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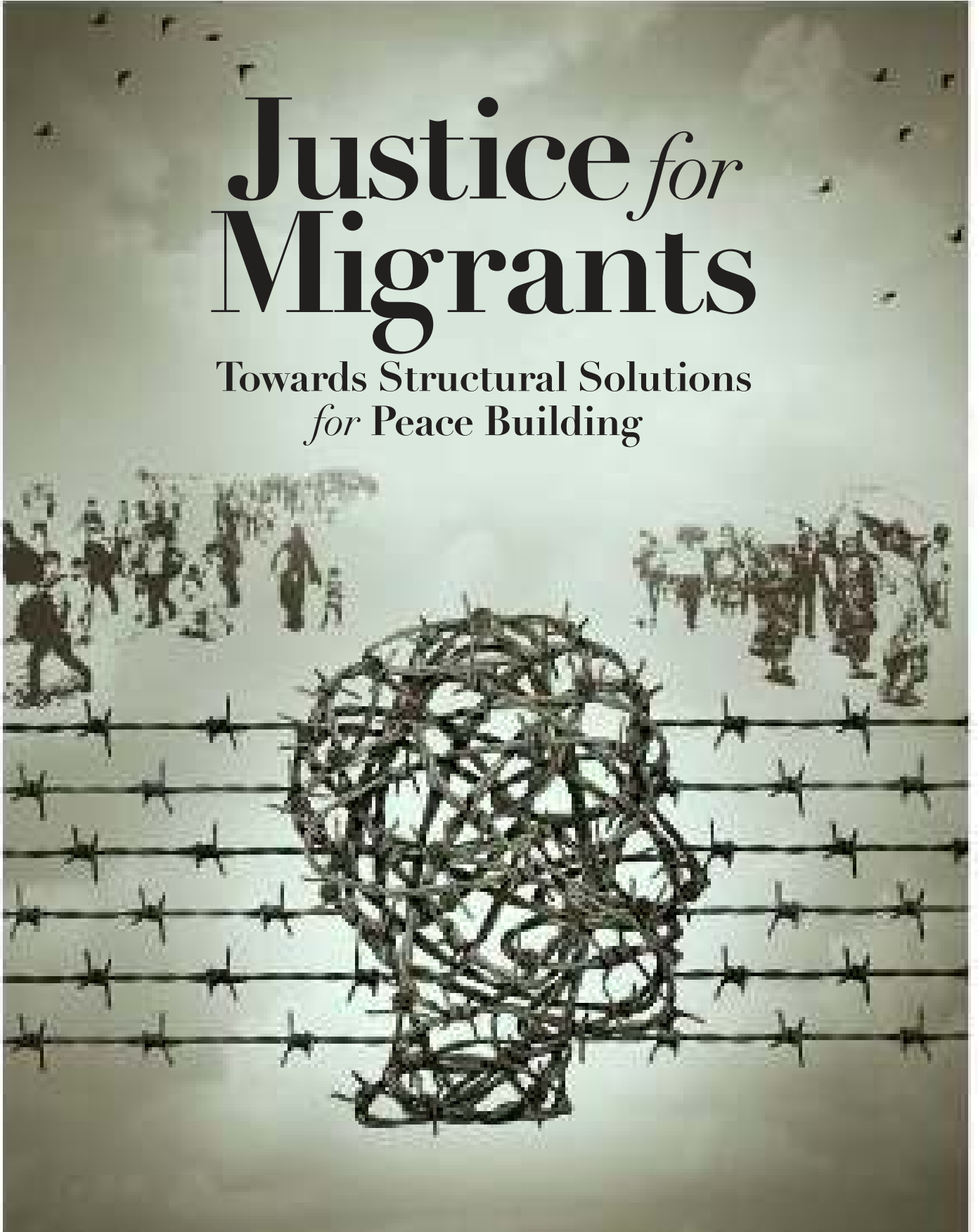


Vol. 1 | No. 2 | July 2020

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

Justice *for* Migrants

Towards Structural Solutions
for Peace Building



We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves.

- Dalai Lama

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PaxLumina
A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation



Vol. 1 | No. 2 | July 2020

Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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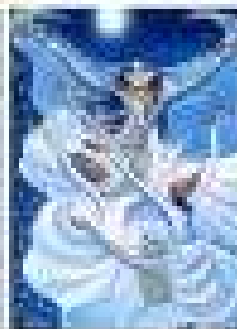
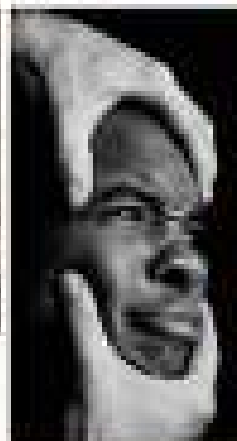
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editorial

The long walk of the migrants

This issue of Pax Lumina focuses mainly on the plight of the migrant workers in India triggered by COVID-19. Triggered but not caused as often erroneously depicted in the media. Newspapers have a life of just a day. Social media often less. People move fast with technology and remember very little. This magazine tries to do something different: to create memories with longer lives. Unless we remember or can remember we will do pretty nothing or nothing meaningful anyway. We are trying here to walk with the migrants, the walk which they walked, many to death and deprivation that always walk with them all their lives.

It is always easy to shoot the messenger for the bad news. So we blame the little virus for all the sickness of this planet. Well, Pax Lumina's friends from all over the world who with their field experience and analytical skills have contributed to this issue are not in a hurry to break news and judge. They watch, pause, think and build memory-chips to help us all to stop a while to ask why this flood of suffering, anxiety and helplessness rushing in with such unexpected suddenness. Are these cloud-bursts of the condensed structural violence of prejudice and exploitation? Please read on and judge for yourself.

We start with a poem. Not a usual practice for a magazine like this. But these are unusual times. The poem on migrants movingly rendered by Taapsee Pannu was a social media sensation. We thought we will capture it in print and give it a little more life. Agreed a poor substitute for giving the real migrant a little more real life with less pain and suffering. After all art has its limits but you and I can hopefully do better.

Jean Dreze is trying to do just that. He started his life as a mathematical economist, saw poverty in India (where else?), felt it, studied it with Amartya Sen, moved into the heartland of India's poor, the resource-rich but starving Jharkhand. He is trying to get the life of the meagre ration supply from government extended till the pandemic lasts. His worry is: what will happen if the pandemic continues and the migrants are unable to go back to their work places?

I can sense the same worry, though totally selfish and hypocritical this time, in the urban bourgeoisie of Indian cities. Here it is because of the loss of cheap labour. But Jean Dreze has real economics and human empathy behind his worry: if migrants do not return, the excess supply of labour will further depress the already low wages of labourers in the region. It is heartening to see that there are human beings still around.

From the the same place that is Jharkhand we have SonaJharia Minz who fought discrimination and prejudice to become a computer scientist and now the Vice-Chancellor of a university. She talks about her life and her community, the tribals.

Injustice and prejudice lead to discrimination and violence. We have a revealing analysis of the inhuman violence of racism in the US from a scholar there.

We also feature the words of sanity clearly articulated way back in 1967 by the great Martin Luther King Jr. How can there be a future without remembering the past?

Shiv Viswanathan writes about peace in the Indian borders in the context of rumblings of absence of it. We have also printed some beautiful Sufi paintings. You may ask whether it is the right time for that. Let me hazard a hypothesis: if we had found the time for Sufi-like thoughts and activities, the present situation would not have come to pass.

The Jesuits who launched the Loyola Institute of Peace and International Relations (LIPI), Kochi, which is the nodal platform of the Peace and Reconciliation Network of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia have "walking with the excluded" as one of its universal apostolic priorities. We hope what we have tried to do in this issue is in tune with that within our over-all objective of working for justice, peace and non-violence.

I wish you all some thoughtful reading and empathetic action.

Jacob Thomas
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Travails of Migrants

One has to be realistic. One's concern for equity and justice in the world must not carry one into the alien territory of unreasoned belief. That's very important.

- Amartya Sen

प्रवासी

हम तो बस प्रवासी हैं,
क्या इस देश के वासी हैं?
अगर हम नहीं हैं इंसान
तो मार दो, दे दो फरमान।

खाने को तो कुछ न मिल पाया
भूख लगी तो डंडा खाया
फासले तय किये, हजारों मील के
कुछ साइकल पर, कुछ पैर नंगे।

मरे कई भूख से, और कई धूप से
पर हिम्मत न टूटी, बड़ों के झूठ से
बस से भेजकर, रैल से भेजकर
जान खो बैठें, रास्ते भूलकर।

यहां प्रतिमाओं की बड़ी है हस्ती,
पर इंसानों की जान है सस्ती
बड़े सपने, अच्छे दिन बतलाए
पर भूख किसी की मिठा न पाये।

चाहिए न भीख, न दान
बस मत छीनिए आत्मसम्मान
हम तो बस प्रवासी हैं,
क्या इस देश के वासी हैं?

Migrants

We are just migrants,
Are we citizens of this country?
Are we humans?
If we are not, kill us. Issue a decree.

For days we had nothing to eat.
And our hunger was fed with lathis.
Covered thousands of miles in the scorching heat,
Some on cycle, others walking barefoot.

Many died of heat, left to our fate
We carried on, betrayed by the State.
Dispatched like cattle in buses and trains
We lost lives, smeared history with stains.

Statues are the status of divinity,
But we the poor are stolen of our dignity.
They sold us big dreams, great days ahead,
Yet our hunger wails were unheard.

Handouts and charity we don't want,
Just leave us with our self-respect.
We are just migrants.
Are we citizens of this country?



This poem was written by Kireet Khurana and premiered on Indian Express Youtube channel in 12 languages. The moving rendition by actor Taapsee Pannu became an internet sensation.





Jean Dreze

jaandaraz@riseup.net

MIGRANT LABOURERS' PLIGHT

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 09-12

During the time of any crisis, the hardest hit is the poor. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has left us all bewildered at the response of State governance structures, more so due to the enormity and unprecedented spread of the infection and the inadequate institutional frameworks to handle it with minimal collateral damage. In fact, I have no special competence on this entire subject, but I can share a few thoughts about how things look like from this part of the country, especially Jharkhand and to some extent, in the surrounding States of Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal and so on. These are some of the poorest States of this country. I think it is important to focus more on these States from now on because that is where the next crisis is likely to be, a crisis of survival and a crisis of widespread hunger.

If you look back over the last few weeks, one of the striking things we observe is that the Central Government was consistently unable to anticipate the next crisis. They did not anticipate the



Central Government must accommodate the request of the Jharkhand government for additional foodgrain for the purpose of covering households that do not have a ration card. This must be done urgently and without any delay. Otherwise, there are going to be many more tragedies, like the death of this five-year-old girl in Latehar district, during the next few weeks.





consequences of the lockdown or the consequences of abruptly cancelling all the trains. They could hardly imagine the consequences of people being sent in huge numbers without proper arrangements. Similarly, not anticipating the current crisis of survival and livelihood could adversely affect the migrant labourer as well as the host populations of these poor States.

If you look at the map of coronavirus cases, you can see very clearly that the virus is spreading fast from the western and southern parts of the country towards the eastern parts. Till now this part of the country had very few cases but now the numbers are rising very fast. Some of these eastern States are even poorer than Nepal and Bangladesh, e.g. Bihar. During the national lockdowns, the rising numbers of migrant workers, among other internally displaced persons, have accentuated the civic crisis. As a spillover effect, it has caused an ever-worsening health crisis thereby endangering livelihoods and increasing impoverishment risks. The other

worrying aspect of this is the availability of excess labour, causing a drive down in wages. Nothing can be gloomier!

Now one thing that is important to remember is that the people who are suffering from this whole crisis are not just migrant workers. The migrant workers, of course, are the main victims and their hardships are very visible on the television screens and so on. However, people forget the plight of their families. They fail to understand that this is a wholly interrelated chain of deprivation, hunger, and powerlessness.


You must have heard of the recent hunger death in Latihar district in Jharkhand, when a 5-year-old girl called Nini fell unconscious and died on the 16th of May. This happened in the midst of media attention and public discussion on hunger deaths during migrations. Tragically, until that girl died no body was talking about the plight of her family or for that matter the many families in the same village who were experiencing

the same situation of having no jobs, no ration cards and no food at home.

There are many like Nini's family. I refer to that because this was the family of a migrant worker Jaglal Bhuiya who was stuck in brick kiln far away from his family. It was his wife Kalavati who was struggling at home to feed her six children, surviving merely on the occasional help received from neighbours and a little bit of help from time to time from the Anganwadi. Though she got Rs.500 in her bank account through the Jan Dhan Yojana, most of the time it was like not having enough to feed a family. We, therefore, need to figure out what can be done in the next few months to help these returning migrant workers and their families and many other families that are at risk of hunger.

I think the first point to recognize and which is reasonably well-understood is that public distribution system or PDS has kept people alive in the last few weeks. Fortunately, in Bihar and Jharkhand and the other poorer States of India, the coverage of the PDS is not so bad. About ninety percent of families in rural Jharkhand have a ration card and as you know the food ration has been doubled in the last three months. I think that was one good move of the Central Government and that has been a great help to huge numbers of poor families. So, I think it is extremely important that this doubling of food rations continues in the next few months. The recent move to extend food rations for another three months was a much-needed relief.

Now, of course, that is not enough because food rations are just a protection from hunger. It does not allow people to have good nutrition let alone a decent standard of living. We also have many poor people without ration cards and Jaglal Bhuiya's family was one of them. There are hundreds of thousands



An important issue that needs to be tackled is the unwillingness of migrant labourers to return to their earlier place of work or to undertake long journeys. This may cause surplus labour accumulation on the one hand without any work and consequently, may also disrupt labour availability at previous workplace locations. This may slow down economic recovery. So, unless there is much more Central support for States, I think the humanitarian crisis may worsen in the next few months.

of families in Jharkhand that were mostly poor earlier but have now been pushed below the poverty line. This is disheartening!

So, I see that in a State like Jharkhand where a large majority of the people who don't have ration cards at the moment, are vulnerable families who may face the risk of hunger in the next few months. There is a strong case for giving ration cards. I think in the current situation, there is also a strong case for universalising the public distribution system at least in rural areas and urban slums. This benevolence of the State would cost very little financially given the social benefit it would achieve in such trying times. Central government must accommodate the request of the Jharkhand government for additional foodgrain for the purpose of covering households that do not have a ration card. This must be done urgently and without any delay. Otherwise, there are

going to be many more tragedies, like the death of this five-year-old girl in Latehar district, during the next few weeks.

We are talking here only about avoiding hunger but if you want people who have anything like a decent life, they need much more than mere subsistence support. I think that if people are to earn any substantial income in the next few weeks the main hope that they have in rural areas is to get employment under the National Employment Guarantee Act and that is why another very urgent priority in all those poor States is to scale up the level of MNREGA employment. We need five or ten times as much work under MNREGA as we see today. Unfortunately, the poorest States are also the ones that are least prepared to radically expand the scale of MNREGA.

In Latehar district of Jharkhand, there is no programme officer at the Block level for MNREGA in seven out of nine Blocks. So, you can imagine how difficult the situation must be where you do not have any officer to manage it at panchayat level. And this brings me to the last point which is to have in place, very urgently, special support and special attention, to the poorest States by the Central Government.

Though the Jharkhand government apparently collects Rs.5000 crores a month in taxes, the current collections are a dismal amount of Rs.700 crores. So, there is hardly any revenue, and unfortunately, instead of helping the States and especially the poorest States, the Central government is concentrating more on helping business. It is not even paying existing dues to the poorest States. For example, according to the Government of Jharkhand, Coal India Limited, a Government of India undertaking, owes Rs. 80,000 crores to the Government of Jharkhand for coal royalties and dues. Now that is more

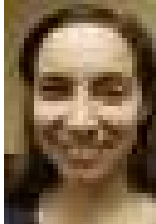


than the annual budget of the Jharkhand Government. So, there is a very urgent need for more Central support to the poorest States, especially States like Jharkhand, even more Bihar, because I think Bihar is a veritable time bomb. The coronavirus case is rapidly increasing, and Bihar has a huge proportion of landless casual labourers who are the most affected by the unemployment crisis. This may cause a spike in crime rates and conflict between the migrant returnees and host population as deprivation increases.

The other important issue that needs to be tackled is the unwillingness of migrant labourers to return to their earlier place of work or to undertake long journeys. This may cause surplus labour accumulation on the one hand without any work and consequently, may also disrupt labour availability at previous workplace locations. This may slow down economic recovery. So, unless there is much more Central support for States, I think the humanitarian crisis may worsen in the next few months.

Prof. Jean Dreze, is a Belgian-born Indian economist, renowned social scientist, and activist. He has co-authored books with Nobel Laureate in Economics Prof. Amartya Sen and many other eminent economists. He is currently the visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University, Jharkhand.





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Pandemic *Xenophobia and* Inequality

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 13-15

Despite the great promise of the UDHR, in 2020, we live in a world in which national governments have failed to live up to the promise of human rights. Their bodies of law continue to make distinctions between people when defining eligibility to access their basic needs.

From the moment the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, the people of the world have a mutually agreed upon code of freedoms and protections owed to every person by virtue of their human dignity. The drafters summarized those freedoms as ‘freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want’. They viewed the Declaration as an essential step toward the fulfillment of the UN’s foremost purpose: maintaining international peace and security.

Despite the great promise of the UDHR, in 2020, we live in a world in which national governments have failed to live up to the promise of human rights. Their bodies of law continue to make

distinctions between people when defining eligibility to access their basic needs.

As with any crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic had the most devastating impact on those groups whose human rights have consistently been neglected or violated for a long period preceding the crisis itself. How can another outcome be expected for those with the smallest bank accounts (or with no access to financial services at all), the fewest personal connections in the halls of power or wealth, the greatest obstacles to political participation, the most crowded and pollution-plagued living conditions, the most limited access to affordable healthcare, nutritious food, clean water, and information in languages they understand?



Migration plays a key role in the world's otherwise feeble efforts to redistribute resources and opportunities in a way that is more equitable and thus, more supportive of global social cohesion and economic health.

These descriptions apply to many different groups in any society, depending on which ethnic, racial, gender and religious identities, and languages they belong to. In virtually every society, however, the descriptions also apply to migrants.

Article 6 of the UDHR indicates that the rights enshrined within that document are carried with every person wherever he or she may travel. But governments and societies fail to uphold those rights, consistently privileging those living in their place of origin (2020 World Migration Report, page 190).

Even in the best of times, we have seen migrants living in informal or unstable housing, battling hunger, living in extreme poverty, facing illness or injury without access to health services, working in the informal sector, unable to seek justice for crimes committed against them without fear of immigration enforcement reprisals, missing out on public education, and excluded from basic public services. Still worse, we are witnessing a global trend in criminalising migration. The most egregious examples include indefinite detention in prison-like conditions, separation of migrant parents and children, and summary removal of asylum-seekers without the due process as required by international law.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that, in times of a pandemic, we have seen migrants left out of public health and economic relief responses, forgotten in the formulation of lockdown measures, and disproportionately burdened by the COVID-19 virus itself. These are consequences of the xenophobia that is endemic to our world. They are also precisely the fate that the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative sought to avoid with their 2013 MICIC Guidelines.

The MICIC Guidelines offer policy and practical recommendations for the protection of the rights of migrants when a crisis befalls the nation. In addition to emergency response efforts that integrate the specific circumstances and needs of migrants, the Guidelines place great emphasis on how to reduce the factors that create migrant vulnerabilities in a crisis.

They recognize that, if we are to have peace, we will need to 'flatten the curve' of rising xenophobia and migrant criminalisation. To that end, our path forward must include, among many other initiatives, the elevation of public discourse in two major areas: the role and the drivers of migration. While a negative narrative about the challenges presented by migration has taken hold of the global imagination, we have

lost sight of the positive role played by migration.

Migration is a pressure-relieving valve and a resource and labour redistribution channel that we desperately need. As the largest age group of the population in many high-income countries continues to age out of the labour force, those nations will face growing labour shortages, care needs, and social security funding strains.

The growing working-age population of low and middle-income countries will play a key role in relieving them. Migrant workers' financial remittances to families in their countries of origin are also the primary facilitators of capital flow into low and middle-income nations. Their collective annual contribution has long dwarfed the pittance offered by high-income nations in the form of development aid. On an average, remittances serve as 40% of household income for recipient families and as key engines of development where financial and governmental agents have failed. Tools and language to support positive migration discourse were recently developed by the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which they have expressed in their publication entitled *Shaping the Public Dialogue on Migration and Migrants: A Guide to Promoting a Balanced Dialogue*.

We also need to invest in data collection and increase education on the extent to which migration has become a necessity rather than a choice by the effects of climate change, other forms of environmental destruction, and gross economic inequalities between nations.

The most recent data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre indicates that 33.4 million people were forcibly displaced in 2019, nearly 75% of them by environmental disaster and

degradation. On the economic side, the average household income in high-income countries compared to that of low-income countries has come down drastically during 2013 to 2017.

Long-range studies on national economies by the International Monetary Fund indicate that 'the persistent lack of inclusion—defined as broadly shared benefits and opportunities for economic growth—can fray social cohesion and undermine the sustainability of growth itself.

Migration plays a key role in the world's otherwise feeble efforts to redistribute resources and opportunities in a way that is more equitable and thus, more supportive of global social cohesion and economic health.

Highlighting these realities, especially in the 'developed world', could be an important step toward a reckoning with the havoc the economic interests and consumption patterns of the Global North have wreaked on the Global South. It could, one hopes, not only infuse Global-North natives and the super-wealthy of every nation with a greater compassion for the forcibly displaced but also inspire personal and communal metanoia.

For if we are to ever ensure that our migrant sisters and brothers are protected in a crisis, we must ensure that our structures and behaviour allow them and their families to live in dignity and well-being in times of normalcy. If we are to make our way to the peace characterized by freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, and freedom from want, we must win our freedom from ignorance and indifference to the injustice all around us.

Teresa Blumenstein is the New York Coordinator, JCoR (Justice Coalition of Religions)





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Giving Visibility to Migrants

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 16-19

The events that have unfolded in the last three months only reveal a bitter truth that there are millions of workers, mainly migrants, who build our homes, maintain our cities and provide various services to the people, contributing nearly 10 percent of the GDP, who are invisible to citizens, policymakers and governments.

The sudden national lockdown announced by the Prime Minister of India on 24th March, giving the people of India a mere four-hour notice à la demonetisation style unearthed the reality behind the extent of the contribution of migrant workers to the growth and development of India.

At the stroke of midnight, millions of people, including the migrant population, were stranded without any mode of transport available to go back home. Firstly, the government did not anticipate that a national lockdown would result in millions of informal workers, especially migrant workers, losing their jobs, livelihoods, sources of income and even their rental

accommodation for being unable to pay rent. Migrant families were left with no option but to leave cities and search for the best way to head home.

Secondly, the government failed to understand that in a crisis, migrants, like any other people, would prefer to be at home. Instead, they sealed the State borders, imposed a curfew and asked State governments to feed stranded migrants in makeshift shelters. This thoughtless policy decision only resulted in a humanitarian crisis as 50 million migrants defied lockdown rules by risking their lives to reach home using innovative means, trekking, walking on roads or railway tracks, cycling, getting on to cargo trucks and any available means of transport.

Hundreds of migrants died of exhaustion, hunger, being run over by trains on the tracks or vehicles on the



roads. After five weeks of lockdown, the government was compelled to introduce 'Shramik Trains' to take migrants back home. The Supreme Court intervened in the matter only at the end of May and has directed the government to bring all stranded migrants to their destinations by the end of June. A few millions of migrants have already been brought home by trains, but there are still many millions more waiting for their turn to return home.


The events that have unfolded in the last three months only reveal a bitter truth that there are millions of workers, mainly migrants, who build our homes, maintain our cities and provide various services to the people, contributing nearly 10 per cent of the GDP, who are invisible to citizens, policymakers and governments.

Many factors contribute to the invisibility of migrant workers. Firstly, they largely belong to socially disadvantaged sections of society, such as Dalits and tribals. They are socially invisible as they are often poor, marginalised and discriminated against.

Secondly, migrants largely belong to backward regions, where there are hardly any employment opportunities and where there is employment, the wage rate is low. Besides, the neglect of rural development and infrastructure and the over-emphasis on urbanisation and building of 'smart cities' have spurred large flows of rural-urban migration.

Policymakers often overlook the fact that migration from backward regions to more developed regions with a higher wage rate contributes to the development of the country as the remittances sent back by migrant workers to their families in rural areas boost consumption and economic development in the backward regions.

Thirdly, there is an underlying identity-based politics that is played out that advocates the 'sons of the soil' theory, where locals based on linguistic or cultural groups are given preferential treatment and migrants are treated as 'outsiders' and blamed for all evils that plague society. Paradoxically, they are treated as aliens.



Finally, a large majority of the migrant workforce are casual labourers, daily wage earners, contract workers without written contracts or unorganised workers engaged in informal labour that do not have employment, income, or social security. Such workers remain invisible in the labour market as there is hardly any data about such workers for any policy intervention. Thus, migrant workers are also statistically invisible

Fourthly, due to the federal structure, the identity documents granted by a particular state is applicable only within that State and not outside. The ration card and the caste/tribe certificate apply only to the native State. Therefore, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of one State cannot access the benefits of affirmative action in another State. Consequently, migrants of SC/ST origin from one State have to live a miserable life without any benefits in the destination State.

Fifthly, the legal framework in the Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 applies only to a very few migrant workers and the implementation of the Act throughout the country is very poor. Besides, a large number of migrant workers are engaged in informal labour which does not come under the purview of the Act and most labour laws, thus making migrant workers legally 'invisible'.

Finally, a large majority of the migrant workforce are casual labourers, daily

wage earners, contract workers without written contracts or unorganised workers engaged in informal labour that do not have employment, income, or social security. Such workers remain invisible in the labour market as there is hardly any data about such workers for any policy intervention. Thus, migrant workers are also statistically invisible.

To give visibility to these migrant workers, several structural changes and policy decisions need to be taken. Firstly, all workers, including migrant workers, need to be registered and given all-India multi-purpose smart cards with unique ID numbers that will have all details about employment and access to benefits for the workers. This will ensure portability of all welfare schemes and social security benefits for migrant workers working in any part of India. This will provide visibility to migrant workers and transparency in access to all benefits for migrant workers.

Secondly, all labour laws need to be revised to make them inclusive so that labour rights can be guaranteed to all workers, including informal labour and migrant workers.

Thirdly, the decision of the government to ensure portability of ration cards under 'One Nation One Ration' is a step in the right direction. Also, there should be universalisation of the Public Distribution System rather than a targeted one that exists at present.

Fourthly, there should be a robust social security system in the country that guarantees universal access to education, healthcare, welfare benefits, access to credit, insurance and pensions, and even unemployment benefits.

Besides, the National Employment Guarantee Scheme, which is targeted and limited to rural areas, could be extended



to urban centres as well. This will benefit migrants wherever they work in the country. In addition, there needs to be a publicly funded low-cost housing scheme in rural and urban areas so that the homeless and the migrants can access affordable housing instead of living in slums and unauthorised colonies.

Fifthly, the affirmative action measures for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes need to have a pan-India coverage. This will ensure that the rights of migrants belonging to marginalised communities are protected throughout the country.

Finally, there needs to be a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and employment-oriented skill development in agricultural and non-agricultural trades so that migrants can be gainfully employed either in origin as well as destination States. These policy measures will go a long way in giving visibility to the contribution of the poor, including the migrants, in the growth and development of every region in our country.

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Accompanying *the* Interstate Migrants

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 20-22

With the aim of a just world for all, the Jeevika Migrant Workers' Movement (JMWM) was established in 2011 as a proactive, responsive and result-oriented non-government organization with a mission to facilitate fair employment practices and the well-being of migrant workers in Kerala. The movement works to uphold the fundamental rights of migrants ensured by the constitution of India that 'all human beings have equal dignity, freedom and all have the right to move and work in India.'

C COVID-19 Pandemic has brought migrants to the forefront of society. Migration is a global phenomenon that is growing at a fast pace in modern times. According to the 2011 census India has nearly 453.6 million internal migrants based on the place of last residence (37.4 per cent of the total population). And Kerala is one of the attractive destinations for migration from different parts of the nation particularly from the northeast and northern States due to higher job opportunities and wages.

According to a study conducted by the Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, 'Kerala is likely to have

3.5 to 4 million inter-state migrant workers in 2017'. Unfortunately, they are also victims of a number of human rights violations at their workplace and are treated unjustly. Often, they live in poor and unhygienic residential facilities. The cultural differences and language barriers are an added struggle for them. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," (Martin Luther King Jr). A just world is a dream that we all share for peaceful coexistence.

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practices and the well-being of migrant workers in Kerala. The movement works to uphold the fundamental rights of migrants ensured by the constitution of India that ‘all human beings have equal dignity, freedom and all have the right to move and work in India’.

Jeevika’s approach is democratic, participatory, non-institutional and rights-based.

The primary interventions include:

- i) Engaging with employers for ensuring just and fair wages for the migrant workers.
- ii) Legal assistance for work-related issues, such as wage disputes.
- iii) Educational and welfare support to migrants and their children.
- iv) Medical and health support through networking with hospitals and also financial support in emergencies.
- v) Support for sending back the dead bodies of migrant labourers.
- vi) Networking with government departments for the rights of migrants.
- vii) Attending to their spiritual needs.
- viii) Organizing sensitization programmes on government schemes/programmes for migrant labourers.

Besides, a strong network, ‘People for the Rights of the Interstate Migrants’, headed by Jeevika has been initiated in collaboration with other organizations and volunteers to advocate and lobby for improving the living and working conditions of migrant labourers. Similarly, through ‘Jeevika Kala Kendra’ the cultural ethos of the guest workers are promoted through their tribal dance and cultural events.





In almost a decade of its existence, Jeevika has touched the lives of hundreds of migrant labourers through various interventions. Several received their salary through the intervention of Jeevika. Many others received medical and health support. Hundreds took up health insurance. They received opportunities to attend religious ceremonies.

Jeevika took part in consultation meetings with government officials on migrant labour issues and thereby influenced the policies/programmes designed for the migrants. The celebrations, like Onam, Christmas, and Iftar enhance social integration and the appreciation of other customs and practices. Jeevika has always treated them as brothers and sisters and they considered Jeevika as a true friend from where they can get any help.

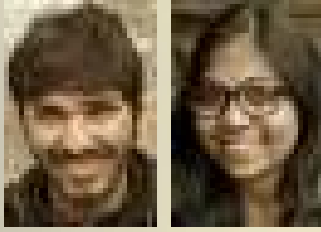
The pandemic and lockdown have made them jobless and incomeless.

However, prompt interventions by the government and elected representatives ensured meeting their survival needs. As individual NGOs were not allowed to make any intervention of their own, Jeevika could not take any direct measures. At the same time, Jeevika kept in touch with them as a helpline centre ensuring that they remained safe and healthy.

The crisis in the States and the country heightens the relevance of institutions like Jeevika for justice and safety to the migrants. We have a long way to go. What we do is only a drop of water in the ocean. We always hope for the better. “The ultimate end of all revolutionary change is to establish the sanctity of human life, the dignity of man, the right of every human being to liberty and wellbeing,” said activist Emma Goldman (1869-1940).

Author is the Director of Jeevika Migrant Worker's Movement at Sameeksha, Kalady, Kerala State.





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Media attention and an avenue to voice out problems are accessible to the position you occupy in the class hierarchy in society. This is but an instance of structural marginalisation, of issues as well as the stakeholders involved.

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 26-23

Empathy in Policymaking

Raj Kishore is a migrant worker from Chotpur, Bihar, who was working as a construction worker in Noida (Uttar Pradesh). He got in touch with us, through a relative who had received help from Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN) - a group of volunteers responding to distress calls from stranded migrant workers and engaged in relief work.

“With the lockdown, we haven’t had any work, so it’s a problem, but if you can’t send any help, we’ll be able to manage, don’t worry,” he said by phone.

Meanwhile, living in an upper-middle-class society, when our area became a containment zone, we immediately started getting calls from the media asking “Are you getting home delivery?” Home delivery! What for? The cakes that we might have to skip for a few days?

Media attention and an avenue to voice out problems are accessible to the position you occupy in the class hierarchy in society. This is but an instance of structural marginalisation, of issues as well as the stakeholders involved.

Vinod Kumar had migrated to Ludhiana, Punjab six months back, to work in a shirt dyeing company. With his first child born in the middle of lockdown, he faced difficulty in ensuring the good health of the baby and mother. The lockdown curbed his movement and left him scrambling for government rations. The numerous government helplines did not pick up, while services now take pride in being active on social media.

And if he tried to turn to the local shop or the police station for help, he faced discrimination because he was a migrant. Left without a job and a newborn baby



to take care of, in a land that, apart from giving him his roti sabzi, had in no way been hospitable to him, where does he turn to? How does a voiceless person navigate through this crisis when faced with hurdles in every direction?

Apart from these two testimonials, and the countless others you can find in SWAN's reports [1], it points to a structural apathy that exists towards migrant workers. In this piece, we look at a need for empathy and understanding, as a prerequisite for justice for the stranded migrant. Empathy not just in society as a whole, but also in the policymaking process, and the execution of policies determined.

The State-imposed lockdown was a decision taken unilaterally. It not only plucked out all the sources of labour, at home and work, paralysing the society, but also brought to light our implicit dependence on migrant workers. It is so deep-rooted and ingrained in our way of life that we have failed to acknowledge their presence.

The labour exodus has exposed the dependence of the city on its migrant workers, the invisible workers who are

the veins and arteries of the cities. The urban landscape which we live in and take great pride in, would not have been developed without the sweat and blood of rural migrants. Yet the hypocrisy of society is highlighted in their treatment of migrant labourers as cheap and disposable commodities, failing to recognise and support their rights.

As Prof. Jayati Ghosh [2] has rightly said, in a discussion on SWAN's Report 32 Days and Counting, "I don't think we've had such a dramatic and obscene betrayal in our history, where the middle class and the elite have declared that they don't care what happens to migrant workers. They are around only to provide goods and services for for the middle class and the elite. That betrayal is something very deep and will take a very long time to correct." [3]

If it were possible for a migrant workforce to come together on a collective platform, it would perhaps aid them in holding their employers and the State accountable for discriminating against them. One would be able to lock on to some non-negotiable principles of social security -- such as a right to work, to minimum wages, by collectivising.



In SWAN, our numerous experiences with trying to get workers the sanctioned rations, or getting them to register with the government for Shramik trains, all pointed towards the same thing - the State lags in implementation of its existing systems and designs numerous other systems to counter it.

Yet by nature, this group has multiple identities, and unionising has taken a backseat in the light of it becoming detrimental to the meagre employment opportunities they have at hand. When your day is driven by a need to ensure you get your next meal, these problems point to a system that does not accommodate the need of workers to come together to demand a better deal.

It is not as if there are no provisions for their rights. The government did run Shramik trains and announce policies for ration to help sustain the workers. However, the ordeal they had to go through to get access to these policies is what is unfair.

Raimal, who belonged to a group of 40 workers from Chinnapandu, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh reached out to SWAN on May 18. They had received proper food and shelter from their company for only a month. Both the contractor and the tehsildar (the block level government official), kept giving promises about providing rations but never delivered. It was through a local group that rations were arranged for them. On May 21, they started walking to Jharkhand which is 1500 km away. But they first walked to the Chittoor railway station 100 km away. After SWAN contacted the district administration, their train journey to Jharkhand was facilitated on May 22.

to be employed again if they do and having to pay exorbitant prices for their transportation. It also brings out the issues concerning travel registration and shelters for migrants in States they are stranded in, as well as the quarantine facilities in their home States.

A system is only as good as how it intends to accommodate those falling through the gaps. Government systems seem to do this as an afterthought, if at all. In SWAN, our numerous experiences with trying to get workers the sanctioned rations, or getting them to register with the government for Shramik trains, all pointed towards the same thing -- the State lags in implementation of its existing systems and designs numerous other systems to counter it. But workers, neither having the know-how nor the information, find themselves racking their heads on how to use them.

It points to a lack of empathy in the decision-making process. To reiterate,



SWAN's third report, 'To Leave or Not to Leave' highlights other such instances of migrant workers, wanting to leave, but being threatened never



it is not as if workers were not able to use the systems. However, listening to the testimonials, one cannot help but wonder what framework these policies are based upon, which leads people into such ordeals.

Policies are structured in a top-down manner, where some individuals decide for the beneficiaries, but they seem to be leaving empathy behind. Instead, policies need to be driven by the people in need, with a bottom-up approach, that would ensure the concerns of the people are met. If empathy were truly built-in, the system would emerge from the grassroots and be duty-bound towards the people it serves.

It would do us well to remember Gandhi's quote: "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following text. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man/woman, whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it?... Will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry

and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away."

Self-rule and rule over self are what we as a nation once dreamed of. On this note, every citizen should have access to both. We may have achieved self-rule, but through the systemic inadequacies, we struggle to give the backbone of our economy the dignity to even aspire to rule over themselves and to even dare dream of dignity to guide their own lives.

[1] All 3 reports by SWAN can be found on- <http://strandedworkers.in/mdocuments-library/>

[2] Professor Jayati Ghosh is a Developmental Economist, and teaches at Jawaharlal Nehru University

[3] Link to the Webinar on SWAN Report '32 Days and Counting'

Anish Mishra and Sindhu Sivakami are volunteers with Stranded Workers Action Network, a group of concerned citizens responding to distress calls from stranded migrant workers and engaging in relief work

■



Violence of Prejudice and Racism

The very fact that racism degrades both the perpetrator and the victim commands that, if we are true to our commitment to protect human dignity, we fight on until victory is achieved.

- Nelson Mandela



Francisco Javier

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 28-32

George Floyd and Racism in US

With horror, the world watched the video of the murder of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin, in Minneapolis, USA on May 25, 2020. After handcuffing Floyd, the police officer held him on the ground, kneeling on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds until Floyd died of asphyxiation. This happened, despite his pleading that he couldn't breathe, and despite onlookers begging the officer to relent. His alleged crime? The cashier in a shop suspected that Floyd had paid with a counterfeit \$20 note, and called the police.

This is not an isolated incident in the

United States. In recent years, nearly 1000 people have been killed by police annually. More often than not, an armed white officer kills an unarmed black man, even in routine traffic stops. American police are perhaps more heavily armed than their counterparts anywhere else in the world. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, the federal government affected a major transfer of weapons from the military to police departments. Combined with a deep history of racism that is inseparably tied to the institution of slavery, this creates a lethal state of affairs. Floyd was just one of the most recent victims.



The protests have not only been in the large and diverse cities and towns, nor just on the coasts, but also in rural communities with an almost all-white population. This is a hopeful and perhaps unexpected sign of empathy across racial and ethnic differences, a desire for a more just society, despite the few but vociferous voices to the contrary.

The present historic moment, however, is unique. Two-and-a-half months into the coronavirus pandemic, after a period of lockdown, economic free fall, and job losses for around 20 percent of the national workforce, patience was fraying. How much confinement, financial strain, and fear for one's health can people take?

Black and Latino people also have higher rates of COVID-19 infections and up to double the death rate, owing not only to the effects of higher rates of poverty but also institutionalized racism such as receiving less timely medical care.

Meanwhile, East Asian Americans have seen an uptick in racist attacks and discrimination, targeted because China was the origin of the virus. So, yet another gruesome murder of a black man by a white police officer motivated tens of thousands of people to not only to decry the situation in words but to go out into the streets and make their outrage visibly felt.

Protests occurred in dozens of major cities, towns and even small villages across the country. Such a protest is a fundamental right in American democracy, protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution – Free Speech and Assembly.

The protesters were largely peaceful – chanting, holding signs, candlelight vigils, and civil disobedience, such as blocking roadways. The slogan #BlackLivesMatter, which first surfaced a



few years ago, after the shooting to death of another unarmed black man, Trayvon Martin, by a white man, has become a rallying cry. There was some destruction and looting, though it appears mainly carried out not by protesters but others who sought to take advantage of the chaos to make off with goods.

Then there was the police response to protestors, at times disproportionate and brutal – using tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons. An elderly man in Buffalo, New York, a life-long peace activist, was shoved to the ground by a police officer who did not even stop as blood poured out of the man’s cracked skull. Several high-profile journalists were arrested without cause, seemingly because they were Latino or African American, while their white colleagues remained untouched. The police response, at times, confirmed precisely the grievances the protesters were seeking to convey.

Less than a week after the murder of Floyd, the White House employed the military to gas lawful, peaceful protesters. This was done to allow President Donald Trump to walk a block to an Episcopal church where photographs were taken showing him holding a Bible in his hand, seemingly to suggest that his leadership had divine sanction. This move was immediately condemned by many religious leaders, including those responsible for the Episcopal church.

Despite the backlash, the following day Trump staged a similar photo opportunity in front of a Catholic shrine, which was criticized by the Catholic archbishop of Washington D.C., Wilton Gregory. Meanwhile, the President did little to console the grieving family of Floyd, acknowledge racial injustice, or attempt to restore national unity.

Yet these protests do show that there is a broader unity among Americans than we

may have imagined. The crowds turning out for the protests, hosting prayer vigils (even on Zoom and Skype), or posting signs at the windows of their homes saying “#BLM” (BlackLivesMatter), came from a diverse cross-section of Americans – Black, White, Latino, East and South Asian.

The protests have not only been in the large and diverse cities and towns, nor just on the coasts, but also in rural communities with an almost all-white population. This is a hopeful and perhaps unexpected sign of empathy across racial and ethnic differences, a desire for a more just society, despite the few but vociferous voices to the contrary.

Confirmation of this consensus that all is not well, and things must change in American race relations and policing, can be seen in the declining approval of President Trump in polls since Floyd’s killing. This registered disapproval is likely magnified by the extraordinary national death toll (now over 1.2 lakh) from the coronavirus as well as the economic devastation of America’s most vulnerable by unemployment.

Special emergency aid to the unemployed, passed by Congress in March, is due to run out in July. However, the situation is likely to get worse for quite a few Americans. Coronavirus infection rates are also on the rise in about half of the States, including the largest ones – California and Texas. All of this is to say that there is good reason to believe the public will demand a deeper reckoning with the injustices in the nation’s race relations, policing, the structure of the economy and the uneven accessibility to adequate healthcare.

The United States must face head-on, rather than paper over, the truth about the past: the brutality of chattel slavery in the American South until the end



of the Civil War (1865), the lawless lynchings of Black Americans thereafter, the segregation of society, and the colour prejudice that prevails to this day.

The history is well known, but history is not sealed in the past. These painful truths have a long reach into the hearts and minds, identities and judgments of people today, as well as our institutions of governance, policing, and education. They constitute white privilege, non-white disadvantage, or worse. The latent, subconscious racism that may cause a white person to feel suspicion or fear upon seeing a black man, is as much racism as its overt expression by the Minneapolis policeman Chauvin to murder a handcuffed Floyd over an allegedly counterfeit \$20 note.

This national reckoning, if it is to be successful, must happen on two levels. Outwardly, it requires a reevaluation of policies to do with policing, training, hiring practices, diversifying the leaders of institutions to more equitably representing the population, and stimulate dialogue and cooperation

across different groups. But inwardly it means that each person has to examine his/her prejudices, unearth them, and allow them to be transformed. Those who deny that they have prejudices are simply not self-aware.

For this reason, the great leaders of social transformation in the 20th century, such as Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, insisted that their followers take on personal discipline, asceticism, the practice of non-violence and meditation as a means to align their outward striving for justice in society with an inward striving for a moral foundation. Such an alignment is necessary for the health of both the society and all its members.

Whether the United States is at the point to be able to undertake the work of such a national reckoning is yet to be seen. But now certainly seems as good a time as any to make a start.

Justice must not be kept waiting.

The author is a research scholar from USA



Martin Luther King, Jr.

I was led to non-violence because I felt it was the best moral way to deal with the problem; that is, establishing a just society.

Negro was a slave in this country for 244 years. This led to the thingification of the Negro. He was not looked upon as a person. He was not looked upon as a human being with the same status and worth as other human beings. Slavery was justified morally, biologically, theoretically and scientifically.

American society made the Negroes' colour, a stigma, and that can never be overlooked. The other thing is that America freed the slaves in 1863 through the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, but gave the slaves no land, nothing in reality to get started on. I believe we ought to do all we can, and seek to lift ourselves by the bootstraps, but when white Americans tell a bootless Negro to lift himself by the bootstraps, it becomes a cruel joke.

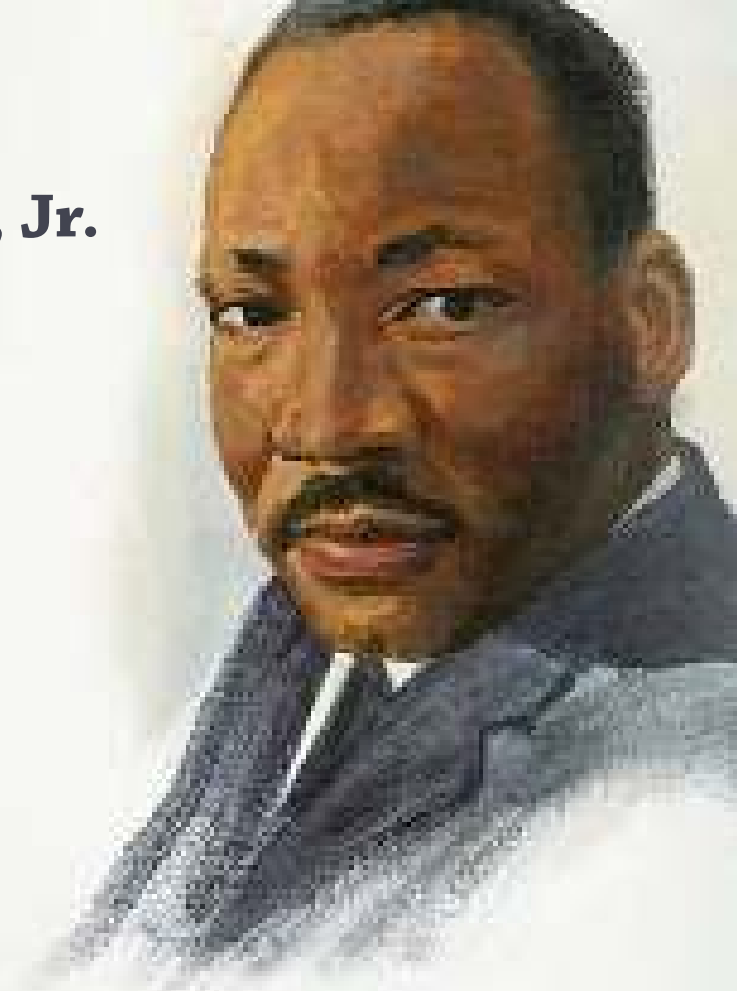
We want to be men and women; we want to be persons not on the basis of the colour of our skin, but on the basis of the content of our character. I have noticed the other day, some weeks ago, a Negro was shot down in Chicago and it was a clear case of police brutality.

And I feel that there is a need for a revolution of values in America, because some of the values that presently exist are certainly out of line with the values and the idealistic structure that brought our nation into being.

There must be a restructuring of the architecture of our society where values are concerned. There are three evils in our nation. It is not only racism, but economic exploitation of poverty and militarism.

And it seems to me that integration at its best is the opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity. We have got to learn to live together as brothers and sisters and get rid of slums and poverty. And I think the realistic fact is that we still have a long, long way to go. I'm not one to lose hope, I keep on hoping. I still have faith in the future.

*Extracts from the Interview with **Martin Luther King, Jr.** by **Sander Vanocur** for the NBC News in 1967, 11 months before his assassination.*





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On COVID-19, Prejudice *and* Education

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 33-36

The process of separating the ingroup and the outgroup by the mind is called social categorisation. Social categorisations give rise to prejudices and maintain them by exaggerating between-group differences and minimizing within-group differences. People typically see outgroups as less variable than average, that is, 'they are all alike'. Ingroup is seen as more variable than average, that is, 'we are varied'.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 virus has made conspicuous many ostensible facets of human nature; worst among them is the inherent prejudices and biases in human beings. This is evident in many proclamations made by experts and lay people alike: COVID-19 is a 'Chinese' virus; 'Muslims' spread it; and those 'inside' are safe as long as 'outsiders' are not allowed in. Categories like 'Chinese' and 'the rest', 'our' religion and 'theirs', 'outsiders' and 'insiders' and 'us' and 'them' are formed so easily that one cannot but question why this happens, especially when one knows that a virus is a virus and everyone is susceptible to be infected by it and everyone can potentially carry and spread it to others.

The Nature of Prejudice

Prejudice is entirely normal, argues Gordon Allport whose work *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954/1972) sparked a revolution in the studies on prejudice, presciently. Allport's contention is that prejudice is not solely the product of a sick, psychotic mind. Human beings have a normal, natural propensity toward pre-judgment. People universally and spontaneously separate themselves into homogeneous groups, into 'us' and 'them' categories - the group containing the self, the ingroup, and other groups, the outgroups-the 'we' and the 'they'.

The process of separating the ingroup and the outgroup by the mind is called social categorisation. Social categorisations give rise to prejudices



and maintain them by exaggerating between-group differences and minimising within-group differences. People typically see outgroups as less variable than average, that is, 'they are all alike'. Ingroup is seen as more variable than average, that is, 'we are varied'. This sets the stage for prejudgments of outgroup members. From this follows the attributing of various tags to 'us' and 'them'. The failures in the outgroup are interpreted as a result of their 'inherent' dispositional features; their successes to a random fluke. And the opposite logic holds for in group outcomes. The tags are clear: 'we' are intrinsically good; 'they' are intrinsically bad.

From Attitude to Behaviour

Prejudices, given a chance, turn into behavioural patterns. The initial expressions can be seen in social sharing among ingroup members. Interdependence within in an ingroup can be maintained only if socially shared ways to make sense of outgroups can be found. For example, after a negative revelation (e.g., discovering that a Covid-19 patient had attended a meeting

in a masjid), conversations about the group that the person belongs to tend to focus on stereotypes, especially negative, stigma-congruent information (e.g., Muslims do not follow the law of the land).

Gossip, rumor, opinions, stories, media, and online platforms are all various forms of social sharing that contribute to consensus in stereotyped beliefs and related prejudices. When prejudices and stereotypes are shared in these forms, those who propagate them are given social legitimacy. They are emboldened by this presumed social permission to circulate more of their biases. Thus, prejudices and stereotypes are multiplied and reinforced. This shows that there is an explicit socially shared understanding without which prejudices and stereotyping cannot thrive.

From merely sharing prejudices and stereotypes with others, the next step is to act discriminately against the stereotyped person/group or agree to discriminatory acts against them. We tend to find no reasons not to support laws and practices that may deny equal

treatment to the stereotyped on the basis of his or her group membership. The easiest way to discriminate, and also one of the most dangerous, is avoiding contact with the person because of an alleged stigma attached to him or her. Think of apartheid in South Africa, racially segregated society in America and an all pervasive caste system still prevalent in the Indian subcontinent.

Discrimination provides for the outgrowth of physical violence, the worst expression of intergroup prejudices and stereotyping. Violence towards the prejudiced member or group thus erupts from a gradual building up of animosity beginning with the first step of categorical prejudgment of a group. The interesting facet of this is that ordinary people who have no personal grievances against the stereotyped person or the group take part in the violence or support it. For example, it has been reported that ordinary people without any compunction, join in torturing the enemy prisoners.


Can Prejudices be Overcome?

Studies have shown that social interventions can play a great role

in reducing prejudices. Enacting appropriate laws is the most effective way. Certainly, there must be a dimension of critical thinking present among the law-makers to pass such legislations. However, once it is passed, the legislation itself becomes educative.

At an individual level, the most effective way to minimize prejudices and stereotyping is through substantial contact with outgroups. In 2005, the results of a meta-analysis of studies related to intergroup contact effects were published. During a 5-year search, the researchers uncovered 515 studies that examined relationships between intergroup contact and prejudice; together they represented responses from 2,50,493 individuals in 38 nations. The results showed three important features of prejudice reduction. First, greater levels of intergroup contact are typically associated with lower levels of prejudice across all levels of analysis. Secondly, the effects typically generalized; that is, contact with individual group members contributed to less prejudice toward the entire outgroup. Thirdly, intergroup friendship is the most salient factor in the reduction of prejudice.





Schools are the best suited social structure that can promote ideal conditions of optimum contact among various groups reaching below the surface. Cooperative learning, when students from different groups are asked to work together in common projects, has been found invaluable in this regard.

The Role of Education

Simple contact per se with a member of the outgroup would not necessarily be sufficient to change attitudes towards that group. Contact must reach below the surface in order to be effective in altering prejudice. This is where the role of education becomes prominent. Schools are the best suited social structure that can promote ideal conditions of optimum contact among various groups reaching below the surface. Cooperative learning, when students from different groups are asked to work together in common projects, has been found invaluable in this regard.

Through the development of cross-group friendships, pupils will become more inclined to trust not only the individual outgroup members they know, but to demonstrate a broader willingness to trust outgroup members as their views on relations between the groups begin to shift. In addition, where cross-group friendships arise, they may provide access to ‘friendship networks’; by meeting other outgroup members through each existing outgroup friend, more cross-group friendships may develop. Every school should facilitate such friendship networks.

All schools may not have the resources to reorganize their teaching-learning practices in order to establish strong inter-group friendship networks among its pupils. However, there is one thing that all schools can do. Studies have shown that prejudice can be reduced even with such simple practices as mutual compliments in class rooms and self-disclosures in one to one settings, which can generate feelings of closeness in a relatively brief time. Classroom exercises like asking pupils to take a few minutes and think about seeing the world through the eyes of an outgroup member can have huge effect on reducing prejudice. Our schools must develop a culture of mutual appreciation of the good found everyone.

The Power of a Touch

Studies have shown that even minimal interventions like interpersonal touch can aid in reducing outgroup animosity. Psychologists maintain that touch (along with physical proximity and behavioural synchrony) is an embodied cue of ‘communal sharing’ or close relationships. Interpersonal touch causes people to act in more helpful and generous ways toward the person who touches them. In fact, a mere interpersonal touch can, like an actual friendship, produce not only positive feelings about the individual ‘toucher’, but also can reduce prejudice toward his or her group.

We cannot touch a COVID-19 patient; but at least we can see the world through his/her eyes and the eyes of his/her loved ones.

The writer currently pursues his PhD in Education from Trnava University in Slovakia. He lost two of his cousins due to the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020.



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**REPORT
FROM
EUROPE**

The ‘New Normal’ *in* Europe

Pax Lumina 1(2) / 2020 / 37-39

The drama is even greater for people who do not master the language and have serious difficulties about knowing the rules of sanitation and isolation. Many of them are afraid to leave their homes to seek medical care or to buy groceries because they think the police will ask for their documents and they will get into trouble.

We are facing one of the most complex situations ever, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Numbers are rising every day, in almost every corner of the globe. Europe has reported more than 2,250,000 cases and almost 200,000 deaths. The countries reporting the most cases and deaths are the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Spain, Russia, Germany and Belgium.

Europe decided to close its borders, imposing a lockdown on all residents. Health and economic consequences have been dramatic in some regions around the continent, especially affecting the most vulnerable people, including migrants, refugees, and forcibly displaced persons.

What is the situation faced by people on the move?

#StayAtHome

#StayAtHome is one of the most used hashtags these days in social networks and health and public administration directives. The tragedy is that there are many vulnerable people, including many migrants and refugees, who have no home in which to isolate themselves. Other people live indoors, but they cannot call it home. These are underprivileged homes where entire families or strangers live together in 20 square meters.

Refugee Camps

Images in Greece make clear the incompatibility of refugee camps to house those who have fled hunger or violence in their home countries. Crowded camps, with no sanitary conditions for quarantine and isolation, would surely have terrible consequences.



Isolation

Some migrants are living in their homes, these days, with no support networks with which to communicate or to feel accompanied. The drama is even greater for people who do not master the language and have serious difficulties about knowing the rules of sanitation and isolation. Many of them are afraid to leave their homes to seek medical care or to buy groceries because they think the police will ask for their documents and they will get into trouble.

Detention Centres

There are different types of detention centres around the world. For example, in Spain, there is no possibility of expelling people due to the closure of the borders of more than 120 countries. The overcrowded conditions in which they live puts people at risk.

Prejudices and Xenophobia

Societies look for scapegoats when they face a crisis. The global pandemic we are experiencing is no stranger to that trend. There are voices saying migrants are the one spreading the disease. In some cases, the scapegoats change sides and we no longer are speaking only of the migrants who jump the fence, but also of the Chinese immigrants who brought the coronavirus from their country.

Essential Workers

Many migrants, particularly women, work as caregivers to children and the elderly. As essential workers, many are not permitted to self-isolate at home and must continue working at great risk to themselves and their families. Unfortunately, this invaluable contribution to society often goes unacknowledged. Many people who work in this sector are not able to live with dignity.

Trapped at the Border

With the closure of borders around the world, families find themselves divided and trapped in transit sites with no means of survival, sometimes without the knowledge of the local language or legislation. People blocked at airports around Europe, unable to access basic information, overflowing consulates and embassies, are elements that present a strong threat for certain groups that have been isolated by the closure of borders.

Economic Impact of COVID-19

There are quite a few migrants with precarious jobs, who are already affected by layoffs and even self-employed people have seen their professional futures endangered. The economic blockade caused by the coronavirus affects the most vulnerable people, especially those in the lowest strata of our labour market. A large percentage is migrants and refugees in need.

How can we take care of the most vulnerable people on the move?

Given the current situation in Europe, several measures would need to be implemented soon.

1. Evacuate overcrowded refugee camps and detention centres and provide safe accommodation for migrants.
2. Stop the deportations of migrants, due to weaknesses of the health systems in many countries.
3. Promote access to medical care for the homeless, migrants and refugees in transit, especially for the most vulnerable groups.
4. Provide humanitarian and financial support in solidarity with the countries and areas most affected by the humanitarian care of refugees.
5. Support the right to asylum, including the right to due process, especially in this time of crisis.
6. Provide safe emergency resources for homeless people or those living in overcrowded situations who cannot comply with prevention and isolation measures.
7. Offer information in several languages about the current situation, as well as health measures.
8. Implement networks of care providers, especially for people who are lonely, sick or have been trapped by border closures. Some civil societies and various churches, which had anticipated such a need, have set up various networks from the beginning of the current crisis.
9. Raise awareness in favour of the most vulnerable groups. Many migrants are taking care of our elderly, the group

most affected by the pandemic. A large part of our labour market and care networks are supported by the immigrant community. In these complex times, these key elements should get frequent headlines in our newspapers.

10. Fight against falsehoods and populist trends that associate migration and the spreading of COVID-19, stigmatising migrants, refugees and displaced people.

What measures may we adopt in the 'new normal'?

Promote a sensible regularization policy that helps the integration and the safeguarding of human rights, as well as the construction of a 'social fabric'. The global health emergency has also brought to light the great vulnerability of rights that these situations cause in people, given the loss of employment and social protection.

Foster international cooperation to minimize the causes of migration. Countries of origin need to minimize the structural factors that compel people to leave their country.

Reinforce integration and social coexistence in our pluralistic and multicultural societies. Hospitality and integration are key elements to ensure that our diverse societies build a future and inclusive citizenship.

Realise that migration is an opportunity. Migration is an opportunity for societies to grow and be enriched not only from an economic and scientific point of view but also in the social and cultural fields and the world of values.

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The Indian Scene

Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.

- Pope Francis



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Migrants in India: Strategies for Justice

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Introduction

The COVID-19 national lockdown in India displayed not just a migration, but an exodus of millions of distressed internal migrants. Immediately after the declaration of lockdown, migrants realised that they do not belong to the very cities and urban areas where they worked. So, they had no choice but to go back to their native places. The desire to get home is deep-rooted in all human beings.

But for the ruling class, the industrialists and the middle class in India, migrants are not human beings with families, or persons with desires, hopes and aspirations. They are just a commodity and non-citizens without rights. This article is an attempt to probe into the reality of distress migrants in India and

Forcibly locking down migrants in temporary shelters, far away from their near and dear ones, was not justifiable. It was told that this ban on travel was to prevent migrants from carrying the coronavirus to the villages and to prevent a shortage of labour after the lockdown. The second reason indicated a capitalist mindset influenced by profit-oriented thinking and an attitude towards migrants as mere commodities, and not as human beings with rights.



to suggest strategies for justice to the migrants and their families.

Distress Migrants in India

In India, migration has been a strategy for survival and livelihood for millions of people. The findings of Census 2011 point to a decade of rural distress as the major reason for migration. Landless farmers, agricultural labourers and marginal farmers who lost their livelihood on account of globalised agricultural practices form the bulk of distress migrants.

The majority of the migrants are from the socially and economically deprived strata of rural society. They belong to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or the Other Backward Classes with very little or virtually no control over the means of production.

All the three major sectors of the Indian economy, namely agriculture, industry and services employ a large number of migrant workers. The building and construction industry along with brick-


kilns, stone quarries and garment industry employ the majority of the inter-state migrants. Services provided by migrants include domestic services, security services, working in small hotels and driving auto-rickshaws and taxis.

Workers without rights

Distress migrant workers face a daily violation of their human rights and in a systematic manner. The violations include the right to livelihood, residence, food, health, education, social security, equal wages, proper hours of work and freedom from bondage. They mostly remain without identity and so are unable to claim State resources. They have no social security, no compensation in cases of accidental injuries and deaths, and no access to safe drinking water and healthcare.

Most of these workers are forced to buy foodgrains and kerosene at higher market prices as they do not possess ration cards. They face a lack of legislative protection due to the scattered and dispersed nature of their employment and lack of collective





The inter-state migrant workers are not foreigners or aliens, but fellow citizens with constitutional rights. Migrants, through their hard labour, contribute to the economic growth of India, but they are considered as 'the other'. It is important to promote a positive discourse to avoid prejudices and a negative portrayal of these workers.

bargaining power. The State sees migrants as a low priority and so many social protection schemes tend to have 'sedentary' bias and exclude migrants.

There is a dearth of exclusive laws enacted by the Central Government for the protection of their rights. The only exclusive law enacted by the government is the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979.

The Act applies to every establishment and the contractor employing five or more inter-state migrant workers, but it remains, by and large, without teeth.

Strategies for Justice

Let Migrants go home.

In the Bible, the book of Exodus (5:1) describes how Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh Ramses 11 and said, 'Let my people go'. After the declaration of the lockdown and prohibition of travel, many appealed to the rulers to

'let migrants go home'. Yes, the immediate strategy for ensuring justice was to let the migrants go home. It should have been done by the Central and respective State governments by arranging proper transportation so that they could reach their native places in a dignified way. Forcibly locking down migrants in temporary shelters, far away from their near and dear ones, was not justifiable. It was told that this ban on travel was to prevent migrants from carrying the coronavirus to the villages and to prevent a shortage of labour after the lockdown. The second reason indicated a capitalist mindset influenced by profit-oriented thinking and an attitude towards migrants as mere commodities, and not as human beings with rights.

Why do migrants want to go home? First, most of these migrants work and live far away from their family and relatives. Secondly, most of them know that they can not survive long without employment as they have neither the eligibility to access any Social Security Schemes nor have access to Public Distribution System (PDS) at their destinations. Thirdly, they realise that they are vulnerable to hostile treatment by the local population, employers, room owners, civil authorities and the police during the pandemic lockdown.

Further, by going home, they can 'stay at home' as per the lockdown rules. Therefore, preventing migrants from going to their homes was a denial of their fundamental rights and freedom of movement.

Accepting migrant workers as fellow citizens

The inter-state migrant workers are not foreigners or aliens, but fellow citizens with constitutional rights. They are the backbone of the economy in Indian cities and one of the wealth



creators of the nation. Migrants, through their hard labour, contribute to the economic growth of India, but they are considered as ‘the other’. It is important to promote a positive discourse to avoid prejudices and a negative portrayal of these workers. Thus, the respective governments and civil society must create awareness for a better understanding of their positive contribution to the nation.

India’s COVID-19 migration crisis is a manifestation of systemic discrimination and structural injustice. The crisis calls for the formulation of public policies that provide migrants and their families decent and dignified livelihoods, affordable housing, quality education, and access to health, nutrition and sanitation services.

Protection of the rights of migrants

The civil society, as well as the Central and State Governments, must take steps to facilitate protection from rights violations, wage theft and xenophobia. They must be enrolled with trade unions and, in turn, trade unions must take the initiative to protect their rights and

welfare. Instead of creating separate welfare schemes for migrant workers, they must be included in the existing welfare schemes depending on the work in a particular sector they are engaged in. The existing legal protection measures should be made available to the migrant workers in case of accidents or deaths. For instance, provisions of the Workmen’s Compensation Act, (1923), which provides for payment of compensation to workers and their dependents in case of injury and accidents arising during employment resulting in disablement or death, should be made available to migrant workers.

The State Governments should facilitate policy initiatives to provide a social security net and inclusion to interstate migrant workers across several areas, such as education, inclusion in welfare boards, housing, and insurance.

Inclusion of Migrants in Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Boards

All migrant workers must be registered under the Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008, which builds a social security system for them.

It redefines the worker to include all types of workers, not only those who have a fixed employer. In doing so, it brings in all the self-employed workers as well as casual, contract and home-based workers. This includes workers in all types of occupations including agriculture. According to the Act, 'Unorganized Sector Worker' means a person who works for wages or income, directly or through any agency or contractor or is self-employed; and in any place of work including his or her home, field or any public place. It identifies each worker and gives him/her a unique social security number and social security card.

It offers a variety of social security benefits to the unorganized worker. These include health insurance, maternity benefits and pension. Thus, by facilitating the registration of migrants under this Act, their social security can be ensured.

Portability of basic services and entitlements

Central government can initiate a policy for migrant workers to access services such as PDS, public health care, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), voting rights, housing schemes and insurance schemes anywhere in India. Thus, migrant workers and their families can get subsidised food provisions, public health facilities, mid-day meals, benefits under ICDS and the other social security entitlements at their destinations.

Towards Justice and Peace

The Constitution of India [Art.19] (1) (d) and (e) states, 'all citizens shall have the right ... to move freely throughout the territory of India; to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India'. Thus, all the citizens have the fundamental

right to migrate, to work and settle in any part of the country. Therefore, migrants cannot be deprived of their basic rights – the right to unionisation, entitlements and benefits - based on the State or place of origin. Thus, it calls for Central and State governments to guarantee migrant workers the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The COVID-19 migration crisis is a result of migrants' unequal situation due to the denial of basic constitutional rights. Therefore, in this context, it is important to emphasise 'Justice for all: social, economic, and political...' embedded in the Indian constitution.

In public functions, the citizens often pledge that 'all Indians are our brothers and sisters', and talk of 'one India' and 'one people', but the fellow citizens who migrate are considered as non-citizens and often meet with inhuman treatment. Migrant labour is extracted, but they are not valued and are not allowed to live and work with dignity.

The industrialists and the middle class need their work and services, but most of them do not want migrants to live in their neighbourhoods. Thus, to build a peaceful coexistence among the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' based on constitutional principles of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and dignity of the individual, citizens need to pledge with honesty to ensure that migrants get justice and can lead dignified lives all over India.

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Legal Protection of Migrants



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This article deals with four aspects of the interstate migrants such as data available on interstate migrants, their agony during the lockdown, the data on reverse migration and the changes needed in the legal regime.

Interstate migrants walking to their destinations, including women and children, as families, groups, and individuals were a common sight during the lockdown in April and May, 2020. The mainstream media extended very little coverage of this exodus from different parts of the country to the home States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

Episodes of people dying before they could reach the destination became regular news besides the alarming incident where a train overran sixteen migrant workers who were sleeping on the railway tracks.

This piece deals with four aspects of the interstate migrants such as data available

on interstate migrants, their agony during the lockdown, the data on reverse migration and the changes needed in the legal regime.

I. Lack of data is not an excuse for the plight of the migrants during the lockdown.

For the first time in the history of the country, the Economic Survey of India 2017 stated that in the five years that ended in 2016, an average of nine million people migrated between States every year for either education or work. This is almost double the inter-state migration recorded in 2001-2011 and captured by the Census of 2011.

The survey reveals that States like Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat attracted large number of migrants from the Hindi-speaking States of

Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. According to the survey, internal migration rates have dipped in Maharashtra and surged in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, reflecting the growing pull of southern States in India's migration dynamics.

Out-migration rate or the rate at which people have moved out increased in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh but dipped in Assam. The survey reinforces the fact that the less affluent states have more out-migrants and the most affluent states are the largest recipients of migrants.

Between 2001 and 2011, there was an increase in the growth rate of migrants headed for other destinations within their States as compared to those headed outward. The number of alleged inter-state migrants grew at 55% between the 1991 and the 2001 Census. This came down to just 33% between the 2001 and 2011 Census.

In contrast, the rate of growth in the supposed inter-district migrants (within the same State) increased from 30% between the 1991 and 2001 census to 58% between 2001 and 2011. Not only are people moving within States, but they are also moving within districts.

The growth in intra-district migration (movement within the same district) increased from 33% to 45% between 1991-2001 and 2001-11. Inter-state migration is declining and intra-district within the State is increasing.

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001, and 2011

II. The Plight of the Migrants During Lockdown

The lockdown in the country was announced on March 24, 2020, for 21 days. Borders were sealed, transportation

was stopped, factories, shops, restaurants and all type of economic activities were stopped, barring only the essential services. This proved to be a nightmare for countless migrant workers, who lost their livelihoods overnight and became homeless.

The immediate challenges faced by these migrant workers were related to food, shelter, loss of wages, fear of getting infected, and anxiety. As a result, thousands of them started fleeing from various cities to their native places. Many migrants lost their lives either due to hardship on the way, hunger, accidents or comorbidity and some even committed suicide.

A telephonic survey of more than 3000 migrants from north-central India by Jan Sahas, a community-based organisation (2020) showed that the majority of the workers were the daily wage earners. At the time of the lockdown, 42% was left with no ration, one third was stuck at the destination city with no access to food, water, and money, and 94% does not possess a worker's identity card (Jan Sahas, 2020).

The sudden lockdown also stranded many migrants in different cities. Those who were travelling were stuck at stations, district or State borders. Many were forced to walk hundreds of miles on foot to reach their villages because of the lack of public transport. Adding to their woes, those who reached their native villages were seen as potential carriers of the infection and were ill-treated by the police and locals.

In one instance, a group of people were sprayed with chemicals to disinfect them for which the local administration apologised (India Today, 2020). What was witnessed was one of the biggest mass migrations in the country. The effort to stave off the pandemic turned



The immediate challenges faced by these migrant workers were related to food, shelter, loss of wages, fear of getting infected, and anxiety. As a result, thousands of them started fleeing from various cities to their native places. Many migrants lost their lives either due to hardship on the way, hunger, accidents or comorbidity, and some even committed suicide.

into one of the greatest human tragedies in India's recent history. (IIPS 2020)

III. Reverse Migration

(Source: A Migration thread with estimates of India's reverse migration since mid-March 2020, placed conservatively at 30 million or 3 crores or 15-20% of the workforce: Chimay Tumble at 7.20 pm on May 29, 2020. Twitter Web App)

What is captured in the reverse migration is only those who crossed the State borders to work and return during this period. Migrants who moved within the State (intra-district) are omitted. The movement of the migrants during this period, at a consolidated range, must have been a huge number.

Even 30 million is a conservative estimate but still there were migrants and Shramik train services, which carried the migrants to their destinations. The Shramik trains were exclusive trains to transport stranded migrant workers due to the COVID-19 induced lockdown.

These trains started operations in early May, 2020 on special requests by States to return the stranded migrants to their native places (The New Indian Express, 2020).

The number of Shramik trains which run between the destination and source at the end of the lockdown will reveal the number of migrants who returned home. However, the pressing question is when will the 're-migration' begin? Since the experience of the interstate migrants has been a harrowing and dehumanising experience many migrants may not venture into long-distance destination States. They may prefer a neighbouring State or a district within the State.

IV. Legal Regime

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, *inter alia*, provides for payment of minimum wages, journey allowance, displacement allowance, residential accommodation, medical facilities, and protective clothing. However, the lockdown



has demonstrated starkly the lack of proper implementation, and thus the ineffectiveness of the Act.

The Working Group (WG) on migration recommended the following: In principle, there should be no reason for specific protection legislation for migrant workers, interstate or otherwise. They should be integrated with all workers as part of a legislative approach with basic guarantees on wage and work conditions for all workers, as part of an overarching framework that covers regular and contractual work.

Pending such a unified architecture, the working group recommends that States must (i) establish the Unorganised Workers Social Security Boards, (ii) institute simple and effective modes for workers to register, including self-registration processes, e.g., through mobile SMS; and (iii) ensure that the digitisation of registration records is leveraged to effectuate inter-state portability of protection and benefits.

Finally, there are about 50 million building and other construction workers as per the estimates of the (National Sample Survey) NSS 2011-12. Two principal legislations are the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; and

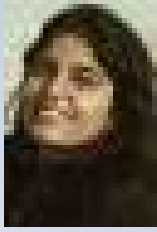
the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996.

As per these, building and other construction workers (such as brick-kiln workers) are required to be registered with State-level Construction Workers Welfare Boards. The minimum safety standards and conditions of employment for construction workers have also been prescribed. In 2018, the amount collected and lying with the State Welfare Boards stood at Rs 28,000 crores.

This amount has been allocated for the construction and brick-kiln workers who are the most vulnerable among the migrant workers. The government is planning in a big way to reduce the 44 labour Acts into four codes on wages, industrial relations, social and occupational safety and health and working conditions. Having witnessed the mass movement of migrant labourers, a separate code to protect and facilitate the safe migration of workers and their labour rights into the existing and proposed labour legislation is recommended.

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Failure of Governance Systems *during* COVID-19

It's a matter of shame that neither the government was capable of providing them food and necessities for the period of the lockdown nor does it have any record of them. They are called unorganised workers surviving on a daily wage without any social benefits of medical insurance, Provident Fund and leave of absence.

India has reportedly 40 million migrant workers who can only afford to live in slums, colonies or sites of work and 1.8 million homeless citizens according to the 2011 census. In the slums, 7-8 workers are squeezed into a 10x10 ft. room, toilets are shared by many men and women and water is an expensive commodity.

The lockdown was announced with just four hours' notice when COVID19 positive cases were just 300. In a country like India, asking its citizens to stay inside homes, maintain social distance,

and wash hands several times was a bitter joke.

The move was unplanned and what followed was unprecedented. Lack of work, the decline of agriculture as a means of sustenance, extremely low wages, caste discriminations and atrocities, natural calamities like floods, drought and socio-political factors forced people to migrate in search of their livelihood to cities from villages.

In cities, these migrant workers work in areas such as construction, carpentry, tailoring, hotels and restaurants,

garment industry, delivery of goods, security service and garbage collection. With the salary they get they can barely manage expenses and send money back home to their families.

During the lockdown period from 22 March till 14 April, migrant workers as well as native workers who are mostly informal workers, daily wage earners, for whom it is 'no work no pay' became jobless overnight. Just four hours' notice immobilized them and they got stuck in the corners and outskirts of the cities with no food and money, abandoned by their employers.

Faced with a severe backlash, the government stopped these people from migrating back home, promising free food and shelter. But as reports were coming out, State Governments did not have any record of the number of migrant workers and the locations where they were stranded.

States started giving cooked food twice a day at specified locations with the help of several NGOs. These locations were sometimes very far from the place where

workers were stranded, so they had to walk 2 km back and forth to get each meal.


After reaching the location and standing in queue for two hours the food would have finished and they had to return with an empty stomach and a sense of indignation. Appalled by the plight of workers living in this kind of uncertainty and indignity an appeal was filed in the Supreme Court that money be paid to the workers during this lockdown. But what the Supreme Court said was appalling and dehumanising. The Court said workers are getting cooked food, so what is the need for money!

One can't help but wonder, does a human being only need meals twice a day to survive? What about other expenses for medicine, urgent healthcare services, room or house rent, and drinking water?

Migrant workers had built the city, run the economy, increased the GDP of the country and paid taxes all along for every expense. So, it's a matter of shame that neither the government was capable of providing them food and necessities for the period of the lockdown nor does it have any record of them. They are called unorganized workers surviving on a daily wage without any social benefits of medical insurance, Provident Fund and leave of absence.

Travelling back home

After several protests by workers, clashes with authority, demands from civil society and human rights organization to let the workers return to their native States, on May 1 the government announced that it would run Shramik Special trains that would transport workers to their native States.



As we watched in disbelief the unconstitutional treatment meted out to migrant workers, it reminded us of our constitution which says 'living' is not merely the physical act of breathing. It does not connote mere animal existence or continued drudgery through life. It has a much wider meaning which includes the right to live with human dignity, right to livelihood, and right to health.

With no clear notification, thousands showed up at the railway stations, hoping they could get a train home. State-wise online portals started to register workers who wanted to go back home. But most workers found it difficult to register on the site due to lack of knowledge of the language used in the form or lack of smartphones. Still, 53,000 workers registered for travel back to Bihar alone.

Workers who had been stripped of their last bits of dignity were now made to pay double the fares to return home.

The cities need the service of migrant workers, but won't acknowledge their skills with dignity. Soon after the announcement of trains in Karnataka, the construction builders' lobby fearing that such large-scale reverse migration would impact construction work

requested the Chief Minister, B S Yediyurappa to cancel the trains. Following this, the trains were cancelled. So, the employers who had abandoned the workers during lockdown without any shelter, money, food, and some were even driven out of the place where they were living, were now holding these workers hostage!

Factory owners in the cities began complaining of the shortage of labour. One such owner, who runs a factory making home appliances, says there are over 2,000 such units in Delhi 'employing a lakh or more workers from UP and Bihar, more than half of them are gone and the other half are looking to leave'.

Human rights, morality and ethics went for a toss when we heard stories like these every day: 18 workers were found in Madhya Pradesh, hiding in the drum



of a cement mixing truck. They were trying to make the 1,400 km journey from Mumbai to their homes in Uttar Pradesh. The heat in the drum, one worker told reporters, was more bearable than hunger.

Rakesh Paswan, a 30-year-old mason from East Champaran in Bihar, made a scarce living in the national capital region until the lockdown on March 25. Struggling with unemployment and hunger, when the shutdown was extended till May 3, he cycled 1,100 kilometres to go home.

A pregnant woman delivered by the roadside without getting any medical assistance while walking 400 km to reach home.

383 people had died since the lockdown was imposed due to road and rail accidents, starvation, denial of medical care, police brutality, exhaustion and suicides. There have been hundreds of non-coronavirus deaths.

Of them, 69 people died in rail or road accidents while walking to their homes – the only mode of travel available as public transport had been suspended. Many migrant workers, their babies and women have died in the course of and after travelling on Shramik trains without food and water, sometimes for 60 odd hours.

There have been cases of trains missing their original route and reaching the destination after 10 days.

Apathy and negligence of judiciary are unparalleled

On May 8, sixteen migrant workers were run over by a train at Aurangabad, Maharashtra while they were trying to

return to their rural homes in Madhya Pradesh. Their minimum belongings, shoes and some 'chapatis' were all that was left on the tracks.

"How can anyone stop this when they sleep on railway tracks," the Supreme Court said a week after the accident. The survivors said that since they didn't know the route, they were following railway tracks. They knew trains were not operating due to the lockdown. After walking for so many kilometres, they sat on the tracks to take rest and have some chapattis and fell asleep out of tiredness.

Later, the Supreme Court dismissed an application seeking urgent directions to all District Magistrates to identify the walking labourers and to ensure that they reached their homes, free of cost and in a dignified manner.

This unshaken faith in governance and zero interference in implementation by the highest level of the judiciary left the migrants and the poor in lurch with nobody to turn to. As we watched in disbelief the unconstitutional treatment meted out to migrant workers, it reminded us of our constitution which says 'living' is not merely the physical act of breathing. It does not connote mere animal existence or continued drudgery through life. It has a much wider meaning which includes the right to live with human dignity, right to livelihood, right to health.

The pandemic has exposed a broken system running behind the facade of the fastest developing economy.

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A Thousand Robots and One Sweeper

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Economist Nouriel Roubini, who accurately predicted the 2008 bursting of the housing bubble (mortgage loans) in the USA has issued a dire warning about what is in store for the world economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Roubini predicted that the current recession would morph

Although deficit spending is necessary in the present crisis and may appear benign at the onset of recovery, it is laying the kindling for an inflationary conflagration. Negative supply shocks are going to raise the cost of resources, even as hyper-exploited workers suffer perpetual wage and benefit declines.



into a full-scale economic depression that would devastate societies across the globe. He foresees a slow, lacklustre 'U' shaped economic rebound in the pandemic's immediate aftermath, but insists that this recovery will collapse beneath the weight of the global economy's debt burden, particularly the massive private debts, especially that arose after the 2008 crash. The pandemic will durably depress consumption and thus weaken the anticipated short-lived recovery.

He further predicts that economic conditions will worsen even more, when higher inflation kicks in and trade arrangements break down among countries, more particularly between the US and China. On top of it all, the disasters brought on by climate change may hammer the economies even further in the coming years. Science says that these extreme events are becoming more frequent, and are coming further inland, and are doing more damage. And they are happening right now, and not 30 years hence. The economic costs of climate change are becoming worse. For example, Indonesia has decided to move its capital out of Jakarta to somewhere

inland because the city is going to be flooded.


Although deficit spending is necessary in the present crisis and may appear benign at the onset of recovery, it is laying the kindling for an inflationary conflagration. Negative supply shocks are going to raise the cost of resources, even as hyper-exploited workers suffer perpetual wage and benefit declines.

Prices will rise, but growth will peter out. Ordinary people will be forced to pare back their consumption more and more. Stagflation will beget depression; the resultant depression will beget more depression.

The factory of the future is going to be one person manning 1,000 robots and a second person cleaning the floor. And eventually, the guy cleaning the floor will be replaced by a Roomba because it doesn't ask for benefits or bathroom breaks or get sick and can work 24/7. In the US 35 to 40 million workers have already lost their jobs.

If ever they get back employment, it will be part-time ones, without benefits; and fair wages. That is the only way for corporates to survive. Because they are so highly leveraged already, they need to cut costs and the first area is wages with less hiring of labour. But, on the reverse side, money spent on labour is re-spent on consumption. In a situation of low wages, households will be left with less income.

There is a huge difference between the 2008 global financial shock and the coronavirus crisis because the former was a crisis of aggregate demand. In the short run, to avoid depression, fiscal stimulus is necessary. But there will be inflation in the post-coronavirus world because of negative supply shocks. Globalisation is going to become



Not carefully thought-out steps such as demonetisation of higher-value banknotes, the hurried and tardy implementation of GST and the unplanned sudden introduction of the lockdown without giving breathing time for the vast majority of India's population, have already pushed the country into the quagmire of unsolvable problems.

de-globalisation due to decoupling, protectionism, fragmentation and so on.


The Indian Scenario

The dire predictions of Roubini are applicable more to India. The vulnerable citizens of our country don't have any financial safety net as in the developed economies. Our priorities are not oriented towards the 'aamadmī'. We may wake up rudely from the make-believe world that seems to have been created around us.

The unemployment level of the able-bodied, in India's population of 1.35 billion, is estimated at 51%. With the downswing in economic activities due to the pandemic, the economic turmoil and its corollary daily life have become unbearable for the ordinary unprotected citizens of our country as never before. Those who are below the poverty line is estimated at 22% of the total population. Malnutrition, especially among children, is very acute.

A major chunk of India's population lives in the vast, congested, ramshackle slums of Dharavi, Govandi, Kurla and other places spread all over India. How can there be social distancing and home quarantine for these underprivileged people packed like sardines in unventilated single-roomed quarters? Their dwellings exist cheek by jowl in narrow lanes. They are compelled to throw caution to the winds for the sake of their existence.

In the real India, there are millions of honest hard-working people, the so-called middle class, who survive in single-bedroom tenements in the cities spread across the country. They are compelled to commute long distances for hours to reach their workplaces in jam-packed suburban trains or other equally



An edifice to last must be built on a strong foundation. The stones for this purpose are available in plenty in our villages: the heart and soul of India. Once the suitable infrastructure is put in place and the rural people are given appropriate training and leadership, they can find gainful employment locally thereby stopping the exodus to the already over-burdened metros.

over-crowded modes of transport and return home exhausted.

Santhosh K. Mehrotra, Professor of Economics at the Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, stated in his book, 'Reviving Jobs: An Agenda for Growth' that the current reverse migration may set the country back by 15 years. He pointed out that the economic stimulus package by the government is minuscule, as compared to the one rolled out by the earlier Manmohan Singh government during the 2008 crisis. The fiscal package announced, post-COVID, is less than 1% of the GDP though the economic and job crisis are much deeper than in 2008.

He adds that the stimulus package is heavily geared towards bank loans. Why should an entrepreneur borrow from a bank when he knows that the demand is extremely low in the economy, both domestically and internationally? The only people queuing up for bank credit could be unscrupulous ones, for diversion of funds, with no intention of repayment. The global economic crisis is much worse than the one in 2008. If the

government doesn't put money into the hands of people, no revival is possible.

He adds further: the number of unemployed has gone up from about 30 million in 2018 to 122 million in April, 2020. This is unprecedented in Indian history. Some jobs will come back post-lockdown. But how many that will be, will depend on the quality of the stimulus. If the new entrants, especially the better-educated ones enter the job market, it will be at a rate of more than 5 million per annum. So, the country has to create at least 5 million non-agricultural jobs to break even.

Not carefully thought-out steps such as demonetisation of higher-value banknotes, the hurried and tardy implementation of GST and the unplanned sudden introduction of the lockdown without giving breathing time for the vast majority of India's population, have already pushed the country into the quagmire of unsolvable problems. Most of us have been put on the brink of an abyss.

Steps towards Equitable and Just Development

If any shred of humanity is left with our rulers, will they stop chasing grandiose schemes, but instead, as a short-term measure, put adequate cash into the hands of the cashless poor so that they can buy food and other essentials? As a long-term measure, job-oriented schemes paying adequate monetary compensation and simultaneous production of common consumption goods (wage goods) and provision of essential services such as water, electricity and passable roads should be of prime priority?



They could build habitable prefabricated houses, with a kitchen, a living room, two bedrooms with attached toilets with rooftop solar panels with a power generation capacity of 3KW and the requisite accessories. Ideally, the houses may be built, at least two metres apart with patches of land for cultivation of vegetables for daily consumption. Other accompaniments necessary for the daily life of the ordinary people are also called for. These steps are bound to generate gainful employment and lasting assets creation.

We have to protect the territorial integrity of our country and our way of life. Fruitful negotiations and adjustments with our neighbours seem a better and viable option. Of course, credible deterrence is required to be put in place. But there are limits to this paradigm. In a crunch situation, no country will be able to save all its citizens with its arsenal of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, laser beams and the most advanced fighter planes.

It is nice to dream of an Indian landing on the Moon or living on Mars. But on the parched land of our country, pathetic cries and wailing of the downtrodden will rise in a roaring crescendo. We may be able to hide the ugly realities for a period and take shelter behind sanctimonious humbug for some time, but not forever. One day soon, there will be catastrophic upheavals that may shake the very foundations of our society with disastrous consequences.

No tweaking of the Repo rates will save India out of the stagnancy and negative economic growth. It may end up in deepening the debt trap. Even if the funds are properly utilised, the gestation period necessary for manufacturing activity will slow down the efforts in the short run. In the long run, we are all dead. What is required are quick-yielding projects, manufacturing essential goods and services. The people to be rescued are not

some crony capitalists in trouble owing to their misdeeds and inefficiency.

Pumping cheap bank credit without oversight is a dangerous proposition. Let the powers that be not forget that the funds provided to the unscrupulous characters are squeezed from the ordinary people by way of taxes and other levies when they buy their foodgrains, pulses, cooking oil and kerosene for their oil lamps. History reveals that funds disbursed by banks are wantonly diverted by the likes of Vijay Malaya, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and others for dining, wining and womanising.

An edifice to last must be built on a strong foundation. The stones for this purpose are available in plenty in our villages: the heart and soul of India. Once the suitable infrastructure is put in place and the rural people are given appropriate training and leadership, they can find gainful employment locally thereby stopping the exodus to the already over-burdened metros.

The 'trickle-down benefit-based Reaganomics' has been unceremoniously dumped. Crony capitalism has performed the last rites. In India, wealth is grabbed by the unscrupulous, greedy profit-mad merchant class and manipulators of the stock market aided by brokers. Real wealth is seldom created in the manner of Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and other innovators. The much-touted GDP of India seems to be a statistical juggling. Accounting entries in the ledgers of corporates could be mere figures. The balance sheets of many business concerns hide more than they reveal. This has been my experience in the course of inspection of banks and analysis of company balance sheets.

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We are not proposing a dissenting model of a few marginals, but a schema for the nation in terms of its two great forms of the unconscious, the idea of civilisation and the notion of the civil society.

We need Civilisational Confidence

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Peace is, to me, a polysemic word, describing a pluralistic world. To think of peace, one must summon a heuristic, a metaphor, a prayer, and an imaginary. One way of doing all this is to pretend that one can summon a few wise men, sages, shamans, and scientists, and imagine they are talking to one another. As you invent the conversation, you unfold the discourse like a weave.

I have two or three favourite ways to begin. I'd like to imagine Raimundo Panikkar and Ivan Illich walking on the streets of Banaras discussing peace, or scientists like CV Seshadri and Amulya Reddy thinking peace through science, or, I'd like to think of the Dalai Lama and Jiddu Krishnamurti, two great dialogic imaginations, thinking together, evoking a prayer for peace. Peace always begins as a hyphen between a prayer and an imaginary, an unfolding of a

still unthought world. This paper seeks to create a backdrop for the new peace movements, we need to create.

To set the stage, one begins with an anecdote that signifies the opening moves. One of my favourites is a story of an economic historian responding to a Nazi Minister's threat, that "when he hears the word culture he reaches for a gun." This stark story is well-known, but not much has been told about Alexander Gerschenkron's response to this. He simply stated, "When I hear the guns, I reach for my culture." Today, when we hear the guns from Galwan, one has to reach for civilization as a lived act, as a form of life, not as a dead archive.

This implies three things. We move from urgency to immediacy, from event to

duration, and both moves challenging the knee-jerk behaviour of the Indian nation. Watching the current phase, one notices several things. Firstly, the ferocity of the Chinese attack is appalling, designed to humiliate and disturb. Using wooden clubs full of nails to mutilate seems alien to the code of the warrior.

The Indian response is also disappointing. There is no sense of leadership and our politicians give answers which have little coherence. The opposition is as illiterate with Rahul Gandhi and Randeep Surjewala acting as if they are scoring election points. Rahul Gandhi's comments about 'Surrender Modi' would be embarrassing even in a school debate.

Beyond individuals, the nation-state as a political frame is not ready for the grammar of peace. It has survived too long on the idiocy of security, sovereignty, border and body count. It oozes the rhetoric of patriotism without caring for

the people. When Rajnath Singh talks of the martyrdom of thirty-five soldiers, one realizes he has little understanding of martyrdom or modern war. This was a senseless waste of human beings, of lives lost. The civil society which is usually remote from war and international relations has to intervene to provide a different framework.

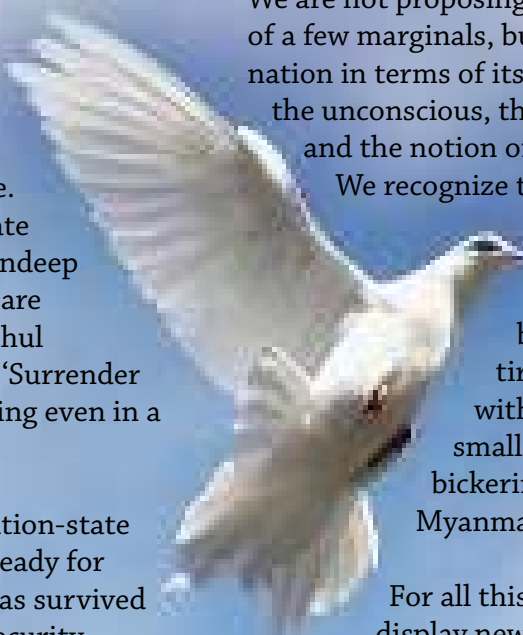
We are not proposing a dissenting model of a few marginals, but a schema for the nation in terms of its two great forms of the unconscious, the idea of civilisation and the notion of the civil society.


We recognize the problem is threefold. We're faced with China with increasing belligerence, a tiresome endless war with Pakistan, and smaller but continuous bickering with Nepal and Myanmar.

For all this, India has to display new confidence. We cannot think like our elites that with a touch of machismo and a slice of authoritarianism we can match China. In this, we mimic China, which as a superpower, realises its enormity as a training power.

India has only one-fifth of the training capacity. One needs a new imagination. Peace, thus, has to have new imaginaries. It cannot be based on the old litany terms. In requiring a new imaginary, we fall back on civilisation and civil society, both anchoring the very democracy which is now in crisis.

In confronting war, we confront our security experts like Ajit Doval, who has merged internal and external security. We have to realize India as a nation at





Borders count less as a region, as the region seeks integration, collaboration, a telescoping of the past, the present, and the future. The region has a symbolic affinity, an ecological closeness, while the border only provides a ritual of separation.

war with itself, as the late sinologist and defence expert Giri Deshingkar observed, “For ten years all the awards for gallantry our soldiers received were for action against our people.” India not only has the third-largest army in the world, but it also has over one million paramilitary troops for internal order and control, under the control of regimes which are becoming increasingly authoritarian.

Let us separate three problems analytically. Each requires a different imagination, a different heuristic. We begin with Myanmar and Nepal. One must realize that the concepts of nation-states have limits here as an imagination. It already posits an “us” and “them”, failing to realize that the border between these countries is recent, often arbitrary and illiterate phenomena.

As a nation-state, we have become arrogant about Nepal. Yogi Adityanath’s statement about Nepal going the way of Tibet catches the cannibalistic power of the nation-state. The national movement of the thirties, borrowing from the work of Patrick Geddes and Radha Kamal Mukherjee, developed the idea of the region as an ecological and cultural heuristic, conveying a sense of economic embeddedness, cultural memory, and social intimacy of pilgrimage and trade which created a fabric of a different relationship.

Borders count less as a region, as the region seeks integration, collaboration, a telescoping of the past, the present, and the future. The region has a symbolic affinity, an ecological closeness, while the border only provides a ritual of separation. In our regional solidarity with Nepal, India must look silly, even adolescent, playing the border game. Our affinities are deeper. To play up differences sounds illiterate.

India on its side needs to rethink its behaviour as a bully and a behemoth. A region as an identity, as a memory, as a collaboration, an equal-icy has to be created as a formal framework where India creates a third house, a regional Parliament, to debate the distances our affinities challenge. It would be a pity if we forget that the Nomadic groups and tribes have crossed the boundaries with impunity.

We should not fetishize borders when livelihoods are at stake. Even citizenship can be constructed in a plural sense so the nomad and the migrant do not become an instant refugee. To freeze borders as an act of punishment on India’s side would be knee-jerk. We need a framework of plurality, rather than the egotism of the nation-state. We need structures of hospitality which let large masses enter India. This is their only salvation.

The region, thus, becomes a conscience for the nation-state. It’s time we activate and institutionalize it as imagination. India responded as a society, absorbing refugees from Tibet and Bangladesh. It was one of our great ethical moments. To behave in a miserly way with the Rohingyas makes little sense. The plurality of the border is our protection. To play the minority game or electoralism, which our regime is doing, is short-sighted.


We must celebrate the noise and care for the turmoil of these democracies, as they learn the new rules of the game. The more democratic the region gets, the higher is India's sense of creating an ecology for democracy, which is what the region should be.

The wounds of the partition are difficult to heal as it now fades in memory, and India and Pakistan consolidate themselves as nation-states. Borders thicken, differences increase as memory fades. It is these very categories of the nation-state fetishizing the securitarian discourse that has made India's response to Kashmir inept, brutal, and hypocritical.

Kashmir has not been at peace for over seven decades. The trauma of internal war and terrorism has destroyed the everydayness of Kashmir, everydayness that women and children desperately want to get back to. Waiting for peace has become the final act of citizenship. In brutalising Kashmir, we have brutalised ourselves as a nation-state.

Any move for peace demands that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has to go. It is important for Kashmir, it is important for India as a democracy and civilisation. We have to inaugurate rituals of ethical repair, of healing. One needs to establish the equivalent of the Truth Commission for India to face itself on Kashmir. The Sufi that belongs to both of us has to meet for peace. Kashmir has been bereft, without an imagination. Let us now return the everydayness of peace.

The biggest barrier now is terrorism which seduces the desperate and the devastated. Here, India has to fall back on a dialogue of religions with a sense that it is an Islamic society bigger than Pakistan. Indian Islam has to invent a dialogic self, and new schools of



Instead of reading China, India must read itself as a civilisation. Its sense of civilisation must encompass its sense of the nation-state. Its democracy must develop a sense of plurality. India must now see itself as a moment to create an Anthropocene, a country which grants nature constitutional representation. Peace begins when we are in alternative imagination when we transcend the mediocrity of the nation-state.

Islamic thought that make India and not Saudi Arabia, the seat for a thinking theology of Islam. We need a new sense of community, future, and plurality, and this democracy will have to be invented.

Once we do this, we confirm Pakistan as the lost sibling of politics, clear, that we can face it as a pluralistic democracy. But intellectual confidence is missing. One has to revive the KhudaiKhitmatgar (Servants of God movement) of Badshah Khan to give Satyagraha a second chance, to repair the wounds of Partition. Only by reinventing memory, can we make sense with peace. As we extend the notion of the region and frontier to Pakistan, we reinvent the green cross of Nicolas Roerich as a way of sustaining ecology and culture.

Once we set the planes, one hopes we can discover the leadership that sees its true creativity in peace. Maybe one needs thought experiments here. A friend suggested one, "Imagine Maulana Azad were the Prime Minister. How

would he respond to Pakistan? What particular combination of culture, law, and scholarship would Pakistan face with his leadership?"

The Indo-Pakistan encounter has to invent peace and take the moral risks to make peace possible. It has to be located in *communitas*, not on contract. Mere law cannot create peace. One needs the categories of belief beyond it. The Punch and Judy show called India-Pakistan must become a dialogue of faith, politics, and futuristic polities, an encounter which hopefully redeems the sadness of Partition.

At a time when China's strength stands as a behemoth, an alternative imagination to Russia and the West, India might tend to feel secondary. The lessons of 1962 have broken the Indian confidence and the obtuseness of our democracy has made the elite envy the Chinese authoritarianism. The usual Indian response is to become some sort of China.

As poet Milosz has said about US Intelligence, that it collected information without insight, facts without interpretation. We need to look at China as one civilisation looks at another. It is not an encounter of the nation-state one begins with. India must develop a deeper sense of its creativity, faith in its civilisation and its democratic imagination, and renew its faith in non-violence.

Instead of reading China, India must read itself as a civilisation. Its sense of civilisation must encompass its sense of the nation-state. Its democracy must develop a sense of plurality. India must now see itself as a moment to create an Anthropocene, a country which grants nature constitutional representation. Peace begins when we are in alternative imagination when we transcend the mediocrity of the nation-state. China is

the reason why India must invent itself playfully, in fact, to outthink China.

Both India and the Islamic society have to confront China and the West in creating new alternative imaginations. A race for ranking will keep us secondary, peace comes within ourselves. Knee-jerk reactions are not going to help. By reinventing democracy, so that nature and the margins acquire a new vitality, India is redefining the current versions of world politics and economics. That the Dalai Lama has shown the way, it's time to reinvent him as a part of Indian imagination.

One must understand, Chinese violence has complexity and duration we need to grasp. We're not witnessing a mere border fight, China is simultaneously threatening Taiwan, Hong Kong, claiming territory in various places and quarrelling with America. It is as if it's signalling one of its periodic orgies of violence that wreck the country, a sign of internal struggle. As a China hand told me, "China never moves from thesis to synthesis, it moves from thesis to thesis, marked by amnesia and violence."

We seem to be facing another one of that stark phenomena.

Peace begins when we redefine ourselves civilisationally, otherwise, we are caught in the pettiness of border bickerings and the paranoia of security. One has to show through alternatives that China's violence is not an answer no matter what attention it garners. For that, we need civilisational confidence. Otherwise, as Gerard Manley Hopkins put it, "That piecemeal peace is poor peace".

Shiv Visvanathan is an Indian academician who is known for his contributions to developing the field of science and technology studies (STS), and for the concept of cognitive justice a term he coined. He is currently Professor at O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana.





INTERVIEW

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“We need a balance between traditional modes and new paradigms”

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JNU, to me, has not only been an academic space, for experiments and research on teaching and learning, but also a space to nurture societal responses besides fulfilling academic and professional goals.

Could you give a brief account of your career before you were appointed the Vice-Chancellor?

I started my journey on May 30, 1990, as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science, Barkatulla University at Bhopal. In April, 1991, I joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science, Madurai Kamraj University, Madurai, before joining the School of Computer and Systems Sciences (SCSS), Jawaharlal

Nehru University, New Delhi in January, 1992. In April, 1997, I was promoted as Associate Professor in the same school. Since April, 2005, I have been a Professor in SCSS.

How will your JNU background help you in your new job?

As a student and member of the faculty, JNU has had an impact on me. I was a student of the integrated programme of M Phil/PhD in the SCSS since July, 1986. The JNU residential life in the

1980s was vibrant, with post-dinner meetings. We discussed regional, national or even international issues. All these discussions placed the concerns in the perspective of rights and the constitution. Such an environment worked as a catalyst to help me hone my desire and skills to bring to the fore the struggles of the society I came from.

JNU to me has not only been an academic space, for experiments and research on teaching and learning, but also a space to nurture societal responses besides fulfilling academic and

professional goals. The unwritten norms of inclusion and democratic processes in JNU confirmed the institution's commitment to social justice and engagement based on the principles of representation. The administrative responsibilities as warden and provost of the halls of residence, proctor office, equal opportunity office, Dean of the SCSS, following the principle of social justice or natural justice, provided me with an opportunity to learn the administrative commitments and responsibilities of an institution.

Besides, there were other platforms like the JNU Teacher's Association and Gender Sensitisation and the Committee Against Sexual Harassment helped me discern the accountability of an institution to society. The rich experience of holding responsibilities, and participation in all statutory committees -- Board of Studies, Academic Council, Executive Council, University Court -- has been a training ground for me for my new office of the Vice-Chancellor.

While an apex level programmatic structure towards concepts and theorisation is essential, some region-specific features such as science and tribal philosophies could be explored to provide new momentum to the science-religion dialogue.



What are the strategic and systemic changes required in higher education in India?

We need to strike a balance between the traditional modes of higher education and to contribute new paradigms. For example, a strict definition of the word 'innovation' is dichotomous.

How promising are your areas of interest (data mining and machine learning)?

Data science and big data are the buzz words today due to the explosion of digital data and activities in cyberspace. Artificial intelligence has found new challenges and avenues to offer some traditional and new machine learning-based techniques for real-time and effective solutions. My area of research - data mining, machine learning, and spatial computing hold promise of enabling new technologies.

How do you plan to develop tribal communities?

My new office is situated in the tribal heartland of Central India. It is rich with cultural and socio-economic and political complexities. The great legacy of the Hul, the revolt led in 1855 by Sido Murmu and Kanhu Murmu with their two brothers and two sisters may play a pivotal role in paving new paths. Some academic activities and initiatives could provide a platform to face challenges and expectations alike.

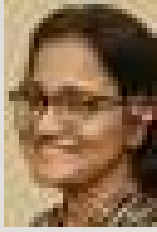
You have been involved in the promotion of science-religion dialogue for over two decades. Do you think the academic community can cultivate a new momentum for this dialogue?

Yes, I have been involved in these programmes and activities. While an apex level programmatic structure towards concepts and theorisation is essential, some region-specific features such as science and tribal philosophies could be explored to provide new momentum to the science-religion dialogue.

How important is the peace mission in universities, especially in Jharkhand?

Conflict is contrary to progression, while calmness should neither be mistaken for peace nor complacency. Universities have traditionally been spaces for counterparts and contrapositives to coexist based on values such as equity and mutual respect. So why should universities in Jharkhand be an exception?





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ART
AND
PEACE

Peace in Sufi Paintings

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*The Mystical Union - 'Poran amar bodhur beshe chole
chiroswayambora' - 'Khusrow Raajdulari'*



Fanaa - Nilachale Mahaprabhuz



*Swirling Semazens-Khusrow darya prem ka, ulti wa ki dhaar.
Jo utra so doob gaya, jo dooba so paar*

Qawwali and Kirtan: A Cultural Convergence

The 13th-century Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325) had a bold stance regarding the practice of Samā, which some considered unislamic, because of its association with music. Music and chant are essentially parts of Hindu worship. Both Nizamuddin Auliya and his greatest disciple Amīr Khusrau, being steeped in Indian culture, held that the use of music and dance in worship could serve as a basis of contact with local people and it would help to cherish a mutual bond between two communities in medieval India. Qawwali, the devotional music of Sufism was created and popularized in India by Amīr Khusrau in the 13th century. Born of a Persian father and a Rajput mother Khusrau (1253-1325) was well-versed in both Persian and Sanskrit literature. Writing verse in both Persian and Hindustani Khusrau represented a multicultural identity. The thrust on trance-induced dance was later taken up by the 17th-century Punjabi Sufi poet Bulleh Shāh. His famous qawwali “Tere Ishq nachaiyān kar ke thaiyā thaiyā” celebrates this idea

of submitting oneself through dance. A similar expression strikes us across the centuries, as Rabindranath Tagore in the song “Momo chitte niti nriye ke je nāche/ tā tā thoi thoi, tā tā thoi thoi, tā tā thoi thoi” relates the rhythm of his heart to the universal motion of life and death. In Bengal, the 15th-century Bhakti saint Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu (1486-1534) emphasized on a similar method of praying through music and dance. He introduced the musical form of nama-samkirtan in Bengal and Odisha. As a form of religious performance arts kirtan is often sung in unison just like the qawwali.

Both Sufism and Bhakti being mass movements, embraced musical congregations as the simplest way of stimulating religious sentiments of the mass. These parallels between Sema and Samkirtan struck me and in my painting I have attempted to represent this coming together of Sufi and Bhakti traditions through the merging of figures in a devotional-dance. The method also serves as a visual metaphor for the merging of the selves.

Beginning of Sema: Homecoming of the Beloved

“Aye re sakhi more Khwaja ghar aaye” is a famous qawaali by Amir Khusrow. It explores the emotional bond between Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia and his disciple Amir Khusrow. In this kalaam the emotional bond is allegorized as a romantic waiting of the lover for her beloved. The romantic metaphor is further extended by the popular version of the same qawaali “Eri sakhi more piya har aaye”.

In this particular painting “Beginning of Sema: Homecoming of the Beloved” I have attempted to express this mood of preparation at the beginning of a Sema. Prayer begins as soon as the heart becomes composed and submits to the divine presence. It is the moment that the Beloved (Khwaja) comes to visit one's Temple of Heart (ghar). The praying Semazen is transformed into an

*Beginning of Sema - Homecoming of the Beloved -
Aye re sakhi more Khwaja ghar aaye*



Bhakti and Sufi coming together in Dance

awestruck lover kneeling at the presence of the "beloved" within his heart.

It is also interesting to notice in this qawaali how Khusrow has quite skilfully blended the tradition of a secular Indian romance with Sufi religious consciousness. The traditional Indian bridal adornments like mehendi (henna), gajra (floral garlands), and maangtika (traditional jewellery worn by Indian women in the forehead) are thus incorporated in this verse to interpret the preparation of a devout heart for the mystic experience. Similar secular references are extensively applied by the Bhakti Saint Meerabai and the Vaishnava poets Govindadasa, Gyanadasa and Narottamdasas in their poetical works to explain the preparation of the soul (Radha) for spiritual realization (Krishna).

"Dhikr", the primary devotional practice of Sufism emphasizes on the process of spiritual realization within one's





The Flaming Heart



Sufi and Bhakti coming together through Qawwali and Samkirtan

consciousness. The aim of this practice is to feel the presence of Allah within the disciple's heartbeats. This idea reminded me of a qawaali I used to sing often in the evening with my sister in my childhood days: "Har dil mein bas raha hai, jalwa wo noor tera" ("your lamp is aflame in every heart"). "The Flaming Heart: Har dil mein bas raha hai, jalwa wo noor tera" is my tribute to my childhood qawaali.

‘Daryā Prem Kā’: The Message of Unconditional Love.

The two important religious movements of medieval India, Sufism and Bhakti not only shared the common aspects of spiritualism and emotional exuberance, but also shared a pragmatic and socio-cultural message of equality and universal brotherhood. The 7th-century Bhakti movement gathered momentum in the 15th century, when a cluster of spiritual mystics appeared in the cultural scenario of medieval India.

Emancipation through Dance: “Tere Ishq Nāchāiyān Kar Ke Thaiyā Thaiyā”

The projection of a mundane relationship between the deity and the devotee

was quite symptomatic of the Bhakti movement that sought emancipation in the service of the downtrodden mass. The 16th-century female mystic Meerābāi (1502-1556) responded to the general tenor of the movement in portraying Krishna as her husband. Meerābāi embraced music and dance as the means of emancipation and spiritual surrender.

Fanā: Nilāchale Mahāprabhu

In Sufism the state of Fanā explains the annihilation of one's ego through intense devotion. Fanā is marked by multiple stages, whose ultimate end is to be united with Allah. The stage of Fanā-fi-Shaikh manifests a euphoric state of union with one's Murshid, or spiritual guide.

Many qawwalis of Amīr Khusrau, such as "Chhāp Tilak" and "Mohe Apne Hi Rang



Jhulelal-Mast Qualandar

Mein Rang de Rangiley” explain the state of Fanā, where the self is completely immersed into the self of the Sufi pir.

‘Mohe Apne Hi Rang Mein Rang de Rangile’: Dye me in your Hue

Amir Khusrow in “Mohe apne hi rang mein rang de rangile” (“Dye me in your hue”) blends threads of different cultures to interpret the Sufi's longing for spiritual transformation. Holi, the traditional Indian festival of colours is introduced in this song as a metaphor for the disciple's spiritual transformation that is achieved at the moment he comes in contact with his Sufi-saint. This transformation is indicated here as the dyeing of the self.

Jhulelāl: Hindu and Islamic Cultures Meet in the Sindh Region

Lāl Shāhbāz Qualandar (1177-1274) was a 13th-century Sufi saint who preached in

the Sindh region (present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan). He was a contemporary of Rūmī and was a close friend of Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar, the pir of Nizamuddin Auliya.

Qualandars were wandering ascetics of Sufism and Lāl Shāhbāz

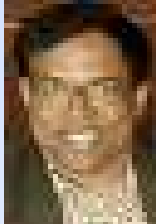
Qualandar had travelled around the Muslim world and with his profound scholarship, taught religious tolerance among Muslims and Hindus. This inclusive and humanistic aspect was an integral part of Sufism that propagated the religion of love.

The Mystical Union

The 13th century Sufi poet Amir Khusrow in his qawwalis often imagines himself as the "bride of Nizaam". This co-existence of masculine and feminine personae in the same self occurs in most of his famous kalaams where the male writer quickly adapts the persona of a woman with green bangles. The concept of the ‘Soul as the Bride’ along with the concept of the ‘Mystical Union’ is quite popular across cultures. It takes us to the Book of Revelation where the devout soul is referred to as the ‘Bride of the Lamb’. The concept of the human soul's betrothal to Christ got a new meaning in Europe of the 16th and the 17th centuries with the Catholic Revival as the devotional lives of the Catholic saints were projected with deep spiritual ardour that was quite akin to the romantic ecstasy. ‘The Ecstasy of St. Teresa’ thus becomes an appropriate theme for both the 17th century Italian Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) and his contemporary English poet Richard Crashaw (1613-1649).

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Science, Technology and Peace

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True technology is a 'double-edged sword'. It can be used for creative and peaceful purposes and also for unimaginably destructive purposes. Technology has become a formidable tool in the hands of human beings. Unfortunately, people have not grown in their ethical life and wisdom.

Science and Knowledge

How can science and technology foster peace among human beings? How can we enjoy more fulfilled and happy lives using the information provided by technology? What is the technological and scientific future awaiting us?

The last four hundred years in general and the sixty years, in particular, have given us an unparalleled and exponential technological growth. Today, technology has become very much a part and parcel of the times. If King Solomon were to visit us, he would be at a loss to deal with the technological marvels, from the simple electric switch to the complex AI robots!

The history of science (from the Latin word *scientia*, meaning “knowledge”) can be traced to the “*Philosophia Naturalis*” of Aristotle (385-323 BC) or even earlier to Democratis, the first preSocratic scientist. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), for example, is regarded as one of the leading contributors to the origin of modern science. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) who is considered modern science’s father and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) who completely revolutionized the scientific methodology. In the last century Albert Einstein (1879-1955), with his two and revolutionary theories, took science to the peak of understanding Modern science, though less than 500 years old, has given us incredible information and knowledge.

We need to ask: can we allow selfishness, greed and narrow-mindedness to lead us to our extinction? Can we allow the differences of opinion, conflicts and misunderstandings to get out of control and swallow ourselves alive?

Science provides us with practical and theoretical knowledge and information. According the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) natural sciences give us explanation, while human sciences give us understanding. Because of scientific progress we have been able to explore the “starry skies above me and the moral law within me,” (Immanuel Kant), providing us with better possibilities and wider horizons.

Science has given rise to powerful and mind-boggling technologies and led to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which current and developing environment in which disruptive technologies and trends such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the way we live and work.

Technology as a Double-Edged Sword

This technological growth has led to more comfortable lives for many of us, but not to a more meaningful life of commitment, sacrifice and compassion. The enormous amount of information and knowledge provided by science and technology has not made us wiser. The well-known science-fiction writer, Isaac Asimov stated: “The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.”



Because humans do not gather wisdom he/she does not know when and how to use technology. So, we are at a crossroads today. True technology is a 'double-edged sword'. It can be used for creative and peaceful purposes and also for unimaginably destructive purposes. Technology has become a formidable tool in the hands of human beings. Unfortunately, people have not grown in their ethical life and wisdom.

So Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the last century could say, "Technological progress is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal." Sadly, it has been proved again and again that human beings, possessing powerful technological prowess, have been acting as 'pathological criminals', harming themselves, others and nature.

Further, today we are witnessing another radically life-altering phenomenon. Technology from being a tool (or means) is overpowering us and trying to dominate human beings.

With the arrival of invasive and intrusive technologies like artificial intelligence, biotechnological growth and neuroscientific discoveries, technology will enter every dimension of human life, including their most intimate and sacred spheres. Coupled with the capitalistic surveillance, we may end up as tools in the hands of the powerful technological corporations, with its power to direct our thinking and choices.

The Best or Last Generation

Here too we can listen to the great Albert Einstein. "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction," he said. "The world will have a generation of idiots."

Further, we are not just becoming 'a generation of idiots', the threat is the

extinction of human beings. With the amount of nuclear, chemical and biological arsenals at the disposal of some of the most powerful nations, our extinction cannot be ruled out.

At the same time, we need to recognise that we could become the best of the generations. As former US President, John F. Kennedy said, "We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world or to make it the last."



The number of natural resources like food and other resources in information, knowledge, psychological and spiritual levels today is truly mind-boggling. These could lead human beings to a happy and peaceful life.

But we need to ask: can we allow selfishness, greed and narrow-mindedness to lead us to our extinction? Can we allow the differences of opinion, conflicts and misunderstandings to get out of control and swallow ourselves alive?

Search for Living Wisdom

Calvin Coolidge, the former US President said, “Some people are suffering from lack of work, some from lack of water, and many more from lack of wisdom.”

I may add that it is not just some people, but most of us suffer from a lack of wisdom. Though we name ourselves, ‘Homo sapiens sapiens’, that is doubly wise, we do not live it.

That explains why there is so much of depression leading to suicide and mistrust leading to murders in society. Our lack of wisdom makes it difficult for us to live in troubled times meaningfully. It makes us less resilient to face hardships and suffering, especially the suffering born of meaninglessness.

French author François de La Rochefoucauld (1613-18) said, “Wisdom is to the soul is what health is to the body.” Unless this empowering and enabling wisdom guides the collective soul of our society, our bodily health and societal well-being are in trouble.

The way to achieve this wisdom is to rediscover the importance of silence in our personal and collective lives. We need to be inspired by the French scientist-philosopher, Blaise Pascal, “All

of humanity’s ‘problems’ stem from man’s inability to ‘sit quietly’ in a room alone.’

After discovering ourselves in the silence of our (collective) hearts we need to draw from the enormous wisdom resources: religious traditions, spiritual ways, and world literature. Then we need to learn to accept others in their differences and affirm them as our brothers and sisters. As brothers and sisters, we may have differences of opinion, lifestyle and drives, but all these should not destroy us.

Make peace or perish

The prophetic words of civil rights activists ring true even now: “We must learn to live together as brothers (and sisters) or perish together as fools.” This can only be done when we learn how to reach out to others (including our rivals and enemies) with love, forgiveness and compassion.

One of the greatest physicists, the Nobel laureate, Richard Feynman said, “Physics isn’t the most important thing. Love is.” Can we use science and technology to refocus and relive this love? That will help us embrace the other and become peace-makers.

Either we use technology to build peace and harmony or we cease to be! Either we discover the beauty of science or we allow ourselves to perish. Either we experience the love found in every religious tradition or decide to annihilate ourselves! Either we invoke joy and hope in our hearts or cease to be!

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**BOOK
REVIEW**

Complexities of Migration

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Sonia Shah has written a gripping book titled “The next great migration”: The beauty and terror of life on the move.



Till the pandemic COVID-19 gripped the planet to the levels of global panic, a phenomenon that was touted as unprecedented in history was migration. The media extensively covered news of dislocated people on the move nearly all over the world.

They presented the planet’s migration patterns as unprecedented, provoking fears of the spread of disease and conflict

as well as waves of anxiety across the Western world. On both sides of the Atlantic, experts issued distressed prophecies of millions of invading extra-terrestrials, overpowering as an evolving tsunami, and many countries responded by electing anti-immigration leaders who closed historically permeable borders.

The Next Great Migration, a travelling narrative about why people migrate, is likely to prove predictive in the coming years since it asks two questions that are already shaping our geopolitics: what causes human beings to migrate? Is such mass movements valuable to more settled communities and nations?

Beginning with a series of observations that become stories from the natural world, Shah establishes with ample evidence that wild species, too, are escaping warming seas and shrivelled lands, creeping, swimming, and flying in mass emigration from their past habitats. She recognizes her kinship with

migrations by narrating how her parents immigrated some 50 years ago to the US.

Though born and brought up in the US, and even after giving birth to two children, she says that she, at times, experienced ‘an acute feeling of being somehow out of place’.

She also narrates her family’s short stint of unsuccessful migratory endeavour to Australia where she felt doubly ‘alien’. Her investigations into these questions give rise to the political history of the human urge to move from place to place.

Shah points out the biological taxonomy, the naming of things, championed by Carl Linnaeus, ‘the sex-crazed Swedish taxonomist’, as the reason for the determination that the ever-moving and evolving nature to be fixed. This led to the political credo of ‘we belong here, they belong there’.

She shows how this ‘enlightenment control freakery’ gave rise not only to eugenics and ‘race science’ but also to the foundations of fascism. Having established this history, Shah unravels its malevolent effects on present-day false narratives about immigration and the re-emergence of supremacist racial rhetoric in the political mainstream in many parts of the world.

She points out that it was the human genome project in the 2000s that finally settled many of the disputes by asserting that ‘a paltry 0.1% of the 3 billion nucleotides strung together on our strands of DNA differed from any one person to the next – but that encoded in our DNA was the age-old urge to mix and move about’.

In the final phase of her gripping chronicle, Shah shares her experiences of travelling to the frontlines of migration crisis sites like Lesbos in Greece. She very

strongly establishes that ‘...migration is not an exception to the rule. We’ve been moving all along. And there’s no singular factor that explains why, and that can be isolated and reversed to restore some mythical stasis’. Accepting this fact, she says, allowed her to see herself in a new way. After years of experiencing rootlessness, she says, “I would now call myself an American, with no extra adjectives to complicate it.” Shah argues that our biology and history tell us a very different story to our politicians.

The conclusion that Shah arrives at is that ‘migration is a force of nature, rooted in human biology and history, along with that of the scores of other wild species with whom we share this changing planet. Over the long history of life on earth, its benefits have outweighed its costs’. Then she adds that ‘the relevant question to ask is what we are going to do about it’. She is hopeful that if ‘we were to accept migration as integral to life on a dynamic planet with shifting and unevenly distributed resources, there are any number of ways we could proceed.’

Shah has a very lucid and descriptive narrative style that is refreshing, with numerous stories and events from around the world sprinkled with facts and figures. The arguments that she makes have the potential to alter some of the unsubstantiated narratives that are construed, and her conclusions offer some hopeful and constructive directions towards solutions.

*Title: THE NEXT GREAT MIGRATION:
The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move
Author: Sonia Shah / Publisher: Bloomsbury
Pages: 396 / Price: \$30*

The reviewer pursues his doctoral program in clinical psychology at Loyola Maryland University, Baltimore, USA.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



If spirituality is an integral part of peace, or vice versa, the narratives of various authors in this edition of the e-magazine have profoundly enriched its centrality. The editorial has pithily, yet captivatingly managed to mesmerize the readers to feel sanguine in the midst of despair, trauma and negativity triggered by the corona virus. The collective wisdom in the e-magazine has firmly established that several perspectives on peace and spirituality can stand next to each other without any conflict. I find this unique. Also, it has excellently managed not to expound any particular philosophy or promote a specific viewpoint, but talked of things that concern all of us in our everyday life, of an individual's search for security and happiness, and the need for mankind to free itself from inner fears. All in all, it truly and unquestionably is a 'Journey Well Begun'.

K.S. Somasekhara Reddy, Bangalore

Congratulations on bringing out this e-magazine. I like the articles because of their optimism and hope in the midst of all this gloom. To find peace, we must have hope within ourselves first and to carry this message to others is a herculean task but all journeys are comprised of steps and I wish you all the best on the commencement of this long and arduous journey.

Jagan Mathews, Kochi

Congratulations to PAX LUMINA team. The first issue is relevant, simple and represents the international perspective LIPI envisions. I do hope in the continuing issues, you will get more Peace activists across the world to write and also critical social commentators with international perspectives.

MK George, Rome

Read the articles in the first issue of PAXLUMINA. The coverage on COVID is quite effective with an international perspective. Though there are many unknowns as on date about coronavirus, these articles throw certain pointers to the discerning readers. The impact of the disease on various strata of society as well as across national & cultural borders is well brought-out. Most of the articles provide relevant and interesting reading to various segments of society. There is a reasonable level of uniformity in the style & focus of the articles. Layout, presentation, colour schemes etc. are quite pleasant and appealing. It would be better if you could attempt to standardize the length of the

articles. On the whole, reading PAX LUMINA was an enriching experience.

K.A. Joseph, Kochi

I enjoyed reading an excellent article by Sebastian Painadath in Pax Lumina 1(1), 2020, entitled "Religion and spirituality." The author seems to affirm the legitimacy of both, religion and spirituality as written, "We need to recognise the diversity of religions, and the freedom of human persons to seek the Divine in diverse ways; at the same time, we have to experience the deep unity in spirituality, for all are called to a higher, divine, consciousness."

Fr. Michael G., Vasai, Mumbai

There are many young people in cities and towns defying their families by setting out each morning to distribute food to the hungry. (PaxLumina 1(1), 2020, Page 9). What more do we need. We need to find out what force and what grooming prompts these youngsters for these acts of daring kindness. And then we need to promote such education and such conversations. I see PaxLumina and its editorial team showing the light. Thank you Harsh Mander for the lovely anecdotes from Nizamuddin, Ghazipur, OldDelhi, and many more. There might be gloom; but Hope pervades.

Likewise, the deeply human meaning of religion, ecology, and economics, as presented in Carlos E Vasco's article (pp.26-30) here leaves much hope for humanity. Wishing the best for PaxLumina in its efforts for global peace and reconciliation.

Rincy Abraham, Vellarikkundu, Kasaragod

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IN

PEACE STUDIES



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&
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TARGET GROUP: Working Professionals, Midcareer Beaucrats of State/Central Government, Social Workers (NGO & Civil Society Organization), Activists, Artists, Researchers and College Students with aptitude.

SCOPE: The course aims at empowerment through the inculcation and strengthening of right attitudes and values and enhancing professional skills. Hence the Course Certificate is expected to add to the academic credentials of the participants.

ASSESSMENT: The project work will be supervised and assessed by competent field supervisors associated with XLRI - LIPI and the grades awarded will be added to the final evaluation.

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