

THE SECULAR CITIZEN

Vol.30 Issue No.21 ■ (Total Pages 24) ■ Mumbai, 24 - 30 May 2021 ■ Rs. 10

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

A Second Open Letter To The President Of The Republic of India

By Dr. Louis D'Silva

Your Excellency

This letter to you describes some acute concerns about the character, leadership and future of the democratic republic of India over which you preside. Firstly, the notion that a nation belongs to its dominant section, be that section religious, racial or linguistic, has been termed ethnonationalism. Also described as majoritarianism, it is an idea for the raw force feeding on hate and contempt. Much of the Indian subcontinent saw this force erupt in violence in 1947. The region that became Bangladesh faced this outburst in 1971. Delhi experienced it in 1984, the Balkans in the 1990s, Rwanda in 1994, Gujarat in 2002. Recently, the chief priest of Ghaziabad's Darna Mandir urged Hindus to "stop behaving like eunuchs" and "finish off" Muslims. Such words do not seem to invite any objection from those at the helm of governance in India. Donald Trump believed strongly in white supremacy which was his version of ethnonationalism. Fortunately, in 2020, the rising tide of this destructive force was arrested when American voters rejected Trump. When the dominant section turns muscular and vicious, minorities, women, dalits, tribals and liberals are harassed, demonised and even brutalised with impunity. This happened to the peace-loving and service-oriented Christian minority in Kandhamal, Orissa. The saddest episode in the history of Christianity in India, with over hundred innocent Christians embracing martyrdom, was described by the former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, as a "national shame".

Ethnonationalism should be abhorrent in a land whose Constitution is a reflection of India's pluralist soul. It would conflict with the quintessential values enshrined in the Constitution's Preamble, notably fraternity, and also with our cultural legacy of the peaceful coexistence of peoples in the most multifarious nation on earth. Our optimism in upholding this

sublime constitutional and cultural system is derived from the common Hindu who is tolerant, eclectic and thoughtful and believes in the live-and-let-live principle.

Secondly, the viewpoint that the Indian Prime Minister is a paradoxical personality, with adverse effects on the nation, has been substantiated adequately. Many who have not examined his record in detail ascribe to him qualities of decisiveness, devotion to duty and incorruptibility that in their eyes mark him out as a great leader. He continues to lead in most public opinion polls as the most deserving Prime Minister of the country. This may well be a tribute to his marketing savvy, his oratorical abilities and his assiduous use of every communications tool to burnish his own image. The ultimate paradox of our paradoxical Prime Minister is that his perceived stature is belied by the multiple failures of the administration he leads.

There has been palpable failure in implementation of even his laudable initiatives like Swachh Bharat, Skill Development and Beti Padhao Beti Bachao. Regarding the management of the current coronavirus pandemic alone, two senior and scholarly citizens have entitled their articles on the subject: "Maximum Misgovernance" and "From Crisis to Catastrophe".

One could add a question mark after each of his captivating slogans. As "Acche Din" was never forthcoming in the lives of people, the slogan ceased to be uttered and almost imperceptibly changed to "New India". His slogan "government has no business to be in business" was followed by his government's role in many a business it ought not to be in from running hotels to making condoms. How does one understand a PM who speaks of "minimal government, maximum governance", but who runs the most centralised, top-down, bureaucracy-driven,

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A Fond Farewell



WILLIAM ALBERT NORONHA

25 June 1936 - 14 May 2021

You taught us to live life to the fullest. You were our guiding force. You were full of life, love and enterprise. You were strong till your last day, You were dear to us all. Your intelligence and business acumen was par excellence. You are and always will be a loving husband, father and grandfather. In our memories and stories, you will forever live on.

Wife: Lena Noronha

Children :

Anita / Vivek, Vinod / Blossom,
Sharon / Donald, Vivek / Lina.

Grandchildren :

Varun, Alisha, Sonia, Suraj, Viren, Vineet, Megha & Lisha.

All Employees and Team Members

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Vol.30 Issue No.21 May 24-30, 2021 Rs.10/-

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

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Subscriptions Rate:

One year (anywhere in India) Rs. 500

Two years (anywhere in India) Rs.1000

Five years (anywhere in India) Rs. 2000

One year (outside India) Rs. 3500

E-paper Edition

sent anywhere in the world (by email)

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Rs. 600 or US \$ 15

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Matrimonial Classifieds:

● Rs. 500 per insertion (for 35 words) (includes box no.)

● Rs. 3000 for 12 insertions. (1 year The Secular Citizen FREE)

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Our bank account details for Fund Transfer : Account Name: The Secular Citizen, Current Account No. 0355200006744, Bank: HDFC Bank, Branch : CST - Mumbai VT, ISFC code: HDFC0000355

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personality-cult dominated central government since Indira Gandhi's Emergency Rule?. How can the slogan "sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas" be reconciled by India's minorities daily made to feel unwellcome by an aggressive majoritarian discourse or, more specifically, by the Citizenship Amendment Act, so blatantly, discriminatory? Other actions of the Prime Minister have also left the citizenry perplexed. He kissed the floor at the entrance to Parliament with Parliament during his premiership, ramming through legislation and barely functioning as a forum for genuine debate and accountability. Also he constructed the world's tallest statue in reverence to Sardar Vallabhai Patel and later calmly agrees that his own name should replace that of Patel for the most prestigious and largest cricket stadium in the world.

Thirdly, there are some very troubling issues about our democracy. One is extremely pained at the plight of a section of our people. Since the ascent of the present ruling dispensation, hundreds of our own fellow-citizens have been killed in anti-minority and anti-Dalit acts of violence while hundreds of others have been injured, stripped,

beaten and humiliated. Particularly reprehensible are mob-lynchings and hate attacks often videotaped by the perpetrators who were confident that they would not be punished. Similarly, in our polity today, sir, courageous critics can be physically eliminated with their killers, even after years, not identified and punished. Three names of those who fit this description will be remembered by many--Narendra Dhabolkar, Govind Pansare and Gauri Lankesh. Why have the numbers of those called anti-national and charged with sedition risen exponentially? The frail 84-year old Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, Fr. Stan Swamy, suffering from Parkinsons and other ailments, is jailed. After spending long years helping those on the lowest rungs of Indian society, he is being investigated for sedition or conspiring to overthrow the Indian state. One of those heroically assisting him is Arun Ferreira who spent several years in jail and described his harrowing experiences, including torture, in his book "Colours of the Cage". He was released from jail after being declared innocent and incarcerated once again. However, even in times of darkness, Indian democracy has shown glimmerings of hope. Throughout the country, people fought hate with an alternate discourse of solidarity and love, holding aloft the national flag,

the national anthem and the Constitution as the icons of the humanist and inclusive pluralism they were determined to defend.

Last, but certainly not the least, Your Excellency, is the question critical: Whither India? Prof. Suhas Palshikar, Chief Editor of "Studies in Indian Politics" tells us, without mincing words, what we are currently witnessing: "Government sends out a chilling message: power and people are clearly separated. The present dispensation always had the trappings of removing the democratic garb. Barricading cities and blocking internet symbolically represent a barricaded and truncated democracy that the regime expects to shape. India is now witnessing a much more serious moment when democracy seamlessly slips into authoritarianism"

Competent bodies have already described India as "partly free" and an "elected autocracy". The goal of the ruling party is to establish one-party rule, a swanky over-sized and rubber-stamping Parliament, a compliant judiciary, an officially-sponsored media, obedient and self-serving corporates and a complacent and subservient people who will be happy

(Contd.. on p. 9)

Prophetism Of Social Communications Media In The Modern Age

Leading journalists of every hue, including Christian, have been amazingly forthcoming in their writings published in reputed periodicals castigating the government over various highly sensitive points in terms of governance vis-à-vis the ongoing COVID-19 debacle, the downslide of the economy, falling unemployment and rising poverty in the country, the clampdown on freedom of speech and religion, and a lot else. That quite a few of such brave souls have been either imprisoned on flimsy grounds or killed outright is not merely a matter of concern for all right-thinking people but also a **challenge to journalists in both the print and electronic media to give flesh to journalistic forthrightness collectively.**

Media - Conscience of the nation

On a hilarious note it may be observed that the tables seem to have of late been turned by periodicals on news portals, the latter now publishing in its columns what has already appeared in print in the former rather than the other way round! Be that as it may, **the time has obviously come for news portals as well as competent writers, conscientious speakers and other intellectuals of calibre from the field of journalism, law, science, religion and culture, to come together specifically for the purpose of having an end put to all divisive tendencies prevalent at any given point of time in the country.** It is clear that the present dispensation doesn't respect the rule of law and cares two hoots about the Constitution to the extent of disturbing the peace by way of destroying order and orderliness.

The Fourth Estate – a Prophetic calling

The Holy Bible cites significant examples of prophets admonishing rulers

into submission to God's plans for His people. We have Samuel instructing Saul on God's behalf to completely destroy Amalek along with all his men and women and livestock for having stood in the way of the Israelites leaving Egypt. Reprimanded sternly for not having obeyed the Lord's command in full, Saul acknowledges his sin and seeks forgiveness (cfr 1 Sam 15). King David, reproached by the Prophet Nathan for his licentious deed of taking the beautiful Bathsheba for his wife after having got her husband, Uriah the Hittite, slain, promptly repented (cfr 2 Sam 11 & 12).

Given the situation, if India is to hold together she needs to tide over the madness of religion being used to divert people's attention from the non-functionality of the government in tackling the mayhem caused by COVID-19 which the powers-that-be are clearly unable to handle sensibly other than by resorting to lies and subterfuge. In today's times, however, we don't hear or speak

of prophets anymore. And yet, the writing is clear on the wall. The role of the Fourth Estate, i.e. the media, is fast emerging as that of prophets anew! **Equipped with the potential to awaken the consciences of those in power to the futility of misusing the mandate of governance earned from the electorate, they play their prophetic role by way of making them listen to the voice of the same electorate. It is precisely in a situation where what is happening around us makes our heads reel in disgust that the prophets of today need to boldly take their prophecies, teachings, counsel and warnings directly into the corridors of power or the courts of law in a bid to change the scenario for the better.** And that's where persons

of prominence in public life come in - individuals of the stature of Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menampampil, Jesuit activist Cedric Prakash, fearless editor Capuchin Friar Suresh Mathew, MI portalist Salesian C.M. Paul, genial, unassuming publisher Lawrence Coelho, prolific Pauline journalist-nun Lissy M, noted columnist A.J. Phillip, not forgetting the likes of the outspoken Ram Puniyani, Arundhati Roy and Shashi Tharoor, logical thinker Shweta Kothari, renowned idealist John Dayal, gutsy writer Chhotebhai, bade-bhai et al whose arguments and activities have never failed to make an impact. Would that such large-hearted, clear-headed individuals cobbled up such a forum without delay!

Christian Communications showing the way...

In his message for the 55th World Communications Day, 16 May 2021, the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus, Pope Francis states: "We think of how much empty rhetoric abounds, even in our time, in all areas of public life, in business as well as politics. This or that one "speaks an infinite deal of nothing... His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search" [William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 1]. The blistering words of the English playwright also apply to us as Christian communicators. The Good News of the Gospel spread throughout the world as a result of person-to-person, heart-to-heart encounters with men and women who accepted the invitation to "come and see", and were struck by the "surplus" of humanity that shone through the gaze, the speech and the gestures of those who bore witness to Jesus Christ." Pope Francis adds: "The disciples not only listened to his



by Ladislaus Louis D'Souza

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St. Damien of Molokai

Ref your issue 10-16 May 2021. I was pleasantly surprised to see an article on Damien of Molokai By Fr.F.M.Britto. The first piecel read on Damien written in the 1940's is still with me .It was published in a Times of India

publication in the mid 1950, and I got it in the old books market. I am preserving it even though it is in tatters. It gives a lot of information on Fr.Damien as he was then popularly known.Justice was done late to Damien..Finally he was admitted to the Roster of Saints by Benedict XVI.

I am not going to repeat what can be read in any book on St.Damien. He made the supreme sacrifice for wretched lepers of Molokai.Once you entered the island of Molokai you were never to return in Damien's time.The day he knew of his being afflicted by the disease is dramatically described in The Times of India (Press article of 1940s.)Leprosy (some times referred to as Hansen's Disease).was a deadly disfiguring disease which led to a slow and painful death.Today things are different.

I have read For.Fr.Britto,s last paragraph giving M.K.Gandhis,comment on The Catholic Church's social campaigns in India.He says it is worthwhile to look for the source of such heroism. Rather I would ask our admirers to find out What motivates our religious to devote their lives to such selflessness which requires immense courage.

—Albert C deSouza
Bandra West

Shortage of burial space in church

cemeteries

This is with reference to the article 'Pandemically speaking' by Ladislaus L.D'souza (Secular Citizen, May 10). The Catholic church in Mumbai has been grappling with the problem of shortage of burial space since the past 20 years or more due to the burgeoning Mumbai population. The problem has now assumed greater significance and worry due to the pandemic and the surge in the number of deaths. This problem would not have arisen had the church heeded the advice of the seniors and switched over to electric cremation long back, which has been proved to be the most economical, most hygienic and quickest way to dispose off the dead. An electric crematorium is also not difficult to set up and does not occupy much space. It is therefore important that an electric crematorium be installed in every church cemetery, if the church hopes to solve the problem of burial space shortage. The ashes can then be stored in a receptacle kept in the cemetery from where people are free to take the ashes and preserve it at home or even send it to their loved ones abroad. This will also obviate the need of niches. Permanent graves can therefore stay put without disturbing the peace of our loved ones. Secondly, if temporary graves are posing a problem of decomposition of bodies even after 3 years, then is it not better to be cremated and go up in smoke , instead of rotting in pieces and eaten up by maggots. We will undoubtedly resurrect on Judgement day as the church tells us, but in what form , no one knows. So, instead of asking people to surrender their permanent graves to make room for the dead, the church should instead encourage the faithful to go in for electric cremation by setting up an electric crematorium in every cemetery. Western countries have already gone in for cremation in a big way because of the

difficulty of digging up frosted ground. The Catholic church also does not forbid cremation. So what is the problem?

— A. F. Nazareth,
Alto Porvorim, Goa

Transfers of priests

Transfers of clergy in Goa and Mumbai follow a well charted route. While the transfers in Goa are published in the newspapers , in Mumbai they are published in The Examiner---the official weekly of the archdiocese .

It is a matter of some concern that the Catholic church doesn't have even a semblance of feedback system , which would help the higher ups in taking decisions such as putting the right person in the right place and promoting of clergy to higher posts. I think the church must make a start by asking clergymen to fill a self assessment forms in which among other questions they may be asked the kind of work they would like to do. Peer reports too would help. Priests may assess the performance of their fellow priests , including the parish priest. The laity too should be involved. For a start, parish pastoral council members may be allowed to fill assessment forms of the clergy. Needless to say all these forms should be submitted to the parish priest in sealed envelopes, which may then be forwarded by him to the bishop's office.

These reports will help the higher ups to assess the performance of individual priests.

—Prof Robert Castellino,
Malad

Be Krishna Not Dronacharya, Mr. Bhagvat!

Mr. Mohan Bhagwat, when India recorded 3,26,098 COVID-19 cases that took the tally to 2,43,72,907, while 3,890 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 2,66,207, (According to Union Health Ministry, Sat. 15 May), you open your mouth on the current situation in the country! Too late! At a lecture series 'Positivity Unlimited' you said that

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this is not an appropriate time to point fingers and all should avoid making irrational remarks!

Are you not trying to shield your Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi and his government who in fact has pushed the country into the death trap of the second Covid wave? Newspapers have declared on their front pages to the world that the Modi government has disappeared, लापता! At Least the tragedy of your own RSS comrade Amit Jaiswal should have drawn your attention to the tragic situation in your 'Hastinapur'! An IT man of the BJP whom the PM even followed on Twitter became a Corona patient. His family sought the help of Modiji but alas! He died without finding a hospital bed in Agra and remdesivir injections!

Mr. Bhagvat, you should have opened your mouth a year ago, warned and corrected the government and saved the *Hindu Rashtra*. Only on 15 May you accuse the government and people of becoming complacent after the first wave. Your warning comes too late! You should have pulled back Modiji from his election campaign in West Bengal and engaged him in the preparation plan against the second wave of Corona! Now there are talks of the third wave. A Dehsbhakt would have expected you to speak about how the RSS plans to combat the third wave on humanitarian level. But you are silent on that point! Your 'sermon' irritates all the more when you cite England's hopeless situation in World War II. A quote was written on the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill's desk which read, "There is no pessimism in this office. We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. They don't exist". You should directly ask Modiji to put this quote in the offices of all the Central Ministers specially the slumbering Health Minister Mr. Harshvardhan! Are you not shielding the BJP?

The ruling party BJP is born of RSS and supported by its cadre. Hence we expect you to be a spiritual father of the present government which is ab-

solutely irresponsible. It is causing *Narsamhar* like the one caused at *Kurukshetra* in the days of *Mahabharat*. The BJP governments in UP and Bihar are killing people without oxygen and throwing corpses into the sacred Ganges! Where is your love for *Gangamata*? Instead of advising us, "... in this situation we can't give up on courage. We need to also have steely resolve", speak these strong words directly to Modiji and his government. Without the frank talk your lecture on '*Positivity Unlimited*' reminded us of the war between *Kauravas* and *Pandavas*. You seem to be playing the role of guru *Dronacharya* on the side of *Kauravas*, fooling us, simple *Pandavas* and supporting the *Manusmriti* rule in *Bharat Varsha*!

Satyamev Jayate!

—Fr. Michael G. Vasai

Solve Graves Crises!

Ref Mr. Ladislaus D'Souza's article in the 17-23 April Issue of *The Secular Citizen* under "Pandemically Speaking" he has touched upon a burning issue of today by explaining the futility of holding on to family graves, embalmed bodies occupying graves permanently as well as the niche issue. I sincerely wish all of us would give deep thought to this issue for doing away with this system.

Also wish to thank Fr. Michael Pinto Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes Church Orlem for his announcement recently on surrender of graves to solve the crisis which is very laudable in a large parish like ours.

—*Sylvia Godinho Orlem-Malad*

'Oxygen' Issue

Aguair, I must compliment you on highlighting the 'Oxygen' issue at such an appropriate time as this. I think the only entity not running out of Oxygen is the Central government per se. How one wishes someone would pull the plug on the BJP-MODI Regime - and the sooner the better!

—*Ladislaus Louis D'Souza*

Murder Rap on Election Commission

The Madras high court recently ruled that the Election Commission of India (ECI) is solely to be blamed for flagrant violation of Covid protocol during the recent poll campaigns, which has led to the ballooning Covid cases in the country. **An interesting observation made by the Madras High Court was that, the poll body officials should probably be booked for "murder charges"**. Yes, exactly, holding elections in the midst of the pandemic was nothing short of murder.

This observation should have awakened the ECI & the government to do some soul searching. On the contrary however, this seemed too much for the ECI to digest and they have filed a petition in the Supreme court against the oral observations made by the Madras High Court, that ECI was "singularly responsible for COVID second wave" and that its officers "should probably be booked for murder".

The Supreme Court on its part too, seemed to have rapped the ECI. **"Take it as a bitter pill; in the right spirit"**, said the Supreme Court to the Election Commission of India. Well, the truth hurts. And how much more does it hurt the people when they lose their near & dear ones due to non availability of oxygen, ICU beds & other medication?

In view of the gravity of the situation perhaps, the court should also consider booking the centre on these same charges of murder. And, not to miss out the Kumbh Mela organisers. It's now time to see the authorities owning up responsibility. It's time for some action!

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

Does Nature talk back?

disappointed for sure!

There is another WhatsApp video which talks of what is called, "**Forest Therapy**" which involves strolling through the forest barefoot on the leaves, wrapping one's arms around a tree, breathing in its scent, and feeling its presence. It promises one an amazing experience. Well, that's Nature - **you Love Nature and Nature will Love you back!**

One last point - does Nature talk back? Of course it does! **Nature talks back in the form of Heavy, torrential rains, cloud bursts, cyclonic storms, landslides, earthquakes, etc. Nature talks back in the form of high waves, floods, rainstorm, tsunamis. Nature has been talking to man in various ways over the past several years, but man seems to have shut his ears to what Nature is trying to tell him! Perhaps, we will continue to shut our eyes & ears to Nature - at our own peril!**

For the second year in succession, we are in a Lockdown-style mode on account of the life threatening, rampaging coronavirus. The general atmosphere around us, the environment, is one of gloom. Some time at the end of the first wave, we have been discussing what we called the 'new normal'. And now, suddenly we find ourselves in a serious situation where the second wave of this pandemic has suddenly changed all that! The results are there for all to see. **One of the biggest negative effects the Covid has had upon man is that he is now stressed out completely.** The first wave had broken his back. There has been large scale closure of businesses resulting in loss of employment. Salaries have been cut down, several companies have downsized in order to survive. This has led to an employee's inability to pay housing loan installments & other statutory payments, in short, his household budget has gone for a toss! **The second wave has thrown man completely off balance.**



Melville X. D'Souza
- Orlem, Malad West

A disturbing feature of the second wave of this dreaded virus is that people are falling dead on account of shortage of oxygen supply or no ventilators available; ventilators as you know, pump oxygen-rich air into your lungs. It also helps you breathe out carbon dioxide, a harmful waste gas your body needs to get rid of.

Why am I talking about human lives being lost on account of lack of oxygen? What is this oxygen we are talking about? As is commonly known, plants absorb all the pollution, the gases released by us, carbon dioxide, etc., during the day and give out oxygen to enable us to breathe. But here we see a scenario where human lives are lost due to lack of oxygen. Oxygen

is freely available in the air and yet, we are being made to breathe through a ventilator and pay for it.

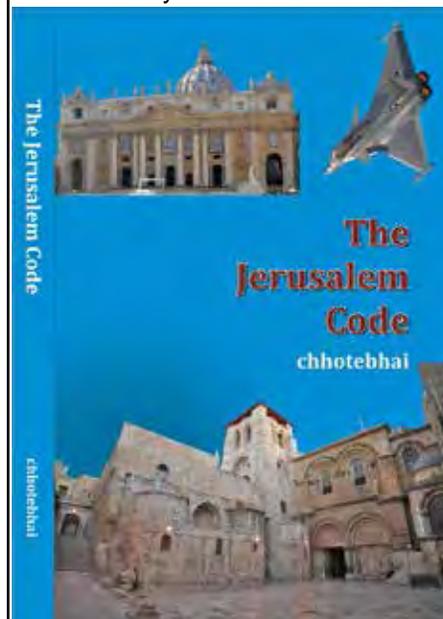
Well, coming back to the present situation in our country. What is all this loss of lives leading to? What is this loss is employment, livelihood leading to? What are all these movement restrictions leading to?..... **Stress! Isn't stress known to be one of those silent killers - the #1 proxy killer?** Surely, we must have across incidents where people have passed away on account of stress. It is real and a very sad situation. So, how do we tackle this silent killer? What are the options available? Visiting counsellors, psychiatrists, speaking with some learned people in society, etc. Yes, all this perhaps helps, although sessions with professionals may be boring at times. Prayer, of course. Is there another practical option available?

Well, how about turning to Nature? Can we speak with Nature - doesn't that sound a bit weird? Perhaps yes. Speaking to Nature - you must be out of your mind. This could be the general reaction of the public. There was a message recently doing the rounds on WhatsApp, which goes something like, **'Talk to Nature, and if Nature talks back, visit a psychiatrist'**. How do you look at it, as a cryptic comment or sarcastic? I for one, thought, perhaps there is some sense in that message. If one reads the message carefully, all it says is, try turning to Nature as an alternative. **Of course, Nature may not talk to you after all, literally, but what's the harm if you find some solace in Nature?** Never mind the reaction of people, never mind what they would think of you - they may term you a mental case. Why should that bother you? Talking to Nature of course, can do you no harm, even if it doesn't seem to do you any good. You would not be

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Positive Approach Need Of The Hour During Pandemic

it was to ensure their implementation. They, in their wisdom, or rather the lack of it, treated the NDMA's detailed guidelines and SOPs with contempt, leaving it to their minions to handle the problems.

Inherent arrogance and a belief that we had put the pandemic behind us ensured that the Government took its eyes off the ball, even going so far as to ignore advice, received in early March from its own advisory group, on the likelihood of a second wave impacting us with even more ferocity. As a result, it didn't bother to make up for the infrastructural and procedural deficiencies observed earlier but, worse, refused to hold accountable for acts of omission and commission those responsible for the lapses and delays that led to unnecessary and avoidable deaths of thousands.

In short, it was a Government more focused on garnering power and prestige than ensuring the well-being of its citizens. An uncaring civil society, a divided and defunct Opposition spear-headed by a party in the death throes and a pro-Government media preferred to remain silent on these issues. By doing so, we enabled them to cover up their misdeeds and perpetuate false narratives and bold-faced lies. We may have excellent reasons for not venturing outside his bio-bubble as in IPL matches in selected centres.

Interestingly, such an absence in a war zone on the part of a military leader would result in his immediate removal from command, probably on grounds of incompetence, if not sheer cowardice. Whatever the spin this Government may attempt to push has been completely shorn off all the gloss and charisma promised and predicted earlier.

The question that arises is that we will do the right thing and fall upon the sword. One way or the other, we will know the answer soon. But let us be totally clear that the country suffered a lot forever. We need an able leadership and a vibrant opposition to lead us at the peaking time of pandemic.

Despite the darkness and the chaos that currently engulf us, one can say with certainty that this, too, shall pass. Undoubtedly, the cost has been tragically unconscionable, and nothing could have prepared us for the trauma and heartbreak that confronts us on a daily basis. The fact is that we had expected to be overwhelmed by the pandemic's impact during the first wave, given the state of our health infrastructure and the Government's apathy. Especially, since the latter's complete focus was on Donald Trump's visit, the opposition to the Citizen's Amendment Act and the Delhi riots. For reasons that we still do not fully understand, that did not happen and we got away lightly, believing for some reason that our generally poor standard of hygiene and prevalence of disease had made us immune to the virus.

Clearly a combination of inverse snobbery, arrogance and complacency gripped us, allowing us to forsake common sense and ignore basic science in an effort to quickly regain our prepandemic lives. Suffice it to say, the handling of the first wave by those mandated to do so was apathetic in the initial stages and panicstricken subsequently, especially after they

saw it decimate Europe, the US and South America. We locked ourselves in, at a moment's notice, without any consideration for our less fortunate brethren, the daily wage earners, whose livelihoods disappeared overnight. The inability of the State to anticipate the consequences or mitigate their suffering resulted in the largest migration of population seen since Partition. The migrants attempted to get back to the safety of their villages, treks on foot involving thousands of kilometres for some. To compound their misery, the Centre as well as most State Governments responded, as the Governments here invariably do, with inherent savagery, totally bereft of empathy or compassion. As a result, thousands died by the wayside.



Jayanthi Subramaniam

The Government was seemingly unaware that even in the tragedy that was Partition, the fledgling Government of the time utilised the military to establish the Military Evacuation Organisation to coordinate the movement of all refugees and helped them reach their destinations in relative safety. In complete contrast, despite the grave nature of the threat confronting the Government, the military remained a mere bystander, utilised for such "critical" tasks as serenading hospital staff and other frontline workers by showering hospitals and police memorials with flowers from helicopters!

Even now, there are allegations that the military has been used to establish field hospitals in the constituencies of a few VIP politicians. Clearly, in hindsight, it was not our systems and processes in place to deal with just such a contingency that were found wanting, as Kerala showed us, but the lackadaisical approach of most Ministers and bureaucrats whose responsibility

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Benediction Of The Most Holy Rosary

MONTH OF MARY

If there's a person who feels a warm glow inside his heart when praying the Rosary, it's a Roman Catholic. Probably the most wonderful and powerful gift from Our Lady makes the Rosary "an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society."

Among Roman Catholics the practice of praying the Rosary embraces the faith with encouragement and hope automatically. The sacred beads download a sequence of images in the life, miracles, death, resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ, helping devout souls to maintain a better understanding of the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries. The Rosary is a holy devotion.

St. Louis DeMontfort in his book, *The Secret of the Rosary*; writes: "The Rosary is a priceless treasure which is inspired by God." Abundant grace is obtained in this holy practice, God's blessed Mother had appeared to Saint Dominic urging him to talk about the Rosary, which Our Lady referred to as her "Angelic Psalter."

The remarkable history of the Rosary had originated in early recorded Christian practice. The people of God would recite the "150 psalms from the Bible... as a way of prayer", says F.M.K. Paul, ssp. In his book, *The Holy Rosary*; Some of the faithful would recite the Our Father 150 times, using beads to count the prayers.

For Roman Catholics the Rosary is a beautiful daily practice and a way of spiritual life. Devotees of Our Holy Mother believe and profess with confidence the timeless freshness in this prayer, an instrument of victory at times of war, for sinners to repent and to convert lost souls. The perseverance in its recitation work miracles.

The Rosary is a mystical blessing from Almighty God and His mother. Our Lady of Fatima said, "We must pray the Rosary in our homes. We must make each bead a prayer and a sacrifice. The Crucifix is our hope and strength."

The origin of the name Rosary came from the flower, Rose. The Dominicans it must be noted were the first to promote the rosary in the thirteenth century. St. Dominic, a monk, received the Angelic Salutation from the Mother of God in the form we use it today as a prayer. Saint Dominic became a powerful preacher of the Rosary and tried to kindle a love of devotion in the hearts of his listeners.

Our Lady appeared to the saint and instructed him to urge people to say 'my Rosary, and in this way your words will bear fruits for souls.' (Book of Miracles of the Holy Rosary) in Italian. For Catholic people who practice this devotion much piety and fervor follows.

Many religious associations were dedicated to the Rosary. In the passage of the years the faithful have neglected "to pray" this gift from God and the rage of sin and violence have brought much destruction across the face of the earth.

On October 16, 2002, the Holy Father Pope Paul II issued a missive titled *Rosarium Virgins Marae* (The Rosary of the Virgin Mary). In his apostolic letter, the pope added five "Mysteries of Light" to the present fifteen mysteries (to be prayed on Thursdays).

The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the Rosary, an 'epitome of the whole Gospel', express this devotion to the Virgin Mary, (CCC. 2678/514). The most holy rosary is predominantly

the most popular of Roman Catholic practices. Please say the Rosary in your quiet moments today.

All true devotees of Our Lady, I feel confident, will enrich the specific desire of Mary to 'say' the Rosary and to lead a life of prayer and faith. St. Louis de Montfort called himself the "Slave of Mary". Let us call ourselves the "Faithful of the Most Holy Rosary".

(Contd.. from p. 3)

with material progress. This kind of India will be no different from China. Similarly, a Hindu Rashtra in India will be equivalent to an Islamic State in Pakistan. Our polity will then have the negative features of both China and Pakistan- our main adversaries. It would be a combination of both left wing and right wing dictatorship. This would be one of the biggest tragedies of modern world history and the biggest tragedy of the world's largest democratic republic. Is this not a cause for grave concern, Mr. President?



BY MELVYN BROWN

Thanksgiving

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be Praised Adored, Glorified and Loved today and everyday throughout the world, now and forever. Amen!!



Ask St. Clare for three favours two impossible and say nine Hail Marys and the above prayer for 9 days with a lighted candle and publish on the 9th day your request will be granted no matter how impossible it is

—Felix Pereira,
Navi Mumbai

Fear Is The Key

After weathering the initial storm, India has once again descended into COVID-19 chaos.

As the situation across the country continues to be a story of helplessness with humanity pitted against a hideous adversary which has been remorseless in its overwhelming devastation, it lays bare quite a few follies committed by both the government and the public which if consciously attended to in its actual context could have helped reverse the situation.

India is already looking at a future where, if the coronavirus continues to evolve further, the country will not be spared from a third wave of the pandemic which has already swept a few nations like Canada, France and Italy.

The situation at home is not very encouraging either!

Goa today sits in a very precarious position with the daily spike in cases exposing the state's vulnerability to the unmanageable spread of the disease. Reportedly, Goa tops highest COVID-19 positivity rate in the country today.

The state thus went into a unique sort of lockdown – a 'weekend special' detractors called it!

While there is no doubt whatsoever that a strictly enforced total lockdown is the need of the hour in the state to check the escalating COVID cases, but how justified are some of the legislators in demanding that the Pramod Sawant-government extend the present one imposed in its diluted form for another specified period!

From a situation where an unmoved regime was only paying lip service to the idea of carrying out stringent re-

strictions to curb the malaise of the disease even when the state recorded unprecedented spike in cases, a complete volte-face on its earlier stance on the matter is itself encouraging.

When a lockdown which is being pooh-poohed for its insincerity gets the sort of response that has been reported in parts of the state with citizens enforcing a voluntary lockdown by remaining indoors to break the COVID chain, it is an indication of the fact that gradually people are realizing the seriousness of the situation that they are in.

By taking evasive action to protect itself against the potency of the virus, it is as if the public has come to terms with the enormity of the situation.



by Pachy Menon

With such a scenario in evidence, it is half the battle won for the state which has so far had hardly anything to show for its beleaguered fight against the dreaded microbe.

When, as responsible citizens, people attune themselves to the task of safeguarding their own lives, adhering to safety guidelines will be a natural public response.

While it is quite obvious that it is the panic that has set in in the wake of the marauding virus which has elicited such an 'enthusiastic' reaction from the public, it is difficult to understand what exactly refrains people from adopting a more proactive role during such calamities when their own lives are at risk!

Moreover, when it is a question of lives and livelihoods of its people, every government will try to maintain a balance between both while formulating policies during the pandemic.

Even now, the partial lockdown has

been imposed with a view on controlling public movement. But the manner in which it has drawn criticism for its illogicality says a lot for the fault-finding attitude of political leaders and people alike whose empty talk only worsens the situation.

It is said that people with premonitions of an impending threat tend to behave irrationally.

But as is evident in Goa, it is an acute awareness about the ravaging effects of the marauding virus which has brought the public back to its senses.

Seen merely as the government's formal response to the echoing demands for a shutdown in the wake of the spiraling rate of infections witnessed in the state, the weekend essay has however veered off course and manifested itself in a 'phenomenon' never before experienced.

As a severe course of action, the imposition of any sort of lockdown was inviting opposition from various sectors for the harm it would cause them economically and otherwise.

Besides, it was as if people were yet to get over the euphoria of the newfound freedom after the harshness of the first lockdown had severely restricted their fondness for 'social interactions'.

The second wave of COVID is certainly to be ascribed to this slovenly habit of the people for whom, so far, a mood for enjoyment and personal entertainment has preceded any consideration for their safety in the face of the virus scare.

It is this fallacy that the government ought to have addressed in the earlier stages so as to keep the charge of the coronavirus in check.

But amidst the relentless efforts to save the lives and livelihoods of its people, the government has been taking one faulty decision after the other which has led to this overawing situa-

(Contd.. on p. 11)

Good works of Castelino Eye Foundation Jaipur



Castelino Eye Foundation (Jaipur) with collaboration of Hope Foundation Bangalore distributed Corona-care Mother's meal ration every month to 20 poor mothers Rs. 500 ration per month from 15th August 2020 - July 2021. This month AU Small Finance Bank Ltd., donated 300 Sanitizers and Masks. The Foundation gave it to Missionaries of Charities Homes two Pratapnagar, Sagar. This was possible due to the efforts of Founding President Michael Castellino,

(Contd.. from p. 10)

tion.

Very clearly, the COVID second wave is a result of negligence. But who exactly is to be blamed!

At one stage it was the government which stood out as the villain of the piece and was accused of watching on helplessly as the situation turned from one which could be controlled to an irremediable one in the state.

But how gracious enough have the people been in admitting that their irrepressible manners have been equally responsible for the state being pushed to the brink of yet another catastrophe!

Amid a scenario where the scarcity of hospital beds, vaccines, medicines and lifesaving oxygen has compounded the woes for an overburdened healthcare system, it is now for the public to strengthen the hands of the government by willing themselves to stay home and avoid the risk of infection.

With COVID-19 fear gripping the state, more local bodies across Goa have commenced imposing voluntary lockdown in their respective areas.

However, as has been suggested, these local lockdowns reflect fear and lack of confidence in the government's efforts to keep the harmful effects of the virus at bay.

But, need we have waited for so long to understand the urgency of the situation! ●

Matrimonial Proposals

Proposals are invited for

Mangalorean RC Bachelor, 31 years belonging to a highly educated and very affluent family with interests in healthcare, agriculture and many other sectors, Tall, Fair, Handsome, Holding Doctorate, managing the family business in Karnataka State. (REF:MM104)

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28 year Mumbai based Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 72 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., Profession : a Banker (REF:MM109)

Vasai based affluent business family R.C. East Indian Spinster, 33, years Ht. 5' 2", very beautiful and pretty. MS General Surgeon, Doctor by profession. (REF:106)

Mumbai based now in Dubai Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, 33 years, Ht. 5' 7", Fair Complexion, Edn. BMS, profession: a Senior Merchandiser (REF:107)

Mumbai based Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, 29 years, Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 72 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., C.A., Holding a managerial post. (REF:108)

Those interested in this proposal :

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Lorenzo Dow, a 19th century evangelist, was on a preaching tour when he came to a small town one cold winter night. At the local general store he saw the town's lawyers gathered around the potbellied stove.

Dow told the men about a recent vision in which he had been given a tour of hell, much like the traveler in Dante's Inferno. One of the lawyers asked what he had seen.

"Very much what I see here," Dow said. "All of the lawyers gathered in the hottest place."

A Dublin lawyer died in poverty and many barristers of the city subscribed to a fund for his funeral. The Lord Chief Justice of Orbury was asked to donate a shilling. "Only a shilling?" said the Justice, "Only a shilling to bury an attorney? Here's a guinea; go and bury 20 more of them."

"How can I ever thank you?" gushed a woman to Clarence Darrow, after he had solved her legal troubles. "My dear woman," Darrow replied, "ever since the Phoenicians invented money there has been only one answer to that question."

A lawyer boarded an airplane in New Orleans with a box of frozen crabs and asked a blonde stewardess to take care of them for him.

She took the box and promised to put it in the crew's refrigerator. He advised her that he was holding her personally responsible for them staying frozen, mentioning in a very haughty manner that he was a lawyer, and proceeded to rant at her about what would happen if she let them thaw out.

Needless to say, she was annoyed by his behavior. Shortly before landing in New York, she used the intercom to announce to the entire cabin, "Would the lawyer who gave me the crabs in New Orleans, please raise your hand."



Not one hand went up . . . so she took them home and ate them.

Judge Bean and Lawyer Bilgeworth were riding horses. They came upon an open stretch of country and noticed a hangman's noose dangling from a tree, solemnly waving in the breeze.

"Bilgeworth," said Judge Bean, "if that gallows had its due, where do you suppose you'd be?"

The lawyer looked at the noose. "Riding alone," he said.

The funeral procession included two hearses and a man walking a dog. Several hundred people followed the man.

Curious, a pedestrian approached the man. "The first hearse carries my ex-wife's lawyer," the man explained. "My dog bit him and he died two days later. The second hearse has a lawyer who opposed me in some business litigation. He met the same fate."

The pedestrian thought for a moment, then asked, "Could I borrow your dog?"

"Okay be me, but you're going to have to wait your turn like these other people."

The District Attorney was approaching the Suwanee River when he noticed a sign, "Caribbean Cruise--\$99.00". He stopped and bought a ticket, whereupon the salesman hit him on the head, wrapped him in a rug and threw him in the river.

The Public Defender noticed the same sign. He too bought a ticket, got hit on the head, wrapped in a rug and tossed in the river.

The Public Defender awoke and

called out to the State's Attorney, "Do they serve drinks on this cruise?" The District Attorney replied, "They didn't last year!"

"And God said: 'Let there be Satan, so people don't blame everything on Me. And let there be lawyers, so people don't blame everything on Satan.'"

- Pete Luchini

A lawyer was filling out a job application when he came to the question, "Have you ever been arrested?" He answered, "No."

The next question, intended for applicants who had answered, "Yes," was "Why?" The lawyer answered it, "Never got caught."

An elderly patient needed a heart transplant and discussed his options with his doctor. The doctor said, "We have 3 possible donors; the 1st is a young, healthy athlete who died in an automobile accident, the 2nd is a middle-aged businessman who never drank or smoked and who died flying his private jet. The 3rd is an attorney who died after practicing law for 30 years. Which do you want?" "I'll take the lawyer's heart," said the patient.

After a successful transplant, the doctor asked the patient why he had chosen the donor he did. "It was easy," said the patient, "I wanted a heart that hadn't been used."

A gang of robbers broke into a lawyer's club by mistake. The old legal lions gave them a fight for their life and their money. The gang was very happy to escape.

"It ain't so bad," one crook noted. "We got \$25 between us."

The boss screamed: "I warned you to stay clear of lawyers! We had \$100 when we broke in!"

Q: Where can you find a good lawyer?

A: In the cemetery

Wellness Notes

A Short History of Medicine:

2000 B.C. – “ Here, eat this root.”

1000 B.C. – “That root is heathen, say this prayer.”

1850 A.D. – “That prayer is superstitious, drink this potion.”

1940 A.D. – “That potion is snake oil, swallow this pill.”

1985 A.D. – “That pill is ineffective, take this antibiotic.”

2000 A.D. – “That antibiotic doesn’t work anymore. Here, eat this root.”

2019 A.D. – “That root is ineffective, You need to be vaccinated.”

Reflection during the Pandemic Times:

When ‘I’ is replaced by ‘WE’.. Even ‘ILLNESS’ becomes ‘WELLNESS.’ One Anonymous writer has give alternative commandments for a long and peaceful life: Ten Commandments for a Long and Peaceful Life
Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass. Thou shalt face each problem as it comes. You can handle only one at a time. Thou shalt not cross bridges before you get to them, for no one yet has succeeded in accomplishing this. Thou shalt not take problems to bed with you, for they make very poor bed-fellows. Thou shalt not borrow other people's problems. They can take better care of them than you can. Thou shalt be a good listener, for only when you listen do you hear ideas different from your own. It's very hard to learn something new when you're talking. Thou shalt not try to re-live yesterday for good or ill—it is gone. Concentrate

on what is happening in your life today. Thou shalt not become bogged down by frustration, for 50 percent of it is rooted in self-pity and will only interfere with positive actions. Thou shalt count thy blessings, never overlooking the small ones—for a lot of small blessings add up to a big one.

Zen Story on The Holy Man

Word spread across the countryside about the wise Holy Man who lived in a small house atop the mountain.

A man from the village decided to make the long and difficult journey to visit him. When he arrived at the house, he saw an old servant inside who greeting him at the door. “I would like to see the wise Holy Man,” he said to the servant. The servant smiled and led him inside. As they walked through the house, the man from the village looked eagerly around

the house, anticipating his encounter with the Holy Man. Before he knew it, he had been led to the back door and escorted outside. He stopped and turned to the servant, “But I want to see the Holy Man!”

“You already have,” said the old man. “Everyone you may meet in life, even if they appear plain and insignificant... see each of them as a wise Holy Man. If you do this, then whatever problem you brought here today will be solved.” We the Indians have enriched a rich spiritual traditions from the Satyagrahi Mahatma Gandhi. Here are these ten powerful phrases from The Man himself:

Be the change you wish to see in the world. What you think you become. Where there is love, there is life. Learn as you will live forever. Your health is your true wealth. Have a sense of humor. Your life is your message. Action expresses priorities. Our greatness is being able to remake ourselves. Find yourself in the service of others.



Fr. George Olivera OFM Cap, Mysore

Prayer of Padre Pio for the Afflicted and the Suffering Humanity

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving me. I thank you for sending your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, to the world to save and set me free. I trust in your power and grace that sustain and restore me. Loving Father, touch me now with your healing hands, for I believe that your will is for me to be well in mind, body, soul, and spirit. Cover me with the most precious blood of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. Cast anything that should not be in me. Root out any unhealthy and abnormal cells. Open any blocked arteries or veins and rebuild and replenish any damaged areas. Remove all inflammation and cleanse any infection by the power of Jesus’ precious blood. Let the fire of your healing love pass through my entire body to heal and make new any diseased areas so that my body will function the way you created it to function. Touch also my mind and my emotion, even the deepest recesses of my heart. Saturate my entire being with your presence, love, joy, and peace and draw me ever closer to you every moment of my life. And Father, fill me with the Holy Spirit and empower me to do your works so that my life will bring glory and honour to your holy name. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

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Good Family Makes a Good Society

The 15th day of May is observed, world over, as 'International Day of Families'. This is also called 'International Family Day' or 'World Family Day'. This day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 with a resolution. The celebration kicked off in 1994, as well.

The 'International day of Families' highlights the importance of family for the humans across the globe. Families include people, societies and cultures around the world, and therefore, communities, nations and the global society, too. The day is scheduled for promoting awareness of issues relating to families and to increase knowledge of the social, economic, demographic and cultural processes affecting families.

The word 'family' derives from the Latin root 'familia', meaning 'a group of people related to each other', by birth, marriage or relationship. The word 'familiar' emerges from this very same root, implying 'often seen or heard, easy to recognize, having a good closeness and therefore is well known to each other'. 'Staying mutually related or connected' is the core of the dynamics of the family, too.

As we know too well, maintaining the 'wellbeing' of its members and of the society is the logic of the family. The traditions of the family give its members a sense of being 'rooted, stable and purposeful' in life. Every time the members of the family gather as a group, each one of them contribute to the spirit of 'belonging to each other' and 'belonging together'. The traditions, values and ideals, along with the flow of energy and vitality, are sure to sustain the bonding of the family.

There is a variety of family types in the world. Traditional and non-traditional

families, patriarchal and matriarchal families, matrilineal and patrilineal families, matrifocal and patrifocal families, nuclear and single parent families, avuncular and extended families are the major among them. Obviously, all these types of families emerged in the course of the human civilization and have their singular merits and demerits, beyond compare.

Family, in some form or other, is as old as the first humans. Today, it comes across to us much different from what it used to be thousands of years ago and is in diverse forms, as an ever-evolving phenomenon. But, the relevance and importance of the family stand firm as a never-ending reality. The Canadian-American Emeritus actor, author, film producer and activist, Michael J. Fox by name, has a pithy

statement on what a family is and has to be for all times. He says, "Family is not an important thing. It's everything".



Fr. Dr. M. D. Thomas

It doesn't require a mention that family is the foundation of the society. Family is the smallest unit of the society,

too. In other words, family is the human society in miniature. The most formative years of our lives are spent in the family. And so, parents, sisters and brothers shape the basics of our character. It could be said thus, 'tell me what your family is; I will tell you what sort of person you are'. A 'good family makes a good society', positively so, and vice versa, as well.

The major functions of the family include procreation of children, nurturing them with an unadulterated 'love', as the sole diet for culturing the siblings into good human beings. The biological aspects have to be accompanied by rational, emotional, social and spiritual aspects. Maintaining the comfortable size of the family is a reasonable approach to the family, from all angles.



Family is the divinely designed place, where the creative role of the Creator is being continued by the humans. Therefore, family has to maintain the 'dignity and sanctity of the temple of God', in the right sense of the word.

'The child is father to the man', thus goes the proverb. That would mean that the character built up in the childhood stays all throughout with the adult life. The child is born a human being. But, he or she has to keep becoming a human being, in the course of life. Family is the nursery where such an upbringing is intended to happen, in a primary way. The process of becoming a social being is initiated in the family and in the fullness of time constructs a sociable society. No doubt, the course of culturing as human beings is substantially pioneered in the family.

It is true that India has a significant sense of being a family. The tremendous mutual bonding, as members of one family, no doubt, contributes, in the long run, to ensuring harmony and wellbeing in the society. But, it has to be humbly admitted that the oversized, emotionally over-dependent and financially and politically one-sided families of the country have still a very long way to go in giving memorable memories to the families of the national society.

(Contd.. on p. 15)

(Contd.. from p. 14)

Family, in the right sense of the word, is and has to be 'home', well, 'a place where one lives', not only physically as a household, but also psychologically. It is a 'celebration of being together'. It is indeed a place where one 'feels at home', comfortable and pleased to be. Joseph Campbell, an American Professor of Literature, says, 'Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again'. Obviously, 'home is a place where one would naturally find oneself again and again', because it is the most 'sacred place' in the world, where God really dwells. 'Every family has to be a home', par excellence. And that is the beginning of making the society a home for the humans to dwell.

As husband and wife evolve to be father and mother and further the children become brother and sister to each other, the nucleus cycle of the family becomes complete. When parents become grandparents and siblings beget grand siblings, the family gets a new dimension. The best 'start up' in life is emotional, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, financial, social and cultural, and that occurs in the family, definitely so. A cultured and humane style of human life that is permeated with 'human values of dignity, respect, love, sharing, and equal footing' will make the family really worth the while.

The great occasion of the 'International Day of Families', proclaimed by the United Nations, is a golden opportunity to compliment and salute all the families of the world. It is the duty of all the members of the families across the globe, to commit themselves anew to all the human and divine values that make a 'good family', in view of a making a good society. The divine sense requires being imbibed for upholding the 'dignity and sacredness' of our biological, regional, national, continental and world human families.

The author is Director, Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies, New Delhi, and has been committed to cross-cultural perspectives, interfaith relations, social ethics, national integration and social harmony, for the past over 40 years. He contributes to the above cause through lectures, articles, video messages, conferences, social interactions, views at TV channels, and the like.

Lay Ministry of Catechist!

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter, *Antiquum Ministerium* dated 11 May 2021, established the 'Lay Ministry of Catechist'! – (Some excerpts):

"Fidelity to the past and responsibility for the present are necessary conditions for the Church to carry out her mission in this globalized culture. Thus, it is desirable to recognize those lay men and women, who feel called by virtue of their Baptism, to cooperate in the work of catechesis, especially with the genuine interaction of the youth; so that the faith might be an effective support for the life of everyone!"

"Since the Second Vatican Council, there had been a growing awareness of the high importance of the role of catechists (*AdGentes*, 17) ... A long line of blessed, saints and martyrs who were catechists had significantly advanced this Church's vital mission – Without in any way detracting from the Bishop's mission as the primary catechist in his Diocese – Nor from the primary responsibility of parents for the Christian formation of their children; as also the task of pastors to support them. And in this process to penetrate Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors of society!"

"Every catechist must be a witness to the faith, a teacher and a mystagogue, a companion and a pedagogue – Right from the first proclamation of the Kerygma, to preparation for the Sacraments of Christian initiation."

"All this is possible only through prayer, study and a direct participation in the life of the community, so that catechists grow in their identity and in their integrity!"

—Dr. Trevor Colaso,
Vienna, VA. USA

(Contd.. from p. 4)

words; they watched him speak. Indeed in him—the incarnate *Logos*—the Word took on a face; the invisible God let Himself be seen, heard and touched, as John himself tells us (cf 1 Jn 1:1-3). The word is effective only if it is "seen", only if it engages us in experience, in dialogue." He also says that "many situations in our world, even more so in this time of the pandemic, are inviting the communications media to "come and see"", to what purpose other than to share our firsthand experience of the Word-made-flesh with those in power - a veritable challenge to any conscientious reader, writer, speaker or activist whose way of putting things across would help mollify tempers and nullify prejudice apart from not merely ensuring that by-gones be by-gones but, having seen firsthand, being willing to convert bravado into concrete action for the sake of probity in public life that redounds to the good of the country. This would be best done by way of engaging those in Politics (and business) in experiencing the power of Christ through honest dialogue that could have the literati and the glitterati of the country rising en masse to protect the Constitution tooth and nail—regardless of the consequences—thereby activating their writings and utterances into productive deeds.

Any takers?

Those willing to rise to the challenge must, then, on the one hand, have the courage of their convictions spurring them on to look beyond the passing delight of seeing their names in print as 'bylines' and, on the other, convince increasing numbers of people of various faith persuasions—or even of no faith persuasion—to contribute actively towards strategically lifting our beloved country from the morass in which it is fast sinking, lest it eventually be sent to the dogs by the present regime!

Do You Even Know What 'Atmanirbhar' Means?

by Don Aguiar.

On a single January day in 1997 India vaccinated 127 million children against polio. The following year, another 134 million were vaccinated in a single day. No Aarogya Sethu, no Cowin, no OTP, no running from hospital to hospital, no PM's photo on anything.

India has tonnes of experience in free vaccination. We just need the right leadership, who can ensure its proper execution. But what is happening today is.....

The nation is not in a state of shock because the healthcare System has collapsed. It was always biased against the Poor and Marginalised. It was always biased against the Labourers, Farmers, Low wage workers, manual Scavengers and all those who were in the lower strata of the society. For them it had collapsed long back. This time, the country is in a state of shock because Healthcare System has collapsed for the Rich too.

Although our Prime Minister not too long ago convinced the nation that we are a super-power or, at least, one that is definitely in the making. This misplaced, unscientific, irrational and downright foolish conviction we are special is the cause of the crisis we face today. Well, an invisible virus has punctured the bubble of our pretensions making a lot of people feel disappointed with the government's governance – the same government they lovingly voted back to power for reasons that has nothing to do with governance. The root cause of this disappointment is the same as always, unwarranted expectations.

Coming to specifics, all of us are ex-



pecting the government to provide free vaccination in a timely organised manner. Vaccination is all the rage these days – and that's the crux of the problem, people are unable to manage their expectations.

Our PM has given thousands of speeches in the past seven years. Has he ever talked of 'Vaccinated India'? No. all he has ever spoken about is 'Digital India' so you must be crazy to actually expect free vaccines from the world's largest vaccination drive.

A patriot's foremost expectation from the government – more important than even his own life expectancy – is that it will channel all its resources to protect the country's image i.e. the PM's image. That is why one must not expect the thousands of crores set aside for building the PM's new residence to be used for buying vaccines and giving them free to every citizen.

India's biggest tragedy is that even the highly educated intellectuals claim to be disappointed with the government for "not offering any governance." They expect centralised coordination for ensuring timely, organised access to vaccines, etc.

For several months, well before the advent of coronavirus in India our PM repeatedly urged us to become 'Atmanirbhar', and he did so expressively that we are fully

prepared for the pandemic. Do you even know what 'Atmanirbhar' means? It means expect nothing from the government. So be it. Expect nothing.

On April 28, 2021, when the Indian government opened up vaccine registrations for all adult citizens the government said citizens should sign up on CoWIN, its COVID vaccine registration website, or download its coronavirus contact-tracing app, Aarogya Setu, on their phones. Vaccination slots would be made available on May 1.

But the domestic workers, labourers, farmers, low wage workers, manual scavengers and internet illiterate have no idea what the CoWIN website and the Aarogya Setu app are. Their mobile and internet literacy are limited to making calls, exchanging messages on WhatsApp, and browsing Facebook: the latter two only because a salesperson at a mobile store downloaded the apps on their phone and changed the language setting to theirs, the only one they can read.

"I have never heard of the Aarogya Setu app. I don't know how to download apps. I'm not educated. How will I self-register?" a domestic worker said in an interview.

(Contd.. on p. 17)

(Contd.. from p. 16)

While the Aarogya Setu app is available in a few regional Indian languages, the labourers, domestic workers, farmers, etc. are not aware that they needed to download it and register on it in order to get the vaccine. The CoWIN website, however, is available only in the English language.

But registrations don't really matter because India is experiencing a dire shortage of vaccines, which means within seconds of opening up, slots are booked. The Indian government has fallen way short of its own target of vaccinating citizens.

Their helplessness has been exacerbated by an unjust vaccination system that prioritizes efficiency and high technology instead of need, loading the dice in favour of the tech-savvy elite over most of the country's 1.4 billion population.

Ahead of vaccine registration for the 18–44 age group on April 28, the government opened up CoWIN's application programming interface to third parties. By offering tech tools like application programming interface that can only be used by software programmers, the government, in effect, has created a discriminatory arrangement that defeats the logic and urgency of a public health program. In this environment of scarcity, the government's message seems to be: learn how to code and you can get a vaccine.

However, only a small percentage of people in the country can take advantage—or are even aware—of these workarounds. Even those who are urban, educated, internet literate, and come from wealthier backgrounds cannot do much to book a slot unless they are aware of platforms that are making the booking process easier or have a techie friend who knows how to write code.

The government should not have made self-registration mandatory for anybody, whether online or offline as

CoWIN and Aarogya Setu are barriers for vaccination progress. People were never expected to register on their own and come for appointments, in earlier vaccination programs, even walk-ins will not solve the problem. The government needs to micro plan and organize vaccine drives by chalking out specific dates for specific districts and cities.

The government's vaccine policy has been widely criticized on all fronts including supply shortage, communication, pricing and rollout, by several health experts and public intellectuals – when actually it should have been given free and rolled out quickly because it has been budgeted for.

What we got in vaccine policy is a bizarre combination of ruthlessness and managing the headlines. ... This is ad hoc social Darwinism. The strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must. A perfect metaphor for our healthcare system.

There is nothing like a critical moment in history. So even after everyone gets vaccinated, until we sort out ourselves..... there is nothing to stop

another round or another pathogen.

Consequently the picture the world sees of India is not of a potential super power but an inept and flailing third-world country struggling but unable to handle a crisis it's inflicted on itself.

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To 'Come and See' IS to 'Be and Do'!

(A reflection on World Communications Day:16 May 2021)

Pope Francis has once again thrown a challenge to Catholic Communicators in his annual message for 'World Communications Day' which this year falls on Sunday 16 May. In his typically direct yet profound way, he focuses his message on the theme **"Come and See" (Jn 1:46). Communicating by Encountering People Where and as They Are.** In doing so, he makes it amply clear that, "in order to tell the truth of life that becomes history, it is necessary to move beyond the complacent attitude that we 'already know' certain things. Instead, we need to go and see them for ourselves, to spend time with people, to listen to their stories and to confront reality, which always in some way surprises us". Though Pope Francis' message is addressed primarily to Catholic communicators- it is, in fact applicable to all communicators today!

In his introductory paragraph Pope Francis sets the tone of what Christian Communication is and should be, "this year, then, I would like to devote this Message to the invitation to "come and see", which can serve as an inspiration for all communication that strives to be clear and honest, in the press, on the internet, in the Church's daily preaching and in political or social communication. "Come and see!" This has always been the way that the Christian faith has been communicated, from the time of those first encounters on the banks of the River Jordan and on the Sea of Galilee". 'Come and See' therefore in essence, is to 'be and do'.

In the subsections that follow, Pope Francis highlights three inter-related dimensions in order to drive home his point: to hit the streets, to live the communication of the Gospels and to have the courage of one's conviction. All these three resonate very strongly with what he says in his Apostolic Ex-

hortation 'Evangelii Gaudium'(The Joy of the Gospels)', "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life".



BY FR. CEDRIC PRAKASH SJ

He sees the need of "hitting the streets", in order to grasp the truth of things and the concrete lives of people, and more important the serious social phenomena or positive movements at the grass roots level. He laments how the original investigative reporting in newspapers and television, radio and web newscasts which involved sticking one's neck out – is today replaced by 'tendentious narrative'. For Pope Francis "hitting the streets" essentially means meeting people face to face to research stories or to verify certain situations first hand; he emphatically states that, "unless we open ourselves to this kind of encounter, we remain mere spectators"

"Come and See", says Pope Francis, "were the first words that Jesus spoke to the disciples who were curious about him following his baptism in the Jordan river (Jn 1:39). He invited them to enter into a relationship with him". For Jesus, as one sees throughout the Gospel this 'come and see' is meant to be a transformative experience. Several religious congregations today have this 'come and see' period : often called a 'prenovitiate' or 'aspirancy'. Basically, it is a time of orientation: a probation, an intern-

ship : when one begins internalising a particular value system and also has an opportunity for involvement. Pope Francis give us the examples of Nathanael and the Samaritan woman saying, "That is how Christian faith begins, and how it is communicated: as direct knowledge, born of experience, and not of hearsay."The change in attitude which evolves when theory moves into practise. That ability to reach out to others. "Come and see" is the simplest method to get to know a situation. It is the most honest test of every message, because, in order to know, we need to encounter, to let the person in front of me speak, to let his or her testimony reach me."

He then talks about the 'courage of many journalists'; he thanks them for their stand and heaps praise on them. He says, "Journalism too, as an account of reality, calls for an ability to go where no one else thinks of going: a readiness to set out and a desire to see. Curiosity, openness, passion. We owe a word of gratitude for the courage and commitment of all those professionals – journalists, camera operators, editors, directors – who often risk their lives in carrying out their work. Thanks to their efforts, we now know, for example, about the hardships endured by persecuted minorities in various parts of the world, numerous cases of oppression and injustice inflicted on the poor and on the environment, and many wars that otherwise would be overlooked. It would be a loss not only for news reporting, but for society and for democracy as a whole, were those voices to fade away. Our entire human family would be impoverished".

Here Pope Francis gives us plenty of food-for thought on the current pandemic. His message was made public on 23 January – but with some extraordinary foresight he was already writing about the pandemic which grips India today when he says, "many

(Contd.. on p. 21)

(Contd.. from p. 20)

situations in our world, even more so in this time of pandemic, are inviting the communications media to “come and see”. We can risk reporting the pandemic, and indeed every crisis, only through the lens of the richer nations, of “keeping two sets of books”. For example, there is the question of vaccines, and medical care in general, which risks excluding the poorer peoples. Who would keep us informed about the long wait for treatment in the poverty-stricken villages of Asia, Latin America and Africa? Social and economic differences on the global level risk dictating the order of distribution of anti-Covid vaccines, with the poor always at the end of the line and the right to universal health care affirmed in principle, but stripped of real effect. Yet even in the world of the more fortunate, the social tragedy of families rapidly slipping into poverty remains largely hidden; people who are no longer ashamed to wait in line before charitable organizations in order to receive a package of provisions do not tend to make news”.

Pope Francis speaks a bit about the ‘Opportunities and hidden dangers on the web’. We are all aware of how the web/internet has radically transformed our lives. For more than fourteen months now, ever since the pandemic has forced millions to ‘stay at home’ – the internet has been a significant means of keeping many sane: some were privileged to ‘work from home’, millions of students could avail of online classes, social media was on a song with almost anything and everything finding some space on facebook, twitter, instagram and the like. One could be ‘in touch’ constantly with distant relatives and friends and with what was happening all around. Sadly there are also the hidden dangers- when we tend to get overwhelmed with all that we received. One clear example is all the ‘fundas’ being dished out as a cure or a preventive to COVID-19; quick-fixes, good grandmothers decoctions that are certainly helpful in boosting one’s immunity level – now flaunted as a cure! Then there is the infamous ‘whatsapp university’ – to which one is

so easily hooked to. The point is that there is so much of ‘fake’ news being forwarded that oftentimes, even without thinking, verifying/ authenticating one happily forwards such stuff. Pope Francis rightly warns us, “All of us are responsible for the communications we make, for the information we share, for the control that we can exert over fake news by exposing it. All of us are to be witnesses of the truth: to go, to see and to share”.

On World Communications Day, Pope Francis gives Catholic communicators some key words as directions, to what catholic communications is all about. The base words are obviously ‘Come’ and ‘See’: the implications are clear – unless one gets out of one’s comfort zone – nothing will change. He reminds us that in the Gospel – only when one goes out to see, to seek – does a change a metamorphosis, a metanoia takes place. Then right through he uses words like ‘encounter’, ‘clear’, ‘honest’, ‘courage’, ‘authentic’, ‘truth’, ‘reality’, ‘curiosity’, ‘openness’, ‘passion’ – which are not merely an haphazard collection but the metamorphosis non-negotiable essentials of what a communicator should be internalising in order to be truly a witness of Jesus in our world today! It is a call ‘to be’ and ‘to do’: to be visible and vocal, to stick one’s neck out, to take a stand for truth and justice.

On 3 May, World Press Freedom Day- the annual ‘World Press Freedom Index-2021’, placed India a lowly 142 out of 180 countries which were evaluated! A sad commentary on the way media is throttled in India! (the last few weeks however, we must admit that there is a sea-change at least in some of the mainstream media). In the light of the challenges which Pope Francis throws to catholic communicators and in the context of the reality which grips the country today – it is imperative that Catholic communicators do some serious soul-searching, ask themselves some uncomfortable questions, have the courage to answer them truthfully and act urgently on these responses. The questions are several; some of them are:

• Are Catholic Communicators visible and vocal to what is happening in the

country today? How many are taking a stand for justice and truth? Sticking one’s neck out?

• How many Catholic Communicators have taken a stand against the callousness, the corruption and the complacency of the Central Government during this pandemic? How many have written about it, done video presentations, preached about it?

• How many editorials have taken a stand against the ‘love jihad’ laws of certain Governments? the wanton destruction of the environment? Or for that matter against the Central Vista project? Or against the conditions in our prisons today?

An honest evaluation of what most Catholic Communicators are ‘doing’ will easily reveal the painful truth. Communications today is not about fancy gizmos or sophisticated studios or for that matter even of so-called ‘productions’ Many of these we know, become obsolete, irrelevant and outdated in a matter of time. Communications is also not about couch potatoes who are afraid to hit the streets. Today several are more interested in relegating communications to ‘toeing the line’, licking the boots of the powerful, maintaining the ‘status quo’, about protecting our possessions and privileges. All this is certainly a betrayal of Christ and his message of what Catholic Communications should be. One should take a cue from the latest issue of the OUTLOOK magazine (May 24, 2021) a creative cover page with emboldened letters in red just one word ‘MISSING’ and just below NAME: Government of India; AGE 7 years; INFORM: Citizens of India! One can also look at the front page of the Kolkata based daily ‘The Telegraph’ (May 15, 2021) with the bold captions, “If you call this pain.....What do you call this ?” With very apt pictures! What powerful images of the Indian reality today! Catholic communicators are called to do likewise!

Pope Francis’ message does not only have to be read in toto but also needs to be internalised. He gives a final salvo saying, “The challenge that awaits us, then, is to communicate by encountering people, where they are

(Contd.. on p. 22)

Illusions...Nay Miracles...!!

By Father Austin Norris

The phone chimed and I thought it was the morning alarm.... I looked at the electronic clock on the wall and it beamed 2.15 am; I sat up and picked the phone and I heard a sob and "Father, mum has just gone to Jesus... sorry to disturb you; just had to tell you..." My heart sank and I muttered "who is with you..." "every-one is around..". "OK," I stuttered.. "be strong.." "Thank you Father..will keep you in the loop..." and the phone went

(Contd.. from p. 21)

and as they are"; and in that final prayer,

"Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves,

and to set out in search of truth.

Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen,

not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions.

Teach us to go where no one else will go,

to take the time needed to understand,

to pay attention to the essentials,

not to be distracted by the superfluous,

to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.

Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen".

To 'Come and See' then is to 'Be and Do' – the ball is now in the court of Catholic communicators and in fact, with all those who are committed to free and fearless communications which is based on truth and justice ! It is left to be seen if one has the courage to accept the challenge!

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silent but I was fully awake.... "Mum has just gone to Jesus.." Wow...!! Did I really hear that...?? It was like I was little Samuel who had just heard God speak and I was speechless.... "Mum has just gone to Jesus.." – Huh...???

"Father, is it possible to celebrate Holy Mass for my uncle, who passed away a few days ago in Canada? The churches there are all closed and our family world-wide would like to connect over the web with a Eucharist..??" "Sure," I said "tell me the date and we will take it from there.." "At your convenience father, just send me the link.. much appreciated... just thought that the Eucharist will be a sort of closure with prayers and blessings...Thanks Father.." **A Eucharist would be a sort of closure.... Did I hear that correctly...??**

"Hi Father Austin, just want to tell you that dad passed away.." "When..?" .. "Last night - did not want to disturb you.." ... "Hmmm thanks.. what are the details..??" "Will revert Father, but just wanted to tell you, how much he loved you and Aniceto and all the priests whom he knew.." I wiped a tear and muttered, "Of course he did, he was a friend of priests as was your dear mother...." A flood of memories spanning Bandra to Goregaon to Anjuna and Badem and weddings and jubilees and mangoes and jackfruits, flashed through my mind and I felt a chill down my spine and I sobered up with the beautiful thought of ..."**but just wanted to tell you, how much he loved you and Aniceto and all the priests whom he knew..**" – of course I heard that....!!

Siblings, acquaintances and friends have reached out across boundaries and nearer home. Phone calls and chats, online Masses and services have woven a web of bonding and support. One comment: "**Thanks father, your prayer suggestion.. 'stay with us Jesus..' based on the Em-**

maus gospel text, has lifted up my spirits, amid my turmoil n confusion..do continue praying for my family.." Really..?? Yes, I know it sounds out of this world, but God does speak in our darkness and propels us towards light and hope.

The above and more, are a few of the conversations that I've had – we've all had, perhaps – over the past one year and more and maybe they have now become passé. But the truth and reality behind each of these experiences and assertions are, to my mind priceless and yes, miraculous...!!

Assorted experiences have a way of teaching us lessons for life. My recent favourite TV series **The Chosen** has given me a personal mantra "get used to different" so topical to our world condition these unprecedented times and days; that with Jesus, I have been able to overcome. Thank you Dallas Jenkins and team.

Closer home, at a personal level, I have struggled these past days and months with my own emotions and experiences. I have drowned myself in work, in writing, in planning religious services and meetings and generally felt useful. When fatigued and listless, in moments when I sat quietly in the Chapel, I seem to get a grip on what's happening and a certain cohesiveness which fits together the pieces of life's jigsaw puzzle. The experiences and exchanges mentioned above have been cathartic. I am thankful to Almighty God for this.

All of us have been through the rough and tumble, but there is a silver lining to all that happens in our lives. We rub off on one another the goodness of God. In the context of Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus we all stand a chance. What may seem an illusion is actually a miracle! And I do believe in miracles!!

SCIANA D'SOUZA

The unforgettable!

By Ladislaus Louis D'Souza*

"Some people come into our lives, leave footprints on our hearts and quietly go away to join the band of angels in Heaven."

— Flavia Weedn (1928-2015 – renowned American artist and writer)

At an event at Hotel Hilton in February 2021, **Melville Xavier D'Souza**—frequent contributor to THE SECULAR CITIZEN—bagged the prize for duetting UNA PALOMA BLANCA (James Baker series) in the Karaoke singing competition! A song that was to prove prophetic for in barely two months, Sciana, claimed a victim by the deathly Coronavirus, had winged her way into eternity singing:

Una paloma blanca

I'm just a bird in the sky

Una paloma blanca

Over the mountains I fly

No one can take my freedom away

No one can take my freedom away

Deeply loved by family, friends and colleagues

Sciana's untimely death has brought in an avalanche of tributes and messages from a huge number of people left stunned into painful disbelief and a sense of bitterness, the common strain echoing through all of this being that Sciana as a "gem of a person" who never failed to bring cheer to any situation. "What set Auntie Sciana apart," avers her nephew, Clyde, "was her contagious enthusiasm, the glint in her eyes lighting up the atmosphere, whether at a party or at a casual meeting or even over a *pani-puri* treat."

Her brother, **Russel**, is disconsolate at now having no one like her around to give him the kind of timely, sisterly advice that only Sciana could give. Their elder sister, **Joyce** is shattered that, though ever concerned about the welfare of others, unfailingly following up on medication, she seemed to have let her guard down with regard to her own health.

Former colleague **Vera** from Amboli,



remembers her as a fun-loving, family-oriented person who never forgot the significant dates like birthdays and other occasions in the lives of the families of friends and relatives alike. **Jacinta**, her closest colleague at Bharat Bijlee—now KONE—bemoans the passing of her dearest friend and confidante of 26 years from whom she says she has learnt much. **KP Bala**, a retired colleague rues the fact that his best friend could not keep her promise to visit his home in God's own country, Kerala.

Theresa of Everard Nagar, Sion, who says she had much in common with bubbly Sciana, lets us in on a secret, recalling her nudged to Sciana to date Melville, the rest being history! Another colleague, **Manoj**, who describes her as *irreplaceable*, insists that "the kind of warmth and camaraderie [you] brought to the team will be missed" sorely. Ex-colleague **Laxmi Iyer** reminisces that "Sciana always had a charming disposition and an air of positivity around her." "She believed that the value of emotional quotient is as important as intellectual quotient," reveals friend **Nirmala Dias** from Jankalyan. Another friend and former colleague, **Padmaja**, who refers to Sciana as "one of life's best gifts", speaks about how they both "shared a sincere and pure bond...we argued, we fought...We used to proudly say, one of the reasons for our strong friendship is the bonding between our respective husbands and children who too got along so well, all enjoying each

other's company on every holiday spent together!" Sciana's Director, **Rajesh Bywar** recalls: "Since my joining Bharat Bijlee in 2012, an ever-smiling Sciana was there with every kind of support needed! Great balance of business understanding and personal requirement coupled with accuracy have been the hallmark of the way Sciana operated."

Carol, Lisa and Fatima all concur that Sciana was a go-to person who never let the travails of life affect her infectious smile. As for **Vimala**, one can literally sense the depth of her grief when she writes, "Sciana, your premature departure taught me to look at our life backwards. Everything we did and did not do, comes to me in a rush of indelible memory pictures. Pained at the inevitability of death's finality, I cannot help but lament as to why, when most others have very long life spans, you, Sciana, were called ahead of time! Did God run so short of wonderful people in His abode that He had to take away my best friend, my classmate and soul-mate, my conscience keeper....to whom I could open my heart at all times, without ever being misunderstood? Enjoy your journey and the destination Sciana! I know you will wait for me as you did on our way to school, for we will have lots to catch up on when we meet again—like we always did!"

Sciana was affectionately named Sasu by the **Friends' Circle** group where she was known as a sweet, calm, ever smiling, sensitive and caring person with a lovely disposition....never angry/annoyed or upset even when teased about anything whatsoever, always laughing it off, never retaliating. Known to take leave to keep up the annual Christmas sweet-making tradition, her sweets came to be termed 'Pasu Sweets', a name she loved to bits! Adios Sayonara Sciana dear...till we meet again!

(Contd.. on p. 24)

(Contd.. from p. 23)

Employee of distinction

For Sciana the most memorable event of her 34-year stint with KONE was the special invite to the factory launch near Chennai where she interacted with staff she had hitherto dealt with only telephonically. In an interview with the company's house journal, she reportedly acknowledged that at KONE, where women staff particularly were made to feel extra special, there never was a dull moment!

Her immediate superior, the Regional Director, **Mr Ambarish**, having been closely associated with Sciana for the last four years, found her as "a person one could rely on and confide in 100%. Energetic, prompt, proactive, hardworking and sincere, she was a real go-getter, ever ready to learn new things, accept new challenges and drive results. Indeed, I'm enthralled by the commitment and passion she displayed towards everything she did! A truly God-fearing person with a caring nature, concerned about peo-

ple around her, she will be definitely missed as the professional with the human touch at work. May God bless her soul!"

Sciana, heart & hearth of the home...

If a woman is the heart of the home, the hearth of the home is around which she nourishes her brood! Sciana's love for her husband and only son did not let her rest on her laurels as a successful and conscientious executive working from home during the lockdown but simultaneously expressed itself in the emphasis she gave to redoing her kitchen in colours and contours that brought out vividly the kind of person she has unabashedly been described as, to the point of rightfully earning herself the nomenclature "**Kitchen Queen**" in the family! Having been personally involved in her 'project kitchen' that turned out to be her swansong so to say, I witnessed a rare kind of pride she took in having both Melville and Dwayne respectfully and admirably involved at every step. It gave me im-

mense joy to acquiesce to her request to cut the ribbon to her newly done up kitchen in maintaining which she took great delight! The one thing I regret is that the absolute foodie that she was, she didn't live long enough to use that kitchen to the hilt, COVID-19 playing spoilsport. And so, may her soul that winged its way to its Maker that fateful night, deservingly rest in eternal peace!

In the final analysis, one cannot help but grieve with Melville that the dream he nursed when choosing Jamaican singer, Boris Gardiner's 1986 flick **I wanna wake up with you** as the First Dance Number at his wedding with Sciana on 11 November 1989, got abruptly interrupted on 20 April 2021, waiting to reconnect in Heaven's time.

Rest in peace dear Sis-in-law, Sciana!

**An elder brother-in-law of Sciana*

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