Contact email : examiner4@yahoo.com

**7164. MANGALORE :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1984 ) Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair, Edn. ITI Course, working as a Technician. Contact email : rajesh.dsz15@gmail.com

**7159. MUMBAI :** Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1982 ) Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 65 kgs, Ethical, Healthy, Simple, Sober, Wheatish, B.E. Software Engineer, works @ Mumbai, 9224335003, mariosofttech@gmail.com seeks matrimonial alliance from Mumbai based Catholic Spinster. Please exchange relevant information.

**7011. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1983), Ht. 6', Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA Electronics and Finance, working as Research Electronics. Contact email : canute.serrao@gmail.com

**7157. PUNE :** Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1990) Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA (Marketing) & M.Com., working as a Senior Executive, Sales and Development. Contact email : amlahenry11@gmail.com

**7155. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in March 1980) Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 67 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th std., having own business asm well settled. Contact email : mendoncajason@gmail.com

**7152. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in December 1989) Ht. 6', Wt. 70 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., having business. Contact email : emi\_dalmeida@yahoo.com

**7151. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1990) Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Masters in Marketing, Working as a Asst. Marketing Executive. Contact email : emanuelfindz90@gmail.com

**7150. POONA :** East Indian RC Divorcee, (Born in November 1960) Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 69 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Graduate Engineer from CWIT University of Pune, working as an Engineer. Contact email : joeskf@gmail.com

**7146. MUMBAI :** East Indian RC Bachelor, (Born in July 1988) Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 79 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. (Mech), + PG course in Finance, working as a Asst. Manager in MNC. Contact email : lenin.pdsouza@gmail.com

**7144. POONA :** Goan RC Bachelor, (Born in October 1985) Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Hotel Management Graduate, working as an Executive. Contact email : merrolmenezes@gmail.com

**7136. HYDERABAD :** Anglo Indian RC Bachelor, (Born in July 1988) Ht. 5' 8",

Wt. 80 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Post Graduate, having own business. Contact email : phillipctochoer@gmail.com

**7135. U.S.A. :** Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in June 1990) Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.E. in Electronics & Telecommunication (EXTC), working as a Senior Software Engineer. Contact email : ryandcunha01@gmail.com

**7133. MUMBAI :** Goan RC Handsome Bachelor, (Born in February 1977) Ht. 5'9", Wt. 78 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc., PG, MBA, working as a Sr. Manager in US IT Company. Contact email : trinidadfranco@gmail.com

**7010. BAHRAIN :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Divorcee (with in three months of marriage), (Born in June 1985), Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 76 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. HSC Diploma in food & beverage, working in 4 Star Hotel Bahrain. Contact Mob: 8806129309

**7132. MUMBAI :** Goan RC Bachelor, (Born in January 1987) Ht. 5'8", Wt. 72 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.A., PG in Advy. / Graphics & Animation, working as a Graphic Designer. Contact email : dcostastephen03@gmail.com

**5996. MUMBAI :** RC Bachelor (Born in November 1974) / 5'8", B.E., working in Senior position reputed IT firm. Seeks alliance from R.C. spinster educated good family background Pl. reply with photograph and details to keithcardozo@hotmail.com OR 9820338755

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# Royal Christian Family MATRIMONIALS - BRIDES

**7170 MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in August 1996), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 80 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. Graduate, working for Bank. Contact email : jenniferdmello25@gmail.com

**7081 MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in April 1993), 5' 3", Wt. 55 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Masters of Dentistry (MDS), Dental Surgeon, Doctor by profession. Contact email : carlferns93@gmail.com

**7126. U.S.A. :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in January 1992) from Mumbai, Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 60 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. (Computers) from Mumbai, M.S. (Information Systems) from US. Possesses H1B visa and is working as a Technical Analyst with an MNC in USA. Contact email : wilfyjoy1315@gmail.com or call +91 98603 02527 / + 91 9970172527

**7128. MUMBAI :** Affluent business family R.C. East Indian Spinster, (Born in 12-04-1988), Ht. 5' 2", very beautiful and pretty. Edn. MS General Surgeon, Doctor by profession. Contact email : drvd2019@gmail.com

**7066. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in June 1987), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 78 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E., (EXTC) M.S. (International Business Management), working as a Consulting Manager. Contact email : l2018anselm@yahoo.com

**7142. MUMBAI :** Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in December 1981), Ht. 5'3", Wt. 62 kgs, Very Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA (HR) working as a HR Associate. Contact email : sunrays1227@gmail.com

**6741. MANGALORE :** Mangalorean RC spinster, 26 years, 5' 3", Doctor, Qualification : MD. Very fair and beautiful. Belongs to

an affluent business family. Email : sona68500@gmail.com

**7117. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in May 1991), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.A. in English Literature, Teacher by profession. Contact email : examiner2019@gmail.com

**7094. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in June 1991), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 52 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, M.Com., working as a Business Analyst. Contact email : roschelle256@gmail.com

**6970. MUMBAI :** Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1987), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 48 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. CS & LLB., working as a Company Secretary. Contact email : mendonsajacinta@gmail.com

**7091. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in March 1990), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 44 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA PGDM, working as an Assistant Manager Presales for a multinational firm. Contact email : priyaquadras@gmail.com

**6825. MUMBAI :** East Indian Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in December 1986), Ht. 5' 5", Fair Complexion, Edn. Graduate + Masters working as a HR. Contact email :

shobhna\_dsa@ymail.com

**7090. QATAR :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in July 1988), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 54 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., worked for Bank in Mumbai, currently working as a H.R. in International School in Qatar. Contact email :

loretta6479@gmail.com

**6032. DUBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in April 1976), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 41 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A., working as a Secretary. Contact email :

track\_1976@ yahoo.com OR 9730454857

**7086. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in March 1991), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 62 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th + Hotel Management Graduate. working as a Developer Manager in Insurance Company. Contact email : samanireena05@gmail.com

**6341. MUMBAI :** Protestant Christian spinster, (Born in April 1985), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 58 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A., B.Ed., Teacher by profession. Seeks a groom from well settled, educated and good family background. Contact email : georgethomas1353@yahoo.com

**7085. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in January 1989), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 47 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MCA. working as a Banking service professional in private sector. Contact email : dorinbaretto27@gmail.com

**6653. MUMBAI :** Goan RC Spinster, (Born in July 1990), Ht. 5' 2", Fair Complexion, Edn. M.B.B.S., Doctor & pursuing M.D. Seeks M.D. / M.S., Doctors. Contact email : selwynhenriques13@gmail.com

**6504. KUWAIT :** Mangalorean RC Spinster (Born in June 1980), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 58 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., Computer, Finance, Banking Marketing Course & Airlines Course completed, employed as a Travel Co-ordinator in Kuwait. Contact Email : lucy777p@gmail.com Tel: 00965-60402765 / 9867308911

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(Contd.. from p. 8)

clearly see this as an act of reprisal by a vindictive regime who is unable to digest the excellent human rights work being done by AI in India.

Following this, fifteen international human rights organizations, in a strongly-worded statement, condemned the Indian government's actions against Amnesty India and pledged to continue support for local human rights defenders and organizations against the recent crackdown. The Indian government's actions against Amnesty India are part of increasingly repressive tactics to shut down critical voices and groups working to promote, protect, and uphold fundamental rights, said the statement by the Association for Progressive Communications, Global Indian Progressive Alliance, International Commission of Jurists, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Front Line Defenders, FORUM-ASIA, Foundation the London Story, Hindus for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, International Service for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group, Odhikar, South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government has accused Amnesty India of violating laws on foreign funding, a charge the group says is politically motivated and constitutes evidence *"that the overbroad legal framework is maliciously activated when human rights defenders and groups challenge the government's grave inactions and excesses."* The BJP government has increasingly cracked down on civil society, harassing and bringing politically motivated cases against human rights defenders, academics, student activists, journalists, and others critical of the government under sedition, terrorism, and other repressive laws. These actions increasingly mimic

that of authoritarian regimes, which do not tolerate any criticism and shamelessly target those who dare to speak out. With growing criticism of the government's discriminatory policies and attacks on the rule of law, the authorities seem more interested in shooting the messenger than addressing the grievances. Women's rights activists and indigenous and minority human rights defenders have been especially vulnerable. The recent action against Amnesty India highlights the stepped-up pressure and violence felt by local defenders on the ground, regardless of their profile. The authorities have repeatedly used foreign funding regulations under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), a law broadly condemned for violating international human rights law and standards, to target outspoken groups. United Nations experts on human rights defenders, on freedom of expression, and on freedom of association have urged the government to repeal the law, saying it is *"being used more and more to silence organisations involved in advocating civil, political, economic, social, environmental or cultural priorities, which may differ from those backed by the Government."*

Besides, the fifteen organisations referred to above, several other concerned groups and individuals have lambasted the Government for the closure of AI. Interestingly, in an unprecedented development the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), issued a notice to the Union home secretary over Amnesty International India winding up its operations in the country because of an alleged witch-hunt by the government. A statement from the NHRC said, *"According to media reports, after the complete freezing of its India bank accounts, the Amnesty International Organization in India has reportedly halted all the work in which it has been engaged in the country, the NHRC said in a statement. The National Human Rights Commission has taken Suo motu cognisance of the matter and directs the issuance of the notice to the Home Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, calling for their comments on*

*the allegations levelled by the Amnesty International as mentioned in the news report. It is alleged that this is the latest in the incessant witch-hunt of human rights organisations by the government of India over unfounded and motivated allegations."* Given the fact that several statutory bodies, like the NHRC (which are expected to be independent and non-partisan) are 'controlled' by the Government one cannot help wondering if the NHRC statement would remain at lip-service!

Then we have the draconian amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). A myth is being propagated by this Government and their ilk (like their crony capitalist friends) that only NGOs (and that too mainly Christian ones) receive foreign money; that the money received from abroad is being used for 'conversion' and other 'anti-national' activities! Convenient bogeys for a regime which is on the backfoot on their miserable performance in governance! Even on the floor of Parliament, an MP of the ruling party, had to denigrate all Christians with that pathetic and false commentary on Rev Graham Staines – who was murdered by those who subscribe to the 'Hindutva' agenda! The hard truth is that the Government is also heavily dependent on foreign money, on imports etc (one cannot deny this! - in the height of the Chinese incursions into India, Modi and his Government apparently took a loan of more than Rs. 9000 crores from the Chinese. Secondly, several organizations based in foreign countries which support the Hindutva Agenda have been sending voluminous amounts of money to their Indian counterparts to further their anti-democratic acts in the country; these of course will not be touched!!!

The amendments to the FCRA are certainly anti-people; it is a retrograde step which will have an adverse effect on genuine NGOs which work selflessly for the poorest of the poor by providing them a whole range of services which include educational programmes, Medicare, poverty al-

(Contd.. on p. 23)

(Contd.. from p. 22)

leviation schemes, women's empowerment, environmental protection and other programmes and initiatives which are essential in ensuring that India truly moves ahead in every sphere. The poor, the excluded and other marginalized sections of society are all bound to suffer. Research is an important component of any meaningful initiative; putting a new cap on the administrative expenses is bound to throttle significant work being done for the progress of all Indians and ultimately for the development of the nation. The amendments to the FCRA are blatantly anti-people, anti-poor and anti-women. It is in every sense draconian! The current regime is afraid that the empowerment of these groups will ultimately end their fascist acts.

Voluntary Action Network-India (VANI), the apex body/national association of Indian voluntary development organizations, strongly feels that the FCRA bill, 2020 will be a death blow to the development relief, scientific research and community support work of the NGO community as it prohibits collaboration with other Indian organizations. *"With limited domestic philanthropy, such guidelines that criminalise activities of even those certified as FCRA compliant, thousands of small NGOs which enable good work and are dependent on legal funds obtained internationally, will shut down, also endangering livelihoods of those dependent on them for a vocation"*, VANI said in a statement just before both Houses of Parliament passed the bill, to make it an act!

Interestingly but in another significant development, Justice N. Kirubakaran of the Madras High Court, exceeded his brief, made observations about NGOs that have become the bane of the Indian society. Justice Kirubakaran was hearing the bail plea of one Kalai Lingam, accused of placing bombs in Madurai and Thoothukudi districts of Tamil Nadu beneath the car of Narayanasamy, current CM of Puducherry when he was a union

minister in 2014. Kalai Lingam was a member of the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army, a banned secessionist organization. Justice Kirubakaran, while rejecting the bail plea considering the serious nature of the crimes committed by Kalai Lingam, made some unnecessary observations about such organizations promoting secessionism and enmity among fellow Indians based on race, religion, region, and language. His observation said, *"This kind of fringe elements are stated to be more active in Tamil Nadu and wearing the masks of NGOs, Human Rights Organisations and political groups are trying to create unrest in Tamil Nadu by way of continuous propaganda through media especially social media instigating the people to protest, creating fear psychosis and spreading hatred among the masses"*. He went on further to state, *"When these elements take Tamil Culture, Tamil Race and Tamil Language as weapons for their sinister plans. Our country is facing more danger in the hands of elements within the country rather than enemy countries. Therefore, the government, as well as the people, should be very cautious about those elements"*

He came down heavily on the human rights activists accusing them of supporting *"Separatists, secessionist forces and those who celebrate our enemy countries and criminals in the name of violation of human rights. Sometimes these groups themselves make anti-national comments making use of the Right to speech and Freedom of Expression"*. About those in the media peddling the narrative of China, he observed *"The recent Galwan valley conflict exposed people who are lovers of the neighboring nation, as they openly support the enemy country. These are not giving straight forward news and only disseminate their views with the name of news to mislead people"* and expressed worry that these people are a threat to the national integrity and unity and implied upon the government to nip them in the bud. All remarks which certainly did not come under his brief while considering a bail application, but which he made presumably to be on the 'good books' of

the powerful of this land!

Writing in the 'Deccan Chronicle' (29 September 2020), well-known journalist and former head of Amnesty India, Aakar Patel says, *"It is not in the interest of India or its people or even the government, to persecute and harass these organisations. Unfortunately, that is what has happened and is happening and the reality is that many of them, already under assault from the State, will have to wind up operations and others will have to scale down. India's civil society is full of motivated people and much of their work will continue because these individuals are not doing this work because of the money. I have worked with people with a background in investment banking, law and of course the media who have chosen to work in an NGO for much less than in their corporate job. Such Indians will continue their work and it is a shame that they are being hindered"*.

That says it all! It is a sad reality in India today: its vibrant civil society is being murdered in a very calculated manner! It is also true, that come what may, the struggle will continue relentlessly!

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