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Pax Lumina



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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

IDENTITY VIOLENCE & PEACE



Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

**The best way to find yourself is to lose
yourself in the service of others.**

Mahatma Gandhi



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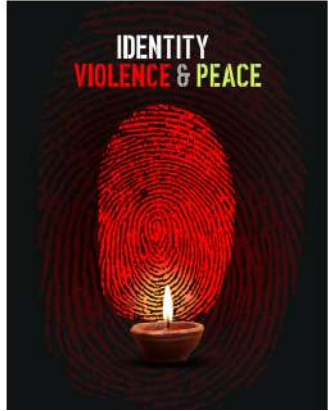
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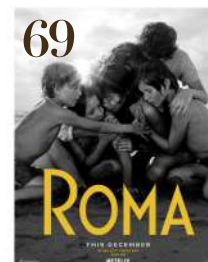
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Identity, Violence and Peace

A person's identity is a social and psychological construct. Though we talk about the identity of a person as something innate and immutable, it is hardly so. Often, it is a product of chance and circumstances. This contingent nature of identity is often forgotten leading to very unpleasant social, psychological and wider consequences.

In this issue of Pax Lumina, we focus on identity and its relation to violence, and therefore, to peace.

It may be mentioned here that a person may have many identities, and all these identities do not necessarily lead to conflict and violence. In fact, exploration of some of these identities is part of peacebuilding efforts. Artistic and scientific identities belong to this category.

We should also remember here that identity, though playing a great part in asserting a person's self-worth, is not solely an individual affair. When the halo of a particular identity spreads to others of similar persuasion, a sort of emotional fermentation takes place often with deleterious repercussions for the rest of the society.

For example, most wars between countries are caused by heightened national identities. But this is not confined only to wars between countries. Today, we find that the re-discovery of ethnic and religious identities causes a lot of social tension and conflicts. Our contributors have written about some of these identity conflicts in different parts of the world, and indicated possible peacemaking efforts undertaken by themselves or witnessed by them.

It may be relevant to mention at this point that whenever a person or a group of persons consider an identity or a set of identities to be one of all-consuming importance, it is quite likely that conflicts and violence will follow. This, I think, is a lesson all peaceworkers and peacebuilders have to keep in mind.

Conflicts and violence arise for various reasons, psychological as well as structural. Identification of these reasons and trying to find ways of dealing with them are crucial steps in the resolution of conflicts. Most unresolved conflicts will lead to violence. Therefore, it is important for the peacemaker to be empathetic to the emerging situation.

In the following pages of this issue of Pax Lumina, you can find stories of compassion in action from our contributors cutting across barriers of nationality, culture, religion



and marrying other economic, social and ethnic variables. In transforming conflict situations into possibilities of reconciliation, as the reports from the field indicate, the role of women as peacebuilders stands out. The report of Fr. Walter Fernandes clearly illustrates this. Similar stories are reported from other parts of the world too.

Let us pause for a moment here and reflect on the question: Is there a cultural association of violence with masculinity? I invite the readers to contemplate this question without getting into ideological silos. Anyway, many men and some women consider physical power and its attendant violence to be desirable human qualities.

This thinking is the root cause of violence. However, as we have found with our work with Pax Lumina, there is a large number of people working in different parts of the world, both men and women, motivated neither by power, nor money, nor fame – Pax Lumina offers none of these anyway – but inspired by the attraction of peace, and they make our work meaningful.

To summarise, unbridled identities tend to lead to violence, but conscious human choice can help each one of us to eschew the path of violence and lead a life of fulfilling peace.

Edith Stein was a young student of Husserl when she wrote her thesis ‘On the Problem of Empathy’ at the age of 25 in 1916. Today, even after a century of philosophical debates and physical violence, empathy is neither intellectually clear nor emotionally accessible to human beings. The cobwebs of violence surrounding identities are a case in point. And what is the solution leading hopefully to peace?

It is, as Edith Stein had realised a hundred years back, empathy.

It is high time we realised this.

Jacob Thomas



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MANIPUR

ETHNIC CONFLICT COMMUNALISED



Of importance is the fact that the conflict has existed for decades and attempts have been made to impose a law on the hill areas to change its land ownership pattern. **The tribes have resisted these attempts and have been demanding the sixth schedule, but they have been granted some concessions under Article 371C of the Constitution.**



Attacks on Christians' is how many headlines present the ongoing clashes in Manipur. It is not surprising because many churches and chapels and a few temples or Meitei sacred places have been attacked thus giving the conflict a communal colour.

In reality, it is a decades-old ethnic conflict resulting from the complex ethnic relations and land management systems of Manipur. The State has three main ethnic families, two of them predominantly Christian Naga and Kuki tribal groups and the third mostly Hindu non-tribal Meitei who are 53 percent of the population of 2.86 million in 2011 (estimated to be 3.6 million today) and live on 10 percent of its land in the valley.

The Naga and Kuki tribes together are 40 percent of the population living on 90 percent of the land in the hills. That land includes most forests that are 67 percent of the State's landmass. The Meiteis complain that they cannot own land in the hill areas since it is tribal, while the tribals can own land in the valley. They want land in the hills but the tribes counter that the Meiteis monopolise jobs as well as economic and political power in the State so they should have no right over land above what they have in the Valley. In reality some poor Meitei families lived in the hills and some well off tribal families lived in the valley before the present conflict. The valley based leaders do not necessarily represent the poor.

Of importance is the fact that the conflict has existed for decades and attempts have been made to impose a law on the hill areas to change its land ownership pattern. The tribes have resisted these attempts and have been demanding the sixth schedule but they have been granted some concessions under Article 371C of the Constitution.

For six decades the conflicts around this issue have taken the form of highway blockades, strikes and shutdowns. The Nagas and the Kukis have joined hands to oppose these moves but have a conflict among themselves around land. When during World War I the Kukis refused to go to Europe as porters for the British army the latter attacked them. After the Kukis lost the Anglo-Kuki war of 1917-19, the British regime evicted them from their land, dispersed them in different areas of the Northeast and spread the canard that the Kukis were nomads who went around occupying land belonging to other tribes. Most communities accept that myth and view the Kukis as refugees with no right over the land. That stand further complicates the conflict and ethnic relations.

Some years ago, a few Meitei leaders decided that the only way to gain access to tribal land is for themselves to acquire the tribal status. Some of them approached the Manipur High Court on this issue. On March 27, a single judge bench ordered the Government of Manipur to recommend Meitei tribal status to the Union Government.

The Supreme Court has since sent the case back to a larger bench of the high court, but the damage has been done. Side by side, on April 26 the State government used a 1966 notification declaring that Kuki land in Churachandpur district was forest land and evicted some of them. Added to it was the pretext that the Kukis were growing poppy which they do but as pawns in the hands of masterminds whom the State did not touch.

These events combined to light the fuse of the decades-old tension. The Kukis reacted to their eviction. But violence began on May 3 when the Nagas and Kukis staged a joint demonstration against the high court judgement on the Meitei tribal status. The demonstration was attacked and violence began.

Three features distinguish this conflict from the past ones. First the Nagas and Kukis joined hands to oppose the Meitei tribal status, but the



Kukis were singled out for attacks. However, the organisers failed to turn it into a Naga-Kuki conflict.

Second, all through the decades it remained an ethnic conflict fought through blockades and strikes. For the first time religious places were attacked in an attempt to divert attention from the real issues, and give the conflict a communal turn.

Third, eye witnesses claim to have seen gangs of 200 young men coming from Imphal on motorbikes to places around 50 kilometres away to attack churches. They would have been paid and organised for a definite purpose. Side by side, rumours were spread about Meitei women being raped by the Kukis in Churchandpur. That could justify atrocities.

These events indicate that the conflict was well - planned, funded and executed by the people in power. Those who have followed the events believe that, often the police were



These events indicate that the conflict was well planned, funded and executed by people in power. Those who have followed the events believe that, often the police were mute spectators. Even the chief of the army has stated that militant organisations were not involved in the conflict.

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mute spectators. Even the chief of the army has stated that militant organisations were not involved in the conflict. However, continuation of the conflict seems to have encouraged the militants to intervene.

Moreover, over the last few years, the civil society groups of all three communities that could facilitate a dialogue between them have been sidelined, and the violent groups seem



to have taken their place. Whether intended or not, the organisers have succeeded in intensifying the ethnic divide. People who were involved in facilitating a dialogue between the communities do not see much hope in the near future. Ethnic feelings have turned into hatred with no possibility of an immediate dialogue.

One can ask whether there is a link between the court case, evictions and the conflict organised by some powerful political elements. Moreover, the security operations against the militants during the last few decades have resulted in increased tension between the communities. But after this conflict, the security forces with immense powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act have taken centre stage.

Simultaneously, some signs of hope are visible. First, not all the Meiteis took part in the conflict, and some of their leaders and thinkers came out openly against it. The houses of a few of them were attacked because of it and they are in hiding.

During the conflict, there are instances like that of Kuki women forming a human chain to prevent attacks by their men on the Meiteis in Churachandpur. In the neighbouring Moirang, Meitei parents and students blocked the gate of a Jesuit school to prevent attacks on it by the armed group. These are some of the many instances that give hope that a beginning can be made towards reconciliation.

Second, despite attempts to turn the Nagas against the Kukis, a few Naga outfits, including a militant group and political leaders from Nagaland, visited some Kuki villages with relief material to show their solidarity with them. The Chief Minister of Nagaland sent a massive consignment of relief to the Kuki majority in Kangpokpi district. The Naga outfits based in Manipur are silent, but have not opposed the Kukis. These actions are rays of hope that a beginning can be made in bringing the Nagas and the Kukis together at first, and eventually work with the enlightened Meitei elements towards a dialogue.

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MANIPUR HOPE, HEALING AND JUSTPEACE



Pax Lumina 4(4)/2023

What is abundantly clear, however, is that the conflict has affected every stratum of society in profound ways that cannot be explained by a local frame of reference alone. **Even as commentators coalesce around two poles – separate arrangement (for tribals) and territorial integrity – it bears reiteration that the current violence will have a cascading effect on generations of people in the Northeast.**



The current violence in Manipur is unprecedented in its intensity and perseverance for over two months since it started on May 3, 2023. It has brought devastation, anger, and resentment of a kind that has few parallels in the 21st century in Northeast India.

As the national media enlists commentators to explain the origins of the violence, one is left with analytical puzzles that are both polarising and personal. Grievances had, indeed, been simmering among sections of civil society for a long time. It is also correct to assume that events in Myanmar have some role to play in the insidious narrative of outsiders and locals that were otherwise not commonplace in Manipur.

It gets progressively difficult to articulate from here: How can a State – with its monopoly over violence, surveillance, and intelligence gathering – fail to control armed violence

between two groups for so long? How will the people of Manipur recover from this tragedy? In the face of such massive obstacles, how can one hope for peace and justice for those who have been affected?

What is abundantly clear, however, is that the conflict has affected every stratum of society in profound ways that cannot be explained by a local frame of reference alone. Even as commentators coalesce around two poles – separate arrangement (for tribals) and territorial integrity – it bears reiteration that the current violence will have a cascading effect on generations of people in the Northeast.

People on the Ground

Conflicts in Northeast India are hard to navigate, especially when they happen. However, many of us have an instinctive ability to reach out and see how to protect our friends and families. I was supposed to join my comrade Dr Aküm Longchari for the Newmai News Network lecture that was organised by the industrious veteran journalist Witoubou Newmai.

The event was to have taken place on May 4, and both of us looked forward to meeting old friends and colleagues, one of whom had written an excellent essay about the dangers posed by the Chief Minister's brinkmanship on the issue of reserve forests and poppy cultivation. I had to pull out of the workshop at the last minute, but as news about troubles came in from Lamka and Imphal, there were several frantic phone calls to ascertain if travel within the State was possible at all.

Very soon, all of us were sharing news and unverified videos. In my WhatsApp group comprising different cohorts of former schoolmates spread across the world, someone requested that we exercise caution when sharing images. All of us abided by the request since we understood the incendiary effect that news might have in fuelling the conflict. However, as it became clear that the government would resort to an internet shutdown, heart-breaking images and short videos found their way into mobile phones and our collective conscience.

As my comrade joined a convoy to make it out of Imphal's Mantripukhri to Kohima the following day, my phone was inundated with requests for support from friends and students who had families both in the Imphal valley and the hill districts. Most interactions were of concern, but many were about setting the record straight on the sequence of events. This strand would dominate later.

These two vignettes are part of a larger narrative of counterinsurgency, where the Indian State has systematically militarised all aspects of civic life. They are not unrelated and have to be seen as points on a spectrum.

However, as all of us scrambled to find refuge for our friends and families, we were also reminded of the devastating impact of several decades of brutal counterinsurgency campaigns on the people of Manipur.

Counterinsurgency and Alienation

One of the founding principles of modern counterinsurgency is the reorganising of socio-political life into manageable silos by the government and armed forces. The two vignettes below testify to this process. In an interview with a news portal during the early stages of the conflict, the respected human rights activist Babloo Loitongbam emphasised that potentially violent political mobilisation had happened earlier in the Imphal valley.





He mentioned the burning of the Assembly in 2001, where he explained that old civil society organisations among the predominantly Meitei community had taken great pains to ensure that no tribal person was attacked. Babloo said that the old civil society had since been sidelined by the current government. He then mentioned the militarisation of two Meitei revivalist organisations that had stepped in to fill the void and criticised the Indian government for not having a coherent policy on people fleeing persecution in Myanmar.

Almost at the same time, the Indian media and some Meitei political commentators had begun to repeat stories about SoO groups who were attacking impoverished Meitei villagers in the foothill areas of certain districts. SoO stands for 'Suspension of Operations', a military term that is applied to the many small groups of armed militants from the Kuki-Zo groups who had agreed to put down their firearms. They were being monitored jointly by the union government and the Manipur government, as far back as 2008. The terms of the agreement included the creation of an autonomous territorial council for the Kuki community.

These two vignettes are part of a larger narrative of counterinsurgency, where the Indian State has systematically militarised all aspects of civic life. They are not unrelated and have to be seen as points on a spectrum. Ever since the Indian army was sent into operations in the Naga territories within the State (in the 1950s

and 1960s), various communities in Manipur have experienced untold violence and hardships that have become all-pervasive, creating great social and economic inequalities within and among communities.

In place of humane relationships and the fostering of solidarity between peoples, decades of counterinsurgency have led each community to look upon their neighbours with suspicion. More to the point, it is painfully clear that the outcome of militarisation is that the State and its forces are not seen as neutral. Instead, communities have had to provide security to their members by reclaiming arms. It is difficult to turn back from such a political place.

Healing

All too often, those of us seeking justice after traumatic events such as the one unfolding today, look towards powerful people to restore law and order. They indeed have a role to play. However, this is also a time to listen to those who seek healing through their poems, stories, and art. At times like these, we are unable to see people's trauma outside of the collective and we tend to reduce individuals into becoming ciphers of their communities.

Poets, writers, and most often, teachers have the unique ability to overcome this predicament by whispering their messages for peace and justice against the maelstrom of angry voices demanding retribution. They speak of a future



Biren Singh



Aküm Longchari



Asojiini Rachel Kashena



Witoubou Newmai

Looking to the future, we need to move away from the sequence-of-events analytical lens to view what is happening. Instead, we ought to understand the present devastation as the outcome of a plurality of cumulative grievances that have evolved.



where people from different communities might have the opportunity to go to mixed schools, build relationships, and even dream of living together.

As we look to the future, both immediate and distant, those of us who continue to care about friends and family will need to confront the enormity of our tasks. Children will need to return to school, people will have to find security and food within the relief camps. In time, they will also hope to rebuild their lives outside the camps, and most of all, ordinary people will need to display extraordinary courage to trust dialogue, conversations, and each other.

Researcher Asojiini Rachel Kashena, while reflecting on the trauma of the Kuki-Naga conflict in the 1990s, writes that women (often widows) and children feel a sense of desolation at such times. She recounts the power of sharing stories of pain and endurance in the journey

of healing. That could be one possible pathway to pursue in the future.

Conclusion

Looking to the future, we need to move away from the sequence-of-events analytical lens to view what is happening. Instead, we ought to understand the present devastation as the outcome of a plurality of cumulative grievances that have evolved. As we seek accountability from elected representatives and demand our institutions deliver justice with immediate effect, we also need to pause and ensure that we leave room for dialogue in the future.

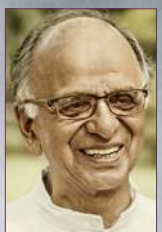
A dialogue between intellectuals and ideologues would also have to include the voices of our poets, teachers, students, and writers. It is such a vision of peace and justice – one that centres on the seemingly silent multitude – that will bring healing and hope in equal measure.

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Kashena, Asojiini Rachel. 2017. *Enduring Loss: Stories from the Kuki-Naga Conflict* in Manipur, NESRC Monograph Series – 2, Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre

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RESPECT COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CULTURES



Religious differences partitioned India into two, kept Ireland divided, and made Timor secede. Cultural differences separated East Pakistan from the West and brought Bangladesh into existence. Ideological differences broke Korea into North and South. **Ethnic differences separated Yugoslavia into several different states, broke up the Soviet Union into pieces, and Assam into seven States. Linguistic differences divided many States of India that were together during British rule. Colour differences kept the Whites and Blacks apart in South Africa.**



explosive situations arise as they did in London, Madrid, and Vienna. Paris is burning. Le Pens and Silvinis (and Amit Shahs!) only aggravate the situation. Pope Francis' 'Fratelli Tutti' (All Brothers) was a response to such situations.

We could look back at what happened after the Cold War ended. The Soviet Empire collapsed and broke up into pieces across ethnic and language lines. The Letts, Lithuanians, Estonians and Ukrainians claimed their own separate ethnic and cultural identities. Slovenia broke away from Yugoslavia and Bosnia went up in flames. Azerbaijan's tensions with Armenia increased. The Slovaks parted ways from the Czechs. Inter-ethnic brutalities in Hutu-Tutsi clashes, and even between Christians, shocked the world.

Failure to Integrate Has Its Price

Religious differences partitioned India into two, kept Ireland divided, and made Timor secede. Cultural differences separated East Pakistan from the West and brought Bangladesh into existence. Ideological differences broke Korea into North and South. Ethnic differences separated Yugoslavia into several different States, broke up the Soviet Union into pieces, and Assam into seven States. Linguistic differences divided

Manipur is burning. For people at a distance, two backward communities are in a senseless conflict. We, humans, are slow learners. The West is beginning to learn. Tensions with new migrants are increasing. Europe has woken up late to the resoluteness of identities, cultures, and religions. The European Union is struggling to integrate people with other worldviews and religious outlooks like the Turks, Algerians or Pakistanis.

Cultural distance is a significant concept, says Oxford scholar Paul Collier. When there are not enough people in a society to understand the force of ethnicity and culture, and are skilled in building bridges across cultural distances,

The immediate reason for tribal anxiety that led to the conflict was the Meitei demand for tribal status which would have opened the entire tribal belt for their occupation. There was also the fear that Christian tribals might lose their tribal status. **Here is where Manipuri Hindutva masterminds took the initiative in pushing the Hindu Rashtra frontier under instruction from the High Command.**



many States of India that were together during British rule. Colour differences kept the Whites and Blacks apart in South Africa.

Coming closer to our immediate situation like in Manipur, when neighbouring ethnic groups that have been living in relative isolation among themselves until recent times move ahead into the wider world, there is a period of uncertainty. People feel that their identities have to be re-defined and relationships with neighbouring ethnic groups sorted out. Competing interests of other communities can lead to tensions. Such tensions are built on perceptions of political,

economic, or cultural exploitation of one group by a stronger one. Some of these may be true and some exaggerated.

New Roles, New Tensions

Historically, the Meiteis, who were introduced to Hinduism only in the early eighteenth century, enjoyed the dominant position in Manipur, their Rajas claiming authority over the Nagas and Kukis on the hills, though it remained merely nominal.





The British defined the borders and gave a measure of autonomy to tribal communities. They allowed Baptist missionaries to evangelise and educate the tribal communities on the hills. Catholics entered Manipur only after Independence.

English education gave an advantage to the tribal Christians who, after Independence, moved quickly into leadership positions and entered in strength into the bureaucracy.

Hindu Meiteis grew anxious and felt their privileged position being eroded, with members of the Naga and Kuki communities moving into senior positions in the bureaucratic and political order. They used to look down upon the tribals as compliant subordinates.

So, there arose an eagerness in the Meitei community to re-affirm their dominant position and widen their areas of influence. Tribal communities look at Meiteis as already enjoying enormous power, as they form the majority in the Legislative Assembly and occupy major decision-making positions in the Executive. However, Meiteis feel confined to Imphal Valley, which is about 10-12 percent of the geographical area of Manipur. One needs to be aware, of course, that much of the space that the tribals occupy is barren hills and unusable slopes.

Hard Days for Kuki-Chin Tribes

When we refer to the Kukis, we are referring to the entire Kuki-Chin family of tribes (including the Mizos, Hmars, Paites, Gangtes, Zos, and

others) who are spread over the northern hills of Myanmar, South Manipur, Mizoram, parts of Assam, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The political lines that the British drew, have placed them today in three different nations.

The Kuki-Chins are, undoubtedly, going through hard times these days. They are trying to defend themselves against the military junta in Myanmar. They are facing troubles with the armed forces in Bangladesh. They have lost their homes in the Imphal Valley, and are on the defensive both in the Kangpokpi and Churachandpur areas.

Biren Singh, the Manipur Chief Minister, claims to be in an anti-narcotic war against the Kukis. Others see it as a free hand given to Meitei armed groups to have their way with the fragile Kukis, branding them as illegal immigrants and drug trafficking terrorists. Both the State and Central governments approve of it. While official sources speak of 120 deaths, knowledgeable authorities speak of hundreds who have lost their lives. More than 60,000 have fled their homes, and some 350 relief camps are trying to cater to their needs. The loss of property on both sides has been enormous.

A Pre-Planned Disaster

The immediate reason for tribal anxiety that led to the conflict was the Meitei demand for tribal status which would have opened the entire tribal belt for their occupation. There was also the fear that Christian tribals might lose their

What we need today are peacemakers who are sensitive to cultures, understand differences in collective psychology, vibrate with people in distress, and have a healing touch. **Much work will have to be done in relief work, medical assistance, counselling sessions, trauma treatment; return and rehabilitation of the displaced, re-building of inter-community relationships, and re-establishment of full normalcy.**



tribal status. Here is where Manipuri Hindutva masterminds took the initiative in pushing the Hindu Rashtra frontier under instruction from the High Command. By turning the majority community against the Christian minority, Biren Singh won the approval of Delhi and Nagpur, while promoting the interest of his Meitei community.

More than 500 churches were pulled down in a matter of 36 hours, as though pre-planned. The way sacred objects and images were smashed has been depressingly humiliating. The BJP masterminds exercise control over every move, while the armed forces remain mere onlookers.

Modi's silence and indifference, Amit Shah appearing after 26 days, the inaction of armed forces despite violence in their presence, and Biren Singh remaining in office despite the disaster, can only be seen as the implementation of a Grand Strategy. 'Get the work done' seems to have been the instruction.

What elsewhere would have been described as 'civil war' has been dismissed by the Supreme Court as a mere 'law-and-order' issue. Northeast Students' Organisation senses a hidden agenda. Modi remains silent, moves abroad, and returns to attend to other trifles, totally unconcerned about Manipur's agony. The world shudders!

The Great Mission Ahead

There seems to be a cessation of violent incidents with the RSS-Sangh Parivar call for peace, after

45 days of conflict. There was an interfaith appeal for peace in Imphal on June 5. Appeals have come from prominent individuals, associations, and civil bodies, in Manipur, in the Northeast region, and the rest of India. But all these efforts have failed. But we do not give up.

The greater the resistance, the greater the effort. Peace appeal is followed by an appeal for the creation of an atmosphere for dialogue; then finally, the actual dialogue when authorities and decision-makers take over.

What we need today are peacemakers who are sensitive to cultures, understand differences in collective psychology, vibrate with people in distress, and have a healing touch. Much work will have to be done in relief work, medical assistance, counselling sessions, trauma treatment; return and rehabilitation of the displaced, re-building of inter-community relationships, and re-establishment of full normalcy. They look like distant dreams!

But nothing is impossible for those who trust in the Lord!

Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil is the former Archbishop of Guwahati.





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BECOMING A SETTLER IN CANADA



The children's names were taken away, their languages not allowed, their traditional braids cut, and their traditional rituals disallowed. In the name of education for trades, many of the schools were more like work houses. **Gathered together in close quarters, many children suffered from diseases. Medical care was inadequate, especially since the schools were built in isolated areas so that families could not visit and to prevent runaways. Some children died.**



Canada has been undergoing a process of Truth and Reconciliation to move toward a widespread and deeper acknowledgment of historical mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples and toward societal and governmental changes which more fully respect Indigenous cultures and rights.

As a non-Indigenous person, I have been learning about my heritage as a Settler and my responsibility to become a better citizen of a more enlightened Canada and to live into Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples.

(people descended from French fur trappers of the 17th-19th centuries and Indigenous women) and Inuit (people of the Arctic). In 2021, 1.8 million people (five percent of the Canadian population) were Indigenous. The percentage is on the increase in this century.

In 2008, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established as part of the settlement of class action suits against the federal government and churches on behalf of Indigenous survivors of the residential school system for the physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and cultural abuse. This resulted in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which included the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

“We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing.” These were the passionate words of Chief Commissioner, Justice Murray Sinclair at the issuing of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). [<https://quakerservice.ca/news/canadian-friends-service-committee-welcomes-the-report-of-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission/>].

The multi-volume 2016 TRC Report includes a 350-page executive summary with 94 Calls to Action addressing numerous areas of society. The report documents the experience of residential schools and its impacts. In so doing, it shows the arrogance and serious harm caused by the European belief in racial, cultural, and religious superiority.

The Commission interviewed thousands of residential school survivors. For more than a century (1870's to 1990's), the federal government partnered with Christian churches to operate more than one hundred residential schools 'to take the Indian out of the Indian'. Sixty percent of the schools were run by Roman Catholic entities. Approximately, 150,000 Indigenous children were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend residential schools. Children were separated from their families for many years (sometimes home for the summer, sometimes not).

The children's names were taken away, their languages not allowed, their traditional braids cut, and their traditional rituals disallowed. In the name of education for trades, many of the schools were more like work houses. Gathered together in close quarters, many children suffered from diseases. Medical care was inadequate, especially since the schools were built in isolated areas so that families could not visit and to prevent runaways. Some children died.

Recent discovery of unmarked mass graves near multiple schools has drawn attention to these truths, truths always known by Indigenous Peoples now finally verified and publicized. Now is the time to honour these children and the survivors who suffered throughout their adult lives.

Survivors report not fitting in at school, and years later not fitting in either on the Reserve or in the cities among non-Indigenous people.

The system's legacy has been widespread post-traumatic stress, alcoholism, substance abuse, suicide, and disrupted parental practices within today's Indigenous communities, and entrenchment and perpetuation of derogatory inferior views of Indigenous people.

It has been a shock to recognize in such detail how my privileged status as a Settler has been based on deprivation, denigration, and family disruption of fellow citizens. Not at all consistent with the Canada I'd come to know as being about family as a source of stability, intergenerational transmission and connecting with God.

In response to the Calls to Action, non-Indigenous Canadians like myself are learning to better appreciate the peoples who have lived on this land since long before the Europeans arrived, to learn about their culture and arts, to foster reinvigorating Indigenous languages, and especially to learn about their life-giving, land-centred spirituality.

Cultural education into the diversity of Indigenous ways in Canada is necessary for ethical reasons. It is also timely, perhaps essential, given the Climate Crisis. Indigenous land-based practices can be central to efforts to save life on earth during these times – i.e., respecting interconnectedness of all life, living in relationship to Mother Earth, and assessing community needs into the seventh generation.

Societal changes in the seven years since the TRC Report include enhanced efforts to settle land claims. Steps in this regard are painfully slow. Media outlets highlight cultural contributions by Indigenous individuals as well as Indigenous communities.

Sections for Indigenous authors are featured in libraries and bookstores; professional education includes more attention to diverse Indigenous cultures; newspapers and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) feature Indigenous events and individuals. In the arts, Indigenous artists and authors are winning awards, and their works shown in exhibits and performances. Universities are increasingly offering courses and degree programs in Indigenous Studies – available to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Teaching of Indigenous languages is especially



In response to the Calls to Action, non-Indigenous Canadians like myself are learning to better appreciate the peoples who have lived on this land since long before the Europeans arrived, **to learn about their culture and arts, to foster reinvigorating Indigenous languages, and especially to learn about their life-giving, land-centred spirituality.**



key for young children, with elders in the classrooms to pass on cultural practices as well.

Media are more likely to employ specific Indigenous names for towns and regions as well as including individuals' Indigenous names along with their English or French names. Preferred representations of Indigenous First Nations' community names are more frequently used in the news and in signage (e. g., Haudenosaunee replacing Iroquois, Mi'kmaq replacing Micmac).

With regard to the Arts, my university McMaster is proud to have appointed an Indigenous woman as Chancellor. Santee Smith-Tekaronhiákhwa is an internationally recognized leader in the performing arts, a multidisciplinary artist and producer from the Kahnyen'kehàka (Mohawk) Nation, Turtle Clan from Ohswé:ken (Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario).

I have made some progress this spring with new learning. As a leader of Hamilton Aging in Community (a mutual support group of seniors), I set out to consult Indigenous experts to talk to us about the lives of Indigenous seniors in our region. With the assistance of new colleagues, we were able to present a two-hour virtual workshop in which three Indigenous consultants spoke to us about seniors living on nearby Reserves and also urban seniors living in Hamilton.

Like many older Settlers, I have had very little contact with Indigenous individuals. The key message from the Indigenous speakers was that Truth and Reconciliation can best be accomplished if we open our hearts to listen

carefully. In order for our group members to become acquainted with Indigenous individuals, the speakers invited us to take part in selected seniors' activities on reserve and at the local Friendship Centre. In the coming year, we will be following up on these opportunities (i.e., monthly potluck lunch, storytelling, gardening, beading) to listen and learn. We are grateful for the invitation. We are on our way up the tall mountain.

Resources

Jesuit Forum (2021). Listening to Indigenous Voices: A Dialogue Guide on Justice and Right Relationships

https://jesuitforum.ca/dialogue_guides/listening-to-indigenous-voices/

What are Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action?

Accessed July 7, 2023:

<https://www.reconciliationeducation.ca/what-are-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-94-calls-to-action>

Beyond 94: Truth and Reconciliation in Canada

<https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/beyond-94?&cta=1>

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TRANSCENDING SOCIAL IDENTITIES TO ATTAIN PEACE



Social identity is a realisation of inter-societal uniqueness that lies among the people of different social groups which occurs through self-comparison. **It is through social identities that one can come to discover the differences among the social groups.**



Social identity is composed of many elements. It defines a person in a social group through self-comparisons with other people in other social groups. According to political scientist Alexander Wendt (1994), social identities are ‘sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object.’

The functionality of the sets of meanings is to give the identification of the person. That is, they are meant to give a sort of identity or social description of that person. They give a social category of the person about his or her group as he or she differs from others. As such the set of meanings gives a collective identity of ‘who we are.’ Social identity expresses a social definitive stature or nature of a person as contrasted to ‘Who am I’, which defines personal identity.

Furthermore, social identity is a realisation of inter-societal uniqueness that lies among the people of different social groups which occurs through self-comparison. It is through social identities that one can come to discover the differences among the social groups.

Political scientist James. D. Fearon (1999) has described two vital criteria through which social identities can be differentiated beyond their nominal descriptions. He notices that implicit or explicit membership rules that govern the inner system of the group and sets

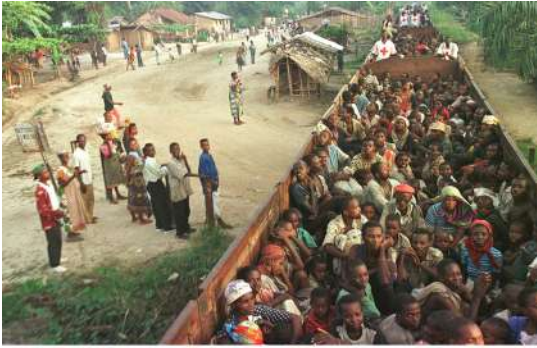
of characteristics are two main hinges through which we come to realise the social identities of different social groups.

The former criterion exposes that each social group has its own rules and regulations by which the members have to abide. Members adhere to the demands of that social group by adhering to the rules. People who assert their social identities as an African or a student implicitly show that they subscribe to the values or customs or way of living of that particular culture which they align themselves with.

Any behaviour that is against the rules disqualifies the person’s sense of belonging to that social group. Whereas the former criterion deals with membership rules, the latter implies that people in the same social group have the same characteristics that define their way of life; the common characteristics unite them in how they live together. The people share common traits such as a belief system, language, tribe and religion.

Social identities in different social categories have salient advantages. They can act as a tool in promoting peace and conflict resolution. For instance, national identity as an example of social identity builds a spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

Educator William Bloom in his masterpiece, ‘Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations’ has defined national identity as that condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with national symbols [have internalised the symbols of the nation (Bloom 1990: 52)].



That is, people in a social class such as nationality feel inspired and loved by one another. They come to love their belonging (their country or the values system that is attached to that country). This spirit of belonging forms a personality character of working hard within a person in the social group. Thus, this reflects unity among the people and indirectly exposes peace among the people. In this way, social identity plays a role in creating peace among the people.

Though social identities can play a role in promoting peace among people, they can yield conflicts among people of different social classes. The conflicts, perhaps, are likely to occur at the inter-social group level. For example, if occupants of a social group can overly concentrate on their social identities, that is, if participants of the groups can focus on their identities without a spirit of objectivity or accommodation, social identities can lead to different personality and social disorders. These can lead to violence among the groups.

Among personality disorders such as having a stereotypic mindset (bias or prejudice) towards other social groups, there is also the disorder of having a reduced view of other social groups while on the other hand magnifying our social groups. This feeling results in a superiority complex among the people.

Superiority complex manifests in the feeling that our social group, culture, tribe and society

is the best among all other social groups. Such feelings place our culture on top of others. This feeling latently visualises that other social groups have to be ready to look at us. In addition, by thinking with a superiority complex, our culture is the centre of focus and we demand others to emulate us in almost every aspect.

The consequences of such feelings towards a peaceful coexistence are catastrophic. We stop recognising the goodness and uniqueness in other social groups. The other groups become minors compared to our social groups. The consequences of a superiority complex affect the way we relate with others and in fact, we even think that any harm that we can do to other social groups does not affect us. We can eventually look at others as mere objects.

In Uganda, some of the tribal-ethnic conflicts have been caused by such feelings of one social group undermining other groups. By way of illustration, in a tribal conflict between Bakonjo and Bamba in 2012 in Kasese (Western Uganda), cattle thefts in Northern Uganda were done by the Lengi ethnic tribe of the Acholi ethnic group.

In the former example, the Bakonjo looked at the Bamba as minors to them. Like the Bakongo people, the Lengi people view the Acholi people as not supposed to have cattle. To the Lengi, all cattle must belong to them not the Acholi people thus cattle grabbing is done by the Lengi on the Acholi people.

On another ground, in Uganda, other people confidently say that the occupants of the other tribe start to think at the age of 40 years. Such a mentality of minimisation among the social groups can lead to unnecessary violence among them because the culture that is despised might choose to restore their dignity through violent means.

Political journalist Bridget Johnson also views the causes of the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda on the same line of looking at other social groups with diminutive lenses. In her article, 'Why Is There Conflict Between Hutus and Tutsis?' Bridget elaborates, "Generally, the Hutu-Tutsi strife stems from class warfare, with the Tutsis perceived to have greater wealth and social status (as well as favouring cattle ranching over what is seen as the lower-class farming of the Hutus)."

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This example shows how thinking that our social groups are the richest, and best among others can lead to conflicts. The group that is looked at as the non-best can prove its strength by fighting back and hence the rise of social conflicts.

The Way Forward

To overcome all violence that comes from social identities, there is a need to transcend one's social categorisations. We have to look at our social groups as unique in terms of differences from other social groups. This kind of positive

viewing of our groups is important. However, we have to recognise the uniqueness of other groups. This can create space for us to look with positivity at the other groups.

It acknowledges that our culture or race is not perfect in totality; other social groups are not perfect in themselves. As such, we come to understand that they have something which we can learn from. In the long run, this mentality will spearhead coexistence, respect, and accommodation of one another.

All social groups need to look at others to complement and complete them in their weaknesses. This thinking can occur once we look at other social groups without bias and stereotypic mindset which negates almost everything that we see in other cultures.

Once cultures and nations have accepted complementarity among themselves, then it implies that we open the bridges of unnecessary that we see in other cultures. Each culture will feel important and great in the face of other cultures. With this kind of thinking, the social identity that we acquire from social groups will be a source of peace and conflict resolution in our societies.

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Identity Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina



What Bosnia's state-building has created are relations of clientelism based on affiliation to ethnic political parties, making this ethno-national identification a constant in the post-Dayton system. **There are many moments in Bosnia-Herzegovina's post-war politics that show the barriers imposed by identity politics to the prospects of sustainable peace.**



Bosnia-Herzegovina's state-building and its effect on prospects for sustainable peace have become a decade-long discussion about identity politics and peace in the Balkans. Emerging from a civil war marked by genocide, ethnic cleansing and a society divided along ethno-religious lines, Bosnia-Herzegovina began its post-conflict history with the 1995 Dayton peace agreement.

Not only was this accord brokered by the international community as a conflict resolution strategy to stop the war, but it also became a blueprint for state and peace-building in the former Yugoslavian territory. Dayton conceived Bosnia as a consociational federation, following an empirical model by Dutch-American political scientist Arend Lijphart.

It focused on an institutional prescription for divided societies, giving priority to collectivities rather than individual citizens in its institutional setup and political dynamics. This was in contrast to the majoritarian formula established in non-consociational societies.

The agreement was signed in Dayton, Ohio on November 21, 1995, putting an end to the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and dividing the country into two entities: a Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) and a Croat-Bosniak federation, adding to that an autonomous region known as the Brcko district, governed by an international administration.

The Dayton's annexes established the structure for identity politics: annexe VI became the country's constitution and established a consociational package that deemed Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks in the country as constitutive peoples while relegating those who did not identify with these groups as second-class citizens, and barring them from political life.

Dayton's constitutional consociationalism may have been an incentive for conflict resolution but it has also cemented the war's ethno-nationalist and social exclusionary features as key components to power-sharing. This has prompted various political and socio-economic crises in the war's aftermath, with few avenues left for citizens to engage in any form of political agency.



What Bosnia's state-building has created are relations of clientelism based on affiliation to ethnic political parties, making this ethno-national identification a constant in the post-Dayton system. There are many moments in Bosnia-Herzegovina's post-war politics that show the barriers imposed by identity politics to the prospects of sustainable peace.

The first era would be the immediate years after the Dayton agreement, which saw the heavy political powers of the international community. Institutions such as NATO, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and several UN agencies were in charge of tasks such as peacekeeping, the development of an electoral system, policy development and reform, establishment of a civil society sector and economic reconstructions among others.

The UN's Office of the High Representative (OHR) had consolidated decision-making, mainly via the Bonn Powers (this empowered the OHR to adopt binding decisions and remove public officials from office), to dismiss Bosnian politicians considered hostile to the spirit of the Dayton agreement.

By 2006 and up to 2014, the effect of this international heavy-handedness ended in a lack of cooperation from politicians in Republika

Recent years, the continuous rise of identity politics and ethno-religious rhetoric has maintained the negative atmosphere surrounding Bosnian politics. **During various electoral seasons, a proposal for the creation of a third ethnic entity for Croats has been rumoured within Croat political circles. This shows an inclination in further administrative and political divisions.**



Srpska (RS) to processes of political reform and their reluctance to support any initiative towards constitutional change. As the distance





between international and local politicians grew wider, a new era emerged with less international involvement, a diminished visibility for the OHR, a more indirect European Union (EU) accession process and an increase in ethno-nationalist political parties with strong rhetoric aimed at maintaining ethno-religious divisions within society through fear of the ethnic other.

The year 2014 marked an important point in Bosnian politics, through the April protests, which saw citizens uniting against politicians for the first time, demanding a prompt recovery from the socioeconomic crisis and stagnant politics that had marked the functioning of the Dayton state. This ended in a famous set of plenums where citizens denounced corruption and issues of socio-economic justice against ethno-political parties. Sadly, the protests lost their momentum through episodes of vandalism, hooliganism and police violence that ended in a reduction of citizens' demands and the conquering of ethnic fear and ethno-religious divisions.

In recent years, the continuous rise of identity politics and ethno-religious rhetoric has maintained the negative atmosphere surrounding Bosnian politics. During various electoral seasons, a proposal for the creation of a third ethnic entity for Croats has been rumoured

within Croat political circles. This shows an inclination in further administrative and political divisions. Although this new entity has not materialised, the message of further ethnic secession looms on the horizon.

More concerning, Bosnian-Serb politician Milorad Dodik has constantly campaigned since 2014 for a referendum that can permit a complete secession of Republika Srpska (RS) as an entity from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a political act aimed at breaking the letter of the Dayton agreement.

Apart from this, Dodik has also revamped a policy of rearmament for RS, another violation of the Dayton agreement, and has used the police as pawns within a political contestation against the EU and other international actors. Dodik's politicisation of law enforcement in RS has meant an increase in members of the police to transform it into his force.

More recently, the National Assembly in RS approved a range of amendments to their legal codes, which would see them stop publishing decisions made by the OHR in the entity's official gazette, making them invalid for the entity. The context for this decision has been the ongoing tension between German diplomat Christian Schmidt (current High Representative) and RS president Dodik.

What the Assembly's decision represents is a complete disregard for the OHR as an institution overseeing peace-building in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a political contestation from Serb politicians towards the legitimacy of Schmidt and the institution he represents.

Dayton's emergence as a peace agreement in Bosnia may have ended the civil strife of the 1990s. However, by cementing ethno-religious divisions in the country's state-building, it permitted the rise of identity politics as the dominant force in Bosnian elections, as well as various disputes between local nationalist politicians and the international community, keeping Bosnia in constant stagnation and crisis.

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COMPLEXITY IN IDENTITY

THE PUERTO RICAN EXPERIENCE

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I am a Puerto Rican.

Puerto Rico, officially the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is a Caribbean island and unincorporated territory of the United States with official Commonwealth status. In unincorporated territories, fundamental rights apply as a matter of law, but other constitutional rights are unavailable. As a result, these territories are often considered colonies of the United States. This means the United States Constitution does not fully enfranchise US citizens residing in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has around 3.2 million residents. English and Spanish are the official languages. The settlement of the population in Puerto Rico goes back to indigenous peoples, namely Taino, who existed there 4000 years ago. It was later colonised by Spain following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493, and remained a Spanish possession for the next four centuries. By the 19th century, the Puerto Rican demographic identity turned to be mixed with Indigenous, African and European elements. Puerto Rico became a US territory in 1893.

Puerto Ricans have had US citizenship since 1917. However, as residents of an unincorporated territory, **American citizens of Puerto Rico are disenfranchised at the national level and do not vote for the president or vice president.**



The United States and Puerto Rico began with a long-standing metropolis-colony relationship. The Foraker Act of 1900 gave Puerto Rico a certain amount of civilian popular government, including a popularly elected House of Representatives. The upper house and governor were appointed by the United States.

In the early 20th century, Puerto Rico was ruled by the US military, with officials including the governor appointed by the President of the United States. In 1914, the Puerto Rican House of Delegates voted unanimously in favour of independence from the United States, but this was rejected by the US Congress as 'unconstitutional', and in violation of the 1900 Foraker Act. Puerto Ricans have had US citizenship since 1917. However, as residents of an unincorporated territory, American citizens of Puerto Rico are disenfranchised at the national level and do not vote for the president or vice president.

Even though the Commonwealth government of Puerto Rico has its tax laws, its residents do not pay U.S. federal taxes. They pay into Social Security and are thus eligible for all Social Security benefits upon retirement, but they are excluded from the Supplemental Security Income and the Medicaid funding (even though a small fraction of it is given) it would receive if it were a US State. Puerto Rico's current and future political identity has consistently been a matter of significant debate.



Even though Puerto Ricans have US citizenship which they are proud of, the majority of the people feel pride in their **Puerto Rican nationality, regardless of their racial, ethnic, political, or economic backgrounds. Because Puerto Rican citizenship is internationally irrelevant.**



There have been several protests and attempts for independence over the decades but in vain. In May 1948, a bill was introduced before the Puerto Rican Senate which would restrain the rights of the independence and nationalist movements on the island.

Under this new law, it would be a crime to print, publish, sell, or exhibit any material intended to paralyse or destroy the insular government; or to organise any society, group or assembly of people with a similar destructive intent. It made it illegal to sing a patriotic song and reinforced the 1898 law that had made it illegal to display the flag of Puerto Rico. Anyone found guilty of disobeying the law in any way is subject to a sentence of up to ten years imprisonment, and a huge fine.

The 1950s witnessed revolts in various towns and cities of Puerto Rico against the United States. In 1950, the US Congress granted Puerto Ricans the right to organise a constitutional convention via a referendum; voters could either accept or reject a proposed US law that would organise Puerto Rico as a 'commonwealth' under continued US sovereignty. The Constitution of Puerto Rico was approved by the constitutional convention on February 6, 1952.



Since 2007, the Puerto Rico State Department has developed a protocol to issue certificates of Puerto Rican citizenship to Puerto Ricans. To be eligible, applicants must have been born in Puerto Rico, born outside of Puerto Rico to a Puerto Rican-born parent, or be an American citizen with at least one year of residence in Puerto Rico. There have been many other revolts and developments in the territory even in the later years but the full sovereignty of an independent nation remains a dream.

The nature of Puerto Rico's political identity and its relationship with the US is the subject of discussion in Puerto Rico, the United States Congress, and the United Nations. The basic question is whether Puerto Rico should remain an unincorporated territory of the US, become a US State, or become an independent country.

Even though Puerto Ricans have US citizenship which they are proud of, the majority of the people feel pride in their Puerto Rican nationality, regardless of their racial, ethnic, political, or economic backgrounds. Because Puerto Rican citizenship is internationally irrelevant.

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IDENTITY FOR PEACE



When people identify strongly with certain groups, they can create **division, hostility, discrimination, marginalisation, violence stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to conflicts.**



I dentity refers to our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. It is also about how other people perceive and label us. Moreover, our interactions with people give us ideas about other's identities, so our concept of identity is also influenced by the culture we come from (Facing History & Ourselves, 2021).

In the same way, we can understand social identity as the sense of who you are based on your membership in certain groups, including age, economic class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

On the other hand, peace means freedom from war and violence. It also refers to people living and working together happily without disagreements (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

Identity and peace mainly refer to inter-state wars and the social impact generated by the conflict of interest regarding identity. Subsequently, we can see how a person's religion can determine different habits and social interactions. When people identify strongly with certain groups, they can create division, hostility, discrimination, marginalisation, violence stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to conflicts.

To solve this problem, it is necessary to recognise, respect and embrace different identities. With this objective in mind, the liberal peace models were designed to deal with these internal conflicts in most countries and applied to the inter-ethnic conflicts ways to build sustainable peace, justice and reconciliation (Hagg, G. Kagwanja, P. 2007).

Therefore, different organisations such as UNESCO and the African Union, 'have looked to cultural diversity and expressions of identity as assets in peacemaking and nation-building'



(Hagg, G. Kagwanja, P. 2007) to manage this problem. We must take into account that the world is increasingly becoming more ethnically diverse, and societies are competing among themselves (Hewstone. 2015) quoted by (McKeown, S. Cavdar, D. Taylor, L. 2019).

Evidence of this is given to us by the authors mentioned above, who exemplify the high levels of ethnic segregation observed in areas such as schools or neighbourhoods, and shockingly also within immigrants and minorities (McKeown, S. Cavdar, D. Taylor, L. 2019).

In particular, we can talk about Colombia and all the peace negotiations between leftist guerrillas and the government over the years. Supposedly, with the peace agreement signed by the Juan Manuel Santos administration with the 'Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army', there would be no more conflict, but the reality is much more complex.

Economist Bruno Boccara (2016), talked about this topic and suggested that it is a result 'when a group feels that its identity is under attack'. So, this is a reason why in Colombia people are competing among themselves. Furthermore, another reason for the internal Colombian conflict is the Venezuelan migration, which causes intolerance and segregation. Also, there is the sexism that women suffer from daily.

Alternatively, some ways to promote understanding and peace is through cultural exchange and dialogue, because learning about different cultures and traditions can make people appreciate diversity, and develop empathy for others. This aim needs communication, empathy, and compromise from our societies. As a result, it would be easier for us to break down stereotypes and prejudices and create a more inclusive society that embraces dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation to heal and forgive.

An example is Finland. The country has ideological and political identity dimensions connected to a neutrality policy amidst sustained public support (Aunesluoma, J. Rainio-Niemi, J. 2016).

Finland built a peaceful society with neutrality as an identity, contributing to social stability through more inclusive peace processes and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The country takes care of and gives more opportunities



for women, young people and people with disabilities to participate in problem-solving in peace and security (Ministry for foreign affairs of Finland. 2023).

In conclusion, identity and peace are two interconnected concepts that provide a sense of purpose to promote peace and allow people to recognise and respect diverse identities, through cultural exchange and dialogue.

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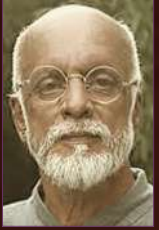
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IDENTITY AND VIOLENCE





I dentity is a crucial social category. To lead a straightforward life, one must substantiate one's identity with a government-certified identity card. When opening a bank account, for instance, presenting a government-certified identity card is a requirement. As a result, one's declared identity on his/her identity card – be it Indian, British, Pakistani, or any other nationality – becomes a significant aspect of social interaction.

This identity-card-based identification serves as a practical social phenomenon. However, within the confines of one's home, the need for such identification is unnecessary, unless one has installed devices that recognise an individual's presence. In a sense, this physical identification can be likened to how animals identify themselves and others through scent.

But what truly constitutes one's identity? Unless one possesses a metaphysical inclination, all our identities are social constructs for convenience. The question of 'Who am I?' depends on the context. In some situations, one is an Indian; in others, a father, a son, a husband, an agnostic, a professor, and countless more roles.

In this sense, identity merely represents a fraction of the various social roles we engage in, proving useful and, perhaps, even pleasurable. However, it can also lead to a sense of disingenuousness, as cautioned by French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, when we fully identify ourselves with any one of our multiple identities.

By doing so, we relinquish our freedom and confine ourselves to a self-imposed prison. This is one of the dangers that arise from denying the fact that we possess multiple identities. The concept of Sartrean 'bad faith' emerges from tragically denying our freedom.

Metaphysically inclined individuals incessantly engage in a quest similar to the 'Waiting for

In India, specifically since 1947, the expression of religious identity has resulted in horrific violence. As Indians, among our various identities, we have been both victims and **perpetrators of violence concerning a single Hindu religious identity. However, since 2014, we have become victims of a government that aligns itself with a singular identity – Hindutva.**



Godot' game, hoping to find an answer to the question, 'Who am I?' They may traverse from one Upanishad to another, or turn to the Bible, the Quran, Plato, or the Buddha, all in pursuit of The Ultimate (identity). They may continue this endeavour as long as time and their financial means permit. However, all these tragic or peaceful activities centred around identity would abruptly transform into abhorrent acts of violence if one were to completely identify herself with her religion or nation.

By religion, I refer to a belief or trust in metaphysical being/beings and their associated practices. Religions often encompass sacred texts, some of them believed to have been received directly from the beings in which faith is placed. By nation, I mean a collective group of individuals united by shared aspects such as culture, history and language.

We are all familiar with the atrocities committed by individuals/nations who identified with Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism. In India, specifically since 1947, the expression of religious identity has resulted in horrific violence. As Indians, among our various identities, we have been both victims and perpetrators of violence concerning a single Hindu religious identity. However, since 2014, we have become victims of a government that aligns itself with a singular identity – Hindutva.

This new identity was invented by a person named Veer Savarkar. According to Savarkar, only Hindus have complete eligibility to live in India/Bharat. He defines a Hindu as someone

who is born in India/Bharat and regards India/Bharat as his holy land. An Indian is someone who is genetically related to the Vedic people who migrated to India/Bharat before 1000 BCE.

All indigenous Indians currently living in India are descendants of these people who intermarried with the local population. Therefore, those Indians who converted to Christianity or Islam are also related to these ancient Aryans, and India is their fatherland. However, since they converted to Christianity/Islam, they cannot consider India/Bharat as their holy land.

By Savarkar's definition, they cannot legitimately be considered Indians, that is Hindus: "So with



His idea of Indianness was not based on the Constitution of India, which states that an Indian is someone who pays allegiance to the Constitution of India. **There is no special foundation for an India made up of what Savarkar called the 'Hindu nation.'**





the Hindus, they being the people, whose past, present and future are most closely bound with the soil of Hindustan as Pitribhu, as Punyabhu, they constitute the foundation, the bedrock, the reserved forces of the Indian State.”

He continued, “O Hindus, consolidate and strengthen Hindu nationality; not to give wanton offence to any of our non-Hindu compatriots,” but “to render it impossible for others to betray her or to subject her to an unprovoked attack by any of those Pan-isms' that are struggling forth from continent to continent.”

Was he trying to suggest that while Hindus should desist from indulging in malicious acts against non-Hindus, it was alright for them to wilfully attack the latter for acts such as consuming beef? His idea of Indianness was not based on the Constitution of India, which states that an Indian is someone who pays allegiance to the Constitution of India. There is no special foundation for an India made up of what Savarkar called the ‘Hindu nation.’

A singular identity can lead to serious political violence in a country. The current government in India wholeheartedly subscribes to Savarkar's concept of Hindutva and openly claims it as their ideology/identity. However, can a government that adheres to the Hindutva ideology, which states that only those who accept India as a holy land can be full-blooded Indians, be allowed to form a government in India?

In India, these individuals are permitted to run for parliamentary and state legislative assembly elections. They win these elections and take an oath to safeguard the Constitution of India, but their ideology directly violates the principle of considering Christians and Muslims as Indian citizens – a right which is guaranteed under the Constitution.

The government's everyday practices towards these minorities align with the principles of Hindutva. Mosques and churches are demolished, and minorities are restricted in their freedom to choose what they want to eat. Muslims are persecuted and insulted. Surprisingly, the blatant violation of the Indian Constitution's notions of citizenship by the government has not been adequately addressed.

Can a party like the BJP rule India without abandoning its Hindutva ideology or identity? Unless we accept that all our identities are multiple and contingent, there will not be a peaceful solution to the problems that countries like India are currently facing.

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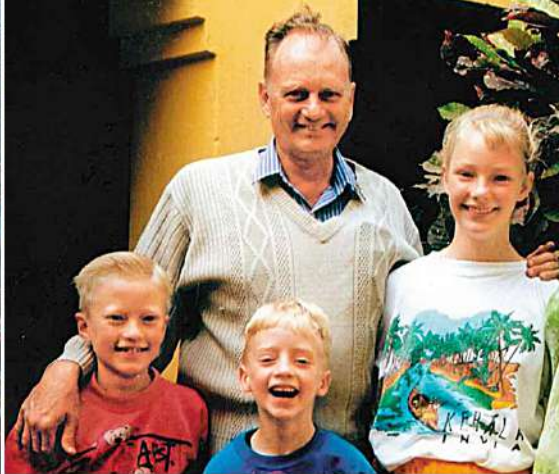
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IDENTITY, VIOLENCE AND PEACE

CASE OF INDIA



In India, the violence started building up against Muslim minorities to begin with and later against Christians. **The basis of violence is misconceptions, which, in turn, leads to hate and so the violence can be orchestrated against those holding minority religious identities.**



India is a pluralistic country with multiple religions and cultures. It has diversity in language, ethnicity, regions and religions. The people hold multiple identities. These diverse identities have added to the richness of Indian culture. Overarching all these identities, the Indian identity emerged during the freedom movement and became the base of diverse identities.

The diversity in identities was not the cause of violence in the pre-colonial period. India did, indeed, see strife, like Shia-Sunni or Shaiva-Vaishnava in the pre-colonial period, but these did not take the form of targeted or communal violence as prevailing today.

The colonial period saw the emergence of newer social classes, like the industrialists, workers and the educated classes. They were harping on Indian identity as the core identity. The old rulers, landlords and kings stuck exclusively to their religious identities alone, opposing Indian

identity and laying the seeds of hate against one another. This opposition to the Indian identity and sticking exclusively to religious identity sowed the seeds of violence in times to come.

While, during the freedom movement, the primary glue for the majority of the people was the anti-colonial struggle and Indian fraternity, those holding exclusively to religious identity sowed the seeds, which not only led to the tragic partition of the country, but also to the violence against religious minorities in times to come. Their political agenda was based primarily on identity issues whipping up emotions and, in turn, led to the rise of communal violence.

In Pakistan, 'Muslim identity' became the primary one. It targeted the Hindu and Christian minorities and later led to violence against smaller Islamic sects. In India, the violence started building up against Muslim minorities to begin with and later against Christians. The basis of violence is misconceptions, which, in turn, leads to hate and so the violence can be orchestrated against those holding minority religious identities.

This violence saw a major upsurge after the demolition of the Babri Mosque leading to the Mumbai violence (1992-93), Gujarat carnage

(2002), and Muzaffarnagar (2013) among others. Similarly, anti-Christian violence started picking up in the 1990s and manifested first in the ghastly murder of Pastor Graham Stewart Stains and later in Dangs (Gujarat) and Kandhamal (Orissa). Currently, the violence in Manipur is also primarily against the tribes, who are mainly Christians.

This identity-related violence and politics are also accompanied by the decline in democratic freedoms. India's place in the Democratic Index is constantly falling. The insecurity of Muslims and Christians is on the rise, while freedom of expression and freedom of religion have seen a free fall. The social atmosphere is reeking of identity-based intolerance where minorities are the main victims. A similar phenomenon has also been witnessed in neighbouring Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

Identities can be empowering in various ways. Currently, we are witnessing a scenario where religious identities are leading to intolerance on the one hand and insecurity on the other. The country which witnessed the glorious syncretic traditions of Bhakti and Sufi, the country where people throng Mother Mary's church at Velankanni, is in the grip of a situation which is against the values of love and peace propagated by major religions in India.

For a peacemaker, these are very disturbing situations. The violence is being orchestrated and hate is dominating the social scene. The peacemakers have tried to combat this hate and misconceptions through various endeavours. While trying to engage in dialogue against identity-based hate and violence, I had the good fortune of associating with and learning from some of the peacemakers. What I am

listing is not the whole of it but a sample of my associations and their impact on society.

Asghar Ali Engineer, through the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, initiated lectures, workshops and seminars to propagate the true meaning of religion in Indian society. His vast contribution to writing for peace was a pioneering work. Interfaith dialogue was jacked up through the efforts of his work to remove the misconceptions among people of different religions. His son Irfan Engineer carries on this legacy.

Teesta Setalvad-Javed Anand duo undertook a mammoth task by starting a journal Sabrang, which now comes as an internet newsletter. It reports on the incidents related to promoting peace in the community. Apart from this, there are innumerable initiatives from them, like Khoj, and justice for violent victims of the politics of identity.

The experience of these initiatives is very positive. These efforts are trying to promote the values of Indian pluralism, tolerance, and celebration of diversity and, in turn, promoting the values inherent in the Indian Constitution.



Asghar Ali Engineer

Anand Patwardhan

Fr. Cedric Prakash

Dr. John Dayal

Faraz Khan



Charul Bharavada and Vinay Mahajan

Teesta Setalvad and Javed Anand

Along similar lines, **Shabnam Hashmi**, through the Act Now for Harmony and Democracy undertook many peace workshops all over the country apart from cultural programmes giving the message of peace. On similar lines, **Harsh Mander**, apart from other valuable work, initiated Karavan-E-Mohabbat, to assuage the families who lost their near and dear ones in identity-related politics. **Dr John Dayal** and **Fr. Cedric Prakash** have also immensely contributed to promoting peace through different forums.

In this dismal scenario, these are a few noteworthy efforts to bring back peace and amity. A couple of more individual works are also worth mentioning. **Charul Bharavada** and **Vinay Mahajan**, through their music, and videos like 'Insaan Hain Ham' (We are Humans), contributed immensely to the message of love and amity cutting across religious lines.

Lately, **Faraz Khan** a singer-music director and musicologist has been working on communal harmony through music. His new song 'Aao duniya ko sikhayen' is due to be released shortly. Not to mention numerous YouTube channels, Media Star World, The Credible History and Ambedkar Nama which are doing a yeoman service by fighting against misconceptions to promote harmony in society.



Shabnam Hashmi Harsh Mander

K.P. Sasi

We also cannot forget the contributions of filmmakers like **Anand Patwardhan**, **Rakesh Sharma** and **KP Sasi** who, through their films, have contributed to combat the hate and misconceptions created by the identity-related assault on Indian democracy. While respecting people's diverse identities what is needed is to combat the misuse of identity to spread hate against others.

The experience of these initiatives is very positive. These efforts are trying to promote the values of Indian pluralism, tolerance, and celebration of diversity and, in turn, promoting the values inherent in the Indian Constitution.

The problem is not that efforts to promote harmony are not there, the problem is that these efforts are too little for a vast country like ours. The dialogue with average people on these issues does lead to a change of heart and mind away from the dominance of the divisive use of identity. We need to recall and restore the glorious syncretic traditions, the great national movement, which cuts across all identities to bring us to achieve democracy and freedom.

One only wishes and hopes the positive initiatives in this direction pool their energies, to coordinate their efforts in the direction of humanist values of religion and inclusive values of the Indian Constitution and United Nations Charter of Human Rights.

Ram Puniyani, President of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism Mumbai, contributes regular columns on issues related to combating Communalism, and promoting Peace.

Books: 'Religious Nationalism, Social Perceptions and Violence', 'Ambedkar and Hindu Nationalism', among others. He is recipient of National Communal Harmony Award 2007.



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FORCEFUL ASSIMILATION

A THREAT TO ADIVASIS IDENTITY



With the arrival of the British East India Company and its intrusion into Adivasi terrains at the invitation of Hinduised rajas, **the processes of revenue (tax) extraction, exploitation and oppression turned so abrupt that Adivasis had to rise in revolts at various parts of the Chotanagpur plateau.**



Many of us agree that India is a land of migrants. However, it should also be agreed upon that all humans during prehistoric times moved constantly from one place to another in search of food and safety. Nevertheless, it has also been accepted that the first humans appeared in Africa, and from there they came to India.

They were 'Kolarian' or Mundari-speaking ethnic groups who had settled in the regions of Mohanjo-Daro and Harappa in ancient times. Later, more powerful waves of migrants intermingled with these civilisations causing the degradation of these civilisations. Further, studies are showing that the early Vedic period, circa 1500 BCE, witnessed the gradual emergence of two schematic branches, besides all other multiple syncretic combinations and permutations that enriched the diversity and plurality of the demographic compositions presently seen in the subcontinent.

Those two enduring chasmic branches could be termed as:

1) Those who still cling on to the original and enduring humane imagination of the autonomy of the bear-self that would resist all forms of domination, discrimination and control while upholding the values of egalitarianism, freedom and autonomy and self-determination. These might be referred to in modern terms as Tribes or hills people, who in central India, would like themselves to be called Adivasis (meaning mainland India's indigenous peoples who made the land here inhabitable).

2) Those who thrive on nurturing prejudices, discrimination, domination, self-aggrandisement and hoarding of wealth unlimitedly for themselves while demonising others whose presence is perceived as threatening. The first could be termed as social formations based on Sacral Polities (SP) and the second on Political Brahmanism (PB). This can also be referred to as the 'Tribe-Caste continuum.'

Although initially, Sacral Polity had permeated the subcontinent, over time, PB began to make a draconian emergence to appropriate the spaces and SP-based social formations. Thus, PB presently encompasses and animates the so-called 'mainstream'. Naturally, SP-based social formations had to escape into inaccessible hills and forests of the subcontinent to preserve and live their original imagination of freedom and the more humane values they cherished.



In sum, Adivasis are people who rejected PB and its oppressive and exploitative values of discrimination, untouchability, graded inequality among humans and **the pursuit of Lakshmi while unmindfully depriving and demonising others. It was self-aggrandisement.**

In other words, those that emerged more powerful appropriated common resources and the surplus values created by the labouring classes for themselves. They did it by employing the religio-cultural hegemony created by the concept of Lakshmi, a Hindu pantheon of wealth, power, honour and good fortunes. Thus, emerged the oppressive and exploitative caste system as a process and praxis.

While the system evolved and spread in the alluvial plains, those who valued pure reciprocity, freedom, dignity and nurtured a sense of justice and equality had to escape the plain's caste system and withdraw themselves further into inaccessible hills and forests. These are the domains that the pursuers of Lakshmi feared to enter. State circles emerged in the plain under PB. The more egalitarian and equalitarian jungle-hill kingdoms too existed and were organised around the principles of Sacral Polities headed by Adivasi chieftains.

The agents that felicitated an ongoing appropriation of SP into PB-based state systems were Brahmanas who visited Adivasi chieftains, indoctrinated them into the process and praxis of PB and converted them into Hinduised rajas who, in return, built temples and gifted pieces of lands to Brahmanas. They would then collect taxes from Adivasis. However, those Adivasis who were aggrieved by PB's self-aggrandisement withdrew themselves into interior forests and inaccessible terrains. This process continues.

The early state circles and rajas established around Brahmanical ideology facilitated the entry of any invading external superior power that would intrude, co-opt or defeat and encroach the spaces of SP which upheld a symbiotic relationship with nature, practised

pure reciprocity and communal ownership of natural resources. These processes were conflictual but not abrupt.

However, with the arrival of the British East India Company and its intrusion into Adivasi terrains at the invitation of Hinduised rajas, the processes of revenue (tax) extraction, exploitation and oppression turned so abrupt that Adivasis had to rise in revolts at various parts of the Chotanagpur plateau.

These rebellions forced the British to recognise the distinctiveness of Adivasi social formations: subsistence-based mode of production ensuring symbiotic relationships with nature, common ownership of water, jungle and land, and egalitarian and consensus-based decision-making processes which ensured good governance and peace.

The British also noticed the external exploitative elements ('dikus') intrusion which disturbed and disrupted the Adivasi ethno-territories and sociocultural organisations. The British began restricting the dikus' entry into these terrains while allowing Adivasi chieftains to manage their internal affairs including control over resources. This began in 1836-37 in a Ho Adivasi reserve called Kolhan Government Estate, presently the entire West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand, India. Other Adivasi ethno-territories were also demarcated later.

These British colonial policies and provisions found their place in post-colonial India's Fifth and Sixth schedules of the Constitution. These and several other special legislations that intend to protect Adivasi ethno-territories provided important legal foundations for Adivasis' distinctive identities as India's indigenous peoples.

In sum, Adivasis are people who rejected PB and its oppressive and exploitative values of discrimination, untouchability, graded inequality among humans and the pursuit of Lakshmi while unmindfully depriving and demonising others. It was self-aggrandisement.

In the process of rejecting PB, they had to withdraw themselves into further inaccessible interiors where forests were dense and the terrains were rough but nature always remained bountiful to them since their relationship remained symbiotic.

Thus, they developed a lifestyle that was carefree, joyful, honest, genuine and non-manipulative. They valued freedom, contentment and autonomy which enabled them to enjoy life making it a joyful celebration in harmony with the nature the rhythm of its seasons. The Mundari saying, 'senge susun; kajige durung', (to walk is to dance; to speak is to sing) illustrates this ever-joyful Adivasi disposition.

Today, Adivasis have almost lost their space and control over resources which pose many challenges to their continued existence as distinctive social formations. Their resource-rich ethno-territories have been overexploited in the name of 'national development' while grossly neglecting the well-being, right to self-determination, autonomy and other hard-earned constitutional and legal provisions put in place to protect and promote these

resources, sustainable cultural values, humane customary practices, music-like languages and proud histories.

These are antidotes to PB which promotes cut-throat competition, accumulation by dispossession, discrimination, oppression, overexploitation, and destruction of the environment and ecology while causing civil conflicts, strife and wars.

The Way Out

The way out is to recognize and respect Adivasis' special constitutional and other legal rights. Arrange to provide an enabling environment whereby Adivasi adults can educate and conscientize themselves about their special rights, the proud histories of rebellions and struggles their ancestors undertook to protect the resources in their ethno-territories and gained recognition to their distinctive mode of production, cultural values and customary laws by which they had ensured peace and good governance through their traditional local self-governance systems for emancipation. Also make school and college education more relevant and contextual for Adivasi children: make their mother-tongue the medium of education in primary schools so that they are able to acquire basic education in a joyful and confident manner, empower the Gram-Sabhas and panchayats under the provisions of Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996 to exercise the principle of



Soon after father Stan's arrest (2018), incarceration and passing away(2021), there remained much apprehensions and uncertainties about the existence of Bagaicha and continuity of its works. **However, amidst existing uncertainties, a few Jesuits have willingly accepted to be at Bagaicha and continue the work.**



subsidiarity by which they are able to run primary and middle schools, primary health centres and ensure other institutions that provide basic public services.

This way when the members of community are conscientized, they would be able to organise and force the respective State governments to implement and ensured their rights and entitlements as equal citizens of the country. This will enable Adivasi social formations to maintain their distinctive sociocultural values and practices that have been proved to be more humane and sustainable both for humanity's and mother earth's future.

The Bagaicha Movement

Bagaicha is a social research and action center established by the late Father Stan Swamy, a human rights defender with a special commitment to protect, promote and uphold Adivasi and other historically marginalized groups' resources, cultural values and special constitutional and legal rights. What motivated Stan Swamy to set up Bagaicha was his conviction that Adivasi social formations have been the real custodians of natural resources – jal, jungle and jameen (waterbodies, forests and land), that this was enabled by their subsistence-based mode of production and the distinctive cultural values evolved around this. Swamy recognized the seeds of socialism and equalitarian values being lived out by Adivasis of Jharkhand as a Jesuit scholastic during his regency year in West Singhbhum where he served as a hostel prefect and teacher to Ho Adivasi boys in 1967.

Since then, Father Stan Swamy remained continuously in touch with his Jharkhandi friends - Adivasi leaders and other committed activists towards forming stronger networks and campaigns to make people aware of special provisions and rights gained by Adivasis' historical struggles to protect jal, jungle and jameen during early British colonial days and to make the post-colonial State to implement these provisions. Even while he served at Indian Social Institute Bangalore (ISIB), he used to visit Jharkhand twice a year to discuss issues with his friends here. Back in Jharkhand since 1990s and his works at Bagaicha, Ranchi since pre and post 2000 have certainly raised people's awareness, formed considerable levels of cultural and political consciousness about Adivasis' distinctiveness as a people with special land and political rights.

Soon after Father Stan's arrest (2018), incarceration and passing away (2021), there remained much apprehensions and uncertainties about the existence of Bagaicha and continuity of its works. However, amidst existing uncertainties, a few Jesuits have willingly accepted to be at Bagaicha and continue the work. Presently, we are four Jesuits from three central-zone Jesuit provinces: Sebastian Lakra, Peter Martin, Tom Kavalakatt and Antony Puthumattathil. Sebastian coordinates the Migrants Assistance Information Network (MAIN) at the zonal level. MAIN provides various assistance to migrants in distress at any part of India by responding to distress-calls received through a pan-Indian toll-free number (18008912995) provided by the Jesuit conference of south Asia.



Peter Martin is an advocate by profession and he practices at the High Court of Jharkhand. He, along with Peter Mahendra Tigga, SJ, a Ranchi Jesuit trained in law, also runs the Hoffman Law Associates, a legal cell established by central-zone Jesuit provinces. Tom Kavalakatt is a veteran social activist who the first secretary of the Conference Secretariat for social action. Later, he worked with the Paharias and Santals for more than two decades. He has specially been invited to Bagaicha to be a guide to the other three who first formed the team post-Stan movement. Antony (Tony) is presently the director of Bagaicha. Tom and Tony keep working with various networks of both grassroots and urban-bound social activists and human rights defenders on various issues of violations of human rights and that of Dalit and Adivasi rights.

Bagaicha offers short-term courses on socio-cultural analysis to young religious and lay youth. One of the core concerns of Bagaicha is to strengthen the traditional local self-governance system of Adivasis under the provisions of Panchayats Extinction to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996. Despite all the challenges listed above, most of the committed Adivasi leaders and their well-wishers and a very few committed NGOs believe that strengthening gram-sabhas under the PESA Act 1996 still remains very relevant and important for reviving sustainable Adivasi ethos and cultural values to counter political Brahmanism, neoliberal capitalism and climate change. Along this line is Bagaicha's dream to demonstrate to Adivasi villagers that their barren village lands laying idle could be made green again with fruitbearing trees.

Bagaicha also maintains a research and documentation centre which occasionally brings out in-depth studies on crucial issues in collaboration with other like-minded researchers. Bagaicha's training centre provides residential training facilities to NGOs and its own collaborators at the grassroots. It also has a day-study centre used by the youth from neighboring villages to prepare themselves to appear for various competitive exams.

Certainly, much more could be done given the gravity and multiple challenges faced by Jharkhandis in the present context. However, given the fast-changing nature of narratives, issues and circumstances, often it is hard to sustain hope. Being hopeful about a better future for all, especially the historically marginalised sections of society, while looking at the complex issues and multiple challenges and an absolute absence of any enlightened effort from the ruling dispensations to improve the situation remains an everyday challenge. Nevertheless, Stan Swamy's focused and consistent efforts to stand up and fight the exploitative and oppressive system to make it more humane and just keep inspiring us. Moreover, these everyday struggles keep us off any dull moment and give us joy to be true to our call as human beings.

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RECONCILIATION AT THE HEART OF IDENTITIES

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This brief contribution shows the intimate connection between identity, fostering relationships, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, and shared discernment. We will learn that an identity that is not a reconciling identity between identities is violent.

1. We are who we are and not who we are not. I have a body and physical traits that are mine. I occupy space and time that another person or object cannot occupy. I have thoughts that are my own and not someone else's. I have prejudices, feelings, and desires that characterise me but not others.

Of course, I may share physical aspects with others, share common space with others, or share thoughts and feelings with others, but I remain unique as each one of us is a unique combination of features, some of which we may share with others. Even clones are not identical, although they share many characteristics of existence: $1 + 1 + 1 + \dots$

Identity involves our whole person: body, gender, spirit, mind, psyche, and will. Identity requires speaking about the entire person, the full context of that person, and their societal commitments. Our identity arises in a context we contribute to from our identity as the place of our creativity in our interactions with others.

All human beings are crucially alike in having an identity they don't share. Identity defines us different. It connects with difference, enabling us to stand against others who are different from us and have a distinct identity.

Identity allows us to relate to others. This may produce anxiety as we may experience others as competitors, particularly when we perceive their capacities and skills that we would desire to be ours. We may feel small or threatened compared to others and experience the urge to affirm ourselves over them.

Conversely, we may also view the differences in identity as opening up possibilities for collaboration and emulation. We can learn from others and grow into who we are by entering into constructive and respectful relationships.

We can allow friendship and love to determine our lives, even if we experience hurt and wounds on that road or discover how vulnerable we are in our identity. We can bring about higher identities through relationships with others.

Identity allows us to relate to others. This may produce anxiety as we may experience others as competitors, particularly when we perceive their capacities and **skills that we would desire to be ours. We may feel small or threatened compared to others and experience the urge to affirm ourselves over them.**



We can collaborate towards something greater than we are. This is how institutions and societies come about. The sum is greater than the individual parts.

How will we consider and approach the game of difference and identity, as identities never exist independently, but always in relationships with 'others' and with the Other?

2. Although our identity distinguishes us from one another, we always share common features with others. We may speak the same language, share the same religious or political convictions, and play the same sport.

Most certainly, as human beings, we 'share' humanity with other human beings. We share being part of the same universe. We share, being creatures, even if we are different. It is essential to become aware of this common soil. Part of our identity is that we share with others the same belonging.

American President John F. Kennedy's words in the cold war remind us of this: "We breathe the same air." The differentiating experience of personal identity is crucial because we share so much with one another that invites us to enter into dialogue, into companionship, into sharing the reality and developing a future together.

Belonging to the same world and sharing the same reality constitutes a formidable feeling and awareness. We did not choose this. This is who we are. Belonging together is part of our identity. We are 'condemned' to shared lives and shared processes of designing the future.

3. Identity is a process gradually built and assumed in conversations with other identities. We grow our identity in ever-changing interactions. It would be a mistake to consider identities as fixed. They are in continual change precisely because of their interactions. Identities do not exist on their own, separate from others.

Identities imply histories and are path-dependent. They require decisions arrived at during conversations. Identity is a process of discernment and involves our relationships with ourselves, with others, with nature, with God. Not accepting the historical, evolutionary character of identity is a denial of the other person and a fixation on the other in one moment.

4. In our identity, we are vulnerable. In assuming and affirming our identity, we express how we value ourselves and how others address us. We experience how they respect us for who we are. We may feel threatened by aspects of ourselves that we or others don't like, for example, gender or race or ethnicity or caste. We are vulnerable and can be bullied.

Conversely, we can wound others by not accepting them as they are. These painful experiences can make accepting our identity and assuming who we are challenging and even painful. We may feel threatened by our need for love and recognition, as German philosopher Alex Honneth has shown.

Because of these vulnerabilities, identities are easily perverted. The dialogue and conversation essential to identity are refused out of anger,



pain, anxiety, and insecurity. The 'I' becomes an isolated 'I', far from the relational and related 'I'.

At the same time, the 'I' cannot deny it is being entangled in relationships. This leads to alienation and estrangement. St. Ignatius of Loyola will speak about 'desavenidos.'

The vulnerability of the 'I' is a door through which a bad spirit can enter and attack the 'I'. This is a spiritual vulnerability. We are called to strengthen our interconnected vulnerable relationship with ourselves, God, others, and nature.

5. Not surprisingly, identity issues which arise in various ways are at the heart of every conflict. Therefore, conflicts affect us deeply. They tend to become violent. We feel attacked in our most vulnerable human identity. Violent clashes may occur because of identities and the perception or fixation on identities.

Even more, as the conflict unfolds and the violence turns destructive, polarisation and simplification arise in forming and allocating identities. We are made to fit into clear-cut categories: victims, perpetrators, good people, and evil people. The other is diabolised, so explains Catholic theologian Didier Pollefeyt in his studies on the Shoah.

In conflicts, recognition of the other must be destroyed. If not, the conflict cannot be sustained in its complete and tragic violence. Enemies must deny even the smallest shared reality. The other is different from me, in an unacceptable identity.

That is one of the reasons why conflicts are sometimes transformed when both antagonists become aware of a shared humanity through shared suffering.

Then understanding, sympathy, empathy, and compassion emerge as the Rwandan theologian Laurien Ntezimana discovered in the Detmold process. Jon Sobrino, a Latin-American theologian, wrote a book about compassion to underline that possibility in conflict transformation processes.

In violent conflicts, we construct our identities to make the conflict sustainable. Compassion – the shared and suffering humanity in our identities (the fact that we have an identity as human beings) – becomes unperceivable and covered up. The conflicting parties require this effort, and people are prepared for that. We repeatedly observe this process when people engage in wars and violence.

We become estranged and alienated precisely because we close our identities. We refuse contact, out of the necessary non-recognition of our fundamental dependence on others, on the Other. We are 'desavenidos' in need of reconciliation.

6. Indeed, reconciliation becomes necessary as an integral part of identity. It constitutes the ever-returning effort of assuming one's identity. Our existence depends upon our willingness to choose our relational identity. Restorative Justice embraces the effort to restore right relations between the various identities coloured by their contexts and histories when these relations have been violently wounded. Restorative mediators

Restorative Justice embraces the effort to restore right relations between the various identities coloured by their contexts and **histories when these relations have been violently wounded. Restorative mediators attempt to bring together in conversation the conflicting parties.**



attempt to bring together in conversation the conflicting parties. The convenor or facilitator acts as a familiar friend, allowing to re-imagine the friendship between the enemies that will restore compassion and the shared work for a common sustainable and peaceful future.

7. There are several aspects to this effort at reconciliation, this effort to regain or maintain our creative, relational identity.

7.1. Peace efforts consist of various steps that are proper to a 'common discernment' process. Enemies are invited to speak with one another and to search for common ground in building a shared sustainable future. Reconciliation is 'discerning reconciliation.' Ignatius Loyola suggests some points of attention in this process.

To recognise the importance of the right relationships that provide us with 'consolation' – the joy and the peace experienced in sustainable life together.

Indifference is the willingness to be self-critical concerning personal identity. To do so, one

reconstructs one's history and context as well as the various factors that influence identity construction (e.g., fear, expectations, anger).

7.2. Peace efforts require us to take care of the context – 'segun personas, tiempos, lugares' (according to people, time and places) in Ignatius' words – in all its complexities. We need an open eye to engage in various viewpoints. That, in its turn, requires dialogue with those who open our minds and hearts and wills to the different. We must consider the whole human being in all dimensions. We call this 'transdisciplinary reconciliation'.

It considers our transcendent character, that we necessarily, inevitably, crucially relate to what is different from us. The 'trans' of transdisciplinarity refers to the effort to move into the nitty-gritty reality of a violent conflict, the capacity to open the mind and to think in new ways by considering various perspectives on the conflict, the discovery of the spiritual depth of human beings in the search for peace.

7.3. The best moment to exercise how to build reconciled identity and engage on the road of who we are, is not amid an intractable violent conflict. When such conflict overwhelms us, we



Axel Honneth



Didier Pollefeyt



Jon Sobrino



Laurien Ntezimana



should be able to use the skills and knowledge we have learned in times of peace. We need to prepare ourselves for violent conflicts: how can we live conflicts constructively and creatively, not allowing their destructive potential to dominate and lord over us?

We call this ‘preventive reconciliation.’ It looks for educational strategies.

(a) We learn to think from the perspective of the young (and even of the still unborn, the future generations) for whom we wish and desire a sustainable world free of the violent conflicts that consume us.

(b) We educate the young and ourselves in the practice of the examen (the Ignatian stop when we take the time to consider our feelings and the deeper motives in our heart), in the practice of the spiritual conversation (a practice of constructively speaking, attentively listening, and jointly discerning the next step to be taken, which is well explained in the recent ‘Instrumentum Laboris’ for the coming synod on synodality), and in the building of networks of shared commitment to peace.

Such preventive reconciliation is the road to caring for friendship and love. It means working together at the service of right and sustainable relationships in which each one,

in their own identity, is respected and valued for their contribution to life together.

8. Conclusion: Our reflection on identity, its strengths and vulnerabilities, has shown how deeply relationships define and constitute who we are. This has made us think about conflicts, their strategies to pervert identity, and how to transform these conflicts of identity towards sustainable peace.

We discovered the fruitfulness of Ignatian spirituality as a practice of common discernment and from the perspective of reconciliation. The three views on reconciliation – discerning, transdisciplinary, and preventive reconciliation – appeared as critical features of an Ignatian approach during the 2021 International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) Madrid Conference on Ignatian Reconciliation. With IAJU’s Task Force on Peace and Reconciliation, we hope to contribute to peace efforts from an Ignatian perspective.

Elías López Pérez and Jacques Haers are Co-Chairs, IAJU Task Force on Peace and Reconciliation.





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PEACE LEADER PROGRAMME IN IRAQ

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The Peace Leader Programme is currently in its seventh edition, with 68 students enrolled and 200 graduates. **It has been implemented in nine countries, including Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, The Philippines, and Sri Lanka.**



This article examines the Peace Leader Programme, a professional course offered by JWL - Jesuit Worldwide Learning. The programme, accredited by Hekima University College in Kenya, utilises a blended learning approach rooted in Ignatian Pedagogy to foster peace and reconciliation in fragile and complex contexts.

Context and Methodology

The programme focuses on the experiences of Peace Leader graduates in Kurdistan, Iraq, a multi-ethnic and multireligious region recovering from a history of war and conflict. It explores the programme's impact on reconciliation with oneself and others, highlighting the interplay between these dimensions.

The Peace Leader Programme is currently in its seventh edition, with 68 students enrolled and 200 graduates. It has been implemented in nine countries, including Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, The Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

The six-month blended learning course focuses on the role and practices of a Peace Leader, integrating the best practices from peace studies and leadership studies. The programme covers three core themes: self-awareness and cultural awareness, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and servant-leadership. Practical fieldwork assignments and a supportive learning environment facilitate the development of Peace Leaders.

The Peace Leader Programme follows the JWL blended learning model, which incorporates the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm cycle: Experience - Reflection - Action. This cycle promotes active and personalised learning, encouraging critical thinking and community engagement.

Onsite facilitators and online faculty guide students through the learning process. The cycle begins with students reflecting on their experiences and applying the learned content. Reflections are further facilitated through assignments, encouraging critical thinking and understanding of the content in the context of their experiences.

The Peace Leader Programme in Kurdistan, Iraq, has empowered its graduates to embark on a journey of reconciliation with themselves and with others, ultimately leading to the transformation of their social and cultural environments.

The motivations of the participants to enrol in the programme stem from their desire for a more peaceful society, particularly among communities that have experienced internal displacement or are refugees.



The JWL model also emphasises the global classroom, where students from different centres and backgrounds engage in virtual discussions, fostering intercultural skills and sensitivity.

This online component transcends geographical limitations, enabling students to interact and share their stories, viewpoints, and values across cultural boundaries. Onsite facilitators play a vital role in contextualising the content, providing academic and motivational support, and maintaining an inclusive learning environment.

The JWL community in Iraq, particularly in the northern governorates and the Kurdistan

region, consists of diverse ethnic and religious groups. The region has a history of peaceful coexistence, but interreligious dialogue is limited. JWL Learning Centres in Iraq cater to learners from various backgrounds, including refugees and the youth of the host community.

In April 2022, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Peace Leader Programme graduates in the Erbil, Domiz refugee camp, and Khanke Internally Displaced Persons' camp. The interviews aimed to document the transformational journeys of these graduates and their experiences with the programme.

Code	Location	Gender	Age	Year of Graduation	Country of origin and Status
IQK_PL_GQ_M	Khanke Refugee Camp	Male	24	2020	Iraq, IDP
IQE_PL_G1_A	Erbil	Female	32	2020	Iraq, IDP
IQD_PL_G1_N	Domiz Refugee Camp	Male	24	2019	Syria, Refugee
IQE_PL_G2_A	Erbil	Male	27	NA	Iraq, loc community
IQK_PL_G2_N	Khanke Refugee Camp	Male	25	2020	Iraq, IDP

Table 1: Demographic Information on the respondents



The programme also nurtures intercultural sensitivity among the participants, fostering a willingness to interact with individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. **This openness to others is developed through global classroom interactions, where students from diverse backgrounds engage in discussions, respecting and accepting differences.**

Peace Leader Programme and the Voices of Reconciliation

The Peace Leader Programme in Kurdistan, Iraq, has empowered its graduates to embark on a journey of reconciliation with themselves and with others, ultimately leading to the transformation of their social and cultural environments. The motivations of the participants to enrol in the programme stem from their desire for a more peaceful society, particularly among communities that have experienced internal displacement or are refugees.

“I told them that what made me interested in the course was the word itself, peace leadership. Since I was born, I cannot see peace around me but peace in myself [...].

For me, I was thinking that we need peace around us. So, since I want to be a part of this course, I think it would be more helpful to spread this word to the people to know what peace is.” (IQE_PL_G1_A)

The programme initiates a process of reconciliation with oneself, which enables the graduates to reconcile with others. Through self-awareness and cultural awareness exercises, the participants develop a better understanding of themselves, their thoughts, and their goals.

This newfound self-awareness allows them to overcome personal obstacles and cultivate traits such as patience, empathy, and the ability to listen to others. Graduates also report increased self-reflection, self-control, and self-confidence.

This empowers them to take an active role in conflict resolution within their communities.

“[...] for quite some time I neglected myself. I couldn't be at peace with myself, but after this, for the first two months we focused on self and cultural awareness. It made me understand myself and my thoughts. I could know what I want in life. I removed those obstacles that were always getting in front of me when I wanted to try something new or follow my goals. That helped me a lot.” (IQD_PL_G1_N)

As peace leaders, the graduates become champions of peace in various aspects of their lives. They serve as role models within their families, and offer guidance and support in resolving conflicts. They also make an impact in their professional lives, effectively communicating with students or colleagues and contributing to conflict resolution in their workplaces. The skills and knowledge gained from the programme enable them to actively work in their communities, advocating for peace and supporting initiatives that promote understanding and reconciliation.

“My community has been through a lot. Maybe dozens of genocides. So, this course, [...] it pushed me to help the community. So now, I have a plan to have a centre, in which I can teach survivors. After taking this course, I need to do something to make a change in the community.” (IQK_PL_G1_M)



Figure 1 Developing Intercultural Sensitivity

The programme also nurtures intercultural sensitivity among the participants, fostering a willingness to interact with individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This openness to others is developed through global classroom interactions, where students from diverse backgrounds engage in discussions, respecting and accepting differences.

The programme encourages participants to learn about other cultures and religions, fostering informed opinions and a deeper understanding of their neighbours. Additionally, this increased intercultural sensitivity prompts self-reflection on one's traditions, challenging the power dynamics within their communities and paving the way for social change.

Through the process of reconciliation with oneself and with others, the programme equips graduates with the confidence and willingness to initiate change in their communities. They become agents of reconciliation, actively working towards creating more peaceful and inclusive environments. By transforming themselves, they inspire and motivate others to embrace peace and contribute to building a more harmonious society.

Overall, the Peace Leader Programme in Kurdistan, Iraq, empowers its graduates to embark on a transformative journey of reconciliation with oneself and with others. By nurturing personal growth, intercultural sensitivity, and a commitment to peace, the programme enables participants to become effective agents of change in their communities, ultimately fostering inclusive and peaceful societies.

Acknowledgement:

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Isabella Rega, Magdalena Nauderer and Melodie Honen-Delmar belong to Jesuit Worldwide Learning: Higher Education at the Margins.



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IDENTITY POLITICS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL HARMONY



The tension between identity politics as an instrument for peace and as a factor fostering conflict highlights the need for genuine dialogue as a powerful force to bridge identity bases divides and foster global harmony.



Since the end of the Cold War, identity politics emerged as a powerful force in shaping political dynamics in our interconnected world. Increasingly, people draw upon their ethnic, national, religious, and cultural identities to claim their rights and to mobilise for political action.

While identity can foster a sense of belonging in a community, it can also be a source of political tension, polarisation, and conflict. For this reason, exploring the relationship between identity politics and global harmony is an important topic in the disciplines of international relations and political science. By understanding the complexities of identity-driven politics, we can promote narratives that encourage peace and cooperation.

In political science, scholars have often identified identity politics as a divisive factor that can drive conflict and exacerbate division among communities. Examples of how identity-based politics can fuel hostility and frustrate peaceful coexistence include the Balkan Wars and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Samuel Huntington (1996) famously emphasised the need to take into account identity-driven grievances and manage cultural diversity to achieve peace. In his book 'The Clash of

Civilisations' and the 'Remaking of World Order', he claimed that tolerance of diverse identities is not enough and engaging in constructive dialogue is essential for conflict resolution that address the underlying causes fuelled by differences of identity. Recognising the power of identity, peacebuilders can devise strategies that address the root causes of conflict dynamics, and ultimately promote reconciliation.

In contrast with the negative connotations associated with identity politics, political scientists and sociologists also recognised the potential of identity to foster peace and reconciliation. American Professor of International Peacebuilding John Paul Lederach (2005) described how engaging with different identities and understanding the differences in values, beliefs, and narratives is important to develop innovative forms of peacebuilding.

In his book 'The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace' he described the importance of empowering individuals and communities to build peace through inclusive dialogue, truth, reconciliation efforts, and restorative justice. Identity becomes a driving force for positive change, promoting healing and sustainable peace.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is recognised as an important example of identity-based movements contributing to conflict resolution.

The tension between identity politics as an instrument for peace and as a factor fostering conflict highlights the need for genuine dialogue as a powerful force to bridge identity bases divides and foster global harmony.

Meaningful dialogue serves as a platform for an engagement that transcends surface-level differences between cultures, and allows for deeper understanding and connection. A dialogue that embraces diversity promotes active listening and encourages the exploration of shared values and aspirations fostering a sense of interconnectedness and collective responsibility that is essential for peacebuilding.

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (2007) explored the complex relationship between identity, violence, and dialogue in his book 'Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny'.

Power imbalances from structural inequalities and historical injustices are crucial factors hindering the willingness to engage in dialogue and compromise while complicating the efforts to build inclusive and sustainable peace.



Sen rejected the dangerous narrow notion of identity as fixed and singular, embracing instead the concept of multiple identities, arguing that individuals have plural and overlapping identities that are not necessarily in contrast with each other. Multiple identities are important in bridging identity divides and fostering mutual understanding, facilitating connections, empathy, and shared values.

However, navigating identity-based peacebuilding processes comes with its unique challenges. Power imbalances from structural inequalities and historical injustices are crucial factors hindering the willingness to engage in dialogue and compromise while complicating the efforts to build inclusive and sustainable peace.



Norwegian pioneer of peace research Joan Galtung provided valuable insights into the distinctive challenges we face when building inclusive and sustainable peace in the presence of power imbalances. Galtung describes how structural inequalities perpetuate violence and hinder the establishment of harmonious societies.

His work shows that navigating identity-based peacebuilding processes requires a comprehensive approach that tackles power imbalances and structural inequalities. Through his concept of



Johan Galtung



John Paul Lederach



Samuel P. Huntington



By addressing root causes and providing opportunities for the marginalised, these efforts pave the way for a future where harmony becomes a reality, different identities are celebrated, and conflicts are resolved.

‘positive peace’, Galtung highlights the need to address systemic inequalities rather than solely aim for an absence of violence.

His insights emphasise the need for transformative actions to overcome these obstacles and prompt peacebuilders to consider the root causes of conflicts to develop strategies that address systemic injustices, fostering an environment that enables genuine and lasting peace. Recognising and addressing identity-based challenges, then, is essential to create an environment conducive to inclusive peacebuilding.

To overcome these challenges a multidimensional approach is needed. First, intercultural education is suggested as a valuable approach that challenges stereotypes and fosters empathy to bridge divides.

Second, transformative leadership is recommended, as leaders who transcend narrow concepts of identities and advocate for inclusivity can inspire cooperation and dialogue among different communities.

Third, grassroots initiatives are proposed as an essential method for addressing systemic inequalities and historical injustices, to empower communities to promote cross-cultural understanding and inclusive governance.

By addressing root causes and providing opportunities for the marginalised, these efforts pave the way for a future where harmony becomes

a reality, different identities are celebrated, and conflicts are resolved. By promoting dialogue, embracing the interconnectedness of identities, and supporting grassroots initiatives, we can enhance the conditions for sustainable peace, contribute to the reduction of conflicts, and strive towards a more inclusive world, celebrating diversity while transcending divisions.

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FILM
REVIEW

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LAW, CINEMA, AND THE LATIN AMERICAN IDENTITY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

'The Fighter' depicts an utterly dysfunctional family of 10 and how they manage to make a living out of the boxing ring. **Set in Lowell, Massachusetts, it showcases a working-class neighbourhood in America, with all its struggles**

Much has been said about Alfonso Cuarón's movie 'Roma' (2018). While critics have swung from extreme to extreme, stating that it is either a work of art or that it has been overrated and could be considered the emperor's new clothes, I would like to offer three ideas to free us from this crossroads or at least try to do so.

This write-up aims to make the film visible as a useful tool to challenge homogeneous visions of Latin American violence that produce monolithic and identity-based visions of the subjects, anchored in violent narratives that prevent us from seeing the peace in which domestic workers participate and the complexity of the places and times in which their actions unfold, permanently relating to the law.

Law, History, and Narrative

'Roma' is interesting for its account of overlapping historical times. In this movie, the viewer can see the development of a long-term history which is engaged with



geographical, demographic, economic, social, and ideological frameworks. It also reflects the phenomena of colonisation, racialisation, inequality, and dispossession present in many stories told about Latin America.

It also gives life to the socio-political climate in Mexico in the 1970s that ended up triggering, for example, on Thursday, June 10, 1971, the Corpus Christi massacre in which about 120 people were killed during a student demonstration in Mexico City. But there are also stories of short duration or, as Fernand Braudel, French historian of the Annales school, would call them, of events.

In them, women like Cleo (an indigenous woman of Oaxacan origin and domestic worker who experienced a heartbreak while pregnant) are connected by necessity and

chance with others, such as Sofía (employer of Cleo, wife abandoned by Antonio, and mother of their four children).

The morning after ‘Roma’ won three Oscars, on February 25, 2019, the president of Mexico Andrés López Obrador, said in an interview that his government was doing everything possible to ratify the International Labour Organisation’s treatment of domestic workers.

When we look at the law concerning historical times and processes, it is interesting to see its fixation with the histories of events and conjuncture, ignoring the historical processes of long duration in time. Here, history plays a vital role in making the roots of power visible. Dipesh Chakrabarty, an exponent of the cultural turn in Indian historiography, invited us to unravel the inevitable entanglement that global narratives of rights, citizenship, and the nation-state generate in their path, moving towards counter proposal stories that deliberately make visible what has been invisible by the historical knowledge itself.

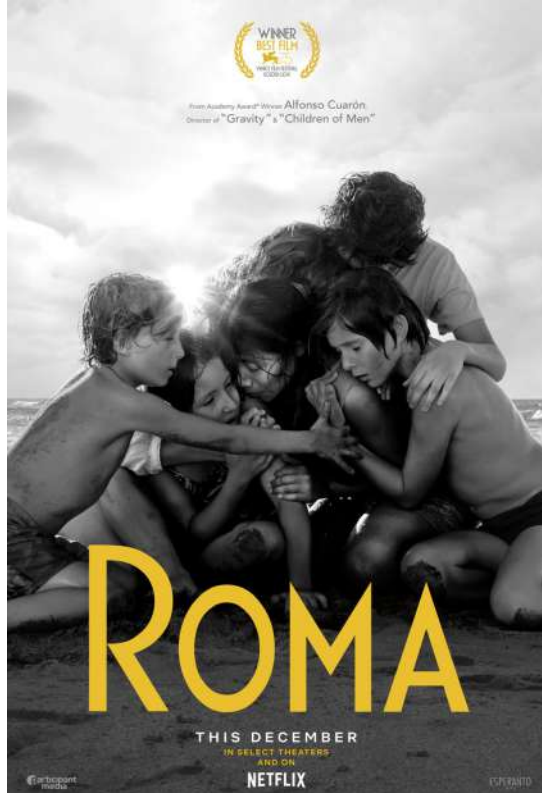
The film gives us a wonderful opportunity to think about the law. Where is the law in the movie? What has the law made or allowed in the everyday life of people like Cleo?

We have been taught to understand Latin American history as one where the law is conspicuous by its absence. Still, we have also been taught little to understand what happens where the law is present or has been built over time, acting, and interacting. After all, the poverty and structural injustice in which the subjects move should challenge the law that has created conditions to produce or reproduce inequality in some cases.

Memory, Law, and Distribution

The film also contributes significantly to taking the spotlight off the stories that narrate socio-political violence in Latin America. Perhaps the advantage of being narrated from Cuarón's recovered memory of his childhood gives us a closer view of the reality of subjects who experience violence produced by guerrillas, paramilitaries,





or drug trafficking but who also coexist with violence of all kinds, which are rarely narrated.

In them, for example, subjects live with the racism and feminisation of poverty and interactions in patriarchal scenarios where gender, race, and class are at a constant intersection, conditioning their possibilities of being or existing for the state. In this context, while ‘Roma’ brings us the story of the El Halconazon (Corpus Christie massacre), it arrives as an outbreak on a random day when two women go to buy a cradle.

In ‘Roma’, the organic, soft, slow, and contemplative scenes also speak to us about care’s duty within the social world, so trivial but necessary for the maintenance of life, as political philosopher Hannah Arendt states. Care is given to others and integrated in a way that solidifies power or makes it a technology.

After all, domestic workers are relatives who help family members. In official statistics, there is a population of over 19 million people in Latin America today, mainly indigenous women in Mexico or peasant women in Colombia.

Cuarón takes us out of the museist that Latin American history has built around its political violence and shows us head-on the

While Micky and Alice reconcile, Dicky visits the crack house where he and his buddies smoked crack and bid his friends goodbye.

We can consider this as him reconciling with his addiction and those that partook in that addiction with him. It is a sign that he has made peace with the past and intends to leave that life behind.



economic violence, making us think about what the discourse of development has done to different kinds of women during the construction of the third world.

Silence as an Invitation

On December 18, 2018, ‘The New Yorker’ published an article by American film critic Richard Brody entitled ‘There’s a voice missing in Alfonso Cuarón’s “Roma”’. In his words, “If the director dedicated the film to Libo, his nana, how come he didn’t give the maid more of a voice? (...) It was done for convenience, for not knowing for sure what words should come out of such a voice.”

My final invitation has to do with the possibility of listening to Cleo, beyond any phrase she could articulate in the script. It seems essential to retain the intensity of Cuarón in pointing out that the film rescues his memories. His nana (close even more than her mother) remains without a voice. Cleo’s silence brought to my mind the painting of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo with



her nana ('My nurse and I'), an indigenous woman who breastfed her and whom we cannot fully know because her face is covered by an African mask.

I think Cuarón would not know for sure what words should come out of such a voice, but I doubt our ability to understand the oppressed Latin American subject without art. Cuarón takes a step forward and removes the mask that Frida saw in her nana. He showed us the face of a young woman who speaks Mixtec, falls in love, rejects motherhood, and, despite not saying much throughout the film with her words, speaks permanently with her gestures and location in the photographic world of the film.

Do we need her words to hear her? Can we imagine her words and try to guess what should be occupying the space? A bet, from the ethics of otherness, that allows us to see a heterogeneous world in which the oppressed, such as Latin American women, are not monolithic subjects without fissures, fighting against an equally monolithic project but elusive and complex figures not ontologically given but historically constructed.

In the final scene, when Cleo tells Adela, the other maid, she has a lot to say

to her, it opens many possibilities. The historical times that mark the film do not end with the film. The threads pulled by the narrator give life to other stories and phenomena which could enrich the written stories about Latin American reality.

For instance, 20 years later, there was a

campaign like the Zapatistas, a guerrilla force who took up Mexican flags against colonialism and indigenous slavery. Fifty years later, judicial institutions such as the Colombian Constitutional Court recognised in their decisions the naturalised presence of slavery in domestic relations, from the daily practice of giving away peasant girls to perform household chores in perpetuity (Colombian Constitutional Court, decision T-1078/12).

The 'Roma' film understood that this, and other perspectives contribute not only to the incorporation of international treaties or to the strengthening of national regulations to make slavery visible in the domestic context but also and powerfully adds to the narration and representation of the ineffable, giving at least a face to voiceless subjects, and, perhaps, producing changes in the narratives that support the law.

These women, after all, have built a commitment to peace, even while living through different kinds of violence. Their recognition is born after making visible the structural ignorance of their humanity. That, to me, is the importance of Cleo, a subject beginning to appear in a traditionally exclusive frame, even if we are not yet ready to listen to her voice or to approach her identity construction as an alternative to redefine her approach to peace.

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BOOK
REVIEW

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THE COMPLEX INTERPLAY BETWEEN IDENTITY, POLITICS AND VIOLENCE

AMARTYA SEN DOES AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS IN HIS BOOK,
'IDENTITY AND VIOLENCE: THE ILLUSION OF DESTINY'.



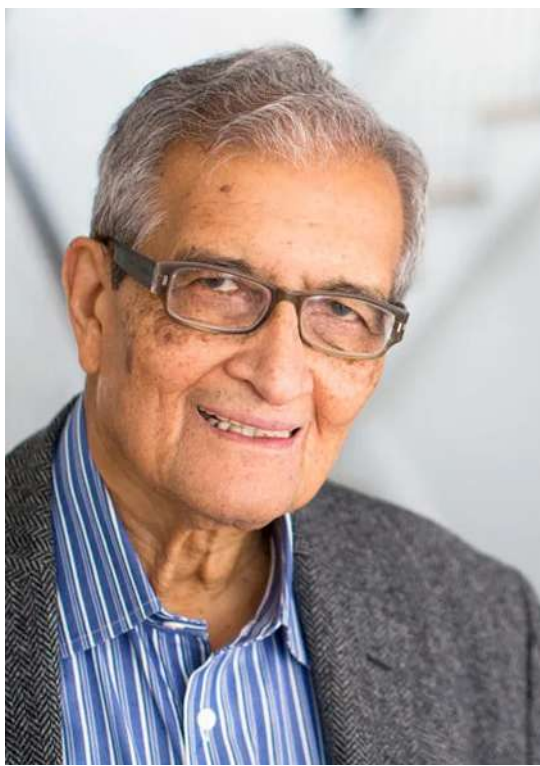
Sen proposes that the concept of identity is intricate and diverse, influenced by a multitude of factors such as personal experiences, social interactions, and individual agency. **He argues against the notion that individuals are confined to a singular, community-based identity without the ability to choose or consider alternative identities, asserting that such a perspective is overly restrictive and fails to acknowledge the complexity of human identity.**



"My first exposure to murder occurred when I was eleven. This happened in 1944 during the communal riots that characterised the last years of the British Raj, which ended in 1947. I saw an unknown person, profusely bleeding, suddenly stumbling through the gate to our garden, asking for help and a little water. I shouted for my parents while fetching some water for him. My father rushed him to the hospital, but he died there from his injuries. His name was Kader Mia.

“For an eleven-year-old child, the event, aside from being a veritable nightmare, was profoundly perplexing. Why should someone suddenly be

Amartya Sen



killed? And why by people who did not even know the victim, who could not have done any harm to the killers? That Kader Mia would be seen as having only one identity—that of being a member of the 'enemy' community who 'should' be assaulted and if possible killed seemed altogether incredible. For a bewildered child, the violence of identity was extraordinarily hard to grasp."

The fact that the same child mentioned in the anecdote grew up to provide an incisive examination of identity and violence is a way of finding a resolution through the myriad complexities of growing up in India.

In 2006, Amartya Sen published 'Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny,' a thought-provoking exploration of the complex interplay between identity politics and violence.

The author is a luminary in the realm of economics and social philosophy. Sen is also known for seminal books like 'Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation' and 'Development as Freedom.'

He dissected the dangers of essentialist thinking and the divisive consequences of reducing individuals to a single facet of their identity. By analysing the roots of violence and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of identity, Sen calls for a re-evaluation of our collective narratives and a rejection of the narrow identities that fuel conflicts.

Sen proposes that the concept of identity is intricate and diverse, influenced by a multitude of factors such as personal experiences, social

interactions, and individual agency. He argues against the notion that individuals are confined to a singular, community-based identity without the ability to choose or consider alternative identities, asserting that such a perspective is overly restrictive and fails to acknowledge the complexity of human identity.

The perspective challenges essentialist views that reduce individuals to a single, fixed identity based on factors such as religion, ethnicity, or nationality. He highlights the dynamic nature of identity and the potential for individuals to navigate and negotiate multiple affiliations, choosing what resonates with them.

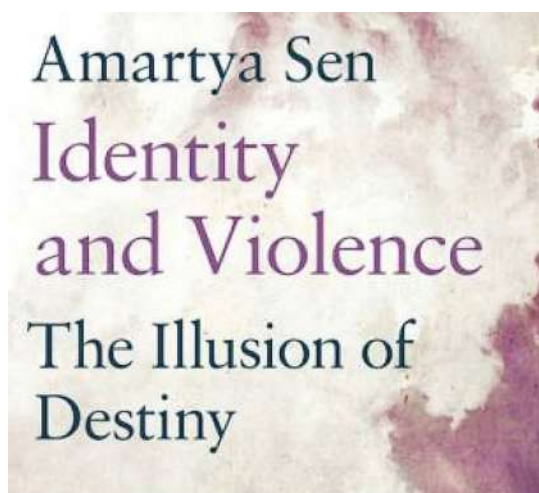
Sen argues that recognising and respecting this complexity and freedom of identity is essential for fostering social harmony, inclusivity, and individual well-being.

According to Sen, individuals possess the capacity for critical reflection about their identities. They can engage in introspection, evaluate their affiliations and attachments, and make reasoned choices in their actions and decisions. This implies that people are not solely defined by a predetermined set of characteristics or affiliations but rather have the agency to shape their identities based on their experiences.

These ideas hold great relevance in the context of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). These two contentious issues have ignited discussions about identity, rights, and social cohesion within diverse societies, making Sen's insights particularly valuable.

Regarding the UCC, Sen's perspective provides an insight into the challenges of creating a singular, homogenous legal framework in a diverse society. The importance of recognising and respecting the plurality of identities and the resultant sensitivities, particularly in matters of personal laws and religious practices, is the need of the hour.

This perspective points towards a more inclusive approach, accommodating different cultural and religious norms and promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and accommodation as the fundamental premises to create a legal framework.



The rare synthesis of great intellect and total personal human involvement combine in Amartya Sen ... One of the few world intellectuals on whom we may rely to make sense out of our existential confusion'
Nadine Gordimer.

Similarly, Sen's ideas on identity provide a valuable lens through which to assess the feasibility and implications of a UCC. In the context of the CAA, Sen's work on violence sheds light on the potential consequences of policies that could be interpreted as being constructed on exclusive notions of identity.

The CAA, which grants fast-track citizenship to specific religious groups, has been criticised for potentially undermining the secular fabric and inclusivity of India's democracy. Sen's analysis of the perils of essentialist thinking and identity-based violence reminds us of potential triggers that could deepen societal divisions and fuel tensions. He emphasises the need to build inclusive societies that prioritise social justice and equal rights.

Sen critiques the presumption that individuals can be singularly categorised and challenges the crude characteristics of civilisations. He argues that people possess multiple identities and affiliations, highlighting the oversimplification and political implications of labelling India as a 'Hindu civilization.'

This example serves to illustrate the limitations and reductionism inherent in such classifications. Historical examples are invoked to highlight the

The composition of one of India's governments, with a Sikh prime minister, a Muslim president, and a Christian woman leading the ruling party, **reflects the country's acceptance of and respect for multiple identities coexisting within the framework of Indian citizenship.**



varying attitudes towards religious tolerance within the Muslim community. This serves to dispel the notion of a monolithic and homogenous Muslim identity, showcasing the complexities and nuances that exist within the broader framework of Islam.

The extension further asserts that religious or civilisational identity should be understood as just one facet among many memberships that shape an individual's identity.

Similarly, by drawing attention to the diverse experiences and perspectives within the Muslim population, this extension aligns with Sen's broader thesis on identity. It underscores the importance of avoiding essentialist assumptions and recognising the multidimensionality of individual identities.

Embracing this perspective encourages a more nuanced understanding of Muslim communities and fosters an inclusive dialogue that appreciates the rich tapestry of human experiences within and across civilisations.

It is imperative to acknowledge the diversity that exists within the Muslim population. Muslims encompass a wide range of political and social beliefs, literary and artistic tastes, scientific interests, and levels of religiosity.

Sen emphasises the significance of recognising cultural variations and social behaviours among individuals who share the same religious affiliation. It underscores that being a Muslim does not singularly determine every aspect of a person's beliefs or identity.

In addition, Sen questions the notion of Western values being inherently unique and superior. He argues for the global roots of democracy

and the significance of public reasoning across civilisations.

The exploration of contrasting and non-contrasting identities in present-day global society sheds light on the complexity and diversity of human experiences. The notion that community-based identity is the most authentic or fundamental form of identity overlooks the reality that individuals can have multiple affiliations and identities that intersect and influence one another. The significance of these identities can vary depending on the context and circumstances.

This understanding is exemplified by the rich tapestry of identities found in contemporary India, where individuals from diverse backgrounds occupy prominent positions in various spheres of society without their religious or cultural affiliations being the sole defining factor.

The composition of one of India's governments, with a Sikh prime minister, a Muslim president, and a Christian woman leading the ruling party, reflects the country's acceptance of and respect for multiple identities coexisting within the framework of Indian citizenship.

This inclusivity extends to various domains, including literature, cinema, business, and sports, where individuals from different communities are celebrated for their achievements as Indians rather than being narrowly defined by their specific religious or ethnic backgrounds.

*Anoop P.K. is Research Scholar,
University of Kerala.*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pax Lumina 4(4) / 2023 / 77

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the May 2023 issue of Pax Lumina. It has come out very well. The issue is so good that it will be useful for us to use as resource material in our peace and conflict resolution workshops.

Best wishes,

Irfan Ali Engineer, CSSS, Mumbai.

Dear Editor,

Big congratulations to you and the team for yet another stellar edition. I respect the quality, contemporaneity, and inclusiveness of Pax Lumina.

Linda Pulickal, USA.

Dear Editor,

Pax Lumina is an EXCELLENT Magazine. I read the last issue which covers Global issues.

Hardev Singh Virk, Mohali, Punjab.

Dear Editor,

Thanks for sharing Pax Lumina. I just finished reading in detail and really liked the issue on Reconciliation.

Best wishes,

Sudesh Mukhopadhyay, Former Chairperson, Rehabilitation Council of India.

Dear Editor,

My sincere appreciation to team 'Pax Lumina'. Peace and Reconciliation Network of JCSA is truly a new frontier worth getting involved in. It was such an eye opening experience to read through the Vol. 04 (No. 03) May 2023 issue, focusing on 'Reconciliation' as the running theme. Starting with the editorial by Dr. Jacob Thomas, all the articles explore the long road to reconciliation and peace. PaxLumina is certainly sowing the seeds of reconciliation at the personal and societal levels. On a personal note, I was delighted to read the article titled 'How did the Town Halls become Symbols of Peace and Reconciliation?' May we all build many a city of peace in the varied geopolitical spaces we traverse as Men of God.

With Regards

Leolin Arockiadass Arulsamy,
Assistant Professor, Computer Science
St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli.



Dear Editor,

This note is a response to the January 2023 issue of Pax Lumina on Technology and Peace. Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to contribute to world peace in several ways. It's important to note that while AI has the potential to contribute to world peace, its development and deployment should be guided by ethical considerations, international cooperation, and responsible governance to avoid unintended negative consequences. Collaboration among governments, organizations, and researchers is crucial to harness AI's potential for peace and address potential challenges.

Binoy Ponnembel, Bangalore.

Dear Editor,

The terminology of peace and harmony is not so visible in the dictionary of war and communalism. Reconciliation is a beautiful term that is significant in the restless zones of the planet. The editorial of May 2023 issue itself declares openly the failure of the media which contaminates the progressive outbreaks. "Peace does not occupy headline space, violence does" Jacob Thomas the editor says. Irfan Engineer collects the message of Asghar Ali Engineer, the one who opened the discussion on 'Sari-Ath' in the 1980s. He furthermore edges the embankment of prejudicial attitudes.

The 'Good Friday agreement between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on reconciliation was perfectly indicated by Tom Laden. The psychological impact of reconciliation is an unavoidable element in sociology and Laden deals with the same.

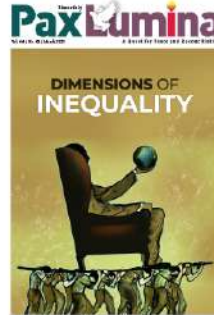
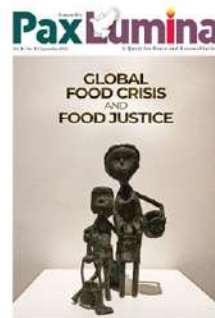
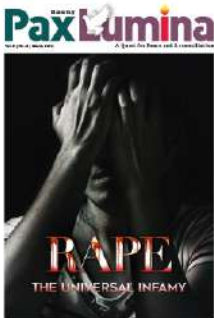
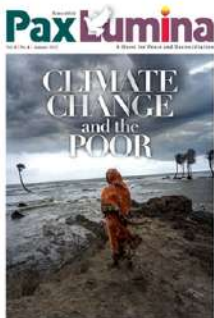
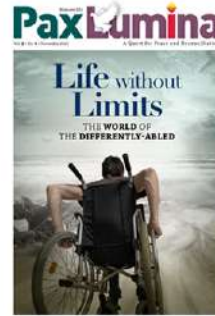
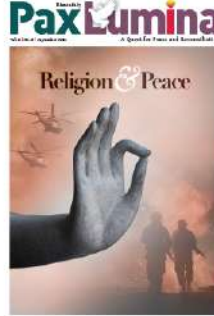
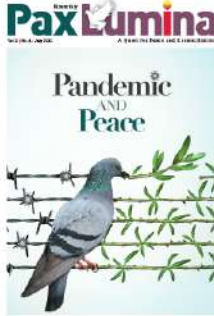
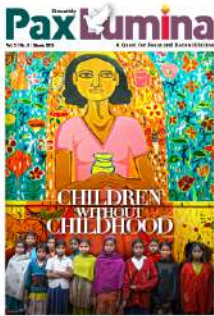
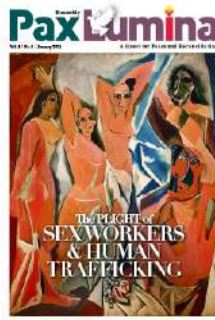
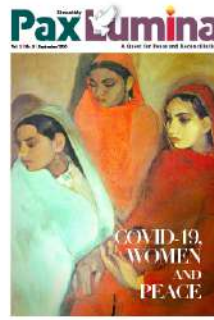
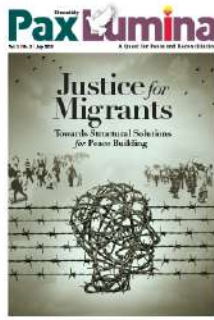
Congratulations to Pax Lumina.

Eby N. Joseph, Kannur

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sharing the latest Pax Lumina which is quite insightful. Well received.

Jackie Anundo, Kanya



Center for Peace and Justice (XLRI) & LIPI ONLINE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN **PEACE STUDIES**



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TARGET GROUP: Working Professionals, Bureaucrats, Social Workers, Activists, Artists, Researchers and College/University Students with aptitude for peace and reconciliation.

CERTIFICATE: The certificate awarding ceremony, scheduled for November 25, 2023, will take place at LIPI- Kochi, and to this, participants are strongly encouraged to attend in person.

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01. UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND PEACE
02. CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND RECONCILIATION
03. IDENTITY, VIOLENCE AND EMPATHY
04. STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS
05. GENDER AND CASTE VIOLENCE
06. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACE
07. WORLD RELIGIONS AND INNER PEACE
08. INTERNATIONAL PEACE INITIATIVES
09. ENVIRONMENTAL PEACE
10. EDUCATION FOR PEACE
11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
12. PROJECT WORK/INTERNSHIP

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(Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogota, Colombia).
02. **Dr. Sophia Opatska**
(Catholic University, Ukraine)
03. **Dr. Kifle Wansamo**
(Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, Nairobi)
04. **Dr. Jane Kimathi**
(Peace Practitioner, Kenya)
05. **Prof. Ted Peters**
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06. **Adv. Irfan Ali Engineer**
(Director, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai)
07. **Dr. Paramjyot Singh**
(Director, Centre for Peace and Justice, XLRI, Jamshedpur)
08. **Prof. Dr. K. Babu Joseph**
(Former Vice Chancellor, Cochin University of Science and Technology)
09. **Dr. Jacob Thomas IAS, Retd.**
(Editor, Pax Lumina & Ex-Additional Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh)
10. **Prof. Dr. M.P. Mathai**
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15. **Prof. Dr. Neena Joseph**
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16. **Prof. Dr. K.M. Mathew**
(Formerly Professor, KUFOS, Kochi)
17. **Dr. Denzil Fernandes**
(Director, Indian Social Institute, Delhi)
18. **Dr. Binoy Pichalakkattu**
(Director, LIPI, Kochi), et al.



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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION NETWORK

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Life isn't about finding yourself.
life is about creating yourself.

George Bernard Shaw

