



THE BOMBAY CATHOLIC SABHA

The Official Journal

#RIPSTAN

I have fought the good fight.
I have finished the race.
I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4: 7

SABHA

News & Views

11th Issue July 2022/Vol 1 No. 11



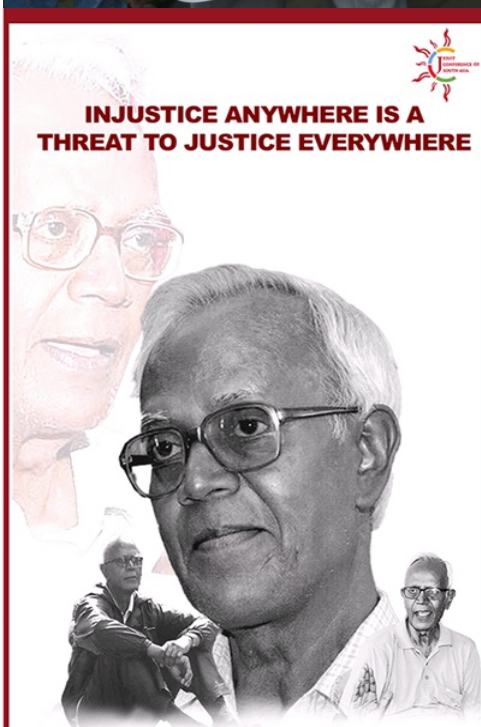
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF FATHER STAN SWAMY

Father Stan Swamy, as the Jesuit priest was popularly referred to, was the country's oldest prisoner charged under the UAPA for his role in what the NIA contends was an alleged Maoist conspiracy that led to caste clashes near the Bhima Koregaon village four years ago.

Members of The Bombay Catholic Sabha hold a memorial Mass outside St Peter's Church in Bandra in a protest holding banners and lighting candles for Father Stan Swamy who died on July 5, in Mumbai on July 6, 2021.



"Father Stan Swamy was a human rights activist and his concerns about the conditions in the jail were not only for himself but for other prisoners as well. Though he was not keeping well, his efforts were to highlight the apathy of the jail authorities so that the medical facilities in the jail were improved," said Father Frazer Mascarenhas, a friend of Swamy who was permitted to meet him during his stay at hospital.



FR. STAN SWAMY, S.J.

Are you a Member of The Bombay Catholic Sabha?



Become a Member, Today!



Life
Membership
Rs. 120/- only

I heartily recommend that every catholic above the age of 18 becomes a member of The Bombay Catholic Sabha.

- **Cardinal Oswald Gracias**



THE BOMBAY CATHOLIC SABHA

St. Michael's Church, Mahim, Mumbai 400016.

Email: president@bcsabha.org | www.bcsabha.org

Committed to a Better Tomorrow, Today!

The Bombay Catholic Sabha

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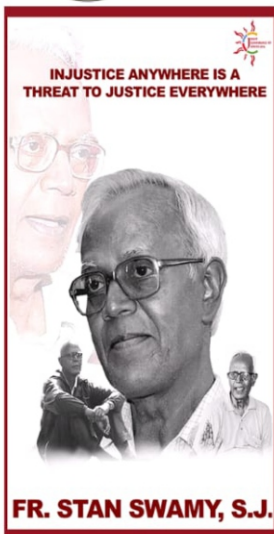


THE BOMBAY CATHOLIC SABHA in collaboration with ST. PETER'S CHURCH, Bandra



symposium on

**REMEMBERING THE TRIBAL & HUMAN RIGHTS
CRUSADER: HIS LIFE & HIS MESSAGE FOR US!**



Venue:- Loyola Hall, St. Peter's Church, Bandra.

Date:- Tuesday, 5th July 2022. -- Time: 6:00 PM.

Committed to a Better Tomorrow, Today!

Look out for the report in the next issue..!



“
Let us hope that human
sense prevail. If it does not,
I am ready and I hope all
those who know me and
who are concerned will
also be ready to face what
is to be faced.

STAN SWAMY
Indian human rights defender
#STAND WITH STAN



June 2022

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...



MARTYR OF OUR TIMES- FR. STAN SWAMY S.J.



A year ago, on 5th of July, 'bird that sang in the cage' was silenced. Civil Society was aghast at the Administrative and Judicial murder, as some called it, of Rev. Fr. Stan Swamy S.J. who languished in jail for just under a year, for the alleged crime that 'he was not only the member of banned organisation Communist Party of India (Maoist) but he was carrying out activities in the objective of the organisation which is nothing but to overthrow the democracy of the nation'. Non denial of not only bail but even a drinking straw (to a man suffering from Parkinson and other deceases), ultimately took his life. The Petition to exonerate him of all allegations is being pursued by Rev. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas in the Bombay High Court. Not only Rev. Fr. Frazer

and his community of Jesuits but a large section of the Society believes that Fr. Stan died a martyr's death for pursuing his mission of welfare to Tribals in Jharkhand.

The Bombay Catholic Sabha was the only institution that was present outside St. Peter's Church, on the Hill Road on 5.7.2021, with few other ardent civil/human right activists to express our indignation and anger at the loss of life of Fr. Stan. It was fitting that we dedicated this issue in his memory. On 5th July, 2022 the Sabha in collaboration with St. Peter's Church, Bandra will conduct a symposium on "Remembering the Tribal & Human Right Crusader: His Life & Message for us". I hope large number of Sabhaites would be there to participate and resolve to follow in the footsteps of Rev. Fr. Stan Swamy in carrying forward our mission **"To create a just Society through involvement of Social, Civic and Political Affairs"**.

Raphael D'Souza,
President.

EDITORIAL



Hi Sabhaites,

Schools have started and parents are going to be busy as all schools have started physical attendance. Congratulations to all the young kids who will be going to school for the first time. A very happy moment for the parents. We wish these kids a lovely and enjoyable schooling career and all success.

At last Maharashtra has a government which is not a party and supported by the largest Political Party in India.

It is a known fact that "Too many cooks spoil the soup" and this is exactly what has happened in Maharashtra. Everybody wants to be a leader, and nobody wants to be a follower.

We hope that this turmoil ends and we have a stable and safe government as governance has gone for a toss and currently what is needed is a proper government to start administrating Maharashtra.

Again we remind you that BMC elections are round the corner and we need to vote and be prepared to reach out to our community to vote.

If you do not vote then you have no say whatsoever in the good and bad of the city.

Congratulations to all our units who have held their AGMs. A task well carried out by all our units. ,

On behalf of the executive of the Sabha, A big thank you to all the out going unit office bearers and managing committee members. "Welcome and Best of luck" to the new teams who have been elected. The Sabha is proud of you and your commitment and assures you of all guidance and support during your tenure.

A word of mention to the new committees --- You are the eyes of the community, and you have a responsibility to bring awareness to our community members and other members of our society about injustice, environment destruction, guiding our youth, making our youth more responsible, Identify and Create new young leaders to take our community and country ahead, empower our community economically.

Please pray that we have good rains this season which is a necessity for a good economical growth of our country.

Stay safe, Eat healthy and Keep smiling.

Proudly Indian.

Vinod Noronha
Secretary General,
The Bombay Catholic Sabha.
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Fr. Stan Swamy: his legacy lives forever!

-Fr. Cedric Prakash SJ

A year ago, on 5 July 2021, when Father Stan Swamy left us, the world mourned the death of a great human being who epitomised compassion, courage, collaboration and commitment! 'Stan', as he was lovingly called by those close to him, died whilst he was still incarcerated. From the time he was illegally arrested on 8 October 2020, he languished in the Talaja jail; his deteriorating health conditions prompted the Special Court to direct the jail authorities to admit him to a private hospital in Bombay where he finally succumbed, despite the best possible medical treatment given to him at that time! It was indeed too little too late. For one, Stan should never have been arrested; secondly, the frail 84-year-old Jesuit priest was already suffering from severe health ailments. His death, was universally regarded as an 'institutional murder'. It was nothing short of that! Till today, Stan has not yet been exonerated of the trumped-up charges in the Bhima- Koregaon conspiracy case; fifteen others still remain in jail (though a couple are on bail) in the same case.



There is no doubt that Stan has left behind a rich legacy worthy of emulation! He had a legion of friends- mainly the Adivasis and the sub-altern groups. He identified with them; walked the talk and accompanied them in their struggle for *jal, jungle aur jameen*. He left no stone unturned, in the defense of their legitimate Constitutional rights. His collaborators were women and men from all walks of life who were convinced that Stan lived his life totally for a more humane and just society. In the realisation of his vision, Stan made many enemies – the rich and powerful, the mafia who were plundering the area for natural resources, the corrupt politicians and their corporate honchos, and other vested interests. Prophets, like Stan are inconvenient; it was so obvious that Stan was a sheer nuisance to these vested interests. He thwarted some of their plans of destroying the lives of Adivasis, their livelihood and their environment. They wanted him out of the way and they succeeded!

Stan was an inspiration to many all through his life and one year after his death, he still continues to be so. His was a life of selfless service for the poor and the marginalised, the excluded and the exploited and the other sub-alterns of a dehumanized society. During his incarceration and on his death last year, there were hundreds of thousands who came out on the streets, both in India and abroad- first, condemning his illegal arrest and then his murder. His death was news all over the globe: in the print and electronic media; social media went viral extolling his significant contribution to the sub-altern groups. Like a true Jesuit and a worthy son of St Ignatius, Stan did all he could to “set the world on fire” through the many values he epitomized, among them Compassion, Courage, Collaboration and Commitment.

Compassion: Stan's heart bled for the excluded and exploited; his life was focused on the reality and the cries of the poor. He did all he could to alleviate their suffering by identifying with them, being immersed in their joys, griefs and anxieties; walking with them and addressing the systemic unjust issues which caused their impoverishment.

Courage: Stan lived the dictum of Jesus: “fear no one”, as he spoke truth to power and took on vested interests who denied the Adivasis of their legitimate rights for their identity and culture, land and other natural resources. He fought tenaciously for the youth who were imprisoned without justification. He was not afraid to risk his own life for justice for others.

Collaboration: Stan always believed in collaboration with all women and men of goodwill. He realised that people from every segment of society have to come together in order that Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are internalised and belong to “*we the people of India*”. He forged and belonged to networks and alliances which moved towards that goal.

Commitment: Above all, Stan was unflinching in his commitment to God and in the service of his people. At great risk, he gave without counting the cost. He lived the Gospel without compromise and like his Master Jesus he was one-sided in a total commitment to the service of faith and the promotion of justice, for the poor and the excluded.

Stan has left the country with an unparalleled legacy. Even in his death, Stan challenges one and all to do much more, in the face of the deteriorating situation. The situation in the country is bad in every sphere: political, economic and social. Global surveys on significant indicators puts India either rock-bottom or among the worst. Divisiveness, discrimination, demonization and denigration of minorities hold sway; hate and violence is mainstreamed. Constitutional bodies which are meant to be impartial and objective are pathetically compromised and even destroyed to become pawns of the political masters. The less said about paid 'godified' media the better!

Human rights defenders and those who take a visible and vocal stand for truth and justice are intimidated and harassed, subject to heavy police interrogations and even incarcerated (as we see in the case of the BK-19, those detained under the UAPA and other draconian laws).

Mohammed Zubair and Teesta Setalvad who brought to the nation the plain truth, are in custody today on baseless fabricated charges; so also, are former IPS officers R. B. Sreekumar and Sanjiv Bhatt. On the other hand, those who revel in hate speech, venom and unconstitutional language, like Nupur Sharma, get away with impunity and are provided with State immunity. The regime is absolutely corrupt: they blackmail and buy up opposition legislators to destroy Governments which were elected with a people's mandate. Just a few days ago this was also witnessed as the Government of Maharashtra was so brutally toppled! Democracy is being bulldozed; the pluralistic fabric of a nation based on a visionary and pathbreaking Constitution, is slowly being dismantled!

A few days before his arrest in October 2020, in a video-message which went viral, Stan said, *“What is happening to me is not something unique happening to me alone. It is a broader process that is taking place all over the country. We are all aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers' writers, poets, activists, students, leaders, they are all put into jail because they have expressed their dissent or raised questions about the ruling powers of India. We are part of the process. In a way I am happy to be part of this process. I am not a silent spectator, but part of the game, and ready to pay the price whatever be it.”*

Stan was not a silent spectator and has certainly paid the price; in doing so, he has left us with a rich legacy of compassion, courage, collaboration and commitment. Stan is no longer in our midst at a time, when the nation desperately needs the likes of him. One thing however, is certain Stan will never die and whatever the consequences, his legacy lives forever!

-Fr Cedric Prakash (GUJ) is a human rights, reconciliation and peace activist/writer. Contact: cedricprakash@gmail.com)



LET US HOPE THAT THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FR STAN WILL KEEP SOCIAL ACTIVISM ALIVE

- Aires Rodrigues

On 5th July it will be the first death anniversary of that most unfortunate and horrifying custodial death of a brilliant and caring Jesuit Priest our late Fr. Stan Swamy. It is high time to revisit the jail rules as it was absolutely improper to have detained a person like Fr Stan in jail despite him being over 80. Those that are elderly who have to be kept in detention could be possibly placed under house arrest or in old age homes where their age related special needs are taken care of.

Prison ensures social isolation and confinement which can result in deterioration in mental and physical health through neglect and fear, especially in the elderly and the vulnerable. Far from achieving the desired outcome of prison which is reformation, to lead law abiding and useful lives in prison and when they are released, their time in prison can be a retrograde step where they either suffer through ill health and even death and for those that survive, they will be more resentful of the prison machinery and society.



Prisons should only be used to reform and to protect the peace of those on the street and for providing a sanction against very serious wrongdoing. The detention of people over the age of 80 in poorly kept prisons that through frailty or other illness is a sad reflection on society and a failure to deal with people humanely. It can also sometimes be a waste of taxpayers' money. Their reform and health must be cared for and addressed in a different and special way.

Almost everyone over 80 is grappling with serious health issues so the jails are not conducive for such aged people. Elderly persons admitted to jails require a different sort of health care. Concerns about the health status of older inmates and their chronic health issues has to be addressed in a special way and the inability of most jails to accommodate their special needs cannot be just overlooked.

Prisons have a duty of care towards all prisoners and must take all reasonable steps to keep them safe while in custody. The prison has a responsibility to ensure the safety of prisoners – which includes protecting those at special risk of injury or who are vulnerable. The prison system must never be inherently unjust and inhumane. The elderly if they are lucky to be back on the streets, we will get a severely ill and demoralized human being staring tragedy through a lack of care. This cannot be a true reflection of a caring and progressive society.

We should take heed of the wise words of Christopher Zoukis, a leading voice on criminal justice reform in America and author of many books on prison life, when he said 'If we treat prisoners like animals, the whole time they are locked up, that's what we will get when they are back on the streets. – wild, dangerous animals.'

In the case of Fr Stan Swamy, the Courts should have taken Suo Motu cognizance, but the Judiciary failed by not rising to the occasion.

Fr Stan may be physically gone but his life and works for the community specially the marginalised will inspire us for a long time to come. Let's hope that his death will trigger a much needed reform to the prison system and the welfare of our elderly. A true tribute for his great Soul would be that we as conscious citizens do not allow social activism to fade away in us being cowed by the Powers to be.

Mumbai Unites to condemn the Arrest of Teesta Setalvad, Human Rights Defender!

In the campaign organized by several groups a protest against the arrest of Teesta Setalvad, Sanjiv Bhatt & Sreekumar at Dadar Station East on Monday 27th June 2022.



Members of BCS along with concerned citizen party workers comprising CPI, CPI (M) DYPI and the other citizen Activists/NGOs/Organizations demanding the release of human rights activists - Teesta Setalwad, RB Sreekumar and Sanjeev Bhatt.

BCS President Advocate Raphael D'Souza Vice president Dr. Lawrance Fernandes, Spokesperson of BCS Shri Dolphy D'Souza and other BCS Units (Goregaon, Byculla, Ghatkoper, Borivali and Wadala) members holding placards joined the massive protest. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas and few sisters were too present at the protest rally.





Dolphy D'Souza, convener, Police Reforms Watch, said, "It's a sad day for justice and human rights activists. Who is going to fight for the voiceless or victims of riots? This act by the government creates a scary environment for the underprivileged, the oppressed and also for those brave hearts who defend them."

Dr. Father Frazer Mascarenhas, former principal of St Xavier's College, said, "It is very disappointing to see the language used in the order by the SC."



Spontaneous call resulted in good number of members participating. God bless us and strengthen **Civil Right Activists Solidarity**

Jai Hind.

ONE EARTH, ONE FAMILY

The Membership and Environment forum and the Archdiocese office for Environment conducted a program on “One Earth One Family”. The topic gives a fair view that each of us belongs to one family living on one earth.

The program began with the prayer by Jt. Secretary Annette D’Cruz from the Bombay Catholic Sabha, followed by the Sabha anthem, The Vice-President of the Bombay Catholic Sabha in charge of membership and environment Mr. Bento Lobo welcomed everyone, Adv. Raphael Dsouza President of the Sabha in his welcome speech said there is a need to collaborate and work for the benefit of the environment.

Bishop Allwyn D’Silva in his keynote address emphasized the need to care of the environment, he said we need to start from our parish, our neighborhood, and our locality. We need to liaison with the government authorities to make laws for taking care of the environment.

Vice-president Bento Lobo gave a brief insight into the various activities carried out by the Sabha during the past year that involved the Collection of empty plastic bottles, tetra packs and E-waste, distribution of Christmas tree saplings, and distribution of ten thousand seed paper National flags. Sabha also conducted webinars on dry waste and wet waste segregation, climate change, the Laudato Si action plan, etc.

Mrs. Pauline and Ms. Giselle from Our lady of Lourdes Orlem parish, who are an E.C.O group had in addition to regularly doing a collection of plastics and E-waste, carried out projects that included recycling old books, and reuse of wedding gowns. They also shared their future plans for the environment.

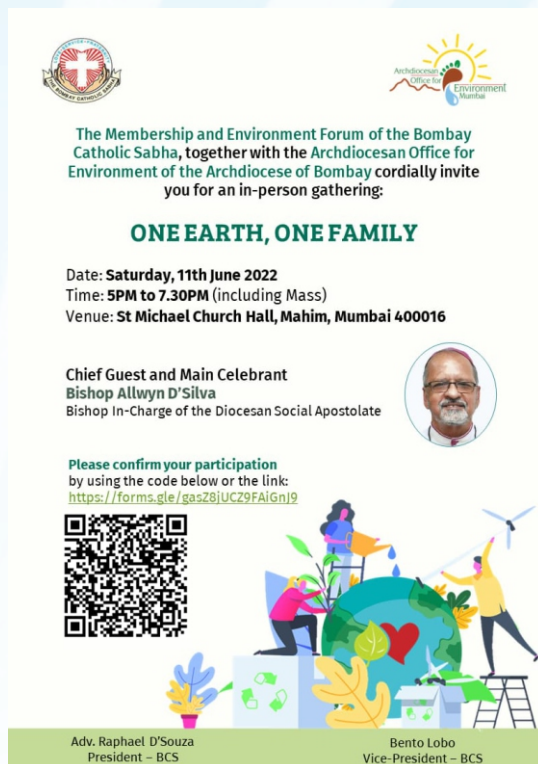
Ms. Astrid Lobo spoke passionately about the need to engage more youth to do environmental activities and undertake projects for the same. Mrs. Rita D’Sa said that the environment does not have a religion and we need to collaborate with other endeavors and gave the example of how St Michaels Church in collaboration with the Durgah Trust in Mahim distributed cloth bags. Mrs. Jane Rodrigues said that slum and street children should be roped into our environment initiatives.

Fr. Luke shared the work done by The Archdiocese office of Environment and emphasized the need to collaborate on the environmental initiatives. Ms. Shawna Nemesia announced the names of people who had completed their Eco Ambassadors course for the years 2019.2020 and 2021.

The vote of thanks was given by Anthony Dias executive committee member of the Sabha.

The program was followed by the Eucharist celebration by Bishop Allwyn D’Silva and Fr. Luke Rodrigues. In his homily Bishop Allwyn said that the trees, plants birds are our cousins we are all a family. We need to care for and protect our families.

Mr. Bento Lobo. Vice-president The Bombay Catholic Sabha.



The Membership and Environment Forum of the Bombay Catholic Sabha, together with the Archdiocesan Office for Environment of the Archdiocese of Bombay cordially invite you for an in-person gathering:

ONE EARTH, ONE FAMILY

Date: **Saturday, 11th June 2022**
Time: **5PM to 7.30PM** (including Mass)
Venue: **St Michael Church Hall, Mahim, Mumbai 400016**

Chief Guest and Main Celebrant
Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Bishop In-Charge of the Diocesan Social Apostolate

Please confirm your participation by using the code below or the link:
<https://forms.gle/gasZ8jUCZ9FAiGnJ9>

Adv. Raphael D'Souza
President - BCS

Bento Lobo
Vice-President - BCS



AOE - Eco Ambassadors



Our Lady of Victories Church

Bottle for Change - Plastic is not waste, It's an opportunity

Our lady of Victories unit handed over 25 KGS Plastic bottles and single use plastic to Bisleri. We thank our parish priest and Our Spiritual Director Fr. Rocky Banz for all the support and co-operation.



St. Michael's Church

St. Michael's Unit handed over 29 Kgs of plastic bottles and single use plastic to Bisleri. And also handed over 450 Tetra packs to RUR Greenlife for recycling. We thank all our committee members and parishioners for joining in this initiative of keeping the environment clean.



St. Francis Xavier Church

St. Francis Xavier, Vile Parle unit was approached by a girl student for financial help to pay her college fees. BCS coordinator immediately got into action by doing a background check. Her father had lost his job during the pandemic and recently got a temporary job with Rs. 50 per hour and mother homemaker. BCS members contacted the college office and requested an extension of 4 to 5 days for the fees. We were able to collect the amount. Some parishioners, friends, relatives and even from our office colleagues came forward to help with some contributions.

Part amount was paid directly in the college bank account while some funds were also given separately for books

We thank all the donors and their families and pray that God provides them bountiful.

STUDENTS COPY
THE CATHOLIC SYRIAN BANK LTD.
 St. Xavier's Junior College
 Vile Parle (West), Mumbai 400 056.
 S.B. A/c No. 2151

Date : 14/06/22

Received from (Pupils Name) [Redacted]

Std. XII Div. _____ Roll No. _____

Yearly I.T. Fees For the 22-23 **5000**

Total Rs. 5000

D.D. No. _____

Signature of Student/Parent _____

STUDENTS COPY
THE CATHOLIC SYRIAN BANK LTD.
 St. Xavier's Junior College
 Vile Parle (West), Mumbai 400 056.
 S.B. A/c No. 2129 Date : 13/6/22

Received from (Student Name) [Redacted]

Std. _____ Div. _____ Roll No. _____

For the Year 2022-2023

Entrance Fees	₹ 800
Yearly Tuition Fees	₹ 12000
Yearly Term Fees	₹ 2000
EduCom. Fees	₹ 200
G.K./Project Book, ID Card, Board Exam Fees, Farewell Class, ID Photos & Misc. Fees	₹ 1650
Total Fees	₹ 16650

D.D. No. _____

Signature of Student/Parent [Signature]

St. Blaise Church, Amboli Unit

St., Blaise parish celebrated the World Milk Day on 1st June 2022 by distributing Milk Packets and Biscuits to the lesser fortunate ones.



On 5th of June St. Blaise unit celebrated Environment Day by taking the children on Environment Green Tour in the Concrete Jungle. We took them around trees and plants which were planted by them and our members took care of it. Some trees which were uprooted, they were replanted and sprouting Baadam and Jamuns. The children jumped in joy on seeing their efforts.



Our Lady of Remedy Church

The BCS Unit of Our Lady of Remedy Church, Poinсур participated in the Laity Sunday celebrations in the parish on 26 June, 2022 by setting up a table in the church premises to propagate the activities of the BCS. Over 30 parishioners joined the BCS as members.



St. Anthony's Church, Malwani

The parishioners were finding it difficult to enter the church gate because of the Hawkers selling flowers and candles next to the church gate for the past few years.



Repeated warnings to leave the place went unheeded. Even after the parish priest asked them to vacate the place, they continued to occupy the place outside the church and also started keeping their wares inside the church gates. On the first day of novenas, BCS members got together and shifted them



Earlier this place was occupied by the hawkers and now BCS members have put pots with plants..

St. Anthony's Church, Malwani

During our Parish Novena's (St. Anthony's Church, Malwani), from 10th June to 19th June 2022 we have registered 75 NEW Members by putting up BCS HELPDESK in the Church Compound.



Our Lady of Lourdes

BCS, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sion Unit distributed note books to the Catechism Teachers & Students. The Note Books were given by our Parish Priest Rev, Father Antony Jibin.



Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sion Unit distributed free medicines today through Health Outreach programme. The Medicines were given by Rev. Father Suji, and he prayed for all the Donors, Heath Outreach Team & the Beneficiaries.

All the beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the Donors and Health Outreach Team.



Holy Family, Pestom Sagar

The Bombay Catholic Sabha of Holy Family, Pestom Sagar unit organised Blood donation drive in coordination with the Red Cross Society of India today on 5th June 2022 in the Parish hall.

The event was well organized and was very successful. 89 people enrolled, 11 got rejected and 59 people donated blood.



Holy Family Parish, Pestom Sagar unit organised planting of saplings in commemoration of World Environment Day in front of our church on 5th June 2022 at 10.30 am.

The event was well organised and attended by the parishioners including the Parish priests.



Holy Family Parish, Pestom Sagar unit organised a campaign for collection of funds to help a poor family to bear the cost of school fees. In all Rs.15,500 were collected and handed over the amount to the poor needy family member in Pestom Sagar on 12.06.2022.



The Bombay Catholic Sabha of Holy Family Parish, Pestom Sagar unit organised trimming of the trees and removing of the debris in and around Road no 4, Pestom Sagar and the School compound on 20.06.2022. Help was taken by BMC. Mr. Xavier Fernandes has done commendable job.



St. Joseph's Church, Vikhroli

Bottle for Change - Plastic is not a waste, Its an opportunity.

St. Joseph Vikhroli unit handed over 26 Kgs Plastic bottles and single use plastic alongwith 200 tetra packs to Bisleri. We thank our parish priest and our spiritual director Fr. Constancio Noronha n Michael Gomes for the support and co-operation.

We are also thankful to all our members who in their own way help us in this cause.



Our Lady of Victories, Mahim Unit

The Bombay Catholic Sabha, Victories Charch had their A.G.M ON Saturday 18th June. We thank Fr. Rocky Banz, Vice President Bento Lobo and North Bombay Deanery Councillor Rakesh Nehra for attending.



St Theresa's Church, Bandra Unit

The St Theresa's Unit had their AGM today. We thank Rita D'Sa who came as the observer on behalf of the Central unit. We thank our Parish Priest who is also our Spiritual Director for his support.

We congratulate our new Chairman Mr. Clement Sutari and wish him all the best for the future.



Mt. Carmel's Church, Bandra Unit

Mt. Carmel's held their AGM on 19th June 2022.



St. Peter's Church, Bandra Unit

The Triennial AGM held on 19th June 2022, St. Peter's unit from L to R Allan Noronha - Two term outgoing Chairman, Bento Lobo - BCS Vice President, Brian D'Souza - New Chairman elected, Beryl D'Monte - Long serving outgoing Secretary, Terence Cardoz - Newly elected Vice Chairperson.



St. Andrews Church, Bandra Unit

St. Andrew's AGM and Elections of the BCS St. Andrews Unit were held on Monday, 27 June, 2022.

26 Members along with Mr Bento Lobo – BCS Vice President and Our Parish Priest - Fr. Clarence Fonseca were present.

The newly elected Committee of BCS St. Andrews Unit (2022 to 2025) are as follows:

Chairperson - Thelma Poojary

Vice Chairpersons - Reynold Dsilva & Gretta Miranda

The Managing Committee for 2022 to 2025 :-

1) Secretary - Jane Rodrigues	10) Zenia Dsouza
2) Jt. Secretary - Anita Lobo	11) Reena Vessaoker
3) Treasurer- Augustine Almeida,	12) Rosa Netto,
4) Jt. Treasurer - Stephen Sodder	13) Renuka Mathews
5) Leanne Manchanda,	14) Rochelle Pinto
6) Ricardo Pereira,	15) Veronica Panthaki
7) Giselle Pereira	16) Plasy Koli
8) Kevin D'Souza,	17) Mark Dharmai
9) Cleophas Pinto,	



St. Paul's Church, Parel Unit

St. Paul's unit had our AGM on 19th June 2022. Mr. Anthony Chettiar came to conduct the Election. We thank Our Parish Priest Rev. Father Austin Norris. 15 parishioners attended the AGM.

Election was conducted under the secret ballot for the Post of the Chairperson.

We Congratulate our New Chairperson Mr. Alex Joe Cyril Castanha and Vice Chairperson Mr. Xavier Arnold Luis Fernandes. All the BEST for the future



St. Lawrence, Wagle Estate Unit

AGM at St. Lawrence unit Wagle was held on 19th June 2022. New Chairperson Mr. Errol Pinto and Vice Chairperson Mr. Edward Ashirvadam and Mr. Naidu and twenty new MC were chosen in the presence of Executive member Mr. Anthony Cruz Chettiar and Thane Deanery Councillor Dr. Maria Ashirvadam. Around thirty members were present along with Parish Priest Fr. Henry and Fr. Onil.

Congratulations the new team.



St. Francis Xavier, Vile Parle Unit

St. Francis Xavier Church, Vile Parle Unit held their AGM (Annual General Body Meeting) on June 26th 2022 at 11:00 am. 30 members attended the meeting. The Annual Report and the meeting Agenda were circulated. The meeting was attended by our Parish Priest Fr. Nelson Machado who appreciated the various activities conducted by OUR UNIT during the year.

Following members were unanimously elected.

Chairperson - Godwin Pinto

Vice chairpersons - Angeline Nimma & Glen Mascarenhas

Secretary - Margaret Moraes; Joint Secretary - Veronica Dsouza

Treasurer - Francis Baptista; Jt Treasurer - Ronnie Mathias

Internal Auditor - Savio Dsouza

Other Committee Members

1. Gordon Dsouza
2. Ferdie Misquitta
3. Samuel Darole
4. Margaret Dsouza
5. Nancy Martins
6. Seedon Dsouza
7. Godfrey Dsouza
8. Claude Pereira
9. Randell Misquitta
10. Cyprian Almeida



St. Blaise, Amboli Unit

St. Blaise Church, Amboli Unit had their AGM on 29th of May, presided by dignitaries from Central office (VP Mr. Lawrence Fernandes, Gen. Sec. Vinod Noronha, Treasurer Alywn Furtado), Deanery Councilor Ms. Dora Martis and Ex Chairperson of the Unit, Mr Godfrey D'Mello, Ex. Sec. Hugh Murzello.

Our spiritual director Fr. Victor Noronha, Guest of Honour has been transferred from our Parish so we gave him a farewell after the AGM.

Forty members attended the AGM. New Committee Members are as follows:

Chairperson - Stella Vyas

Vice Chairpersons. - Jonita D'Souza & Mitchelle Monteiro,

Secretary - Mr. Joshua Samson D'Cruz

Jt. Secretary - Aditi D'Cruz,

Treasurer - Ashunta Prabhu.

Jt. Treasurer - Arjun Ivan D'Cruz

Committee Members

- Mr. Allywn Furtado.
- Mr. Godfrey Dmello.
- Mr. Roger Pereira.
- Ms. Liz Dcruz.
- Mr. Stanley Dias.
- Mrs. Ivy Dcruz.
- Mr. Hugh Murzello.
- Ms. Poonam Dcruz.
- Ms. Nandita Khan
- Mr. Reuben Dcruz.
- Mr. Stanley Dsouza.



Our Lady of Rosary Church, Goregaon Unit

Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Goregaon West held their AGM on 19th June 2022. At the dais: Shri Godwin Menezes (Treasurer); Shri William Fernandes (Vice Chairperson) ; Shri Alexio Fernandes (Executive Committee Member) ; Shri Norbert Mendonca (Deanery Councillor) ; Rev Fr. Colman Carlos; and Br. Wilfred Swamy



Newly elected Chairperson Shri Clifford Dsouza (third from left) and Vice Chairperson with Shri Agnello Lobo (Second from left), Shri Johnson D'souza (fourth from left) flanked by Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Colman Carlos (Centre) and other managing committee members (standing). 34 members were present in the meeting.



St., Joseph's Gokuldam Unit

Annual General Body (AGM) Meeting of The Bombay Catholic Sabha, St Joseph Church, Gokuldam Unit was held today (26th June 2022) at 10.30 am at Asissi Bhavan premises.

The Notice for the AGM and Nominations request for New Managing Committee Team, Unit Activity Report for the year, Income & Expenditure statement and Balance Sheet was notified to BCS members of our Parish in advance.

The Meeting started with a opening prayer followed by the BCS Anthem.

The Chairman Mr Sebastian D'Souza welcomed the Spiritual Advisor & Priest-in-Charge, Fr. Denzil Correia, Mr Alwyn Furtado, BCS Treasurer, Unit Committee members and BCS members present at the AGM. Total 28 members attended our AGM.

Hon. Secretary, Mrs Fatima Alphonso read the minutes of the last AGM followed by the Unit Activity Report of activities conducted during the previous year. Mr Diago Olivera, unit Treasurer presented the Accounts and got it adopted.

Fr. Denzil Correia and Mr Alwyn Furtado spoke highly about our Unit.

Election of New Team for the term 2022-2025.

Following members have been unanimously elected.

Chairperson:- Mr. Stanley D'Cunha

Vice Chairperson - 1) Mrs. Mercy Dennis 2) Mrs Edna D'Souza

Managing Committee

1) Mrs Fatima Alphonso

2) Mrs Jacinta Menezes

3) Mrs Jyothi Lohar

4) Mr C.G. Fernandes

5) Mr Simon Lobo

6) Mr M.S. Dennis

7) Mr Cornelius Comello

8) Mrs Irene D'cunha

9) Ms Shital Rankhambe

10) Mr Prakash Noronha

Internal Auditor - Mr Diago Olivera

Meeting ended with Vote of thanks by Jt. Treasurer, Mrs Jacintha Menezes of our Unit Closing Prayer and National Anthem

Our Lady of Lourdes, Orlem Malad Unit

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, BCS (Orlem Unit) had the AGM on 26th June 2022 (Sunday). The AGM started with the opening prayer followed by the BCS Anthem. The Chairman Mr. David Varun welcomed the Guest (Dr. Lawrence Fernandes (Vice President), Mr. Norbert Mendonca (Deanery Councilor), Mr. Dolphy Dsouza (Spokesperson) & the Spiritual Director Fr. Cedric Rozario) and all the Members.

230 BCS members attended the AGM. Out of which 214 members casted their votes. The elections went off very smoothly and the New Managing Committee was elected.

Chairperson - Mr. Anthony Rodrigues.

Vice Chairperson - Mr. Lloyd Mascarenhas & Mr. Leon Gomes & 20 Committee Members.

We thank our Spiritual Director Fr. Cedric Rozario and our Parish Priest Fr. Michael Pinto for their continuous help and support towards our Unit.

Congratulations to the new team and all the best!!!





The Bombay Catholic Sabha Orlem Unit



Our Lady of Remedy, Poinsur Unit

The AGM was held on 19th June and was conducted as per the Agenda. Around 20 BCS members attended the AGM. Godfrey Ferreira Chairperson , Vice Chairperson Ulrich, Treasurer Joaquina, BCS Vice President Lawrence Fernandes attended the AGM.

Elections

Ulrich Dsouza was elected as Chairperson, Joaquina Vaz and Pepin Anthony as Vice Chairperson of our Unit.

9 BCS members were nominated as Committee members and the rest will be co-opted in our Managing Committee meeting next month.



Holy Family Parish, Pestom Sagar

Holy Family Parish, Pestom Sagar unit held their AGM on 19.06.2022 at 7.30 PM in the Parish hall. There were in total 20 members who attended the meeting including our Deanery Co-ordinator Kevin Dsouza. Balance sheet was approved unanimously and Election of the new managing committee members were held successfully in the presence of Deanery Coordinator Kevin Dsouza.



Our Lady of Immaculate conception, Borivali Unit

I.C. Unit held their AGM on 19th June 2022. We thank Adv. Raphael D'Souza, Dr. Lawrence Fernandes came to conduct the elections of the unit. We thank our Spiritual Director Fr. Victor for his support.

We congratulate the new Chairperson Mrs. Yvonne D Souza, Vice chairpersons Mrs. Leny Fernandes and Mr. John Dantis.



St. John Bosco, Borivali Unit

The AGM was held on 19th June 2022 and was conducted as per the Agenda. 35 BCS members attended the AGM. Dominic Chettiar Chairman, Treasurer Bonny D'Souza, BCS President Adv. Raphael D'Souza, Vice President Lawrence Fernandes, Administrator Fr. Renold Lemos, Rector and Parish priest Fr. Solomon Rapol attended the AGM.

Elections

Felix Aranha was nominated as Chairman Fernando Menezes and Francis Pereira as Vice Chairperson of our Unit.

16 BCS members were nominated as Committee members and the rest will be co-opted in our Managing committee meeting next month.



St. Joseph, Vikhroli Unit

The AGM was held on 19th June 2022. Total 34 members attended the AGM. President Adv. Raphael Dsouza, VP Robert Dsouza, Parish Priest and Spiritual director Rev. Fr. Constancio Noronha attended our AGM.

Elections

Mr. Oswald D'Souza was nominated as Chairman. Mr. Mario Rodrigues and Mr. Robert H D'Souza as Vice Chairperson and 14 members were nominated as Committee members and the rest will be co-opted in our Managing Committee meeting next month.



St. Francis Xavier Church, Kanjurmarg Unit

On 5th June St. Francis Xavier Church, Bcs Kanjur unit had our Agm & Election. Chairperson Mr. Milton Fernandes & Vice-Chairperson Mrs Celine Dmello & Mrs Mildred Mendonca were elected. Mr Robert Dsouza Vice-president & Dr. Maria Ashirwadam Deanery councillor were present for the Agm. Also Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Joao Borges and Spiritual director Rev. Fr. Wilfred Vaz were Present.



Our Lady of Mercy, Thane Unit

Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran, Thane Unit had its AGM on 26th June 2022.



St. Theresa of the Child, Airoli Unit

The Bombay Catholic Sabha St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Church, Airoli Unit held its Annual General Meeting on June 26, 2022, at 11 a.m. The AGM was attended by a total of 50 members.

Mr. Robert D'souza (Vice President of the BCS Social Civic and Political Affairs Forum) and Fr. Joe D'mello, Spiritual Director and Parish Priest, attended the AGM.

- Sister Deepa began the AGM with an opening prayer.
- Mr. Ronald Barboza, Chairman, greeted and welcomed our guests and members.
- Mr. Sunil Halge, Secretary, read the previous year's activities and presented the accounts.
- Mr. Robert D'souza from the central unit spoke briefly and presided over the elections.
- Mr. Maurice Rosario, Vice Chairman, thanked everyone with a vote of thanks.
- Parish Priest Father Joe spoke briefly and encouraged everyone to participate more actively.
- The meeting concluded with a closing prayer, and everyone was served lunch.



Our Lady of Lourdes, Sion Unit

The Bombay Catholic Sabha Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sion Unit held its Annual General Meeting today, June 26, 2022, at 6pm in our Parish Hall.

The AGM was attended by a total of 25 members.

Mr. Bento Lobo (Vice President) and Rev. Fr. Antony Jibin, our Parish Priest, attended the AGM.

Rev. Father Antony Jibin began the AGM with an opening prayer.

Mr. Rakesh Nera, Chairman, greeted and welcomed our guests and members.

Mr. Vijay Salunke, Secretary, read the report of the last AGM and presented the accounts.

Mr. Rakesh Nera, Chairman of the Unit brief through all of the previous year's activities

Mr. Bento Lobo from the central unit spoke briefly and presided over the elections.

Mr. Roland Pinheiro was elected as Chairman & Mr Francis Thorat and Alphonse Muller were elected as Vice Chairman.

Parish Priest Rev. father Antony Jibin spoke briefly and encouraged everyone to participate more actively.

The meeting concluded with a closing prayer by our Parish Priest Rev. Father Antony Jibin, and everyone was served snacks



St. Sebastian Church, Marouli Unit

The Bombay Catholic Sabha, St. Sebastian Church Unit, Marouli, conducted its 20th Annual General Body meeting on Wed. 29th June 2022 at 7.30 p.m.

Vice President, Mr. Robert Dsouza & Deanery Councilor, Mr. Kevin Dsouza were present for the AGM along with our Asst. Parish Priest Fr. Robin Kinny.

The following is the Managing committee elected for the period 2022-2025.

Mr. Clement D'mello - Chairman

Mr. Everton D'mello - Vice Chairman

Mr. Savio Lobo - Vice Chairman

Mr. Dominic Correia - Hon. Secretary

Mr. Francis D'Souza - Jt. Secretary

Mr. Sidney D'Souza - Hon. Treasurer

Mr. Hingston Aguiar - Jt. Treasurer

Mr. R. K. Rubin - Comm. Member

Mr. Joboy Morris D'Souza - Comm. Member

Mr. Raphael Votla - Comm. Member

Mr. Christopher Merwyn D'mello - Comm. Member

Mr. Troy Nunes - Comm. Member

Mr. Castan D'mello - Comm. Member



Dialogue, With Care

The values enshrined in the Bible and the ideology propagated by the RSS are worlds apart. It is absurd to say that there is a meeting point between them.

By John Dayal

My heart goes out to Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune.

An apology has been wrested out of him for his remarks at a public function which were carried by the local media. "The Christian Community accepts RSS ideology and principles. We need to establish communication and coordination between Christians and the (Rashtriya Swayamsevak) Sangh," the Marathi language newspapers quoted the bishop. "The Sangh believes in Nationalism, the church also believes in nationalism," the punchline said.



Bishop Dabre has been on the Pontifical Council for Dialogue and is well known for his meetings with religious heads in his diocese and often in other parts of the country. He is not politically naïve either. He means well by the nation, and certainly by the Church. The remarks, understandably, remain viral on social media in Christian, secular, Hindu and Muslim circles. These groups, now sharply divided on the basis of either the faith of their administrators, or the ideology of like-minded people, reacted according to their DNA.

There was a sense of glee in the WhatsApp warriors of the Hindu right wing at this unexpected support apparently from such high quarters.

The Muslim and secular groups were aghast. They had successfully formed a very vocal, if not very successful, opposition to the Karnataka Government's ban on the Hijab and its enactment of an extremely harsh anti-conversion laws that targeted not just conversions to Christianity, but all but criminalised Muslim young men marrying Hindu women. Leading this struggle is the Catholic Archbishop of Bengaluru, Peter Machado, at the head of a very broad coalition of several dozen groups from the state.

Archbishop Machado is also in the Supreme Court in challenge to the anti-conversion law. Such solidarity has seldom been seen in the country in recent decades. The matter is yet to come up for hearing. The law has been operationalised on the ground.

Away from Karnataka, national civil society was deeply concerned at the political and social climate in the country which even now remains on the boil since the Times Now TV debate anchored by Ms. Navika Kumar in which lawyer Nupur Sharma, a senior spokesperson of the Bhartiya Janata Party, the political arm of the RSS, made disparaging remarks on the Prophet of Islam.

The BJP suspended her, and sacked her male colleague, as the government of Mr Narendra Modi took what it hoped was remedial action to prevent a threatened economic boycott of India by Islamic nations' consolidated demands for an apology. Ms Sharma, however, has been strongly supported in social media by the rank and file of the Sangh.

The silencing of the spokespersons may or may not have mollified the Islamic nations. Barring Pakistan, which India deems a political and military enemy, the countries of the Gulf as also Iran have a complex mesh of mutual economic interests which neither side can really afford to sunder.

But at this moment in time, it is in India's interests that no country carries out the threat made by some employers to sack employees of a certain religion, or to stop imports from India. It could have a cataclysmic impact on Indian states dependent on remittances from the people working in West Asia.

The protests in India continue, however, though in the last two or three days, they have been overshadowed by the burning of trains and railway stations by young men in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar protesting the launch of a military recruitment scheme named Agnipath.

The anti-blasphemy agitation saw the death of two Muslim youth who were killed when the Jharkhand police opened fire. People have been injured at many places in police action, especially in Uttar Pradesh where the police arrested 109 Muslim protestors.

The U. P. Government under Chief Minister Adityanath, now known as Bulldozer Baba, also demolished the home of activist Afreen Fatima who had led a protest against the blasphemy. Afreen called it an "act of vendetta" and "trying to crush criticism of the government."

Bishop Dabre's original statement was aggravated by Catholic media interviewers who recorded him saying "I am not an RSS spokesperson or its defender. In truth, I have demanded a dialogue between the Church and the RSS which Indian Bishops had proposed." "The Christian Community accepts RSS ideology and principles. We need to establish communication and coordination between Christians and the (Rashtriya Swayamsevak) Sangh," another interviewer wrote. Dialogue is a great thing. The Second Vatican Council, almost sixty years ago, recommended it as a major instrument of peace and understanding in society and to end the sort of confrontation that had been seen in various continents after World War II.

It is of essence to go into any act of dialogue with wide open eyes, with a full understanding of our own needs, as also of the needs of others in our nation. With this must be a set of ground rules of debate and discussion. Above all, there must be a very clear knowledge of the nature of the other side, be it a religious sect, or a political entity. And, of course, everyone should be using the same lexicon, dictionaries and data, so there is no scope of misunderstanding.

The Church, right from the first general election, has encouraged the laity, and everyone else, to be a sentient elector and to participate in the election process fully. Barring hiccups as happen occasionally in Kerala, the Church leadership also encourages the laity to join the party of their choice. The only stricture, perhaps, is not to be a member of a group that is going into election on a patently bigoted, narrow, or violent agenda.

At its highest level, the Churches -- and that includes every denomination and Rite of Catholic and Protestant Churches -- have not had formal dialogues with national political parties.

There are informal contacts. The formal sessions, more photo opportunity than anything else, are when Bishops call on the President or the Prime Minister, to invite them to address a meeting, or as in recent years, to persuade them to invite the Pope to India, a visit which has not happened in twenty years and the tenure of two Popes who took office after John Paul II.

Fortunately, this effort has paid off. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his request, called on the Holy Father in the Vatican during his last European tour, and invited Pope Francis to India. The visit is yet to materialise, but will happen sooner or later, we hope.

[As an aside, the Francis-Modi meeting has also led to a meeting with the Pope by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. He is seeking western investment, blocked since the Kandhamal carnage against Christians in 2007-08 during his coalition government with the BJP. Perhaps he hopes this will cleanse the state's record and persuade western investments to come to the state once again.]

Coming back to dialogue and lexicons, alas, when the RSS says nationalism, it means a very militant and majoritarian nationalism. The RSS is not a religious body, and it is not a political party. It is a multi-headed and aggressive organisation whose political face, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has been ruling India since 2014 with Mr Modi as Prime Minister.



The RSS, which has persistently opposed all Papal visits to India, had accused Pope John Paul II, now a Saint of the Catholic church, of using New Delhi to launch *Ecclesia in Asia*. The RSS said this was a master plan for conversions of Hindus in India.

Also, the Church surely knows that the one thing the founding fathers of the RSS held even more vehemently than their supremacist Hindutva was their visceral hatred for followers of Christianity and Islam.

RSS documents are clear that people of these two communities have no place in Bharat, that is India. They would have to accept second class status if they want to live in this Bharat.

This is a sort of combination of apartheid and racism -- a marriage of the worst of the history of Saudi Arabia, Israel, USA, colonial Britain and South Africa. Mercifully Mahatma Gandhi, the legendary Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, during the freedom struggle, ensured this would never happen. Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar wove these aspirations of the freedom struggle to build a new secular democratic republic.

Would the RSS want to have a dialogue on the damage such a doctrine of Hindu Rashtra, with no equity for Muslims and Christians, can do to India?

THERE CAN BE NO ROOM FOR HATE POLITICS

-by Aires Rodrigues

The current public discourse over religion, that our great country has been witnessing for quite some time, is utterly distressing, disgusting and absurd. This time round, it has understandably infuriated the world.

The fanatics who are maliciously sowing the seeds of disharmony into our peace-loving nation must be dealt with an iron hand. Spreading hate amongst communities must be a non-bailable offence with stringent exemplary punishment.

No one, however well connected, should be spared whilst disturbing our secular Peace. Action against such elements has to be swift and merciless, acting as an effective deterrent. As enshrined in our Constitution, India must always strive to be a Peaceful, Secular society, and a beacon of Communal harmony

It is imperative that the Political class must rise to the occasion by displaying statesmanship, competence, honesty, dedication, maturity and selfless determination to keep the nation as it has always been.

Temples, Mosques and Churches and all other places of worship should be focal points to unite diverse communities instead of creating rifts amongst us. As we are all children of that one loving and tolerant God, there can be no room to divide us on the basis of creed or caste.

And we should always be guided by those words of Mahatma Gandhi “Always aim at complete harmony of thought, word, and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well.”



When we're forced to Our Knees.

Don Aguiar.

Many Indians are understandably tired of prayers to end the current rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society. Familiar platitudes such as “thoughts and prayers” seem hollow when offered without clear policy proposals. But the presence of prayer preserves the urgency for action and has since India's inception.

A nation's growth does not depend on economic policy alone. There is mounting evidence that trust among people is a big determinant of a nation's economic success. The rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society is sad not just in itself but because it is damaging the foundations of the nation's growth.

During the current Modi government eight years, - **When one lights a raging fire to distract people from the real issues, thinking it will remain controlled, high chances are that that fire will engulf everything around and destroy even those who created it,** - Aggressive right-wing politics has also cost those who benefit from it most. BJP leader's expertise on Islam – as debated on TV!!- have caused some diplomatic problems with Gulf countries, in the last few days.

The government is now fighting to defuse anger in various countries and opposition attacks at home over comments on Prophet Muhammad by two BJP leaders - one has now been expelled and the other suspended.

The suspension of BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for offensive targeting of Prophet Mohammad is a victory for civility. That the government was forced to suspend its spokesperson and disown her in the wake of reprimands by Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran is a reminder that targeting minorities with impunity, and hate speech with official sanctions, will have repercussions for India's global reputation. **It was not human rights lectures from great powers like the United States, but the power of illiberal states like Qatar, that humiliated India. India did prostrate before tiny Qatar. That was the depravity of our foreign policy. The sheer cretinism of the BJP was called out and how.**

You cannot grudge vicarious pleasure when bullies turn into mice and the BJP discovers respect for all religions and strongly denounces insult of any religious personalities of any religion and against any ideology which insults or demeans any sect or religion as India's Constitution gives the right to every citizen to practice any religion of his/her choice and to honour and respect every religion.

The world is shocked at the perceivable violence against minorities in India by the current Modi government. If the world bans or boycotts Indian products, or in case they embargo crude, CNG and energy supplies to India then India is royally The world's people's everyday buying choices in the supermarket will not be influenced by the diplomatic games of governments, it will be based on sentiment, that Indians murder minorities on the streets. **There's no point in defending the indefensible; there's no point in hiding the violent consequences to rule of Law and law and order from the suicidal diversions from the Constitution of India.**

Indian people's electoral acumen is needed at this time, for judicious and strategic communication, delivered with humility. In terms of crises communication and management, India is still within the golden hour where they can save face by doing the right things.

As a Hindu Majority nation India has much to protect – 35 million Indians. India should be champions of peace and respecting religious freedom. Hate and promoting hate speech will hurt Indians more than any other country. Indians should disregard advice of trolls and surrender to their collective intellect.

In 1947, amid the chaos of partition, Pundit Nehru was inaugurated to his first term as prime minister. He delivered one of the shortest but most memorable inaugural addresses in our nation's history. “Fondly do we hope,” he famously said, “fervently do we pray— that this mighty scourge of hatred, divisiveness and polarisation, may speedily pass away.”



Nehru of course did not stop at prayer. A little over a month later he oversaw a number of princely states surrender to the Union of India. But he couched the Indian mission of victory in the language of prayer because those sorts of words transform a political cause into an existential need. Prayer is the language we use to express our most urgent and essential desires. I don't pray for lower gas prices; I do pray for the end of rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society.

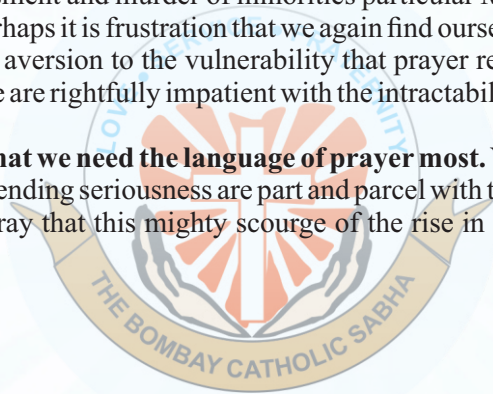
While it's understandable to be frustrated with those who offer such prayers, attacking them for it alienates many—of all political persuasions—who find comfort and urgency in prayerful words. Turning the important debate over the proper course of action on rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society into an inquisition on prayer only makes it more difficult to conduct that discourse. Political conversations, particularly on emotionally fraught issues such as this one, are already eroding. Politicians must present real policy measures that will meaningfully address this crisis, but what's gained by attacking their use of prayerful language? We don't need a moratorium on prayer to stop the rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society.

At the same time, prayerful people must be careful that they don't let this sort of pessimism rob their words of earnestness. I once heard a story about a group of Jews who gathered together in Jerusalem to pray for rain during a drought. As they prayed, one child innocently looked up at everyone and asked, “How come no one brought their umbrellas?” Our prayers to end the rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society need to be serious efforts, accompanied by actions appropriate to the hope that our petitions will be answered.

Why should India not dream for a more harmonious world when Indians know that it will bring a smile to the lips of God who did not create this world to perish in disharmony, but to flourish in harmony?

Nehru reportedly said, “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.” The current random harassment and murder of minorities particular Muslims and Christians has, once again, driven our country to its knees. And perhaps it is frustration that we again find ourselves here, with seemingly nowhere else to go, that has created a cynicism and aversion to the vulnerability that prayer represents. But this most human instinct should not be cast aside just because we are rightfully impatient with the intractability of our political ineptitude.

It's when we're forced to our knees that we need the language of prayer most. Yes, we should emphatically call out the absence of action, but prayer and its attending seriousness are part and parcel with taking action. So, fondly do I continue to hope and fervently do I continue to pray that this mighty scourge of the rise in divisiveness and polarisation in Indian society may speedily pass away.



United Christian Forum alarmed at sharp rise in violence against Churches and worshippers; demands urgent action by Government and Leaders

New Delhi – 13 June 2022

The United Christian Forum (UCF) has demanded urgent judicial and government intervention to check the rapid rise in incidents of violence, coercion and false arrests, traumatising the community. This persecution is most acute in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka; the UCF said citing data collected from its National Helpline Number 1800-208-4545 and human rights groups.

In the first half-year of 2022, is not even halfway over, there already have been 207 cases of violence. Just in May this year, we recorded 57 cases. In 2021, UCF had documented 505 cases, with Christmas seeing 16 acts of violence, including the desecration and breaking of statues of Jesus Christ at a historic church in Haryana.

“This data flies in the face of statements by government functionaries and leaders of the ruling parties at the centre and in the states that there is no persecution, and that there are only a few stray incidents by fringe elements”, UCF National President Michael Williams said.

It is ironic that the culprits, many of whom film their acts of vandalism and physical violence on unarmed women and men, seem to defy the law; peaceful pastors and others are arrested on charges of “conversion” during routine prayer services. In all such cases, the police are either a mute spectator or an active participants in the persecution. Despite our appeals to senior officials and administrators, the police have failed to follow protocol, rules, and investigations.

January	40	More than one incident has taken place each day so far in 2022. There were 40 incidents in January, 35 in February, 33 in March, 40 in April and nearly double in May with 57 incidents in 31 days with almost 2 incidents a day. There were 48 incidents in Uttar Pradesh, 44 in Chhattisgarh, 23 in Jharkhand and 14 in Madhya Pradesh. As the new anti-conversion ordinance is implemented in Karnataka, 6 cases were reported from the state.
Feb	35	
March	33	
April	40	
May	57	
Total	207	

Other than physical assaults, incidents include brutality against women, vandalism, forcible closure of churches, disruption of Sunday prayers and social ostracization which is most visible in small towns and villages.

We cite two cases from Chhattisgarh and one from Uttar Pradesh as illustrative of the persecution of Christians.

On 2nd May, in Bastar district, a 65-year-old Christian woman and her son were threatened with a social boycott by the panchayat if they professed the Christian faith. The two maintained they were Christians and would remain so. At this, they were attacked and severely injured. The woman sustained multiple injuries, including a wound on the head, and had to be hospitalised. A complaint has been filed before the Superintendent of Police and the District Collector.

On 31st May, in Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh, a pastor was conducting a prayer service when a mob barged in, dragged him out, and beat him up, saying he was converting people. The police, rather than acting against the assailants, arrested the pastor, booking him u/s 295A IPC (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings). He remained behind bars until his bail on 3rd June 2022.

ABOUT UCF TOLL-FREE HELPLINE NUMBER

2014	127	UCF toll-free helpline number: 1-800-208-4545 was launched on 19th January 2015 with the aim of upholding fundamental freedom and promotion of values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity of India. The helpline helps people in distress, especially those who are not aware of the law of the land and the system by guiding them how to reach out to the public authorities and by providing the way to legal remedies.
2015	142	
2016	226	
2017	248	
2018	292	
2019	328	
2020	279	As per the records of UCF, there were 127 incidents in 2014, 142 in 2015, 226 in 2016, 248 in 2017, 292 in 2018, 328 in 2019, 2020 in 279 (perhaps pandemic gave some relief to Indian Christians), and 505 incidents in 2021 and year 2022 so far till the end of May have witnessed 207 incidents in 151 days.
2021	505	
2022	207	

Has India Finally Reached the Tipping Point?

- Don Aguiar.

Religion camouflaged as nationalism has become an explosive concoction as Hindutva values propounded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar permeates this current governments policies as reflected in its laws having fatherland (pitribhumi) and holy land (punyabhumi) at its hush core.

What we forget is the Indian Constitution creates a social contract between the government and its citizens. This social contract nowhere declares the government of the day is charged with stereotyping citizens by their religion to enact laws that infact Constitutional morality.

Religion is strictly a private matter of every citizen in which the state has no role to play except to foment discord when its spokespersons make disparaging comments about a holy prophet. The relationship between man and God is very personal and should be nobody else business.

This is why religion is best left to the choice of individuals with the mandate of the government being to preserve law and order. The government must not sermonise its citizens on religion and culture which is why its spokesperson ended up denigrating the holy prophet of Islam.

After the current Indian government spokesperson insulted the Prophet, Muslims took to the streets, riots erupted, cases were registered against them and their houses and shops are bulldozed. When will these bulldozers demolish illegal roads, and buildings erected by China at the border in Ladakh and that of the Prime Minister's Party and his supporters, while the Prime Minister has shut his mouth permanently? This is a matter of national security and self-respect. Why is the current Indian government running scared in Ladakh where it is important to win and instead of bulldozing houses and shops of its very own Indian citizens?

Innocent Indians were also beaten in the Gulf after the current Indian government spokesperson insulted Prophet Mohammad. It's a lesson to the current Indian government not to mix religion with politics or governance of the country. **Nobody elected the current Indian government to offend other religions and desecrate churches and mosques in a desperate attempt to find Shivalinga or other historical remnants.**

Meticulously curated hate has raised its ugly head by the current Indian government, and civil society in India is mortified. Has the nation's mood made a paradigm shift? Will the suppliant desi press prostrate still further and keep grovelling? Will at least a few independent voices speak up and openly condemn those who insult religious sentiments? How long will we pretend that we have nothing to do with this obnoxious "Fringe Festival of Hate"?

If officially appointed spokespersons can be suspended and called "fringe elements", what does that say about those who had appointed them?

Try as we might, sweeping this diplomatic disaster under the carpet is going to take a lot of doing. India has literally played into the hands of India-baiters and given the critics enough ammo to gun for India globally. Meanwhile, the disgraced "fringe elements" may have been advised to lie low and wait for this nasty imbroglio to end. I'm taking a small bet... they will soon be accommodated and welcomed back into the fold, once the heat is turned off. Let's not make a vamp out of Nupur Sharma nor call Naveen Kumar Jindal a villain -- they are mere puppets and mouthpieces and were not speaking in their personal capacity. Sacking them will not solve a thing. It only deflects attention from the real culprits, and lets them off the hook.

Has India finally reached the tipping point?

History has demonstrated over and over again that all it takes for mighty empires to crumble and fall is one fatal mistake. Is this that mistake? The carefully constructed current Indian government's narrative seems to be on shaky grounds after this major international faux pas. All the official rhetoric has crumbled after the duo shot themselves (and the country) in the foot. Maybe a pat on the back was privately given -- we'll never know.



Such demonic grandstanding is not unique. Every political party recruits, trains and richly rewards barking canines who spout hatred and cause irreparable rifts. Some favourite canines are given important designations with matching perks, while others do it gratis in order to suck up to the bosses and show them how far they're willing to go to curry favour. Chamchagiri and exceeding the brief comes easily to desis. Toadies move up much faster in the food chain than those who play safe. However, in this instance, the current Indian government has a gigantic omelette on its face, given the open snub India had to deal with, when the Deputy Emir of Qatar cancelled a scheduled dinner with India's vice-president (M. Venkaiah Naidu) who was on a state visit. "Health grounds" were cited for the cancellation. Clumsy apologies did nothing to mollify the miffed Middle East rulers, who did not mince words when condemning the comments and accusing the Indian authorities of a slow response. Irony: some of these rulers are guilty of far worse transgressions. And just as we have the right of freedom of speech and expression, so do the 57 OIC members who profess to represent the voice of global Islam.

Every State in the world should object to the violation of human rights by every other State, however poor their own record in this matter. The collective weight of hypocrisy has positive results.

My question is: how should secular India react to this intervention by these Islamic states? Should they solicit more such interventions? Or welcome it? Or should they be wary of and circumspect in responding to this external support?

The relevant question is: does the intervention by Islamic states help the situation or make it worse? Must the current Indian government follow the bad example of "illiberal countries" to justify their insults to other religions?

Unfortunately, the current Indian Prime Minister, his party and his supporters have gone all out to match the bad example of "illiberal countries" to justify his party's insult on the prophet with an original video appeal by one of his supporters, Vashudev, to boycott Qatar Airways which has garnered over a million views each and are being retweeted by the thousands. Vashudev has undoubtedly become a minor hero today in the Indian right-wing universe, just as he has also become the butt of jokes in richer, more affluent liberal circles.

And therein lies the tragedy of the generation of young Indians that Modi has let down so badly.

Unable to rise economically in a system that panders primarily to crony capitalists and ignores the long-term wellbeing of the poor, millions like Vashudev have now been hoodwinked en masse into channelling their anger and frustration into hate campaigns against minority communities.

If only India had had a wise and visionary leader these past eight years. The much-touted demographic dividend would not have been squandered as pitifully as it has been.

Instead of giving employment and opportunities to millions of India's youth, the current Indian government and its allies have, over the last 8 years, succeeded in turning an alarming number of them into a bigoted, unthinking mob.

The Prime Minister, his party, and his supporters have a lot to answer for.

It is now inconceivable that the state will allow us to decide which God we choose to worship, how we choose to worship Him, within the privacy of our homes or even allow some of us to deny His very existence.

I sincerely hope that the current Indian government stops this Hindutva madness to garner support to stay in power and instead strives to raise the standard of living of its citizens to a whole new level, not by rhetoric but by actionable programs.

The current Indian government must leave their religious garb at home when they come to parliament or the secretariat of governance. Religion has been the source of enough hatred, discord and cumulative deaths of the Homo sapiens. **Time to shift focus. When one sees the divine in one's neighbour, humanity stays uplifted into the oneness of His creation.**

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

IIT Bombay campus resident Ms. Apeksha Fernandes had won 4 gold medals in individual events, one gold and a silver medal in two team events in the recently concluded khelo India youth games held at Ambala. In one of the individual events (200 m butterfly), she clocked the 'Indian best timing'.



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