

Bimonthly

# Pax Lumina

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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMBALANCES AND THE POOR





Vol. 3 | No. 4 | July 2022

# Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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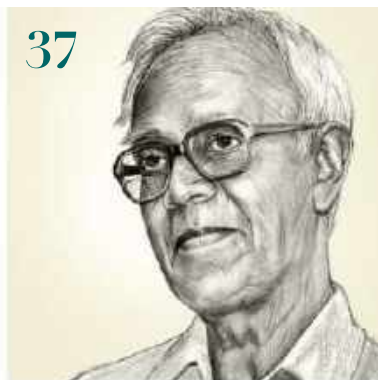
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**Pax Lumina**  
A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

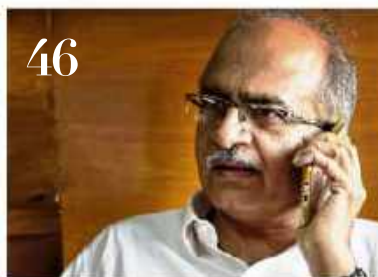




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# Global Structural Inequalities and The Poor

## Editorial

**T**he nations of the world are much more interdependent today than they were in the past. This happens because of the import and export of commodities, technologies, information and even viruses. In this context, Pax Lumina would like to raise the question: How do the poor, the weak, and the excluded get affected by the present global economic imbalances as well as the legacy of the past structural iniquities of the world? Our contributors from many parts of the world have written about this with concern and empathy. They have also indicated some ways of thinking about solutions which can give us some hope.

Actually, we are looking at economic consequences of global imbalances because a major factor of impoverishment of human beings is economic in nature, though many other dimensions of poverty like social exclusion, lack of entitlements and even spiritual emptiness are all linked to it. Though Marx emphasised the primacy of economic relations based on the control of capital and the appropriation of surpluses - his insights are valid in most cases; one has to admit that human growth and freedom are not totally dependent on economic variables and other externalities only. Our authors have looked at this aspect of deprivation too and indicated their ideas regarding the enhancement of freedom of the excluded. For this to happen empathetic action in favour of the excluded is needed from each one of us.

A guiding beacon for such action is the life of the late Fr. Stan Swamy who passed away on 5th July 2021.

### **Fr. Stan Swamy**

I never had the opportunity to meet Fr. Stan to witness directly his excellent work among the Adivasis and the undertrials. Those who have had such opportunity have written about him and his work in this issue. But having read about him and his life and work, I am convinced of a few things.

Fr. Stan had absolute faith in the Indian constitution and the constitutional means of redressal of grievances of the citizens of India. He followed the path





*of total non-violence in these struggles. In fact, whenever he could achieve anything for the excluded, including the Adivasis and the undertrials, that was solely through the orders of appropriate judicial authorities. Therefore, it appears quite strange and ironical that he was accused of "unlawful activities," and detained. And he had to die in detention.*

*The people he worked for, namely, the Adivasis and the undertrials, could not have defended him in court because they are voiceless and he was their only voice. But did the organisation he belonged to viz. the Society of Jesus and his friends do enough to prove his innocence through appropriate and effective legal support?*

*The evidence, as reported by the media, regarding his detention concerns some e-mails purported to have been recovered from his computer linking Fr. Stan to the accused in the Bhima Koregaon violence case. I do not want to go to the merits of this case which is subjudice. But I have to ask whether proper cyber-forensic expertise was sought to refute the allegation against Fr. Stan Swamy. The Bhima Koregaon case is still pending but the case against Fr. Stan Swamy has abated because of his death. Some people, including a few of Fr. Stan Swamy's friends, seem to link the question of the innocence of Fr. Stan to the prospective judgement in the Bhima Koregaon case. This is wrong based on the track record of Stan Swamy. I believe he was never associated with any sort of violence.*

*And this has to be proved independent of the existing Bhima- Koregaon case by adducing appropriate evidence before an appropriate judicial authority. I hope Fr. Stan's friends, and more importantly his mother-organisation, the Society of Jesus, and indeed, all of us who care for truth and justice take up this matter and take action to clear his name from any blemish.*

**Jacob Thomas**

Editor

## INTERVIEW

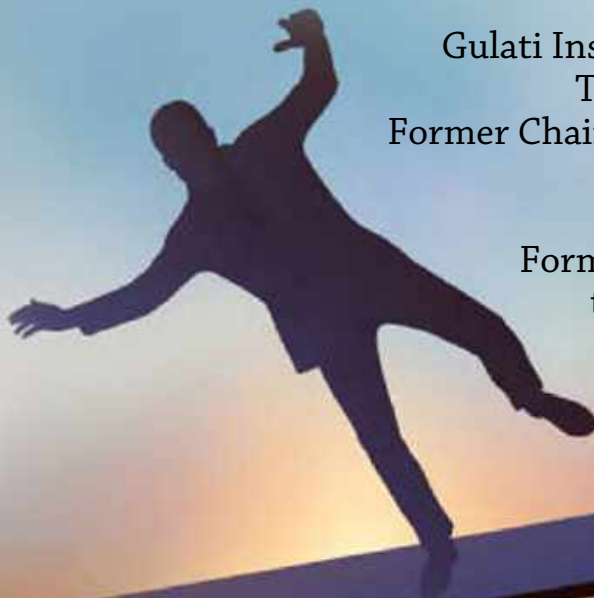
**Prof. M.A. Oommen** / Pax Lumina

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# GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMBALANCES and THEIR IMPACT on THE POOR

Interview with Prof. M.A. Oommen,  
an Honorary Fellow, Centre for  
Development Studies, Trivandrum.  
Distinguished Fellow,  
Gulati Institute of Finance and  
Taxation, Trivandrum.  
Former Chairman of the 4th State  
Finance Commission,  
Govt. of Kerala and  
Former Economic Advisor  
to Govt. of Botswana.







**T**he world probably is facing what some economists call ‘greenflation’. I would like to characterize the current global scenario as one of ‘stagflation’, meaning stagnation in production and increase in cost-push price hike.



Prof. M.A. Oommen

**B**efore I take up the questions, I would like to preface the answers with a couple of observations on the brief ‘concept note’ given under the generic title ‘Global Economic Imbalances and Their Impact on the Poor’. This is a vital issue confronting the contemporary world on which serious collective thinking has yet to happen. Even so, the assertion that ‘the present economic disruptions world over arise from the ongoing Ukraine war and its repercussions’ although accentuated by it does obscure the growing inequality, exclusion, alienation and poverty in the world.

The first five questions certainly raise some of these issues. The last three although more relevant to India are important as challenges which democracy as an ideal of intrinsic

value and instrumental consequences has to contend with. Indeed, the war brings together once again the fault-lines of the modern world deeply fragmented into various ideologies, political systems, technological standards embedded in abject poverty and ostentatious affluence. An international bestseller of 2021 titled, *The Dawn of Everything* by David Graeber and David Wengrow asks the question: why human beings so often treat one another badly—the reasons for war, greed, exploitation, systematic indifference to others’ suffering. Were we always like that or did something, at some point, go terribly wrong? Let me pose this issue before the august readers of Pax Lumina before I take up the questions seriatim.



**M**arket cannot solve hunger and poverty. They can only accelerate these scourges. I have visited almost all countries of the world. But I can confidently testify that the Scandinavian countries and Cuba, (certainly under Castro) did provide food security, healthcare and education to their citizens.

**?** Russia is a major producer and exporter of oil and gas. Major supply disruptions have been caused by the Ukraine war. The immediate impact of this has been the steep rise in oil and gas prices. Many countries have taken steps to insulate their domestic markets from this global price rise. How far have these countries been successful in their efforts especially in protecting the poor and the excluded in each country?

True, the energy price rise has fuelled a gripping inflation especially in those countries like India that depend on imports of oil and gas. Even countries such as USA, which are self-sufficient in oil, face unprecedented inflation. Energy is a sort of universal input and will affect the prices of most commodities and services.

Price rise or not fossil fuel use will have to be discouraged as climate crisis is assuming dangerous dimensions. As a way out, clean alternative sources like solar energy is promoted by several countries, but its price is shooting up. The world probably is facing



what some economists call 'greenflation'. I would like to characterize the current global scenario as one of 'stagflation', meaning stagnation in production and increase in cost-push price hike.

As far as the last part of the question I would say it is too early to evaluate. Even so, I do not consider 'the poor and the excluded' are not an eternal feature. Real remedial actions can come only with such an appreciation. Exclusion is the outcome of your development process which today, in most countries, even in China, is market mediated.

To be sure, only a pro-active public sector policy can make a critical difference in a world where one per cent can dictate to the ninety-nine per cent and where resources are not allocated to serve the needs of the poor. The market automatically

excludes those who have no entitlements or purchasing power to participate in the market. Naturally, market produces only for those with exchange entitlements, like land, employment, income etc. Equity and justice demand fair distribution of exchange entitlements through appropriate social arrangements while strengthening the public provision processes.

**? Ukraine has been a major wheat exporter of the world. Now the war is causing shortages in the world wheat market. And this will affect the poor much more drastically than the rest of the population of every country. Are there any safety nets for the poor and the weak anywhere in the world? Normal market mechanisms are not sufficient to address this problem. Has there been any system put in place anywhere in the world by the government or any other agency to address the concerns of those without entitlements?**

This is an extension of the first question. Not only Ukraine, but Russia, too, is a major exporter of wheat and the two countries together account for 25% of global export of wheat and 20% of barley and maize. These two countries are also major fertilizer producers, and all the supply bottlenecks war and sanctions create can disrupt production and accentuate inflationary hazards.

If the war continues the prospects for global hunger cannot be ruled out. Before I go to the issue of safety nets and entitlements, let me invite the attention of the readers to a book (*Oceans of Grain: How American*

*Wheat Remade the World* by S.R. Nelson) published almost at the time the Ukraine war started. This book boasts of America as a grain trader and the journeys of their wheat across oceans, rivers and ports to write history. But he forgot why wheat was burnt when people died of hunger? Yes, it was to boost up price and profits of the traders.

As already noted in the answer to the first question, market cannot solve hunger and poverty. They can only accelerate these scourges. I have visited almost all countries of the world. But I can confidently testify that the Scandinavian countries and Cuba, (certainly under Castro) did provide food security, healthcare and education to their citizens.

Although China has a good track record in alleviating poverty and hunger in recent times (through land reforms, universal education and healthcare), yet between 1958-61, nearly 23-30 million people died of famine partly because of the suppression of press and controlled information system, and this cannot be forgotten. Shall I quote poet William Cowper:

“Freedom has a thousand charms to show,  
That slaves, how’ver contented,  
never know”.

**? There are many other logistical and supply disruptions which will all ultimately affect the poor. Different countries are trying to deal with them differently depending on their political and economic conditions, and the impact of their actions on the poor varies. Have there been some hopeful initiatives which Pax Lumina can highlight?**





**In Latin America, a region of deep-seated inequality and political struggles, the world witnessed ‘a pink tide’ in several countries like in the case of Chave Venezuela to Evo Morales of Bolivia besides a wider spectrum which spreads to Argentina, Chile, Honduras the latest being the rise of Gustavo Petro in Colombia, notorious for its narcotic wars.**

The response to the poor by a Government or by the non-poor like the NGOs is an ideological and moral question. I do not think I am competent to answer the question. So, my answers are anecdotal and personal. Pax Lumina being a Christian institution, its contributions should rest on values. Although I am not a churchman, I must confess that my worldview is anchored on the great guru, Jesus Christ, born in a manger and worked for love, compassion and distributive justice and walked the talk. The fearless Guru was not for power, but challenged it, be of kings (called Herod a fox) or religious overlords (did not hesitate to call them white-washed sepulchres). In this backdrop, Pax Lumina may do well to campaign and work for :

- 1) Be true torch-bearers of Jesus Christ’s legacy.
- 2) Work for a democratic United Nations based on elections throughout the member countries. The reformed UN should uphold targeted net zero carbon emission, effective multilateralism and new modes of transformative legal system based on proactive public sector, especially in regard to health, education and social security. The institutional framework has to be worked out.
- 3) The continued dominance of US Dollar as a reserve currency has to



Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

be supplanted by a more equitable global medium of exchange and store of value.

4) International experts will have to sit together under a reformed UN to find out the ways to use the rise of mobile brand and advances in social media for the good of humanity.

5) I would suggest all to read, propagate and join the two medical doctors (Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett) who after 50 person years of work produced the book *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* and convincingly argue that equality is better for everyone. Let me quote just one proof.

“Across whole populations, rates of mental illness are five times higher in the most unequal compared to the

least unequal societies. Similarly, in more unequal societies, people are five times as likely to be imprisoned, six times as likely to be clinically obese, and murder rates may be many times higher.”[Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, p.176]

**? Ukraine war, though quite serious, got huge media attention because of the involvement of the major world powers and the potential risk of a nuclear Armageddon. But there are many wars and conflicts occurring elsewhere in the world creating economic and social imbalances, in Africa, Latin America and Asia which do not get world-wide media attention but have caused and are causing enormous economic disempowerment especially of the poor and human suffering. The case of Sri Lanka is a good example of such an economic tragedy with roots in historical racial violence. How to respond or what would be the possible peace initiatives in this regard?**

True, the world is at the risk of an Armageddon if some immature politician or military person press the atom bomb trigger. Any war, whether it receives media attention or not is a human tragedy and must be avoided.

The present Sri Lankan crisis is not a war and certainly not rooted clearly in the historical racial divide. I think it is the result of deep economic mismanagement, corruption

and political miscarriage by Rajapaksa family. Sri Lanka faces multiple crises. It is passing through an economic crisis due to depletion of foreign reserves (the fall in export earnings from rice and tea due to Ukraine war is only the last straw on the camel’s back) which, in turn, has resulted in the shortages of fuel (13 hour black-out is unbearable) food, medicines, cement and most of these essentials. There is a limit to what neighbours like India can provide. For Sri Lanka which once was the envy of the world as a classic case of high human development with relatively low per capita income, we witness a downfall.

Sri Lanka’s achievements were despite the civil war. What makes the difference is to be traced to political choices of the people. In Latin America, a region of deep-seated inequality and political struggles, the world witnessed ‘a pink tide’ in several countries like in the case of Chavez Venezuela to Evo Morales of Bolivia besides a wider spectrum which spreads to Argentina, Chile, Honduras





I believe that ‘the plight of the poor critically depends’ on the political choices of the community, initial endowments, the extant property relations and policy measures taken for equitable social arrangements. If the government and non-governmental organizations with humanitarian motivations can solve poverty as the question assumes the poor are identified as the objects of charity and benevolence. I do not approve of this proposition.

the latest being the rise of Gustavo Petro in Colombia, notorious for its narcotic wars. Durable peace initiatives can come only through changing the character of politics via a real moral rearmament. No panacea can be suggested.

**? The plight of the poor critically depends on the welfare measures put in by the concerned government or other non-governmental organisations working with humanitarian motivation. But during war, welfare measures get a lower priority as defence budgets of those countries which are not directly involved in the war get extra allocations. (Look at the many European countries which have hiked up their budgets steeply.) So there is an added danger of further impoverishment of the poor and the excluded. How can people intervene in this matter in a peaceful and democratic manner?**

I do not agree fully with the question. I believe that ‘the plight of the poor critically depends’ on the political choices of the community, initial endowments, the extant property relations and policy measures taken for equitable social arrangements. If the government and non-governmental organizations with humanitarian motivation can solve poverty as the question assumes the poor are identified as the objects of charity and benevolence. I do not approve of this proposition.

*Thomas Piketty*





Ensuring fairness in the allocation of resources and the tolerance of inequality is a social choice. As Thomas Piketty who studied recent economic history in depth notes in his books *Capital in the 21st Century* (2014), *Ideology and Capital* (2019) and *A Brief History of Equality* (2022), every unequal society, creates an ideology to justify inequality that allows the rich to fall asleep in their town houses while the homeless freeze outside. He recounts the justification that recur throughout history: “The wealth will trickle down”. Let us quote Picketty (2022):


Inequality is first of all a social, historical, and political construction. In other words, for the same level of economic or technological development, there are always many different ways of organizing a property system or a border system, a social and political system or a fiscal and educational system. These options are political in nature. They depend on the state of power relationships between the various social groups and the worldviews involved, and they lead to inegalitarian levels and structures that are extremely variable, depending on societies and periods. All creations of wealth in history have issued from a collective process: they depend on the international division of labor, the use of worldwide natural resources, and the accumulation of knowledge since the beginning of humanity. Human societies constantly invent rules and institutions in order to structure themselves and to divide up wealth and power, but always on the basis of reversible political choices. [*A Brief History of Equality*, p.9-10]

More butter or more gun is a political choice made in peaceful times. War within a country or between countries that enhance defence budgets in the large context of humanity is also a political choice. The thriving and most profitable business of the world is

armaments and military hardware. So, war is for profits for some who influence decision makers.

Turning to the question how can people intervene depends on the regime type you are in. How can people intervene is a question relevant for a democracy? Very briefly, I'll say the answer is by building a good public sphere. Today, public sphere is hijacked by vested interests. Long back, J.S. Mill said democracy is government by debates. It is not the dialogue or debates of the deaf. The quality of public sphere depends on how best it is influenced by public reason without being manipulated by populist leaders and vested interests. These include media in which the so-called social media occupy a very critical role.

I would invite the readers to read Habermas [The Theory of Communicative Action (1984), and The structural transformation of the public sphere (1991)] on the question of normative standards the media should follow to have deliberative politics and public sphere. You can build meaningful social choice in this manner. Here, I may add that peaceful and democratic manners involve even civil disobedience and mobilized protest against acts of oppression and injustice. Peace will not descent like biblical manna from heaven.

 **Global economic imbalances affect nations in multiple ways. One repercussion of this can be a political movement of the ruling government towards more autocratic forms of governance like suppression of public opinion, control over media and restriction of civil liberties. Has this happened in India to any extent?**



**P**icking a Presidential candidate from among them while the majority remains in misery is good as a political strategy, but a self-deception as a social goal. It is sad that the agency of women as a transformative force remains a distant goal.

Frankly, I do not endorse the proposition that the political movement of the ruling government towards more autocratic forms of governance like suppression of public opinion etc., is due to global economic imbalance. If the assertion were true this should have happened much earlier. The Emergency interlude (1975-77) was short-lived. What is happening in India is due to a strong ideological shift of the ruling party towards ethnic nationalism and ethno democracy if one can say so where some identities claim a sort of divine right to rule and want to push it through the strong arm of the State apparatus.

The slogan dynasty-free Bharat is a calculated move to decimate dissent and opposition. The Indian constitution upholds civic nationalism where all minorities, be they

cultural, religious, linguistic or whatever have equal rights. Introducing a religion's test for citizenship through the Citizen Amendment Act 2019, building a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya are all challenges to pluralism and democracy. There is a subtle but aggressive move to delegitimise dissent. That the sedition cases against activists and writers alone rose 28 per cent per annum since 2014 is an ugly story to report. The multitude of diversity that defines the idea of India cannot be put into the straight jacket of a single narrative except by endangering democracy and the Indian constitution.

**?** In such a situation, the existing economic and social disparities tend to get deepened, and the suffering of the marginalized and the excluded tends to get worse. How have these macro economic factors affected the condition of women and children, specifically in India?



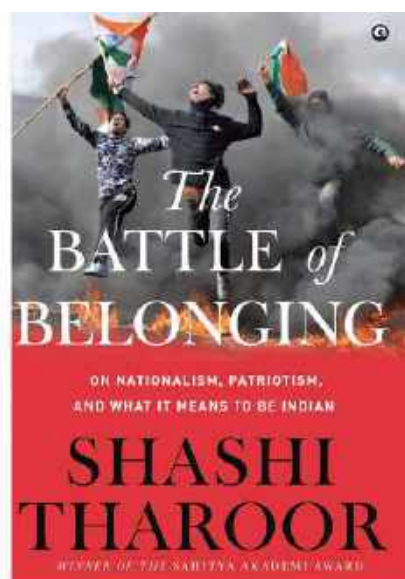
Inequality between men and women is one of the crucial disparities in India. Certainly, this has not received the political attention it deserves. It is a major social failure. Political parties seldom accommodate more than 10-12 per cent women candidates. There are only 78 women in the Lok Sabha of 543 members and 25 in the Rajya Sabha of 245.

No wonder India ranks 123 in Gender Inequality Index of UNDP in 2019 as against China's 39 and 90 for Sri Lanka. The labour force participation rate of population aged 15 and above for women is 20.5 per cent as against 76.1 per cent for men in India whereas, the corresponding figure for China is 60.5 per cent and 75.3 per cent. That the female-male ratio is below unity for decades in all the States of India except in Kerala does not seem to worry any one.

Atrocities against women continue to expand exponentially. In this patriarchal society of India, victimization of women, especially those belonging to the Adivasi and dalit communities continue. Picking a Presidential candidate from among them while the majority remains in misery is good as a political strategy, but a self-deception as a social goal. It is sad that the agency of women as a transformative force remains a distant goal. I believe social progress of India hinges critically on gender equality and justice and using women's agency for social transformation.

**? In India, both at the Centre and in the States, has there been an erosion of institutions and conventions that aid democratic governance and assertion of majoritarianism which can lead to social, economic, legal and institutional violence?**

My answer is to fully affirm what the question implies. The euthanasia of our democracy which ought to have been nurtured and developed to assume flesh and blood and be meaningful to the people seems to be well underway. The arrests of Teesta Setalvad and R B Sreekumar for fighting injustice are ominous portends. The power of adversarial politics is inane and weak. Can we build a reasoned public sphere? (*See answers to Qn. on p.14*).



Shashi Tharoor

To conclude, let me approvingly quote from Shashi Tharoor's *The Battle of Belonging* (2020).

Like most democratic civic nationalists, I want a New India, too. It will be a New India where you won't get lynched for the food you eat, marginalized for the faith you hold dear, criminalized for the person you love, or imprisoned for making use of fundamental rights guaranteed by your own Constitution. Instead, we must look forward to a 'New India' that celebrates and welcomes pluralism, an idea vindicated by history itself, and one that is uniquely suited to our country [p.391].

I would add a guaranteed nutritional security, clothing, shelter, dignity and freedom to all (that is, building the capability to lead the life that you have reason to value).





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# THE RISE of AMERICAN POVERTY 2022

**A View from the Streets  
once Paved in Gold**



**T**he pandemic followed by the Ukraine war has left a trail of destruction, especially impacting the most vulnerable in society. The United States' relatively quick recovery of economic growth and the historically low unemployment numbers – stronger than in many countries – may paint a rosy picture, but they conceal deeper problems and their causes. An already dire situation of poverty, homelessness, addiction and despair, visible on our streets, has worsened considerably.

Walking around San Francisco – or, indeed, any city or town in California's 'Bay Area' – it's plain to see. Nights on the streets are hard and dangerous. So, trains and buses have become for some homeless people a relatively safe place to spend their days sleeping and begging.

Fare evasion has become rampant. Exit most of the major downtown stations in San Francisco, and one meets dozens of people begging, with no place to use a toilet or bathe, some with open wounds and amputated limbs sitting in broken-down wheelchairs, and eating discarded food scraps from rubbish bins.

Petty theft from shops selling packaged food or medicines is almost unpreventable because it has become so common, and the police are too overextended to intervene quickly.

Take a major exit off any of the freeways in Oakland, San Francisco or San Jose, and you are likely to encounter tent cities that evoke the 'favelas' of Rio de Janeiro or the 'bustees' of Mumbai. A similar scene is playing out in Los Angeles, Houston, New York and other places across the country.

Until recent years, I have seen anything like this only in developing countries such as India, Jamaica and Kenya, but never in a developed country. This is also not the image many Indians have of the Bay Area, home to 'Silicon Valley' and some of the wealthiest IT companies in the world.

The glamour of the region's reputation would seem to be part of the problem. Great wealth is being generated by corporate interests, and at least some of their employees earn very handsome salaries. This has caused extreme upward pressure on rents, home prices, and the basic cost of living.

The suffering of the homeless, addicted and mentally ill (commonly a trifecta of afflictions) may be the most visible indicator of increasing inequality, aggravated by the pandemic and now energy cost-driven inflation. But the suffering

**T**his Article 99 of the Charter is interpreted as providing the SG with an independent political role on issues before the Security Council. But in reality, the SG has no real powers to help carry out decisions. **The SG can still shape the engagement of the UN system and call on countries to pressure Russia to end the war.**





of many others in the middle and lower-middle class is also significant but more hidden.

While the median US annual household income is \$67,521<sup>[1]</sup>, a salary double that – earned by very few indeed – would barely put a family above the ‘low-income’ threshold of poverty set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for San Francisco<sup>[2]</sup>. That is how inflated the cost of living is in the Bay Area.

It is followed closely by other metro regions such as New York, Boston, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. This surely puts in perspective the earnings of the many NRIs living and working in IT there. The streets are not paved with gold, at least not for most people.

Why is it that even in states where the politics favour liberal social policy concerned with equality and inclusion, is the inequality and outright suffering so profound? California is the most glaring example of this contradiction. An article in *The Atlantic*<sup>[3]</sup> sought to diagnose the problem. The result can be summarised as ‘ideas, not action’, and ‘not-in-my-backyard’ attitudes. While people believe in affordable housing for all, those who show up to vote in elections reliably vote against allowing actual new and affordable housing to be built in their localities.

The same goes for other poverty-alleviation measures that just might make systemic change rather than treating symptoms. It also reveals how politics and policy are invested more in the profits of businesses, shareholders and the local elites, than a vision in service to the common good.

The Ukraine War, an unspeakable human tragedy unto itself, has exacerbated a precarious state of the economy for America’s poor, working and middle classes. America runs on oil. The distances are vast and whether it’s the transportation of goods or daily commuting to and from work, the expense of fuel has taken a toll that has probably impacted the rural poor the most because of how much they must travel by car.

As oil is a global commodity there is little that the US government can do to bring down the price. Levying sanctions on Russian oil and gas was a morally just decision for the benefit of Ukraine and hopefully will constrain Russia’s belligerence, but its resulting inflation is putting disproportionate pressure on the poor.

This is why inequality and the suffering of the poor are presently worse, even though the USA is experiencing the lowest unemployment numbers in decades and record-setting wage growth. Certainly, many people can find a job if they want one, and the wages have increased substantially in the high post-Covid demand for workers.

Yet those pay rises have been erased by the even greater impact of inflation in the first half of 2022. Those who were poor already had the least leverage to take advantage of the strong aspects of the economy, as they may have lacked the education, experience or health to obtain the available jobs.

How are these problems being addressed?

The US government responded to the threat of the pandemic economy, by making several relief

**A**ccording to the International Organisation for Migration 5.3 million people have fled to neighbouring countries and **6.5 million are internally displaced – more than half of whom are women and other vulnerable people.**







payments in cash to individuals and families, along with more generous unemployment benefits for those who lost their jobs. That certainly helped relieve some pressure during the lockdowns, and the uncertainty and disruptions to work caused by the pandemic. Yet it also may have been partly responsible for instigating the inflationary trend.

After most people had been able to be vaccinated, there was a rush in Summer 2021 to travel and spend on many things which had been put off for over a year. The supply of money was high and the supply of goods and services was constrained, resulting in inflation.

The ongoing effect of a high Covid infection rate, (approximately 1 lakh new recorded cases per day<sup>[4]</sup>), and a relatively low vaccination rate (66.9% of Americans have received two doses<sup>[5]</sup>, only 30% have received one booster<sup>[6]</sup>), is continuing to disrupt the labour force, schools and just about everything else, due to sickness and quarantining due to exposure. Anecdotally many restaurants have remained take-away only because they simply cannot hire enough staff for these reasons.

Private charities and churches, as well as government food banks and shelters, are

certainly working harder than ever to alleviate the profound needs of the poor. In an area like San Francisco, however, the number of people in need was already rising long before Covid, the Ukraine War and inflation.

The church I work at in San Francisco has a feeding programme on Wednesdays, where dry goods, as well as vegetables and fruit, are distributed to the needy. It may be surprising that among those who seek assistance, there are even Ivy League-educated retired professionals. Such is the scale of economic distress in urban living.

Another church I help at serves a meal for the homeless on Wednesday nights. They can barely accommodate everyone. Friend volunteers at one of the numerous clinics try to provide medical care for the homeless, through an unstable patchwork of funding from private individuals, foundations and the government.

A lot of good things are being done, but all this amounts to triage for a serious sickness – a society and economy that have learned to tolerate a high level of inequality and structural injustice despite its democratic and egalitarian claims. The surgery required would be a housing policy that makes it affordable for all, making the minimum wage a living wage, and creating

**T**he principle of multilateralism, leading to dialogue is a key to solving global challenges the world faces currently, especially to maintaining peace and security in the world. **The Security Council has failed repeatedly in the past decades to prevent conflicts and invest in genuine peacebuilding.**



a system whereby everyone can receive medical care.

Among American conservatives, there is no political will for these things, as their rhetoric recommends ‘small government’ and more room for private enterprise to deliver what the market demands (to those who can pay for it). Among liberals, there’s a gap between ideology and action, ideas and actual policy change. Compromise and collaboration across the political gulf are almost negligible.

A remaining source of hope that things can improve is the fact that private charities, churches, and government entities too, are interfacing with the poor daily - attempting to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, bind up wounds, and restore the dignity of those crushed by the present global vulnerabilities and the inbuilt injustices of the economy.

Hearts do change through such one-to-one encounters with those in need.

Compassion grows and the divides are bridged when people can put names and faces and concrete encounters to the big social problems. Schools in the U.S. increasingly require students to perform substantial community service to graduate. One can only hope that such encounters with real people, real needs, and real problems to solve, will translate into politics and public policies that will finally ‘let justice roll on like a river’ (*Amos 5:24*).

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# SOCIAL REPRODUCTION in **TIMES** of ECONOMIC CRISIS



**T**he invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated global inflationary pressures coming as it did on the heels of a worldwide pandemic, marked by heavy government spending in many countries, not to speak of China's zero COVID policy, which is slowing down global trade.

In India, the steep rise in petroleum prices occurred before the invasion and wheat exports have been banned now to protect the domestic market. But what goes around, comes around. As countries take steps to protect domestic markets, few countries will remain immune from global inflationary pressure.

Going beyond generating inflationary pressures across the world, the invasion of Ukraine has generated new uncertainties. The sustainability of globalisation, as we have known it, and the continued benefits of world trade are now in question.

As Europe struggles under its effort to cut off dependence on Russian oil and natural gas, the Russian economy must cope with an unprecedented level of sanctions. For India, the ongoing crisis must surely make policymakers wary of trade dependence on China.

As nation-states alter their geopolitical strategies, the changes that are wrought whether they be directed towards decreasing reliance on specific countries, creating new more compatible trading blocs or achieving greater self-reliance, will bring additional adjustment costs.

Experience shows that the costs of macroeconomic adjustment and economic shocks are borne disproportionately by people from low-income households. For instance, economic restructuring carried out in several developing countries, under structural adjustment programmes, required reductions in welfare spending. This had a direct impact on low-income households.

The present moment offers an opportunity not only to underscore the vulnerability of low-income households to economic strain but also to recognise how people survive in stressful conditions and the ruptures that may be imminent. This could have serious destabilising effects. Seen in this light, social reproduction, which refers to the production and maintenance of life, offers a useful perspective in the current economic crisis.

It is the supply of oil and wheat that are at the forefront of the present crisis. Both are essential commodities, which have a swift and stressful impact on household income. The lens of social reproduction draws attention to households as basic units of production within the macro economy. It makes visible the range of unpaid and care work undertaken within households, mostly by women.





**T**he present moment offers an opportunity not only to underscore the vulnerability of low-income households to economic strain **but also to recognise how people survive in stressful conditions and the ruptures that may be imminent.**



Even in seemingly ‘normal’ times, a range of unpaid domestic and care work is carried out within households which contributes to the well-being of its members. In low-income households, this work is vital to achieving a minimum desirable level of consumption. Consider what kind of adjustments would be required when incomes shrink to ensure basic survival as well as to provide for schooling for children and health contingencies.

Feminist scholars have drawn attention to the artifact of ‘costless’ social reproduction implicated in the idea that labour is not a produced input. The extant social accounting framework defines households as units of consumption and not of production. However, as Diane Elson points out unlike in the case of production of other commodities, people have children and sustain life not for the purpose of supplying the labour market but they cannot prevent the State and society from benefiting from the reproduction of labour power within households.

Therefore, unpaid domestic and care work may act as a buffer or a safety net of the last resort as it produces substitute non monetized goods and services to offset reductions in real incomes or in social welfare spending. It is mostly women who absorb these costs. They do so by extending their working time, by intensification of effort to provide and care for children and other family members, by tapping social capital and taking small loans. However, as Elson also cautions the capacity of the domestic unit to adjust is not unlimited.

In times of multiple economic crises – an ongoing pandemic, supply constraints, rising prices, job loss and high unemployment - the ability of low-income households to adjust would be put to a severe test. As the pressures on households intensify, the effects may be felt in multiple domains. Already, the pandemic is believed to have had a harsh impact on the learning curve of children. The effects are likely to be worse for first-generation learners and those who have lacked material resources to sustain online learning.

UNICEF and the ILO, in a joint report in 2020, underlined the fear that households may resort to child labour to cope with job loss and health shocks associated with COVID-19 which could lead to the first increase in child labour in 20 years. There have also been news reports that rising costs on account of the current economic crisis could affect children’s schooling in industrialised countries as families struggle to balance budgets.

The pandemic provided an opportunity to reckon with the significance of unpaid care work for survival and to maintain social stability. The present crisis demands radically new thinking. Feminists argue that social cohesion is at least partly an externality of unpaid care work in families. A hard look at the social framework to reckon with the value of care work in households would serve to bring it into planning. It will be a first step in building interventions to prevent its depletion but also in striving to organise its provision in less patriarchal ways.

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# SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION and THE ECONOMIC CRISIS in SRI LANKA



**T**he pandemic and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine are partly to blame, and neither could have been anticipated. On the other hand, poor policy choices by a corrupt, authoritarian governing elite have made Sri Lanka uniquely vulnerable. **This has been a disaster in slow motion, entirely predictable, a textbook case of how a government can cause a debt crisis.**



**T**he economic crisis in Sri Lanka is spiralling into a humanitarian emergency as millions of people are facing an acute shortage of food, fuel, cooking gas and medicine. The situation has taken a devastating turn for people already struggling to put food on the table during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's even worse for single-parent households, those without steady work and those already suffering a loss of income. We need international support now to help hundreds of thousands of people pull their lives back together. It's going to be a long, tough road for people to rebuild and get their lives back on track.

P. Thanamohan, an auto-rickshaw driver in Mannar, North of Sri Lanka, said he waited two days to get seven litres (less than two gallons) of gasoline, which he estimated would last only a day. He said it was becoming impossible to feed his family.

"How can we live like this?" he asked angrily. The 'big red flags' were found among the poor, who had resorted to skipping meals, eating much smaller meals or buying cheaper food that is not nutritious.

"We have to rely on hand-outs, and even those are not as frequent now," said L. Nishanthini, 28, who cleans roads and collects garbage at the Mannar bus station. "We cooked with firewood and had to stop giving milk to our child," she said. "We just cannot afford these prices."

An apologist could put much of Sri Lanka's problems down to bad luck: the pandemic and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine are partly to blame, and neither could have been anticipated. On the other hand, poor policy choices by a corrupt, authoritarian governing elite have made Sri Lanka uniquely vulnerable. This has been a disaster in slow motion, entirely predictable, a textbook case of how a government can cause a debt crisis.

Before 2019, Sri Lanka was self-sufficient in food. The government elected that year banned chemical fertiliser and pesticides. Only organic farming was allowed. This resulted in the shutting of tea plantations (a source of export revenue) and shrinking the country's ability to feed itself (Sri Lanka now imports grains). Together with the damage to tourism from the COVID19 pandemic and rising global commodity prices, this has reduced tax revenues and put more pressure on the Sri Lankan Rupee. Sri Lanka's governing elites are not alone in making these kinds of poor policy choices. Perhaps it is time to consider a different approach, which puts the needs of citizens first and ensures that political elites aren't rewarded for poor policy choices.

This is why for more than 50 days now, groups of youth activists and other dissidents have protested outside the President's House, demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Though there are not enough votes in the parliament to impeach him, the opposition looks to have little interest in sharing the responsibility for cleaning up this mess by joining a government of national unity. In short, a chastened Sri Lankan government will try to muddle through, hope the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine end soon, and do its best to secure long-term financial health.

In a statement of solidarity with the protesters, advocates with the Sri Lankan chapter of Transparency International said that **systemic corruption among politicians and the country's elites is at the root of the problem.**



Whatever it may be, the demonstrations have brought together young people from traditionally opposing sides and fostered unity across ethnic and religious divides. Some young Sri Lankan protesters said that they are fed up with traditional politics, which exploited ethnic and religious divisions for political gain. In the past, for educated, middle-class Sri Lankans, policies concerning ethnicity and religion were the deciding factors in the elections.

In a statement of solidarity with the protesters, advocates with the Sri Lankan chapter of Transparency International said that systemic corruption among politicians and the country's elites is at the root of the problem. Besides a lack of accountability and other systemic flaws, "rampant abuse of public resources, syphoning away of public funds, cronyism and nepotism are but a few ways in which successive governments have plundered the wealth of the nation and brought the country to its knees."

The World Bank said it was not planning to provide any new financing to Sri Lanka until an adequate economic policy framework has been put in place. Colombo is also having talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Even if the country manages to strike a deal with the IMF, it will take a few months for the financial help to kick in.



For the poorer sections of society, however, the state of the economy was the most important issue. Up the road, G. Desmond, a 42-year-old fisherman said, "This is the hardest it has ever been." Any austerity measures introduced in Sri Lanka must be based on a human rights assessment, should be open for public scrutiny and feedback in an inclusive and participatory process, and all alternatives must be explored before they are introduced. Austerity measures must not disproportionately impact the marginalised groups and must be strictly temporary.

Still, Sri Lanka has a strong democratic tradition and has always had changes of power through elections rather than coups. The country also has a lot of economic potential.

What Sri Lanka needs is to find a way to translate its potential into sustainable growth. Now is the time to think seriously about a policy to diversify and promote its industry and to bring a 'system change'.

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# GLOBALISATION and IMPOVERISHMENT in COLOMBIA

**T**he past three years in Colombia have been marked by a significant increase in poverty. More than 20 million citizens of the 50 million that inhabit this South American nation, are below the poverty line. The income, calculated for Colombia, is less than \$80 per month per person.

This poverty, linked to an increase in hunger, places Colombia at the risk of a food crisis today,

according to data recently published by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD<sup>[1]</sup>). What factors, linked to globalisation, have influenced the situation to reach these levels? What repercussions has this increase in poverty and hunger had in Colombia in the past two years? What possibilities of change can be perceived with the arrival of the new government, presided over by Gustavo Petro?

## **The Effects of Globalisation Seen from Three Perspectives**

The most significant global phenomenon during the past two years has been the pandemic. Colombia had to face the consequences on its health system. It also had a great impact on the population. There has been an increase in unemployment due to the closure of small and medium-sized companies, the decrease in access to necessities as a result of unemployment and, as a consequence, the increase in hunger in various urban and rural regions.

Entire families, who were accustomed to eating two or three meals a day, have since been forced to eat only one. Young people of working age have



**T**his situation of increased poverty and hunger, accompanied by the variability of oil prices, the increase in inflation and the devaluation of the Peso, **were the reason for a wave of protests that shook the country between April and June 2021.**



lost their jobs. University students, who had to take their classes remotely, and whose parents lost their jobs, had to suspend their studies. This widespread poverty, added to insufficient measures by the national government, was at the root of the strong and massive protests between April and June 2021.

Another problem was the variability of oil and hydrocarbon prices worldwide. The variability, in an oil-exporting country like Colombia, has direct consequences both in the pockets of consumers and in the degree of public investment for sectors such as roads, bridges, and educational centres.

One of the direct consequences is that a large part of the agricultural, agro-industrial, technological and manufacturing products is bought at good prices from countries with which Colombia has Free Trade Agreements. One of the most affected sectors has been agriculture. Colombian farmers simply cannot compete with the much lower prices of imported products, which the average person is more likely to buy in their neighbourhood supermarket.

A third perspective is the effects caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine. One of these has to do with the increase in the prices of agricultural inputs. Many farmers are currently in a crisis because their prices have doubled and tripled, especially that of fertilisers, during the first half of this year. A large part of these supplies was imported from Ukraine and Russia. Because of the war, these countries have reduced or suspended the production of these supplies. This has caused a rise in prices that, in a country like Colombia, puts at risk the production of agriculture, the survival of thousands of peasants and food security.

### Some Repercussions

This situation of increased poverty and hunger, accompanied by the variability of oil prices, the increase in inflation and the devaluation of the Peso, were the reason for a wave of protests that shook the country between April and June 2021. When the pandemic took place, the national government proposed a tax reform to Congress.

It sought to strengthen the social aid package for impoverished citizens, but which, paradoxically,



affected the middle class even more. The protests, which lasted nearly two months, were so great that the reform project was dropped. The Minister of Finance who proposed it was removed from office.

According to the report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), ‘the Colombian State reported to the IACHR that, between April 28 and June 4, within the framework of the national strike, 12,478 protests were held in 862 municipalities of 32 departments. 89% of the protests, 11,060, took place without registering acts of violence<sup>[2]</sup>.’

The discontent led to intensifying opposition to the national government in the following months. Topics such as unemployment, hunger, deficiencies in the health system, poverty, the crisis in the countryside, and corruption in the administration that caused scandals such as those of Centros Poblados<sup>[3]</sup> or of children dying of hunger in the Department of La Guajira, enraged public opinion. It marked a new thematic agenda for a broad spectrum of citizens.

This showed that the government’s discourse, focused on the fight against drug trafficking and armed groups as sources of the country’s main problems, had reached a point of significant wear and tear. Because of this, the opposition gained strength. They proposed better social policies and the need for a reorientation of the economic system.

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## **The Government of Gustavo Petro: Hope without Illusions**

In the recent presidential elections, the public discontent was reflected in the defeat, in the first round of Federico Gutiérrez, a candidate backed by the government of President Iván Duque.

In the second round, the former Mayor of Bogotá and currently Senator of the Republic, Gustavo Petro, was elected president for the next four years. A good part of his campaign focused on the issues mentioned in the first part of this article, with special urgency on reducing hunger and poverty.

In the first place, he suggested the importance of favouring a progressive transition in the Colombian economic model, to make it less dependent on oil extraction and convert it into a more productive model focused on the countryside.

By this, Gustavo Petro not only seeks to attack the problem of unemployment and the crisis of the peasantry but also the food crisis.

Second, the need for a peace agenda that explicitly supports the peace agreements signed with the members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and opens up possibilities for dialogue with currently active groups, such as the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Third, the desire to implement an ambitious environmental agenda that promotes the protection of ecosystems at risk, reduces oil exploration and favours new sources, such as



**G**ustavo Petro will take office on August 7 in Bogotá. His proposals and the first steps he has taken, in terms of appointments, are encouraging. But we cannot have illusions in the face of challenges as complex as those that Colombia faces. It will be interesting to follow the course of this government and its repercussions in Latin America.



*Gustavo Petro*

solar energy. This agenda will help Colombia play a role in the broader context of Latin America, especially in matters of peace, security, the fight against drug trafficking and care for the environment.

Gustavo Petro will take office on August 7 in Bogotá. His proposals and the first steps he has taken, in terms of appointments, are encouraging. But we cannot have illusions in the face of challenges as complex as those that Colombia faces. It will be interesting to

follow the course of this government and its repercussions in Latin America. Let us hope that this new change does not turn out to be ‘more of the same’.

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# INSTITUTIONS and ETHICS DO MATTER in PREVENTING POVERTY



**H**ow does the current war affect Germany? Does it affect the poor in Germany?

Yes and no.

Yes, to the extent that prices will rise and poor people are less likely to be able to keep up. No, in the sense that four institutional settings prevent the poor from becoming poorer.

First of all, there is the social market economy.

Second, there are the institutions and laws of the social security system.

Third, over the past decades, there has developed a strong network of civil society, including many NGOs and the engagement of many citizens and many volunteers (without those the society in Germany would collapse).

Fourth, Germany is embedded into the strong European System of the European Union with its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, and Strasbourg, France. The European Union is strongly committed and institutionalised by law to realise values, such as economic liberty, wealth and solidarity.

Hence, there is a social security network that ensures that nobody will fall through. Everybody, whether a refugee from Ukraine or elsewhere, and the poor will be able to access the minimum level of food, clothing, furniture, basic electric appliances and housing.

On the other hand, the global problems and consequences of war do affect Germany. The main problem: prices go 'mad' – the normal economic limitation of resources sharpens.

Here is a practical example: I would call it the 'Pretzel Piece'.

Pretzels are popular bakery items in Germany, especially in the State of Bavaria.

Let us see how the cost of production of Pretzels has increased. To build a Pretzel you need wheat and flour. Let us realistically assume an average pretzel price of around one Euro. The actual increase in raw materials is about 30 per cent. If the global market for wheat and sunflower oil collapses due to its lack of supply from Russia and Ukraine (both have the world's biggest production of those raw materials), the prices will increase even more drastically.

During the production process, there is a need for ice to cool down the temperature of the dough. To do that you need electricity for the compressor. Electricity prices have increased 30 per cent over a year since a lot of electricity comes from natural gas (Germany has abandoned the path of nuclear energy).

Russia cut the delivery of natural gas by about 40 per cent. In a severe mistake, Germany has followed an energy policy that made it dependent on natural gas from Russia.

**T**he actual crisis hurts us and it will hurt us even more in the next few years, as prices, interest rates, inflation and taxes will increase. **There is no escape. It may sound pessimistic, but it is the truth. It will hurt everybody badly.**





As a consequence, within one year the natural gas prices increased at a rate of 75 per cent. Bakery ovens are mainly heated by natural gas. Thus, the forthcoming consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war are not included in the analysis. Even after the product is ready to leave the manufacturing unit, there is transport that is needed to take them to the retail stores.

Lorries need diesel. Diesel prices have risen by 64 per cent. Let us assume the trade unions fight for higher salaries in all branches to cope with high inflation rates (let us say about 8 per cent).

The rest is left for the fantasy of the reader. Can we afford to buy as many pretzels as we used to?

The actual crisis hurts us and it will hurt us even more in the next few years, as prices, interest rates, inflation and taxes will increase. There is no escape. It may sound pessimistic, but it is the truth. It will hurt everybody badly. The social market economy, social security system, civil society and European integration will be affected by the war and its consequences. On the other hand, all four institutional platforms are strong and will also stabilise us in times of severe crises.

What needs to be done is, first, strengthen and foster civil society (thus engaging with the poorest). Second, we need to reform the social security system to make the poorest able to live. And third, and most importantly, foster development and innovation in all sectors of society (for example: new energy techniques, the revival of nuclear power, and fostering the economy).

Fourth, establishing and deepening and stabilising the social market economy with its institutions,

norms and rules. An increase in taxes or the social budget only burdens not only future generations, but it also does not address the necessary costs of climate protection.

In case one would like to (re)distribute fortunes within a society, that means, if you would like to share the 'cake', you will have to bake the cake. If you want to distribute more to the poor, you will have to increase the size of the cake. That means, because of the war, we will have to work harder, and – paradoxically – have to bear more unemployment.

Institutions do matter. In economic science, there is a strong consensus about direct economic transfers over the past century. But these transfers are useless since they do not develop or transform or reform institutions. They may help, as a flash in the pan, but they are not sustainable.

These institutions are terms of the New Institutional Economy as proposed by Nobel Laureates like D.C. North, Gary S. Becker and D. Coase. It means institutions are not only institutions, they are also sets of rules. It is the set of rules that controls poverty. It may sound counter-intuitive, but the best way to fight poverty is to strengthen economic institutions, such as a functioning tax system, a working security system to fight tax crime, corruption and bribery, a clear and functioning administration of property, and to have an ethically designed order system.

Finally, there is also the need to build up a strong civil society. And, last but not the least, we must raise European and global (economic) integration (at least among the 'western' States with freedom of (economic) activity and property) to increase wealth. If you need to increase the distribution of income to the poor, you have to increase overall wealth for everybody in terms of justice. Sheer distribution does not work.

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# Father Stan Swamy

1937-2021

If you question this form of development, you are anti-development, which is equal to anti-government, which is equal to anti-national. A simple equation. This is why the government calls me a Maoist, although I am completely opposed to Maoist methods, and have nothing to do with them.

Stan Swamy





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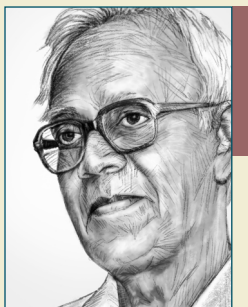
# STAN SWAMY A LIVING LEGACY



**A**s per the Criminal law procedures, in normal circumstances, when an undertrial dies under custody the case is considered ‘abated’, which means there will be no further proceedings and the case stands closed.

**The Jesuits felt that leaving the case as ‘abated’, would leave a permanent scar on the name of Stan and the Society of Jesus, and looked for ways to resurrect the case to establish his innocence in the court of law.**





age, of 83, his health conditions, nor Covid-19 protocols, despite Stan's plea that he was ready for virtual interrogation. The NIA had already interrogated him in July 2020 for 15 hours.

Realising that the arrest was politically motivated, the Jesuits applied for medical bail, through their Advocate Sheriff Sheik in the Sessions Court in Mumbai. After four months, the Sessions Court rejected his medical bail. An appeal petition was filed in the High Court of Mumbai stating that continuous incarceration in Taloja prison will be detrimental to his health.

**J**uly 5, 2022, marks the first death anniversary of Fr. Stan Swamy SJ.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) took custody of Swamy on October 8, 2020, from Bagaicha, Ranchi, for his alleged linkages with Maoists and Naxalites.

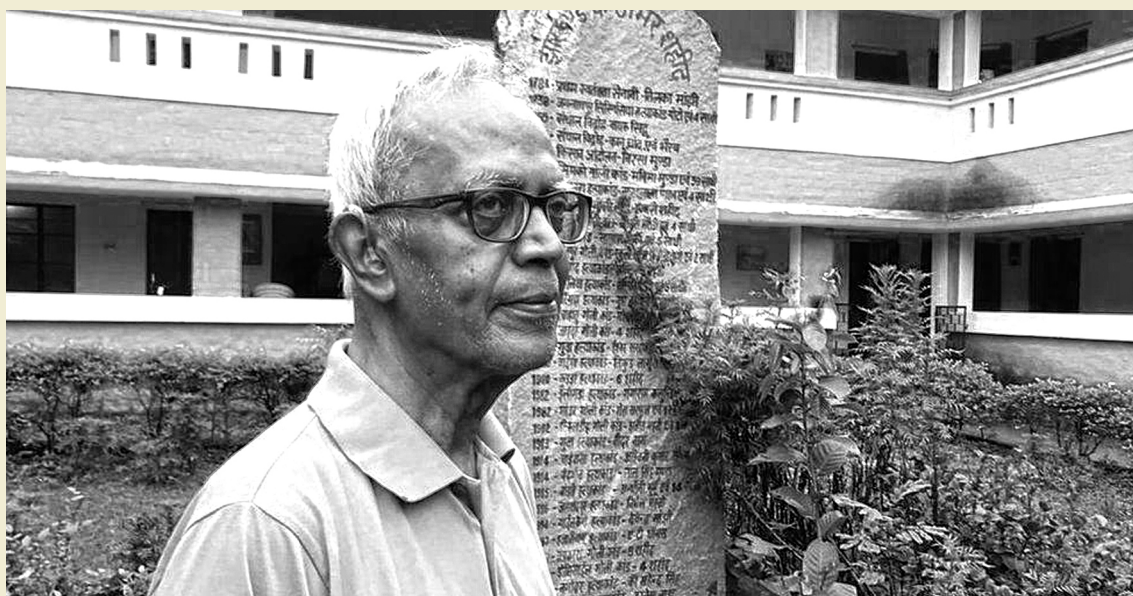
Fr. Stan founded Bagaicha to serve as a nodal social centre for the Jesuits and Adivasis of the Chottanagpur region. Though the NIA filed the charge-sheet in the Sessions Court (NIA Special Court) in Mumbai on October 9, 2020, when Stan was produced in person in the court, there was no indication of when the trial would begin.

The arrest took place against the government's pandemic advisory as well as the rights of the elderly persons. The NIA did not respect his

Then, Covid-19 was rampant in Taloja prison. There were just a few medical personnel to attend to the inmates. The High Court judge had a virtual conversation with Stan and ordered that he be shifted to a private hospital in Mumbai. The doctors diagnosed that his health condition was deteriorating, and the aftereffects of Covid-19 were evident clinically.

On July 5, 2021, when his bail petition was to be heard by the Mumbai High Court, Stan died at the age of 84, as an undertrial at the Holy Family Hospital, Bandra, Mumbai.

As per the Criminal law procedures, in normal circumstances, when an undertrial dies under custody the case is considered 'abated', which means there will be no further proceedings and the case stands closed. The Jesuits felt that leaving the case as 'abated', would leave





a permanent scar on the name of Stan and the Society of Jesus, and looked for ways to resurrect the case to establish his innocence in the court of law.

However, as Stan was no more, any further legal proceedings require a legal heir who is eligible to sign the documents. Stan left his family and joined the Society of Jesus many years ago. The Jesuit companions are his legal heirs.

Fr. Jerome Cutinha SJ missioned Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ, Director of Indian Social Institute Bangalore to coordinate and monitor the development of the case and Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas SJ to be considered as next of kin of Stan.

Advocate Mihir Desai impressed upon the High Court by explaining how the Society of Jesus, a religious order functions and only a Jesuit can be a legal heir as per religious practice. The Court admitted the petition and allowed Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas SJ, the former principal of St. Xavier's College, to function as the legal heir of Stan and authorised him to sign the vakalat.

This procedure took some months.

After this breakthrough, Mihir filed another petition in the High Court with a specific prayer that the High Court allow the continuation of the trial process of Stan, as the aggrieved party, namely the Society of Jesus, would like to clear Stan's name from all allegations. The prosecution (NIA official) opposed this petition and wanted the case to be closed.

Mihir argued that the alleged offences under UAPA have damaged not only the name of Stan, a human rights activist but also that of a well-known organisation, the Society of Jesus, which has done enormous service to the people of India. The High Court admitted the petition for further hearing. During these months, a few other developments took place which derailed the legal proceedings.

Hon. Justice Shinde, who has been hearing the Bhima Koregaon cases in the High Court of Mumbai recused himself, stating that his continuation in hearing the case has become untenable. He made this appeal to the Chief Justice of the Mumbai High Court.

**M**ihir argued that the alleged offences under UAPA have damaged not only the name of Stan, a human rights activist but also that of a well-known organisation, the Society of Jesus, which has done enormous service to the people of India. The High Court admitted the petition for further hearing.



The organisation called The Legal Rights Observatory, an organisation affiliated with the Hindu nationalist group, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* took up a campaign against Justice Shinde, asking the President of India to impeach him, for making Stan a martyr.

The day after the funeral service of Stan in Mumbai, Justice Shinde said, "I do not watch TV. I happened to see a meaningful and magnanimous funeral service."

This spontaneous comment of the High Court Judge infuriated the RSS outfits. They engaged in a devastating personal attack on Justice Shinde. About three months ago, the NIA filed an additional charge-sheet in the form of seven volumes. At least in three volumes, Bagaicha is mentioned.

In the meantime, despite local vendetta politics, an interesting development took place in the international arena. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, besides expressing its grave concern over Stan's death in judicial



custody, has sought answers from the Indian government on four specific questions. The 13-page report also stated that the death of the Jesuit priest and Adivasi rights activist in judicial custody will “forever remain a stain on the human rights record of India”. (Rf: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A-HRC-WGAD-2021-57-India-AEV.pdf>).

On June 2, 2022, the Martin Ennals Foundation, a renowned international human rights organisation in Geneva, recognised Stan’s contribution posthumously. The chief of the foundation,

Isabel de Sola said, “We decided to honour Fr. Stan with the Martin Ennals Award. But unfortunately, he passed away. As per the policy of the foundation, no one is awarded posthumously. So, we decided to honour him publicly for his contribution to the Adivasis of India.”

The petition in the High Court is expected to come up for hearing any time soon, as the Court has resumed its work after the summer vacation. As and when the High Court allows the petition, Stan will be technically treated as one among the BK-16 and will be part of the trial proceedings, whenever it commences.

A favourable order from the High Court would also allow the Jesuits to access materials confiscated by the NIA and prove Stan’s innocence in the court of law.

The Latin maxim ‘ei incumbit probatio qui dicit, non qui negat’ means ‘presumed innocent until proven guilty. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 11, states: “Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to the law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.” Stan is innocent *de facto* (factually) and he will be proved innocent *de jure* (legally).

The faith in our judicial system and unflinching hope in humanity keeps the Jesuits, partners and friends to continue to take forward Stan’s legacy and mission.

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Joseph Xavier SJ is Director,  
Indian Social Institute, Bangalore.

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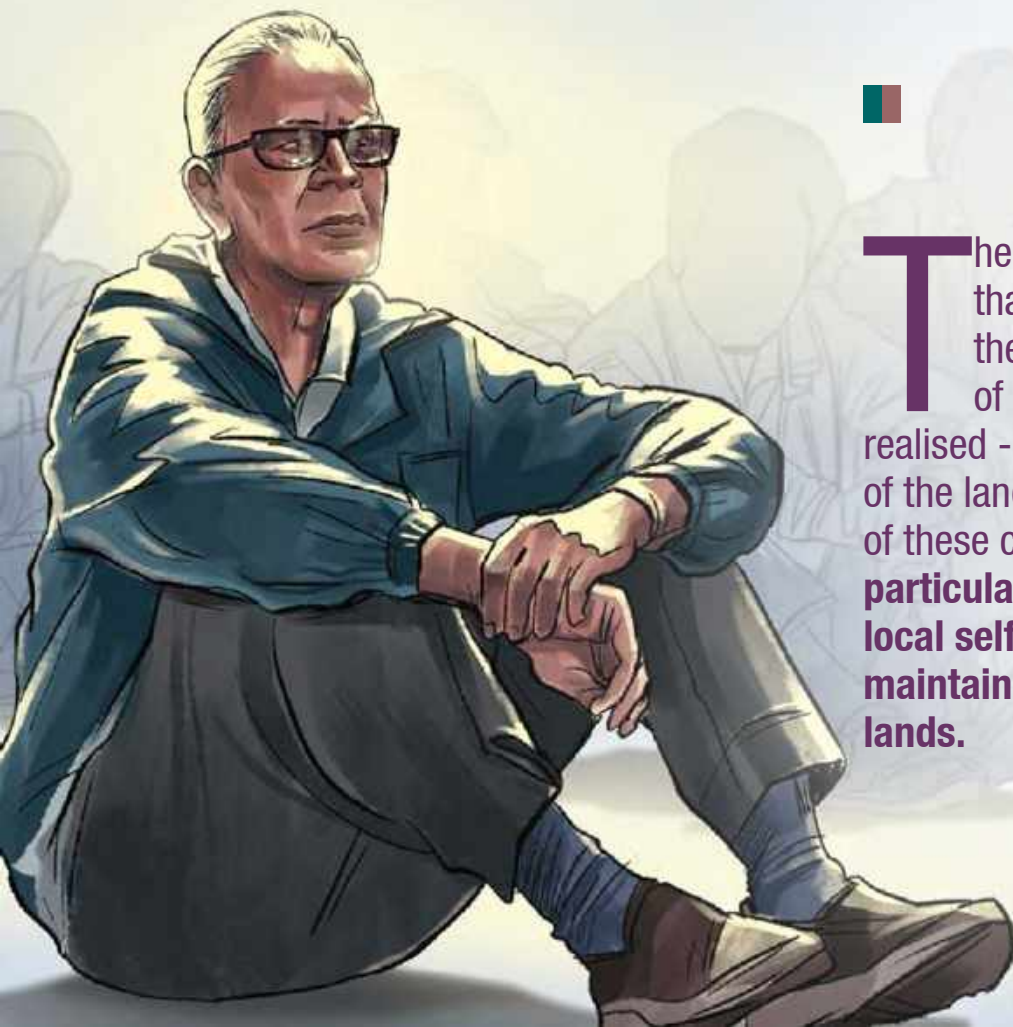


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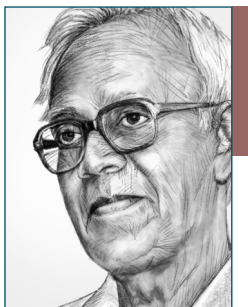
# THE BAGAICHA MOVEMENT

**Father Stan Swamy's Legacy of  
Social Justice Scholarship and Praxis**



**T**he aim was to ensure that the reasons for the establishment of Jharkhand were realised - the preservation of the lands and ways of life of these communities, **in particular the practices of local self - governance and maintaining the common lands.**





**F**r. Stan Swamy, who fought for the rights of the Adivasis<sup>[i]</sup> and Dalits of Jharkhand died in custody on 5 July 2021 after contracting Covid-19 in the poor conditions of the Taloja prison in Mumbai. Rich tributes were paid to him both nationally and internationally. This write-up is to share with the readers the legacy of Bagaicha Movement founded by Stan Swamy.

### **Why Bagaicha is a Movement?**

‘Bagaicha’ means a tree-filled space or orchard, in particular the mangroves that are part of the common land where villagers gather under their shade, to hold people’s courts to resolve matters about the community.<sup>[ii]</sup> Given Fr. Stan’s close connections to Adivasi communities with bagaichas, he did not consider social research and analysis as a circumscribed academic exercise.

Thus, in 2000, when Jharkhand was carved out of the existing State of Bihar in northern India, Fr. Stan and his like-minded Jesuit colleagues established the institute of Bagaicha at Ranchi, the capital of the new State. They had recognised the necessity of having a ‘bagaicha’ in the heart of the capital where social activists could voice their concerns about many issues affecting the lives of the Adivasi people, who comprised the majority of the communities in the State.

The aim was to ensure that the reasons for the establishment of Jharkhand were realised – the preservation of the lands and ways of life of these communities, in particular the practices of local self-governance and maintaining the common lands. Jharkhand’s rich mineral resources have made it a prime target for industrialists and mining companies, in particular, since the opening of the Indian economy in 1991 to the neoliberal globalisation project.

**B**agaicha thus became that space or platform for people to come together to deliberate and **understand the structural origins of their concerns and collectively brainstorm solutions and actions related to the governance of their communities.**



The union government, while granting statehood to the Adivasis simultaneously started to break its promises. Since then, movement after movement has sprung up in the Jharkhand region to resist the regime of the day, all of which have continued to collude with capitalists for their self-interest and betraying the assurances made to the Adivasi people that the freedom won in 1947 were theirs too, as equal citizens of the world’s largest democracy. Although on paper, both historically and more recently, the Indian State has passed visionary laws to safeguard the rights of Adivasis, both national and State-level politicians and bureaucrats have either blatantly ignored their legal obligations or systematically bypassed new policies.

Bagaicha, thus, became that space or platform for people to come together to deliberate and understand the structural origins of their concerns and collectively brainstorm solutions and actions related to the governance of their communities. Both in Bagaicha and beyond, the trajectory of Stan’s social justice praxis, from fostering dialogues between the stakeholders<sup>[iii]</sup> and the State, to the filing of a public interest litigation (PIL) following the research on undertrials conducted by the Bagaicha research team in 2015, is illustrative of Stan’s long witnessing of Adivasi struggles and sacrifices.



Stan was also mindful that Bagaicha's processes reflect its broader aims in the context of today, for example, ensuring inclusivity through gender sensitisation. Even though Adivasi societies have encouraged non-gendered participation in various ways, a sexual division of labour does prevail. He would personally ensure inclusive practical arrangements for women participating in off-site work or at resistance sites, for example, safe travel to and from the site, good sanitary facilities and childcare.

Stan's distinctive social praxis also included his significant role in creating a broader awareness of the constitutional guarantees and other legislative provisions that were designed to protect the Adivasis' 'jal, jangal, jameen' [water, forests, lands], and culture and language in the predominantly Adivasi regions or the Scheduled Areas, as well as his support of the Palthagadi movement in 2018 which affirmed the villagers' legitimate rights over their resources as well as the right to self-determination. Stan, along with other social activists, journalists and writers, urged the government through Facebook posts to enter into peaceful dialogue with the people rather than outrightly repressing the movement. Stan and 19 others were charged with sedition based on those Facebook posts.

There was hardly a forum, demonstration or dharna [sit-in] organised by Adivasis and other marginalised societies in Jharkhand where Stan was not present. He also consistently wrote for journals, and occasionally for newspapers, on Adivasi rights, highlighting the issue of land-grab by the mining corporations aided by the government.

Fr. Stan's commitment to building alliances and communities of practice – local, national, and global – made Bagaicha a nodal point for many social researchers from across India and abroad for training in and participating in action-oriented research. Many of these individuals are social activist-researchers who were trained under Fr Stan during his 15 years of teaching at the Indian Social Institute, Bengaluru, Karnataka in south India (1975-1990).

He conceived of a research study to investigate the demographics and reasons for arrests as well as the condition of undertrial prisoners across Jharkhand. The undertrials' research revealed that many arrestees were conscientised<sup>[iv]</sup> people, who were aware of their rights and who had been raising their voice, for example, against exploitation by mining companies, and organising and mobilising other people.

The skewed demographics of Jharkhand's undertrial population (primarily from marginalised communities) and the details of the state's machinations to put innocent people behind bars disturbed Fr Stan greatly.

His commitment to the undertrials' families did not end with the report's publication in the public domain. In 2017, he filed the PIL but such cases moved slowly through the courts. As mentioned above, the outcome of this was pending when in 2018, the security agencies began harassing him until he died in 2021. However, Swamy's communities of practice are ensuring the work goes on.

### **Nurturing a Movement-Oriented Praxis**

Working as a team is central to the Bagaicha movement and training more people is part of the work. Trainees are conscientised to recognise the role of historical processes and societal power structures and norms in shaping their everyday lives and in asking which are the communities in India that are consistently left

**S**tan recognised that social analysts unfamiliar with local metaphors and ideological underpinnings of particular communities will be less effective in mobilising people and in providing them with the framework for understanding and recognising the factors that are responsible for their oppression.



behind, and which are the few that consistently gain and have held power due to particular cultural norms.

Stan drew on the ideas of many action-oriented thinkers in his work with Adivasis to ensure the enforcement of their constitutional rights under legal instruments, such as the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908, the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1949, and Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996.

Stan was greatly influenced by the historic ‘jal, jangal, jameen’ movements of the Adivasis, led by freedom fighters such as Birsa Munda and Komaram Bheem. The Marxist notion of class struggle and Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s use of cultural idioms and the everyday language of a community to mobilise them also informed his approach.

Briefly, Stan recognised that social analysts unfamiliar with local metaphors and ideological underpinnings of particular communities will be less effective in mobilising people and in providing them with the framework for understanding and recognising the factors that are responsible for their oppression.

Bagaicha’s social justice research and praxis, therefore, requires deep engagement with communities and organic intellectuals, as well as introducing younger generations to analyse their social condition. A significant point for trainers to be mindful of is the risk of becoming ‘brown saviours’. The social analysis approach, thus, focuses on conscientising trainees: enabling them to understand societal power processes, including more subtle caste discrimination, rather than simply leading them. Eventually, people themselves decide whether to take action or which action to take to break free of the cycle of oppression, to see through the ‘jhumlas’ [false promises] publicised through mainstream media and reject manufactured consensus.

As in other social justice learning environments, the Bagaicha movement recognises that unlearning takes time. The induction course will motivate some students to think and recognise the symptoms of oppression around them, and to explore different possibilities of living with their new understandings of the world around them.

These students will make the effort to access online resources and travel for others, for example, to the Jesuit specialist libraries in the Tribal Research and Training Centre at Chaibasa, which also has a collection of rare historical books. Finally, a few will reject conventional life choices to join social justice movements. In Stan’s case, this process involved negotiating his Jesuit priesthood to combine it with his social justice praxis.

### **The Bagaicha Movement Today**

Emerging and developing from Stan’s work with Adivasis in Jharkhand, the Bagaicha movement is exemplary for its interdisciplinary, action-oriented community research methodology that centres on socially responsible, equitable knowledge production and formation.

However, in the present climate of an increasingly emboldened fervour for Hindu nationalism among some groups, some people hesitate to associate with Bagaicha, thinking that it will bring them on the radar of the State’s surveillance machinery. In Stan’s parent community, the fear included the church’s activities coming to a standstill due to sudden attacks from



the 'nationalist' anti-national groups through State-sanctioned misuse of laws and power.

After Stan's passing away, the huge response both within the country and worldwide made many Jesuits in India more aware of their late colleague's tremendous social contribution. A change is taking place in the position of Jesuit superiors as there appears to be a higher expectation among people from the Jesuits, and so they need to prepare themselves and their students to be more committed to social justice and change.

Some provincial superiors of the Society of Jesus are openly supporting Bagaicha and its approach to conscientise novices and motivate them to work in the social field. And Stan's colleagues at Bagaicha are determined to continue his work as they recognise it is now more crucial than ever to do so. They ensure that the communication of the Bagaicha approach to trainees is done in ways that do not make them unnecessarily vulnerable.

The Bagaicha research team is continuing to follow up the undertrial PIL despite the dysfunctional state of the criminal justice system during the height of the pandemic. Their shock and grief at the passing away of an esteemed team leader and colleague have not stopped them. Continuing his work is a tribute to his legacy.

Stan had envisioned starting a Social Analysis Institute at Bagaicha, similar to the one in

**A**fter Stan's passing away, the huge response both within the country and worldwide made many Jesuits in India more aware of their late colleague's tremendous social contribution.

Bengaluru. Stan's colleagues have planned several similar activities for today's context to take his vision forward – and it is our responsibility that Indian history rightfully honours the contribution of a remarkable citizen.

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*Antony Puthumattathil, SJ, is an independent researcher and human rights activist in Jharkhand. Lotika Singha is an Honorary Research Fellow, University of Wolverhampton, UK.*

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[i] Adivasi is often used to describe the 'original' inhabitants of India, but the 'origin, connotations and representational and analytical applications' of such terms remains debated (Bagaicha Research Team 2015: 11; see also endnote 4).

[ii] In Jharkhand's villages, such discussions would include, for example, the amendments proposed by India's central regime to the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (also Land Acquisition Act, 2013), implications of the land bank policies proposed by the Jharkhand government to pool the GM land (common land in villages used for various communitarian purposes like grazing cattle, etc.), and ways to resist the proposed amendments to the

Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908, and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act 1949.

[iii] The people directly affected by development projects that forced their displacement and their representatives, and other concerned citizens, social activists and bureaucrats.

[iv] Conscientization: "The process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Action is fundamental because it is the process of changing reality. Paulo Freire says that we all acquire social myths which have a dominant tendency, and so learning is a critical process which depends upon uncovering real problems and actual needs." ([www.freire.org/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire](http://www.freire.org/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire)).

**Fr. Stan Swamy Memorial Webinar**



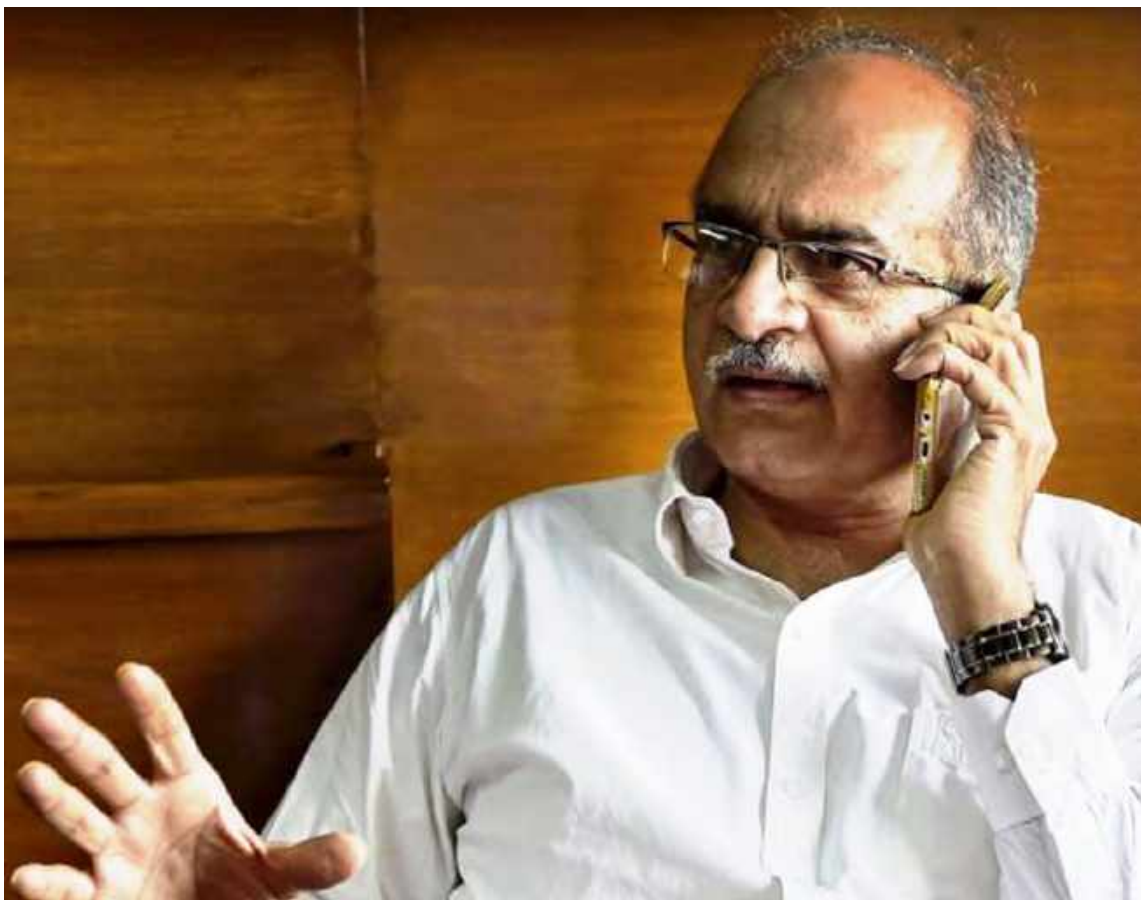
# CIVIL SOCIETY MUST STAND UP

I am, indeed, greatly honoured to be invited to deliver the keynote address for such a soul as Fr. Stan Swamy. He embodied the truest and most pristine spirit of humanity and Christianity. I had visited him at his ashram in Ranchi a couple of times. What I found there was that he had offered his ashram as a haven to all kinds of activists working for human

rights, working for the poor, the marginalised, and especially the poor tribals of that region.

He was the most generous person that one can imagine. He was the most gentle person that I have come across. Gentle and without any trace of ego. I remember the day when a contempt case against me was going on in

*Adv. Prashant Bhushan*





the Supreme Court. I saw a video where he is standing with a placard, saying, 'I stand with Prashant Bhushan.' The placard was shaking in his hands because of Parkinson's Disease. He was a remarkable man. One of the most lovely people that I have ever come across.

Fr Stan's death underscores the subject of today's lecture: 'Challenges to democracy and human rights in contemporary India'.

How he was arrested, the charge for which he was arrested, and how he was treated in jail which eventually led to his death just go to show how serious and how precarious the situation of human rights and democracy has become in India. What we see today is an assault on free speech, and on all people who speak against the government or the prime minister or the chief ministers of the State.

They run the risk of being incarcerated, being charged with sedition, and being charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). A very large number of our finest human rights activists, whether in the Bhima Koregaon case for which Fr. Stan was arrested or whether it's in the Delhi riots case, or in many other cases are suffering unjust incarceration by the malafide application of these Draconian laws like sedition or UAPA, which, in my view, are unconstitutional.

There is also an assault on minorities. The government and the party in power are focused on promoting hatred against minorities particularly Muslims and Christians.

The idea is to divide and rule. To divide between Hindus and Muslims, between Hindus and Christians. To somehow get Hindus to hate

Muslims, to get them to hate Christians, to get them to hate other minorities, and thereby garner the support of the majority community to remain in power.

There is also an assault on civility and culture. We have never seen this kind of culture of abuse. Vulgar abuses are hurled against activists, minorities, and even judges who occasionally stand up for the minorities or for those who are weak and oppressed.

There is an assault on every institution, which has been created by the constitution and our laws to protect democracy, to protect human rights, to protect civility, and to protect public money. There is an assault on the judiciary. As a result, to a very large extent, the independence of the higher judiciary has been compromised.

There is an assault on the media. We see a spectacle which has never been seen in India. Most of the mainstream media, particularly the electronic media, has been compromised. It has become an instrument of propaganda for the ruling party. They propagate hatred against minority communities. We have never seen this kind of spectacle where the vast bulk of the mainstream media, particularly the electronic media, is engaged in these divisive debates to divide the people based on their religion.

This has also been achieved in a variety of ways by firstly using inducements of government, advertisements, and money to compromise the media. And secondly, by using those who are still not willing to become an instrument of propaganda of the government. Then agencies, like the Income Tax, the Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Department, and National Intelligence Agency are used against the anchors and owners of the media organisations to bring them to heel.

Fortunately, during this time there has been the growth of the internet and social media, which the government is also trying to control. But so far, they have not succeeded in controlling the bulk of that.

All investigative agencies have been made into political instruments of the government to harass political opponents, journalists, and activists who speak up against the government. We have never seen this kind of assault before.



The Election Commission (EC) was independent for many years, especially after TN Seshan became the election commissioner. For more than 30 years the EC remained a beacon of independence and performed its role of independently overseeing elections in this country. But now for the last several years, we have been seeing that the EC's independence has also been compromised.

As a result, the EC has begun to function as an instrument of the government. The EC fixes election dates, according to the instructions of and the convenience of the government. They enforce the model code of conduct, only against the opposition and not against the ministers of the ruling party.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which was also a very independent institution, did proper investigative audits of all major government expenditures or all major government institutions. Their independence has also been compromised.

Recently, there was a report saying that after this government came to power, the CAG audits of the central government have been reduced by 75 per cent. That means they are not even auditing most of the accounts of most of the central government institutions which they were auditing earlier.

Institutions like the University Grants Commission which controls universities, and the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) which controls school education are getting saffronised. Universities are places where critical thinking, debates, and discussions are

supposed to be encouraged. But today, we see the opposite.

The NCERT is revising the history textbooks for schools by omitting large parts of inconvenient history and rewriting history in a saffronised way.

Quite apart from all these assaults, there is a whole-scale assault on democracy itself. Unfortunately, in India, we adopted a model of representative democracy. It did not have much by way of participatory democracy in terms of the participation of the people in lawmaking or policymaking. The only place where there was some scope for the people to intervene in lawmaking was through parliamentary committees.

Now we see the spectacle of parliamentary committees virtually being omitted, and no laws are being referred to parliamentary committees. Parliament has been reduced to a farce, where at least 100 laws have been passed without any discussion in just a matter of a few minutes. The result is that parliament has been rendered almost redundant.

Elections, which are supposed to be held once in five years, are virtually the only way where the people can express themselves in favour of some political party or another. Even those have been reduced to a game of money power. Instead of making those kinds of changes to reduce the role of money power in elections, this government brought exactly the opposite changes. Electoral bonds are a non-transparent way of funding political parties. Unfortunately, there is no limit on the spending by political parties. There was earlier, the Foreign Contribution

**T**here is an assault on every institution, which has been created by the constitution and our laws to protect democracy, to protect human rights, to protect civility, and to protect public money. **There is an assault on the judiciary. As a result, to a very large extent, the independence of the higher judiciary has been compromised.**



Regulation Act, which was mainly brought to prevent political parties, candidates, and public servants from receiving foreign funds and being influenced by foreign money. Unfortunately, that law is today being used against NGOs to prevent them from taking foreign funds, but it has been opened up for political parties by saying that subsidiaries of foreign companies can donate money to political parties.

So, all in all, we are in a state where our democracy has been eroded to the point of virtually becoming just tokenism. The government is using all its power to control and destroy the independence of all the institutions, control freedom of speech, and is using its power to even erode culture and civility in public discourse. So, we are in a very difficult situation.

The question is what can be done?

In my view, in this kind of situation where we are facing a full-scale assault on everything that we value, not only our freedom of speech or human rights or democracy but on culture and civility itself.

Civil society has a major role to play. The first thing is that despite this assault and the threat of being put in jail, we have to continue to speak out and develop the strength and courage to be able to face the prospect of being arrested or put in jail without getting unsettled by that.

The second thing is that though they have controlled the mainstream media, they have not yet been able to control the internet or social media. And there are a very large number of people in civil society today who are very distressed and alarmed at what is going on in the country, by the falsehoods that are being spread especially against minorities.

And therefore, we need to create a 'Truth Army'. An army of activists who use the internet and social media to counter the falsehood, and the hate that is being spread, to counter the abuse and the threats that are being spread. We have to use the internet and social media for propagating the contribution of minorities in our history, in our society, and the independence struggle. To propagate the benefits of human, cultural and religious diversity in our society. How this has helped this multicultural, multiracial, multi-religious society to become strong.

The third thing is that we need to come together to launch a major civil society movement. And I believe that the movement should be on the issue of unemployment. We need to have a very large mass movement for a law on the right to employment. Secondly, to ensure or, pressurise the government to fill up all vacancies in a credible and time-bound manner. And thirdly to prevent indiscriminate privatisation of public sector institutions like the banks, railways, healthcare or education.

Because these are sectors, where being poor and the needy need to be helped and need to be subsidised. They cannot function on their own steam. Therefore, we need to run a large civil society movement to press the government on the right to employment. This means that every citizen between the age of 21 and 50 must either have a job at least at minimum wage or must be given an unemployment allowance by the government at half of the minimum wage.

I believe that the time is right for a major civil society movement on the issue of employment in which the cutting edge will be on the youths, who are the ones, who are the most affected by this issue. The youth will have to be there at the forefront of any large mass movement. And I feel that the youth are agitated enough for us to organise them for a movement of this kind. And I feel that that kind of movement would help.

First, this would hurt the present dispensation which is largely responsible for bringing about this employment crisis. And second, it will also help the opposition parties to bring their act together, to get a narrative in place that will have a major effect on political fortunes in the elections to come.

So, I believe that Fr. Stan was doing everything that he could to stand up for justice, and fight against injustice to help the poor and the marginalised. And I am sure that if he had been alive, he would have done everything possible for civil society, to ensure that civil society gets its act together, to do the things that I have mentioned.

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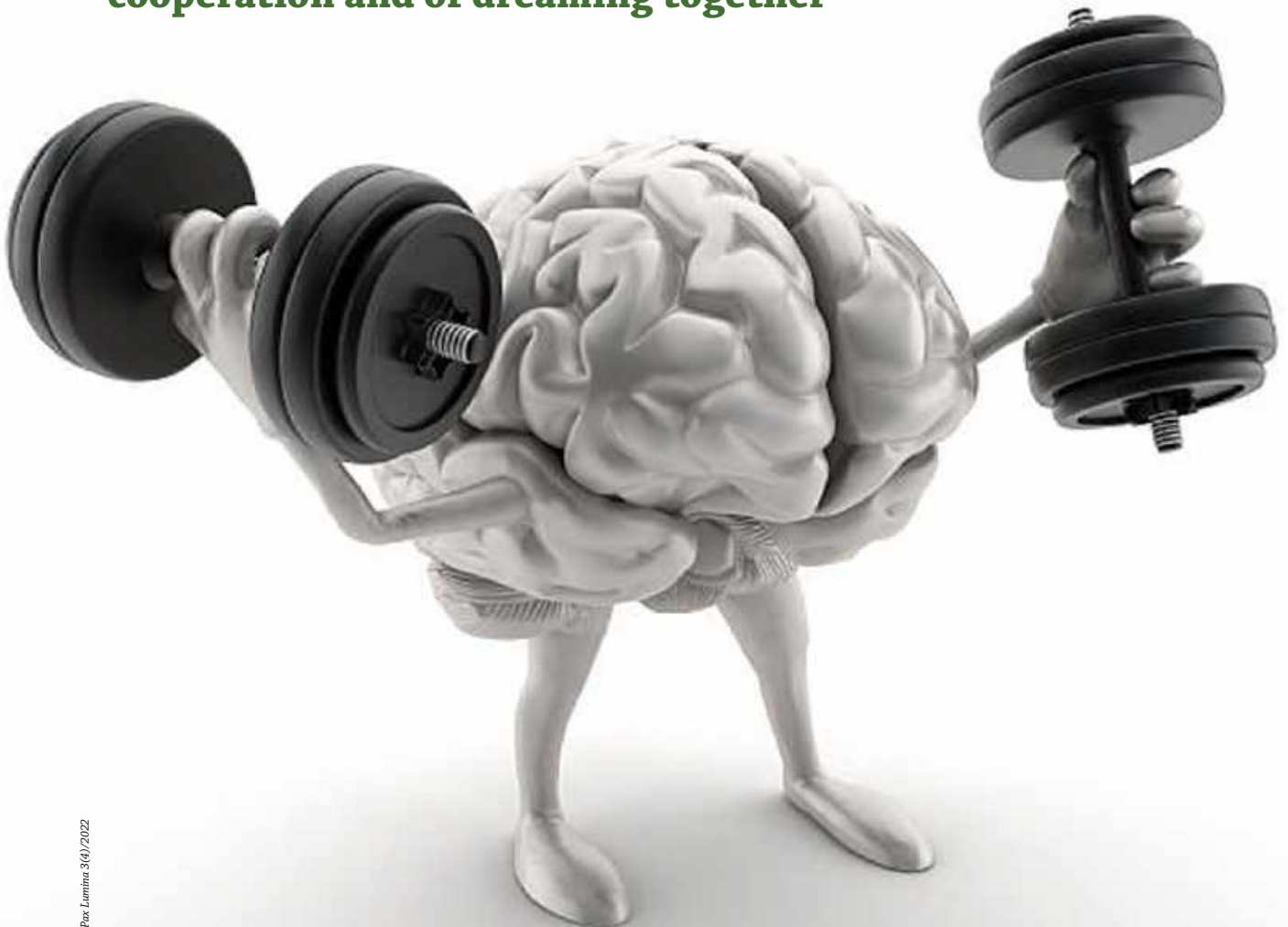
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# Science and Mental Well-Being

**Beyond Psychology: The power of  
cooperation and of dreaming together**





**T**he story of our successful expansion across time, into the 21st century, rests much more on our ability to cooperate than on our needs for self-assertion and competition. **This means that we have in us the biological, psychological, and social capacities to create ties with other individuals and communities and to thrive, and this should be a key focus of our psychological studies in trying to understand how to deal with conflict and war.**



**W**hen I am asked by a young person, who is considering doing a psychology degree, what books or authors I would recommend them to read to understand better the human mind, I say without the slightest hesitation, “Read Tolstoy and the other great novelists. You will understand more about the heights, depths, varieties, wonders, and tribulations of the human mind and behaviour by reading a novel like ‘Anna Karenina’ than any psychology book I am aware of.”

It has taken me well over 20 years of being a full-time academic psychologist to admit this. Psychology, including its clinical and counselling arms, certainly has many useful theories, data, and even some applications. For example, it can help people in dealing with anxiety and depression, though there are many conflicting theories and clinical applications. But when it comes to understanding and dealing with simple, poignant questions, such as ‘how can we teach children and adults to become more prosocial and peaceful beings?’, psychologists haven’t developed any type of cohesive or well-tested hypotheses.

There certainly are thousands of articles showing how we are biased towards favouring our ‘ingroup’, i.e. our family, religious, and social group, and how this can lead to disliking and even acting aggressively towards the ‘outgroup’.

Recently, there has been a flourish of articles trying to show how meditation (usually through secular techniques, such as mindfulness) can help us develop more empathy and altruistic feelings, as well as decrease aggression. The background theory to all this research, though, is not very clear except in the way that it portrays humans as self-interested, quasi-narcissistic animals, who hate uncertainty and are always in need of having their egos pampered.

But if this were an accurate portrayal of who we are, could we have made it this far as a species? The story of our successful expansion across time, into the 21st century, rests much more on our ability to cooperate than on our needs for self-assertion and competition. This means that we have in us the biological, psychological, and social capacities to create ties with other individuals and communities and to thrive, and this should be a key focus of our psychological studies in trying to understand how to deal with conflict and war.

I have recently finished a large project with evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar, where we looked at the psychobiology of bonding between individuals who are doing a ritual together. Dunbar has worked tirelessly to show how humans depend on cooperation mechanisms. He suggested that, as a species, we have found ingenious ways of stimulating social bonding to foster this cooperation through

religious rituals, like dancing and storytelling. These are some of the mechanisms we have used for tens of thousands of years to create social bonding.

In our studies, we found that religious rituals stimulate the endorphin system which is associated with very positive feelings and a sense of relaxation. In one study we conducted with a religious group, we found out that giving endorphin inhibitors to individuals depleted their ability to feel socially bonded to others in the ritual. This is a small, but poignant, illustration of how our body, mind, and communities function as a whole.

Much of the failure of psychological science in helping us understand peace and conflict rests on its segmented, individualistic, and dualistic view of the human. But how can we develop better and more holistic models that help us understand crucial aspects of who we are, including how we cooperate and fight with each other?

Perhaps we need to find a way around our current anxieties and (self) obsessions, and open windows in our old, stuffy mental houses.

I recently found such a window after meeting the indigenous political activist Davi Kopenawa, and reading his book, 'The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman'. Part of the book reads like this: an extra-terrestrial travels to our modern urban civilisation, meets with people in London, Paris, and New York, and writes about how we live, our dreams and concerns. Note that Kopenawa saw 'white' Western people for the first time when he was a teenager; Brazil currently has the largest number of uncontacted tribes in the world. But Kopenawa is, of course, very human. At a certain point, he writes in the book: "The white people, they do not dream as far as we do. They sleep a lot but only dream of themselves. This is why they are unable to understand our words" (2013, 313).

The idea that we dream 'small' and mostly about our self-concerns strikes me as deeply insightful. It also reminded me of the power of dreaming dreams collectively. The success of Christianity and other great religions was certainly built on collective dreaming. And at the psychological level, Kopenawa reminds us

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that awoken and dream life are not as separate dimensions as we often believe. Next to Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina', I'd include parts of his book as an insightful portrayal of how our minds work.

- For more information on Robin Dunbar's work, see his recent book, 'How Religion Evolved and How It Endures' (2021). Kopenawa's book has been translated into English by Harvard University Press, 'The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman' (2013).

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*Miguel Farias is an experimental psychologist who studies religious experience, rituals, and meditation practices and their effects. He was a Lecturer at Oxford University and currently leads the Brain, Belief, and Behaviour Lab at Coventry University. For more information on his work and writings, see [miguelfarias.co.uk](http://miguelfarias.co.uk).*



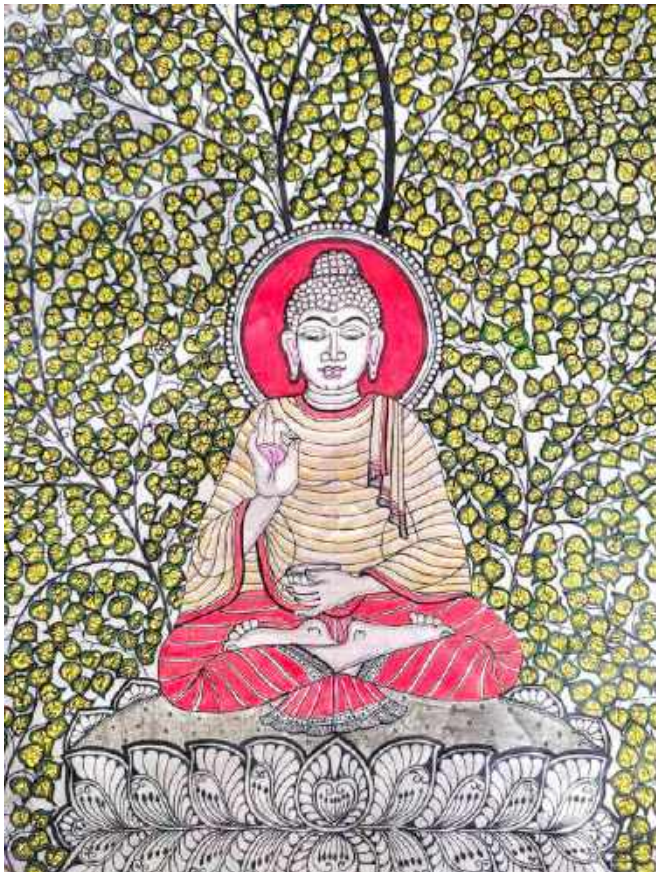


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# PATTACHITRA

## THE POWERFUL ART OF ODISHHA

Courtesy: Twitter-@PattachitraP



Images taken from Google archives







**I**ndia has a rich cultural heritage. Various traditional and cultural practices that date back hundreds of years are still prevalent in the country, while at the same time the people are receptive to modern trends.

The sustenance of these practices owes a lot to the determination of people to preserve their family traditions. Arts and crafts are an integral part. 'Aranmula Kannadi' (Mirror) of Kerala, the exquisite 'Pashmina' of Kashmir, the 'Thangka' paintings of Arunachal Pradesh and the 'Khavda' pottery of Gujarat are a few among them. While listing these, the Pattachitra art of Odisha cannot be left behind.

Dating back to the 12th century, the Pattachitra is regarded the spectacular folk art of Odisha. This art recently hit the headlines when Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik presented the 'Tree of Life' painting made by one of their master artisans, Apindra Swain, to Pope Francis in the Vatican on June 22. This art form is known for its intricate detail, natural colours and mythological themes.

Pattachitra is done on scrolls of cloth or bark, known as 'patt'. The customary patt is made using a time-tested technique.

Cotton cloth is first soaked in tamarind-seed water and coated with chalk and gum. Seven such sheets are pasted together. The final sheet is smoothened out with stone to create the canvas. The painting exudes vibrance with a heady mix of colours including white, black, red and blue. It symbolically reflects the natural life force of animals, humans, flora and fauna.

The colours used are mostly made from tree bark, lamp soot, and gum. Conventionally, the colours are derived from natural sources such as minerals and plants. White comes from the powder of conch shells, yellow from a stone called 'harital', red from the red-oxide stone or 'geru', blue from indigo and green from various leaves.

The paintings are finished with a coating of natural lacquer to give them a glossy finish. In recent times, with some of these sources being difficult to procure, mineral or synthetic colours are used.

The art form has a resemblance to the old mural style of the Kalinga region dating back to the 5th century BC. Although the earliest extant Pattas date back only from the 17th century, it is thought that the practice may have originated with the establishment of the Jagannath temple in the 11th century.

*Courtesy: Twitter-@Naveen\_Odisha*







Images taken from Google archives

The Pattachitra art form is practised mainly by the Chitrakar (artisans) community, who stay in the village of Raghurajpur on the southern bank of the river Bhargavi. The village is 14 kms from Puri.

There are 160 houses. In every family, somebody is involved in some form of art or craft. Hence, calling it an artisan's village would not be an exaggeration. All of them have acquired their skills from their forefathers. They make traditional masks, stone idols, papier mache, sculptures, and wooden toys, but the majority are Pattachitra painters.

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*Manoj A.R. is the Senior Sub-editor of Ezhuthu Magazine ([www.ezhuthu.org](http://www.ezhuthu.org)), a literary-cultural-scientific magazine in Malayalam published by LIPI, Kochi.*





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BOOK  
REVIEW

Pax Lumina 3(4) / 2022 / 56-58

# An UNPRECEDENTED EVENT in HISTORY

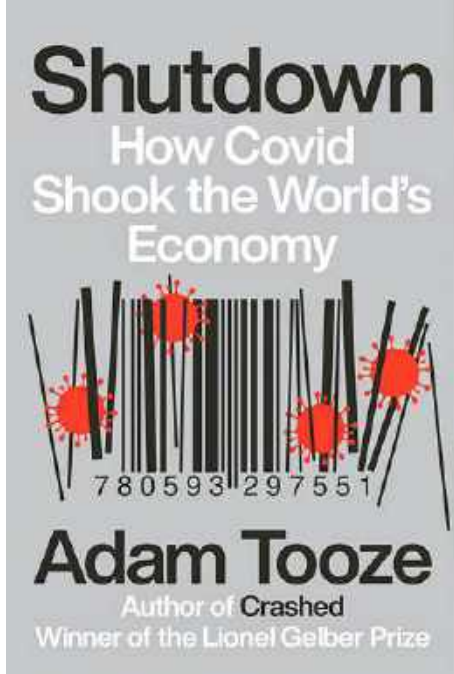
English historian Adam Tooze has studied the myriad effects of the pandemic in his book ‘Shutdown: How COVID Shook the World’s Economy’

**T**ooze believes that the sole reason for the escalation of the pandemic situation was the sheer unwillingness on the part of societies and governments to take timely actions. **The various existing structural tensions within societies just added to the woes.**

**A**s of now, humanity is muddling through an unprecedented historical situation, trying to grapple with and at the same time trying to take stock of the COVID 19 pandemic. Everyone is looking for answers to myriad aspects of the pandemic and how it was approached and dealt with by different societies. For all those seekers, the book, ‘Shutdown: How COVID Shook the World’s Economy’ by Adam Tooze will be a *vade mecum* (a book for ready reference).

Tooze, an English economic historian and professor, in his fourth book, tries to analyse and chronologically recount the incidents from the time of the detection of the virus, the chaos that ensued, how the world fought back, and the economic impact of it all.





Adam Tooze

The author talks about the epidemiological, political, social, geographical, and economic facets of the situation. But as the title shows, the economic aspect is the prime concern of the author.

The book is divided into four parts and has 15 essays. One excellent feature is its use of simple language. Even the toughest of topics, even those covering complex financial and

**B**y the time the world became aware of their mistake, the immediate next step that they took was a complete shutdown. **In a split second, the entire world economy and life in general came to a standstill. Every industry and household in the world was affected. This was a situation like no other.**

economic themes, are written in a simple and lucid language, without the usage of confusing jargon. This makes the reading experience for the layman a seamless job.

Tooze believes that the sole reason for the escalation of the pandemic situation was the sheer unwillingness on the part of societies and governments to take timely actions. The various existing structural tensions within societies just added to the woes. The world was reeling under many issues like climate problems, Brexit, the chaotic American administration under President Donald Trump, and many bilateral issues including the heightened tensions between China and the West. To put it simply, the world was preoccupied rather than worrying about a virus that first originated in a remote region of China.

A rather surprising reason the author gives for this rapid spread of disease was the failure on the part of the world's leaders to understand how interconnected today's world is. For one month, after China admitted to the presence of such a dangerous virus, the rest of the world remained inactive. This proved to be fatal.

The author also gives readers a glimpse into the rather unconventional responses that the Chinese government adopted to contain the disease. The Chinese government was ridiculed by everyone. Tooze, however, is of the opinion that being willing to sacrifice normality is actually the best way to preserve normality. The world was going through a completely chaotic phase and restoring normality was the first step that



**T**ooze comes to a very important conclusion. This is his central thesis. It was the failure of neoliberalism to uplift the failing economy. **The COVID 19 pandemic ended the long-held belief by the economists around the world that markets could regulate themselves during social and economic shocks.**



should have been adopted. To this end, the whole world had failed.

By the time the world became aware of their mistake, the immediate next step that they took was a complete shutdown. In a split second, the entire world economy and life, in general, came to a standstill. Every industry and household in the world was affected. This was a situation like no other. This shutdown led to many problems, including the loss of jobs, reduced demand and supply of goods, a decrease in demand, and a rapid decline in the growth rate. Every economy was hit. Soon, it became clear that salvaging the economy was the only way out of this quagmire.

For this reason, Tooze focuses mainly on central bankers and finance ministers and the policies that they come up with under immense pressure. Tooze analyses these measures and applauds them for trying and succeeding to a great extent in bringing the economy back on the path of recovery.

Tooze comes to a very important conclusion. This is his central thesis. It was the failure of neoliberalism to uplift the failing economy. The COVID 19 pandemic ended the long-held

belief by the economists around the world that markets could regulate themselves during social and economic shocks.

Also, Tooze reminds us that if the world's reaction to any event like the pandemic is disbelief, then "we ain't seeing nothing yet." Through this book, he states that 'caution' should be the watchword. Had the world reacted promptly when the news of the virus first came, we would all have been living in an entirely different world. The book also warns us that these kinds of events could occur in future. So, everyone should always be prepared for catastrophes of such magnitude.

In effect, Tooze's book provides the readers with a sweeping and thorough document of how the coronavirus pandemic affected the world in general, and the economy in particular. But the threat of the pandemic still looms over the world. So, this book is like writing a book when the story has not finished. But this book will definitely be a guide for everyone who wants to know what happened during the pandemic and also will be extremely useful for giving necessary guidelines in the journey forward.

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*Anjaly Vijayan is Assistant professor, Dept. of English and Media Studies, St.Xavier's College, Thumba.*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pax Lumina 3(4) / 2022 / 59

Dear Sir,

Let me first commend your editorial and the compendium of articles regarding war and peace. It is both timely and thoughtful. Every man wants peace and so does every woman. But this peace mostly relates to oneself. When it comes to peace in the generic sense it is mostly something that happens elsewhere and is mostly treated with a chilling indifference. Let us say 350 soldiers both Russian and Ukrainian are dying every day in this war about threats to security of one country or the other.

It is just a statistic and the internet is full of maps showing advances on the battlefield and gory pictures of death and destruction on an industrial scale. The media, especially the western media, talks as if Russia has already lost which seems far more important than the loss of life or suffering. So as always it is the narrative that is primary and peace is secondary. The west is perennially right and the others are always brutal killers. But let me end with one rather dismal thought. This war will either end with the dismemberment of Ukraine or when Russia decides to carry out the next phase of escalation involving tactical nukes which will start when they feel cornered and overcome by the unbearable costs of a conventional war of attrition.

Let us pray that this scenario never comes to pass. With regards

**Jagan Mathews, Kochi**

Dear Editor

I have read the Pax Lumina of May 2022. Your team has really worked hard to bring a different perspective to the war-peace related issues. Thanks for bringing diverse views from different corners of the world. Kudos!

**Jithin Joseph, Pune**



Dear Editor,

Wishes and greetings! Congratulations to team Pax Lumina. As usual, this volume is also very well done. All the best. Keep it up.

**S. Ignacimuthu, Thirunelveli.**

Dear Editor,

This is an appreciation of Roy Thottathil's article 'Art is a Spiritual Process', published in Pax Lumina, May 2022.

For quite some time now, I have been interested in investigating the roots of creativity and it has occurred to me that creativity is manifested not just in conventional forms like art, literature and science, but also in philosophy and spirituality. In this context, I find Roy's article highly informative and particularly revelatory. He asserts that art is essentially spiritual, because humans are essentially spiritual beings. He goes on to add that what is spiritual in art gives expression to what is deep and transcendental. Spirituality is not identical with faith or religion. There is always something that resists articulation in art, while spirituality is fundamentally an appreciation of the ineffable. Roy cites the work of several scholars to buttress his arguments. The result is a beautiful and poignant analysis of the relationship between art and spirituality. In my eyes, art and spirituality are distinct expressions of creativity.

**Dr. K. Babu Joseph, CUSAT, Kochi**





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