

Issue 3  
July 2021  
www.rgfindia.org



# Sadbhavana

## DIGEST

Danish Siddiqui/www.danishsiddiqui.net/



## MINORITIES AND MARGINALIZATION

ISSUE EDITOR- PROF SOMNATH GHOSH

# Sadbhavana Digest

Issue # 3, July 2021

## Contents

<b>Editorial.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part I – How do we deal with the Self?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Shared Beliefs, Self-Esteem and Hindutva: A Theoretical Perspective by Unnikammu Moideenkutty .....	3
A 3-part video by Sheldon Solomon on Belief Systems.....	9
Hardening of the Hindu Hearts - Somnath Ghosh .....	10
Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan on the unifying power of music .....	15
<b>Part II – How do we deal with Other Human Beings?.....</b>	<b>16</b>
हज़ारों खोखले शब्दों से बेहतर - प्रेम और सद्भावना: देवेन्द्र सिंह खनूजा.....	16
सद्भावना - एक प्रयास : शफी शेख.....	20
Abhyas Mandal, Indore – A Civil Society Institution: Somnath Ghosh.....	25
Garam Hawa Review By Mohar Basu .....	27
Imagine: Written and Sung by John Lennon.....	30
<b>Part III – How do we deal with Nature?.....</b>	<b>31</b>
MIT Predicted in 1972 That Society Will Collapse This Century. New Research Shows We're on Schedule: Nafeez Ahmed.....	31
Why Some Biologists and Ecologists Think Social Media is a Risk to Humanity: Shirin Ghaffary .....	36
Environment vs Economy: Dialogue between Bittu Sehgal and TV Narendran .....	43
Islamic Relaxing Music .....	44

## Editorial

---

Part I is focused as always on how do we deal with ourselves – our own inner contradictions, ambivalence and constant tussle between the need to survive and thrive with recognizing the same as a legitimate need for others. Part I carries two short articles, a three-part video and a short take by Bismillah Khan.

The first article titled "*Shared Beliefs, Self-Esteem and Hindutva: A Theoretical Perspective*" by Professor Unnikammu Moideenkutty touches upon the dichotomy between Hinduism and Hindutva. Using a less discussed theoretical perspective – but which has been successfully validated by large number of classroom experiments – he then proceeds to analyze what galvanizes well meaning, decent people to hate another community and the attendant outcomes. In the context of the theoretical perspective, he throws open what society could do to overcome the hatred and bridge distances between communities. As an accompaniment, we include a three-part video by Sheldon Solomon on *Belief Systems* which may help appreciate Professor Unnikammus's article.

The second article, *Hardening of the Hindu Hearts* is written by me. It begins by providing a glimpse of a rather unique family heritage: our ancestral house at Bhagalpur and why we had a mosque apart from three temples; how two close Muslim friends who were perpetual fixtures in our house would help in distributing *prasad* during our family's Durga Puja and would yet have separate earmarked plates even as we ate together. I note how the recent makeover of ambivalence to intolerance towards Muslims has created schisms in my extended family, where a Muslim son-in-law is accepted and showered with love and affection even as the mother and some family members are rabidly anti-Muslim. I am both surprised at the contradiction and appalled at how my maternal uncle who is a devotee of Ramakrishna has over the past few years changed to spew venom at the Muslims. I then reflect on the trajectory of my responses, moving from protestation to withdrawal to spirited engagement even as it meant complete rejection by some. In the process I question how basically decent people have, at least in part, morphed into hateful souls and attribute it to the making of social identity which in turn calls for my participation in organised and sustained dissent.

This section ends with Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan's take on the unifying power of music.

Part II shifts focus from dealing with the self to dealing with others. It begins by an account, "हज़ारों खोखले शब्दों से बेहतर - प्रेम और सद्भावना" by Devendra Singh Khanuja, a Sikh whose family had to migrate in the face of riots. There is no anguish; instead he addresses the issue of reconciliation and Sadbhavana in a matter of fact manner. He draws on couplets, verses and songs seeking to apply balm on communal discord amidst a flutter of hope.

This is followed by an account by social worker Safi Sheikh of grassroots efforts at building Sadbhavana in Indore. This is accompanied by a short profile of Abhyas Mandal, a sixty year old organization in Indore, which attempts to build public discourse on governance, peace, ideology, constitutional values and community related matters.

We then present a review of the classic film *Garam Hawa* directed by M.S Sathyu, based on an unpublished short story by Ismat Chughtai.

We close this section by presenting the lyrics of John Lennon's *Imagine*, which celebrated its 50 years on 4th July 2021. See an article by Rajni Bakshi on the song.

Part III moves on to the third eternal question – how do we (humans) deal with Nature? Here we carry two important recent papers – one which revisited the celebrated, though controversial, MIT Limits to Growth (LtG) world systems model, first formulated in 1972. It seems to show that indeed the predictions of the LtG model were correct and we are “on course” for growth as we know it to come to grinding halt in about ten years. Unless we make significant changes and do not revert to the business as usual approach of depleting non-renewable resources, polluting the environment and chasing mindless consumption.

The second article deals with the toxic impact of social media on society and its basic norms, Seventeen researchers who specialize in widely different fields, from climate science to philosophy, make the case that academics should treat the study of technology's large-scale impact on society as a “crisis discipline”, that is, a field in which scientists across different fields work quickly to address an urgent societal problem. The paper argues that our lack of understanding about the collective behavioral effects of new technology is a danger to democracy and scientific progress.

The third “article” is actually for listening. It's a podcast from the IDRonline's top rated podcast series *On the Contrary*. In this episode on the Environment and the Economy, Bittu Sahgal, environmental activist and writer, and TV Narendran, CEO and Managing Director of Tata Steel, discuss the perceived conflicts between the economy, industry, and environment.

Part III ends with some soothing Islamic music, used by Sufis for meditation.



## Part I– How do we deal with the Self?

---

### **Shared Beliefs, Self-Esteem and Hindutva: A Theoretical Perspective by *Unnikammu Moideenkutty***

In a recent report in The Hindu, Kerala state BJP President K. Surendran expressed concern about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Kerala and lamented that according to the LDF government, 'Love Jihad' was only a chimera conjured up by the BJP to demonize inter-faith marriages. This is just one example of the myriad ways in which the BJP's divisive ideology attempts to polarize society on the basis of religion. Even though it has been an utter failure in Kerala and West Bengal, the effectiveness of this strategy is evident from their whopping success in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

One social psychological framework that can help us understand the success of BJP's electoral strategy is Terror Management Theory (Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 2015). Terror Management Theory (TMT) is based on the work of Ernest Becker (1973). The theory postulates that one of the critical challenges faced by humanity is how to deal with mortality. Human beings are the only creatures that are aware that they will die one day. Awareness of our mortality fills us with terror and one of our most important cultural preoccupations is developing ways to manage this terror.

According to TMT, there are basically two strategies that we employ to manage the terror that we experience due to our awareness of mortality. The first one is to develop a set of shared cultural beliefs that convince us that we continue to exist in some form after we die. The second one is to develop and enhance. Self-esteem is basically the feeling that one is a valuable participant in a meaningful universe. According to Sheldon and colleagues (2012), this feeling of personal significance helps to keep our deepest fears at bay. When we receive a boost to our self-esteem, we are better able to protect ourselves from our deeply rooted physical and existential fears. On the other hand, when confronted with our mortality, we strive to enhance our self-esteem. One way in which our self-esteem can be undermined is when we lose faith in our cultural world-views that are developed to give us a sense of significance. This can happen when a large part of our motherland is conquered and occupied by outsiders for centuries as it happened in our case.

The shared beliefs that we develop tells us what happens to us when we die, this forms the core tenets of religions. In one way or the other, these beliefs help us sustain the faith that we will continue to exist in some form after our earthly life ends. Given that these beliefs protect us from the terror of our mortality, we cling to them tenaciously. Whenever we are reminded of death (mortality salience), we close ranks with those who share our religious beliefs. This is because being with those who share our religious beliefs comforts us by reinforcing these beliefs. We are able to convince ourselves that since those around us share our beliefs, they must be true. Self-esteem arises from following social norms and occupying valued social roles.

Self-esteem strengthens our ability to manage the anxiety that arises from the transience of our lives.

In essence, the BJP strategy is to constantly remind us that Hindus are in danger so that they unconsciously affiliate with those who share such beliefs. Since this is an unconscious process, we are not aware that this affiliation is not based on a rational analysis of the ideology. However, to avoid cognitive dissonance, we may subsequently develop rational arguments to justify this affiliation.

Secondly, Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) tells us that conflicts among our thoughts, feelings and actions causes discomfort and we try to reduce this discomfort by rationalizing the contradictions. Though Hindutva divides Hindus and Muslims, we come up with rationalizations to reduce the significance of the negative aspect of this ideology. We may convince ourselves that Hindutva does not really marginalize or derogate Muslims. We may also argue that this 'otherization' does not apply to Muslims who are our friends.

The BJP strategy also enhances the self-esteem of their followers. The BJP narrative is that Hindus share an ancient and glorious cultural heritage whose progress was interrupted by the Muslim conquests. It is now time to regain this lost cultural heritage and create a Hindu Rashtra. Hindutva inspires Hindus to participate in this grand project. Being a part of this project becomes a source of self-esteem. In this way it helps us to manage our fear of death. However, this narrative creates an 'other,' the Muslims, who are the minions of the conquerors who need to be isolated and relegated to lower status.

If we accept the hypothesis that the attraction of Hindutva is based on its ability to manage our fear of mortality, then we can understand why very sophisticated and sensitive Hindus are its strong supporters. For one, Sheldon and colleagues have

done several studies that show that attraction to those who share our beliefs when faced with thoughts of death is an unconscious process.

Based on TMT, we can argue that the overwhelming victory of BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections was a foregone conclusion after the Pulwama incident and the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka. Both these incidents created mortality salience by reminding us of death. In addition, in both these cases the attackers were Muslim terrorists and it fit the Hindutva narrative of Muslims as evil and dangerous. The result was the consolidation of the Hindu votes and an unprecedented electoral victory for the BJP. What is sinister about this victory was that it came in spite of the lackluster performance of the NDA government, the demonetization fiasco and the ham-handed implementation of GST.

The shared cultural and religious beliefs that help us ward off our deep anxiety of death are based on faith rather than fact. In other words, they cannot be proven unambiguously. In addition, other groups use very different sets of beliefs to manage their terror of death. Acknowledging the beliefs of others calls our beliefs into question. We have to protect our cultural and religious beliefs to sustain the view that we are significant beings living a meaningful life. Alternate world views challenge our entire way of life and everything we believe in. When our fundamental beliefs are questioned, we feel deeply disturbed. Therefore, when we acknowledge that beliefs that are contrary to our own could be legitimate, the terror that our beliefs keep under control can reemerge. One way to manage this threat is by derogating and dehumanizing those with alternate views of life.

In fact, our sense of meaning and significance cannot completely manage our fear of mortality. This leaves a residual death anxiety that we project onto other groups of people who share different beliefs and are designated as the cause of all our troubles. However, when we strengthen our psychological security by showing our contempt towards the other, the result is a backlash from the others leading to a cycle of conflict.

Interestingly, according to Shashi Tharoor (*Why I am a Hindu*, 2018), Hinduism starts with the premise that we do not know the nature of God. This makes it possible for Hindus to search for their own understanding of God. The result is that Hindus have many different understandings of God and they are comfortable with all understandings of God. This makes it possible for Hindus to be more tolerant of religious beliefs that are different from theirs. It is therefore ironic that the proponents of Hindutva argue that the only way to be an Indian is by being a Hindu.

Hindutva therefore transforms a very broad and inclusive set of cultural beliefs about the ultimate reality into a narrow, exclusive and rigid doctrine. This is done through a narrative of disrespect and humiliation based on events which are centuries old. Actions of Muslim rulers who destroyed temples and other symbols of Hindu culture are rightly highlighted as affronts to Hinduism. It is argued that regaining Hindu respect and pride requires the avenging these humiliations. A stark example is the Babri Masjid – Ramjanmabhoomi movement. More than anything else, this movement led to the polarization of our society and consolidation of Hindu votes. This is a good example of using the residual anxiety to create a scapegoat for social ills.

A related development is the burning of the *karsevaks* on the Sabarmati Express at Godhra which led to the Gujarat riots in 2002. According to official figures, 1044 people were killed in these riots of which 790 were Muslims. Only 9.67% of Gujarat population is Muslim. Other reports put the death toll as much higher. A study by Raheel Dhattiwala and Michael Biggs published in *Politics and Society* in 2012 concluded that violence gave the saffron party a clear advantage. From the perspective of TMT, we can say that the communal violence increased mortality salience of both Hindus and Muslims which led to the consolidation of their votes. Where Hindus are in the majority, this naturally led to their electoral advantage. In fact, the study found that the riots and the killings were the most intense in constituencies where the saffron party was neither too strong nor too weak. In other words, the riots were engineered to be most intense in constituencies where the BJP was not sure of success and consolidation of Hindu votes would have worked to their advantage.

Based on TMT, we can come to a very disturbing conclusion regarding the effective electoral strategy for the parties of the majority community. By engineering communal violence, they can consolidate votes on communal basis and win elections. A very frightening possibility is that we can expect to see increasing communal violence close to elections in constituencies where the prospects of the majoritarian party are reasonable but not certain.

India is a very diverse country, but the majority of Indians are Hindus and religious politics are here to stay. If we continue to vote on the basis of religion, the Hindu parties are going to remain in power. Terror Management Theory tells us that as long as we are motivated by fear, we are going to remain polarized on the basis of religion. The losers in this kind of politics are going to be the minorities, especially Muslims. This is an unstable political equilibrium because the minorities are going to feel like victims. Victimhood is not a stable foundation for a peaceful and prosperous society.



A recent Pew Research Center report on religious attitudes in India concluded that most Indians, cutting across religions feel they enjoy religious freedom, value religious tolerance and regard respect of all religions as central to what India is as a nation. Interestingly, for most Hindus religious tolerance was not just a civic virtue but also a religious value with 80% of them stating that respecting other religions was an integral aspect of 'being Hindu'. These findings give hope for a more optimistic future for our country.

In a speech given at Ghaziabad, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS supremo said that the DNA of Hindus and Muslims is the same and that they have the same ancestors. Though this stress on common ancestors is vaguely troubling, he said there was a need for peaceful coexistence and to initiate a dialogue for a composite culture, to be attained by safeguarding and following our own religious practices, cultures and attire. There is no need for a tussle when the two communities share a motherland, culture and ancestors. Even though grounded in ultra-nationalistic and patriarchal concepts like motherland and ancestors, the RSS appears to be offering a more inclusive narrative. Perhaps, RSS is of the view that having consolidated the Hindu vote and ensured victory in elections for nationalist parties at least in the near term, they can now mend fences with the Muslims. This is a wise strategy because continued derogation of Muslims would lead to their alienation. A significant minority that is alienated from the mainstream path of progress would be major drag on the overall prosperity of the nation.

That people have different belief systems to protect them from the terror of their own inevitable death is a given. It is very dangerous to think that one set of beliefs are better than the others. In the 'Charithram Enniloode' series of the Malayalam Safari channel, the Malayalam author T.D. Ramakrishnan, says that what he has learned from the experiences in his life is that there is a great diversity of beliefs in the world, and it is very obvious that the only way to live is by accepting all systems of beliefs as equally valid. While the politics of religion is unavoidable, we can counter the demonization of minorities with facts and figures. Narratives of the uncontrolled birth rate of minorities overwhelming the demographics and 'Love Jihad' must be countered with data.

Knowing that our motivations, cognitions and actions are affected by our fear of death gives us an opportunity to reflect on our politics. We can reflect on whether we are acting out of fear or being manipulated to do so by others. We can question if we are really pursuing the goals that we hold dear in our lives. When we deal with others, we can consider how their efforts to manage the terror of death is affecting their actions and how our own defenses are influencing our reactions to them.

By asking these questions “we can perhaps enhance our own enjoyment of life, enrich the lives of those around us, and have a beneficial impact beyond it.”

*References:*

*Solomon, S., Greenberg, J. & Pyszczynski. (2015). The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life. Penguin Random House LLC, USA.*

*Becker, E. (1973).The Denial of Death. The Free Press.*

*Dhattiwala, R. & Biggs, M. The Political Logic of Ethnic Violence: The Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Gujarat, 2002. Politics & Society, 40(4), 483-516.*

*Festinger, L. (1957). A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Stanford University Press.*



# A 3-part video by Sheldon Solomon on Belief Systems

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/soulbeliefs2/lecture/Ocll3/terror-management-part-a>

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/soulbeliefs2/lecture/Z9BRM/terror-management-part-b>

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/soulbeliefs2/lecture/jOplc/terror-management-part-c>



# Hardening of the Hindu Hearts

*Somnath Ghosh*

Although I have been an academic for most part of my professional life, this is largely a personal account. Largely I say, as I would have to revert to the general to explore the ramifications.

I was born in 1953 in Bhagalpur, the place once famous for its tasar silk and continues to be so but to a lesser extent. It is also notorious for “Bhagalpur blinding” on which Bollywood film *Gangajal* was based, and the even more notorious Hindu-Muslim riots of 1989 which stretched for about two months, killed over 1,000 people of which about 900 were Muslims.

While the 1989 riots had seared public consciousness because of its sheer scale and brutality, since mid-60s, Bhagalpur has had a history of sporadic but low-intensity communal violence where some shops and houses would be torched and a few stabbings would take place. Tension would grip the town and curfew would be imposed. Movements were naturally restricted, even as Peace Committees went about doing their business.

But Champanagar, the area where my house was located, would by and large remain immune to the going-on in the town. So, even as the town would be under curfew for a day or two, residents of our area would go about their business as usual. Not that Champanagar was an exclusive or predominantly Hindu area where one needn't fear anything from the “other” community. Far from it. The area had high concentration of Muslims, mostly from the weavers' community (*julahas*). But communal violence was something that folks couple of miles away had to bother; not us. As young boys, we'd continue to go out to meet friends and play, with barely a caution from elders to be careful even as communal violence gripped the town. *Padhai-likhai* (studies) was not a factor that bothered us or our elders. Our role model was *Sadhan-da*, a GGMP (gheech ghaach kar matrik pass) in seventh attempt.

My family background is rather out of sorts and I suspect that has something to do with the “peace” in Champanagar area even when sporadic violence gripped the town area barely a few miles away. While our family wasn't as well-endowed as the other two estates of Bhagalpur, it was significant enough. What it lacked in resources was however made up by heritage. The title “Mahashay” was bestowed by Jehangir for some act of honesty done by a forefather, and our house is still known as Mahashay Deorhi. But that I suppose is no big deal. It was my great-grandfather who

did something sensible which may have perhaps provided the foundations of Hindu-Muslim amity in our area. Our Deorhi houses two temples. They are in the outer precincts of the haveli, so it's accessible to the public without let or hindrance. There's also a Durga-Sthaan and a mosque in the outer periphery. This was called the pahara - large open space of about two football fields but very much within the Deorhi boundary walls. My great-grandfather had the mosque built on the simple logic that if Hindu ryots could go the two temples, Muslims should have a mosque. The pahara being open to all also served as place for social intercourse on a daily basis.

I never saw my great-grandfather but what endured was good enough. Among the constant stream of visitors, friends and employees, many were Muslims. There was no design to this; it was just there. Many of our closest friends were Muslims. Moin and Quaisar in particular, were almost permanent fixtures in our household. During the four-day Durga Puja celebrations they'd be there the whole day. While Durga-Sthaan was the family's private property, it was never perceived as that. In any case, Durga Puja is considered a public event and thousands of people would visit. Like any family member, it was taken for granted Moin and Quaisar would be involved in prasad distribution and other activities. Some staff members would joke that Moin and Quaiser had transformed into Mohan and Kishore!

1

But more pertinent were two acts. These were so much a part of our family tradition that it is difficult to say whether they were just symbolic. Durga Puja rituals wouldn't start on the sixth day without the presence of the Imam of the mosque. While he'd be ready on his own to come at the appointed hour, as a mark of respect it was a tradition for someone from the family to walk over and escort him to the Durga Mandap. Likewise, even before the tazia procession would reach the gates of Deorhi, it was incumbent for our family members to be present to welcome them.

**Tides of Time** Time grinds slowly, but grinds well. Earlier, even as we ate together, Moin and Quaiser would be served on plates earmarked for them. The contradiction of them being considered family members even as we practiced छुआ छूत (untouchability) was but a manifestation of social discrimination, but I'm sure our elders didn't see it as that, and we the younger lot simply went along even as we felt uncomfortable. Nonetheless, it must have galled. The memory is etched in my mind of the day when the servant arranged the plates before serving us food and Moin pointed out that the servant had mistakenly forgotten to get the "earmarked" plate for him. But it seemed the transition was waiting to happen, for the matter was simply glossed over as if nothing had happened.



For all practical purposes I left Bhagalpur for Delhi in late 1973 for higher studies and then for jobs. So did most other male cousins. Sisters, including cousin sisters, who stayed behind were to be soon married off. Only one cousin brother stayed back. For almost fifty years now, the rest of us have progressed from occasional to rare visitors. With his death seven years ago, Deorhi is now managed by his widow.

Nothing much remains of the social intercourse that was a daily feature in pahara. The withering of social discourse took its toll on some traditional practices also: there was hardly any family member to attend the tazia procession, and none to invite the mosque's Imam. Yet, who would have thought that the mosque would be damaged during the 1989 riots!

The Emerging Scenario Communal riots, while deeply traumatic, are episodic in nature in the sense that for those who did not participate or profit from the riots, their personal, family and social ties with other communities remained largely unscathed. Though a certain degree of misgivings and discomfort regarding the other community may have lurked under the surface, these did not translate into bitterness nor affect ties.

But over the last few years, a hardening of Hindu hearts has happened in a significant section. I use the term "section" consciously because, cutting across families, professions, age, income, education, gender, social status and such other distinguishing features, they have one thing in common: a rabid hatred towards the minority community, especially the Muslims and, to a much lesser extent, Christians. Mercifully, the Sikhs and the miniscule Parsi community are exempt – at least for now.

To me, nothing illustrates this better than my own extended family, where a Muslim son-in-law is accepted even as the girl's mother and some family members are rabidly anti-Muslim. I am also surprised at the contradiction and appalled at how my maternal uncle who is a devotee of Ramakrishna has over the past few years changed to spew venom at the Muslims. The vitriolic of one of my executive MBA students – who is otherwise well accomplished and sensitive – baffles me even more. I hear the same story repeated ad nauseam from others.

Social media – especially WhatsApp – serves as an excellent platform to share and perpetuate rancid views. Sometimes the tragedy repeats as farce as when I shared Karan Thapar's, "Reminiscing about the India I grew up in", which appeared in Hindustan Times, July 10, 2021. Among other things, Thapar wrote: "I feel I live in a country that is very different to the one I grew up in. You could say that's true for all old people. But there's a difference. You expect the change to be progress. Is this

what we call progress? If the past is another country, I want to go back to it. I don't like the country India has become today."

My brother-in-law with whom I am extremely close and who has consistently been by my side during my most difficult days, immediately responded: "Why are you sending such post of Karan Thapar knowing that this man is notorious for his anti-Hindu tirade? Do you by any chance support his views? If yes, only God help you". I responded, "Last heard, Karan Thapar was a Hindu. Can't figure out why he should be a notorious anti-Hindu. And I haven't read or heard a single post, including his book, "The Devil's Advocate" where he insinuates that Hindus are stupid or that Hinduism is inferior to any religion. Certainly not the one I forwarded. In case you have read any of his pieces or heard any of his interviews where he has done Hindu bashing, I'd be interested to know."

My daughter is wiser. She called up to say, "Dad, as a Professor, you should know none of your arguments are going to sink in. Why spoil relations with a person closer to you than most?" "I know it only too well. It's just that I couldn't restrain myself", I said, more as a defence, than by way of explanation.

***The "enemy" within the Hindu ranks*** What I however notice is that all my close friends and relatives – all loving and caring – who are now expressing strong anti-Muslim tirade have also become ultra-nationalists, where questioning on the basis of data and facts - much less dissent and criticism - is equated with sedition. This hardening of Hindu hearts which is undergirded by ultra-nationalism conjures up new enemies. And these enemies are from within the Hindu fold: all those who do not see how the Muslims are out to outnumber us; all those who do not realize how the Hindu culture will be swamped and the Hindus will become pariahs in their own land. It is this enemy within which is possibly more dangerous than the "other". Like my sister-in-law feels that the only fitting place for a person like me can be Syria or closer home Pakistan, and that I "should bandho (my) boria bister (pack my bags) and leave pronto where I will be welcomed with open arms."

***What do we do?*** While it may be important to analyze how such "transformation" has come about in the recent past, perhaps it would be more important to figure out how to eschew hate and revive feelings of amity and Sadbhavana for humanity simply cannot mirror in the slightest the story of Nazi Germany. Considering that fundamental issues of rights, justice, citizenship and constitutionality are involved, multi-layered responses need to be devised, put in action and sustained. It may not be easy, but shouldn't be very difficult either, considering most citizens want to live in peace and harmony.

There's much to hope for as the following news item in *The Times of India* a few days ago indicates: "A 78-year old Christian businessman, who spent his working years in Mumbai and attributes his success to Siddhivinayak, has built a temple at an estimated cost of Rs. 2 crore for the deity in his hometown Shirva, 14 km from Udipi. Gabriel F Nazareth said he built the temple on his ancestral land in the memory of his parents".

My great-grandfather's gesture of building a mosque within the precincts of our ancestral house wasn't after all exceptional.



## Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan on the unifying power of music



<https://youtu.be/n8Rhpqvg194>

## Part II- How do we deal with Other Human Beings?

### हज़ारों खोखले शब्दों से बेहतर - प्रेम और सद्भावना

*Rajeev Bhargava*

आप सब लोगों को देवेन्द्र सिंह खनूजा की तरफ से प्रेम भरा नमस्कार। आज आप लोगों के समक्ष देश की शांति एवं सद्भावना से संबंधित कुछ विचार रखना चाहता हूँ। जैसा कि आप जानते हैं मनुष्य एक सामाजिक प्राणी है और प्रेम एवं सद्भाव के बिना समाज में एक रिक्तता की अनुभूति होती है। समाज स्वयं एक व्यवस्था है और इसकी एक संरचना होती है।

बदलती परिस्थिति एवं आवश्यकताओं के कारण समाज की मान्यताओं में परिवर्तन होता रहता है। हमारा समाज विविधताओं में भी एकता की नींव पर खड़ा है। बाहरी विचारों एवं मान्यताओं का अंतर्वेशन ही हमारे देश की विशेषता रही है किंतु हाल के वर्षों में भारत की साँस्कृतिक विविधता, साँस्कृतिक विषमता में अंतरित हो रही है जिससे लोगों के मध्य सद्भाव एवं प्रेम में गिरावट के साथ ही साँस्कृतिक विशेषता पर भी नकारात्मक प्रभाव पड़ रहा है एवं राजनीतिक दर्शन के रूप में सांप्रदायिकता की जड़ें भारत की धार्मिक और साँस्कृतिक विविधता में मौजूद हैं।

दंगों को भड़काने में राजनीतिक दखल भी एक प्रमुख कारण रहा है। दंगे भी वीभत्स रूप में सामने आते हैं। वहशीपन का एक जुनून सर पर सवार हो जाता है और इंसान दरिदा बन जाता है। 1947 का भारत बंटवारा कौन भूल सकता है। क्रूरता एवं बर्बरता की कोई सीमा ही नहीं रही। उन्हीं दिनों लाहौर से भारत आते समय अमृता प्रीतम ने एक विचारोत्तेजक लेख लिखा था जिसमें उन्होंने उन तमाम औरतों का दर्द बयान किया था जो बंटवारे की हिंसा में मारी गईं, जिन का बलात्कार हुआ, उनके बच्चे उनकी आंखों के सामने कल्ल कर दिए गए। कई औरतों ने उन वहशियों के हाथों में पड़ने की बजाय कुओं में कूदकर अपनी जान देना बेहतर समझा।

अक्टूबर 1984 में इंदिरा गांधी की हत्या के बाद सिख विरोधी दंगे भड़क उठे, जिसमें देश के कई हिस्सों में भड़के दंगों में तकरीबन 4 हजार से अधिक सिख मारे गए। एक सिख होने के नाते मैंने कटु अनुभव अपने दिल में संजोकर रखे हैं। हमारा शहर भागलपुर, जोकि बिहार की सिल्क सिटी के नाम से जाना जाता है, पहली नवंबर 1984 को सिख विरोधी दंगों में जल उठा। हम, जो कि समाज में प्रेम और आपसी सद्भाव से रहते आ रहे थे, जैसे कपास और धागे के रिश्ते में बंधे हुए थे, और अचानक इसी सद्भावना की नींव पर मानो वज्रपात हुआ और सारा शहर हिंसा के नारों से गूंज उठा। हम तड़प उठे। यह क्या हुआ? कभी सोचा भी नहीं था कि जिस शहर में हम इतने वर्षों सौहार्द की भावना के साथ रहते आ रहे थे वहां ऐसी विकट परिस्थिति पैदा हो जाएगी कि अपने प्राणों की रक्षा के लिए हमें जद्दोजहद करनी पड़ेगी! पुलिस, प्रशासन मानो कहीं नजर ही नहीं आ रहा था। अपने घरों में बंद बाहर दंगाइयों की भीड़ की हिंसा को चुपचाप बर्दाश्त करने के सिवा कुछ कर नहीं सकते थे। मृत्यु अवश्यंभावी लग रही थी।

"चीखता था मगर आवाज ना थी,  
मौत लहराती थी सौ शक्लों में।"



हिंसक भीड़ द्वारा पत्थरबाजी हुई, आग लगाने का प्रयास किया गया। जब बाहर कुछ हितैषियों द्वारा बार-बार प्रशासन, पुलिस पर दबाव दिया गया तब कहीं जाकर एक अंतराल के बाद पुलिस द्वारा हिंसक भीड़ को तितर-बितर किया गया और शहर में कर्फ्यू लगा कर स्थिति को नियंत्रित किया गया।

सवाल यह उठता है कि ऐसी परिस्थिति में आखिर सामाजिक सौहार्द क्यों बिगड़ा। कहीं ना कहीं असामाजिक तत्वों को राजनीतिक संरक्षण प्राप्त था। एक हद तक मीडिया भी इसमें दोषी है। सोशल मीडिया का दुरुपयोग कई रूपों में किया गया है। जैसे 31 अक्टूबर 1984 को इंदिरा गांधी की हत्या के बाद हिंसक दृश्यों को टीवी पर दिखाया गया और 'खून का बदला खून से लेंगे' जैसे हिंसक नारों को भी बार बार प्रसारित किया गया जिससे माहौल बिगड़ता ही गया। दरअसल, सोशल मीडिया की भूमिका सामाजिक समरसता को संवारने और सकारात्मक सोच की जगह समाज को बांटने वाले संदेश को बढ़ावा देने वाली हो गई है। परंतु यदि कोशिश की जाए तो सोशल मीडिया उन लोगों की आवाज बन सकता है जो समाज की मुख्यधारा में आना चाहते हैं।

कुछ ऐसे ही हिंसक घटना क्रम से हमारे शहर भागलपुर को एक बार पुनः दो-चार होना पड़ा। बल्कि भयानकता की पराकाष्ठा से गुजरना पड़ा। सिख विरोधी दंगों के बाद हमारे शहर भागलपुर को 5 वर्षों के अंतराल के बाद यानी 1990 में एक बार फिर सांप्रदायिक दंगों की त्रासदी से गुजरना पड़ा। धार्मिक उन्माद ऐसा भड़का कि इंसान, इंसान के खून का प्यासा हो गया। सड़कों पर लाशें बिछने लगीं और मंदिर की घंटियों तथा मस्जिद से निकलने वाले अजान के स्वर इंसानों की चीत्कार में दब गए। एक अनुमान के मुताबिक लगभग 1000 लोगों को जानें इस सांप्रदायिक दंगों की भेंट चढ़ गई। एक महीने तक भागलपुर शहर दंगों की आग में झुलसता रहा। अराजक एवं आपराधिक तत्व अपने कुत्सित मंसूबों में कामयाब रहे। पुलिस तथा प्रशासन एक बार फिर मूकदर्शक बना रहा और जब तक वह हरकत में आता तब तक काफी देर हो चुकी थी। यदि पहले ही धार्मिक जुलूस को निकालने की अनुमति न दी गई होती तो यह घटना घटित ही नहीं होती। राम मंदिर के मुद्दे पर तनाव तो पहले से ही था उस पर इस स्थानीय धार्मिक घटना ने आग में घी का कार्य किया और स्थानीय जिला प्रशासन तथा पुलिस ने आगे आने वाले खतरे को भांपने का सही आकलन नहीं किया और परिणाम स्वरूप आपसी प्रेम सद्भाव और भाईचारा सांप्रदायिक ज्वाला की भेंट चढ़ गया। प्रेम और सद्भावना भी ऐसा कि भागलपुर के चम्पानगर में स्थित महाशय ड्योढी हवेली में मंदिर भी है और मस्जिद भी। दोनों धर्मों के लोग एक ही स्थान में पूजा और नमाज़ अदा करने के लिए जाते रहते थे।

अब सवाल यह है कि आखिर ऐसा कब तक चलता रहेगा क्या यह घटनाएं देश को कमजोर नहीं कर रही? मासूम, लाचार लोग अपने जीवन यापन के लिए दाने-दाने को मोहताज होकर रह जाते हैं। कई दिनों तक घरों में चूल्हे नहीं जलते। शायद इसी दर्द का एहसास कर अमृता प्रीतम ने अपनी रचना 'एक सोच' में कहा था,

"भारत की गलियों में भटकती हवा,  
चूल्हे की बुझती आग को कुरेदती,  
उधार लिए अन्न का एक ग्रास तोड़ती,  
और घुटनों पर हाथ रखकर फिर उठती है।"

आम नागरिकों के बीच जागरूकता फैलाने वाली सोच के लिए काफी व्यापक स्तर पर प्रयास किए जाने चाहिए। समाज में भाईचारे की भावना आएगी तो मन को मन से जोड़ेगी। सभ्य समाज विकसित हो सकेगा और समाज में दुर्भावनाएं एवं कटुता कम होंगी। आज एक बड़ा प्रश्न यह है कि धर्म, जाति, भाषा, क्षेत्र आदि के नाम पर

समाज को बांटने से कैसे रोका जाए। इसके लिए सर्वप्रथम हमें एक दूसरे की संस्कृति का सम्मान करना सीखना होगा। लोगों को अपनी क्षेत्रीय संस्कृति को भी बढ़ावा देना होगा तभी साँस्कृतिक समृद्धि बढ़ेगी। परंतु ऐसा राष्ट्रीयता की कीमत पर नहीं होना चाहिए। राष्ट्र की एकता और अखंडता को सर्वोच्च माना जाना चाहिए तभी हमारा देश प्रगति के पथ पर अग्रसर हो सकेगा। इंसान के दिल में इंसानियत का भाव भी होना चाहिए जो एक आवश्यक तथ्य है समाज में सद्भाव लाने का। कैफी आजमी ने कहा है

"मेरी दुनिया में ना पूरब है ना पश्चिम कोई  
सारे इंसान सिमट आए खुली बाहों में।"

चिंता की बात ये है कि फिरकापरस्ती यदि जल्द खत्म ना हुई तो देश की ख्याति को तो नुकसान पहुंचेगा ही, मुसीबतें भी हमें घेर लेंगी। हर वक्त डर और चिंता का माहौल बना रहेगा। इकबाल ने कहा था -

"वतन की फिक्र कर ए नादां,  
मुसीबत आने वाली है,  
तेरी बर्बादी के मशवरे हैं आसमानों में,  
ना समझोगे तो मिट जाओगे हिन्दोस्तां वालो,  
तुम्हारी दास्तां तक भी ना होगी दस्तानों में।"

हमें खुद को भी देश की उन्नति में अपने आप को एक इकाई के रूप में लेना होगा। इकबाल साहब ने एक जगह कहा है -

हो मेरे दम से यूँही मेरे वतन की ज़ीनत,  
जिस तरह फूल से होती है चमन की ज़ीनत।

दूसरों के दर्द को अपनाकर हम उन्हें खुशी और सुख की अनुभूति दें, क्या यह धरती पर स्वर्ग लाने के बराबर नहीं है? गीतकार शैलेंद्र ने कहा है-

"पहलू में पराए दर्द बसा के,  
हँसना हंसाना सीख ज़रा,  
तू हँसना हंसाना सीख ज़रा,  
तूफ़ान से कह दो घिर के उठे,  
हम प्यार के दीप जलाते हैं,  
हम प्यार के दीप जलाते हैं...."।

कितना ही अच्छा होता कि इंसान अपने - आपको जात - पात और धर्म के भेद - भाव से अलग रखता। इसी बात को मूर्त रूप देने के लिए साहिर लुधियानवी ने अपने दिल के उद्गारों को इस प्रकार व्यक्त किया है -

" तू हिंदू बनेगा न मुस्लमान बनेगा  
इंसान की औलाद है इंसान बनेगा।"

क्या इस तरह की पवित्र विचारधारा हर इंसान के दिल में कभी घर कर पायेगी? इसके लिए धार्मिक सहिष्णुता के साथ - साथ राजनीतिक प्रयास भी करने पड़ेंगे। राजनेताओं को सेवा समझकर लोगों के बीच जाना पड़ेगा और आपसी सौहार्द को जगाना होगा। इन दिनों वैश्विक महामारी में हमने जो देखा, समाज में मुसीबत के मारों की मदद करने वालों की नितांत कमी ही नज़र आयी ये माहौल देखकर हमें साहिर की ये पंक्तियाँ याद आयीं -

" ज़रा मुल्क के रहबरो को बुलाओ,  
ये कूचे ये गलियाँ ये मंज़र दिखाओ,  
जिन्हें नाज़ है हिंद पर उनको लाओ,  
जिन्हें नाज़ है हिंद पर वो कहाँ हैं,  
कहाँ हैं, कहाँ हैं, कहाँ हैं.....!"

आज यदि गरीब तबके के लोगों का समाज आसरा बन सके तो हमारा देश शांति और समृद्धि का तपोवन बन सकता है। हमें निरंतर प्रयास करने होंगे और निराशा का दामन छोड़ना होगा। क्योंकि निराश व्यक्ति अतीत में रहता है, चिंतित व्यक्ति भविष्य में रहता है और शांतचित वर्तमान में रहता है। शांति की शुरुआत मुस्कराहट से होती है। खोखले आडंबर देश को विकसित करने में सहायक नहीं होंगे। हज़ारों खोखले शब्दों से बेहतर है - प्रेम और सद्भावना। सच्चा धर्म वही है जो मानव, समाज को शांति, प्रेम और सद्भावना के मार्ग पर चलने के लिए प्रेरित करे। अंत में प्रेम और सद्भावना के इसी संदेश के साथ आप सबों से विदाई लेता हूँ.....,

"जय हिंद, जय भारत"।

खनूजा जी का सद्भावना सन्देश यदि आप सुनना चाहते हैं तो क्लिक कीजिये निचली लिंक को  
<https://rgfindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Sadbhavana-Sandesh-from-Bhagalpur.mp4>

## सद्भावना - एक प्रयास

शफी शेख

भारतीय संस्कृति गंगा-यमुना तहजीब की संस्कृति रही है, जिसमें सूफियों से प्रभावित होकर विभिन्न धर्मों को मानने वाले एक दूसरे की भावनाओं को समझने, उनका सम्मान करने सहित सत्य और अहिंसा को अपने जीवन में सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता देते रहे हैं।

विभिन्न, धर्मों के त्योहारों पर एक दूसरे के घर जाकर खुशियां बांटने व शादी विवाह में शामिल होकर भाईचारे की भावना के साथ सदियों से रहते चले आ रहे हैं, कभी किसी के मन में दुसरे समुदाय या उसके मानने वालों के खिलाफ ग़लत विचार व्यक्त भावनाए नहीं रहीं हैं। त्योहारों के समय एक दूसरे के घरों में मिठाइयों का आदान-प्रदान करना पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी चला रहा है।

हालांकि कभी-कभी विभिन्न कारणों से दो समुदायों के बीच गलतफहमियां या विवाद बढ़ जाने पर सांप्रदायिक दंगे तथा अनेक बार जान माल का नुकसान भी होता रहा है। कई बार कई-कई दिनों तक लोगों को कर्फ्यू के साए में भी मजबूरन रहना पड़ा है। लेकिन दंगों के दौरान दोनों समुदाय के बुजुर्ग व प्रतिष्ठित लोग आपस में बैठकर चर्चा करके अपने प्रभाव से या जरूरत पड़ने पर शांति समिति बनाकर शांति व सद्भावना के प्रयास करते रहें हैं। थोड़े दिनों के तनाव के बाद सभी लोग सामान्य जनजीवन जीते रहे या जनजीवन सामान्य हो जाता था। किंतु पिछले कुछ सालों से कुछ राजनेताओं व मानवता विरोधी लोगों एवं संगठनों ने अपने राजनैतिक लाभों के लिए या सत्ता पर काबिज होने के लिए हिंदू मुस्लिमों के बीच सामाजिक ताना-बाना बिगाड़ कर नफरतों के बीज बो दिए, जिसके कारण तेजी से सामाजिक दूरियां बढ़ती जा रही है।

शहरों में धर्म और जाति के आधार पर रहवासी क्षेत्र व कालोनियां विकसित हो रही है, जिसमें केवल एक समाज विशेष के लोग बहुतायत में रहने लगे हैं जिसके कारण दूसरे धर्म की परंपरा व संस्कृति का पता ही नहीं चल पाता। हिन्दू बच्चे अनभिज्ञ है कि ईद का मतलब क्या होता है, त्यौहार कैसे मनाया जाते हैं। इसी तरह मुस्लिम बच्चों को नहीं मालूम पड़ पाता कि दिपावली, दशहरे या रक्षाबंधन पर क्या होता है; कैसे संस्कृति का आदान प्रदान किया जा सकता है।

आज के दौर में विभिन्न समाज के लोगो द्वारा स्कूल कॉलेजों का भी जातिकरण कर दिया गया है, जैसे इस्लामिया करिमिया कालेज, खालसा कालेज, क्रिश्चियन कॉलेज, गुजराती कॉलेज, जैन दिवाकर कॉलेज, आदि आदि। इन धर्म के नाम से पहचाने जाने वाले स्कूल कालेज में जाति विशेष के विद्यार्थी ज्यादा होने के कारण विद्यार्थी भी एक दूसरे से दूर होते जा रहे हैं। नागरिकों व युवाओं के बीच मैत्री एवं विश्वास कम होकर असुरक्षा और अविश्वास की भावना बढ़ती जा रही है। ऐसे माहौल में, सद्भावना का प्रयास अत्यंत ज़रूरी है।

### इंदौर में सद्भावना के प्रयास

इन्दौर में 1960 के आसपास आचार्य विनोबा भावे ने भूदान आंदोलन के दौरान अपनी पदयात्रा के समय इंदौर को सर्वोदय शहर बनाने की कल्पना करते हुए यहां विसर्जन आश्रम की स्थापना की थी। 1970 के दौरान सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं एवं धार्मिक एवं राजनीतिक नेताओं ने आपसी भाईचारा बढ़ाने के लिए लगातार कोशिश

करते हुए विभिन्न रचनात्मक पहल एवं आयोजन करते रहें। सांप्रदायिक दंगों के समय शांति समिति का गठन, शांति मार्च, प्रभात फेरीया, कर्फ्यू के दौरान आवश्यक सामग्री का वितरण,( दूध सब्जी दवाइयां) के अलावा विभिन्न समाज के लोगों की बैठक का आयोजन करना, एकता पंचायत के गठन, शांति मंच,सद्भावना प्रतिष्ठान जैसे संगठनों का गठन किया जाकर इनके, माध्यम से विभिन्न समय समय पर विभिन्न आयोजन करके सभी धर्म के लोगों को साथ सद्भावना बढ़ाने की कोशिशें लगातार चल रही है, मोहल्ला मिटिंग,करने की परंपरा ज़ारी है। इससे काफी कुछ लाभ भी हुआ है।

भाई दूज के समय हरिजन बहनों द्वारा स्वर्ण, भाइयों को भोजन कराकर छुआछूत मिटाने, रक्षाबंधन के समय हिंदू बहनों द्वारा मुस्लिम भाइयों को, व मुस्लिम बहनों द्वारा हिन्दू भाइयों को राखी बांधने जैसे आयोजन प्रतिवर्ष किए जाते रहे हैं। त्यौहारों को दूसरे समुदाय के बीच उनके धार्मिक स्थलों पर आयोजित किए जाने की भी परंपरा की जा रही है। जैसे ईद हिंदू बहुल क्षेत्र में; दिपावली का त्यौहार मुस्लिम क्षेत्र में, श्री कृष्ण जन्माष्टमी चर्च में, तथा संत रविदास जयंती सभी धर्म के लोगों के साथ लेकर गुरुद्वारे में मनाने जैसे आयोजनों के द्वारा भी सद्भावना बढ़ाने की कोशिश लगातार की जा रही है।



सद्भावना के लिए राष्ट्रीय सूत्र पर कार्य करने वाले वरिष्ठ जनों, विद्वानों एवं सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं को आमंत्रित कर विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में मीटिंग आयोजित करना जैसे कार्यक्रम के साथ सद्भावना के लिए महात्मा गांधी के साहित्य का वितरण, विद्यार्थियों के बीच स्कुल कालेज में जाकर,शांति अहिंसा एवं गांधीजी के चरित्र को प्रोत्साहित करने के उद्देश्य से, विद्यार्थियों के बीच,लेखन, वाद विवाद स्पर्धाएं एवं साहित्य का वितरण जैसे आयोजन, पर्यावरण की रक्षा के लिए पेड़ों को राखी बांधना, विभिन्न धर्मों के धार्मिक जुलूस के दौरान, सर्व धर्म के कार्यकर्ताओं द्वारा सड़क पर मंच लगाकर उनका स्वागत कर

सद्भावना बढ़ाने की कोशिश की जा रही है। समाज कार्य महाविद्यालय के छात्र जो भविष्य में समाज में काम करने वाले हैं,प्रत्रकारिता के छात्र तथा ला कालेज के विद्यार्थियों को विशेष रूप से जोड़कर उन्हें प्रशिक्षण देने के प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

प्रगतिशील लोग एवं संगठनों के सहयोग से व, इस तरह के आयोजनों के माध्यम से समाज में कम हो रही सद्भावना को बढ़ाने की कोशिश की जा सकती है विभिन्न जगह पर शांति केंद्र स्थापित कर सभी धर्मों की पुस्तके रखने उनका अध्ययन करने ,सभी धर्मों के त्योहार, साथ साथ, मनाने एवं एक दूसरे के दुख सुख बाटने वाले आयोजन, विभिन्न अवसरों पर,साथ में बैठकर खाना खाने का आयोजन किए जाए तो निश्चित ही नफरत कम कर सद्भावना बढ़ाने के काम किए जा सकते हैं।





इंदौर शहर में सद्भावना बढ़ाने के लिए लगातार प्रयास , कोशिशें एवं आयोजन किए जाते रहे हैं, वर्ष 2006 से लगातार शहर के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में, विभिन्न समुदायों के लोगों को जोड़ने की कोशिश के साथ स्कूल ,कालेज के विधार्थियों को जोड़ने, विद्यालयों एवं महाविद्यालयों के मेनेजमेंट को साथ लेकर शिक्षण संस्थानों के परिसर में सद्भावना बढ़ाने वाले आयोजनों के साथ देश के वरिष्ठ सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं, बुद्धिजीवियों तथा विशेषज्ञों को आमंत्रित कर युवाओं के साथ संवाद स्थापित करने चर्चा, परिचर्चा तथा सेमिनार भी आयोजित किए जा रहे हैं, जिसके कारण काफी लाभ भी हों रहा है।

इंदौर शहर में सद्भावना प्रतिष्ठान, शांति मंच,लोकमैत्री, एकता पंचायत, भगतसिंह ब्रिगेड, रूपांकन जेसी अनेक संस्थाओं द्वारा सामूहिक प्रयास कर , आपसी भाईचारा बढ़ाने, सद्भावना के लिए सतत कार्य किए जा रहे हैं।

वर्ष 2006 में इंदौर के रेडचर्च परिसर में सद्भावना प्रतिष्ठान का गठन किया जाकर सद्भावना के लिए सतत अनेक आयोजन एवं प्रयास शुरू किए गए जो आज तक लगातार चल रहे हैं । इसके पूर्व 23 नवंबर 2004 को मसीह विद्या भवन में दीपावली एवं ईद मिलन समारोह आयोजित किया गया ।13 अगस्त 2006 को राजबाड़ा, स्थित अहिल्या उद्यान में विद्यार्थियों के साथ पेड़ों को राखी बांधने का आयोजन किया गया, जिसके माध्यम से सद्भावना के साथ पर्यावरण के प्रति भी युवाओं को जागरूक करने की कोशिश की गई। 26 अगस्त 2008 को शांति केंद्र का शुभारंभ इंदौर संभाग के आयुक्त श्री बी पी सिंह के मुख्यमंत्री आतिथ्य में, मसीह,विद्या भवन नगर निगम रोड पर कि गई जिसमें शहर के प्रबुद्ध वर्ग शामिल हुए।



31 अक्टूबर 2008 को मुंबई में हुए आतंकवादी हमले के विरोध में विभिन्न संगठनों ने गांधी प्रतिमा पर श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की ।2 सितंबर 2008 को पलासिया स्थित ईसाई धर्म के ग्रोटो पर सर्व धर्म प्रार्थना का आयोजन किया गया जिसमें उड़ीसा में ईसाई पादरियों के साथ किए जा रहे दुर्व्यवहार एवं मारपीट की धटनाओं की चर्चा की गई।

31 अगस्त 2008 को जाल सभा ग्रह में शहर के प्रबुद्ध जनों की सर्वधर्म बैठक आयोजित कर, शांति मंच का गठन किया जाकर, शहर में मोहल्ला समितियां बनाकर शांति के लिए कार्य शुरू करने के लिए भी निर्णय लिया गया जिसमें बड़ी संख्या में लोगों ने हिस्सा लिया।

हर मोहल्ले में शांति समिति गठन करने का निर्णय लिया गया। उड़ीसा में ईसाई पादरियों पर हुए हमले के विरोध में अगस्त 2008 में सर्वधर्म प्रार्थना सभा आयोजित की गई। 30 मार्च 2008 को प्रसिद्ध सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता असगर अली इंजीनियर ने संबोधित किया। 1 जनवरी 2009 को विसर्जन आश्रम में क्रिसमस एवं नवरोज,मिलन समारोह आयोजित किया गया। माता गुजरी कॉलेज जो सिख समाज द्वारा संचालित किया



जाता है उस कॉलेज में सर्वधर्म दीपावली मिलन समारोह आयोजन किया गया 24 जून 2013 को रेड चर्च परिसर में संत कबीर जयंती समारोह का आयोजन किया गया। 26 अक्टूबर 2014 को मुस्लिम समाज द्वारा कमाल कम्युनिटी हॉल खजराना में दीपावली मिलन समारोह आयोजित किया गया। 16 फरवरी को सद्भावना प्रतिष्ठान द्वारा कार्यक्रम आयोजित कर शहर काजी डॉ इशरत अली को, पूर्व बिशप स्व,जार्ज अनाथिल की स्मृति में सद्भावना पुरस्कार प्रदान किया गया। इसके पूर्व यह पुरस्कार एवं सम्मान श्री आनंद मोहन माथुर, पूर्व सांसद होमी दाजी जी की पत्नी पेरीन दाजी को तथा बाद में डा सरोज कुमार, पद्मश्री जनक पलटा आदि को प्रदान किया गया। यह पुरस्कार शहर में सद्भावना के लिए कार्य करने वाले एक वरिष्ठ कार्यकर्ता को प्रदान किया जाता है जो प्रतिवर्ष दिया जा रहा है।

2 नवंबर 2014 को चिमन बाग चौराहा स्थित हाउसिंग बोर्ड कॉलोनी में दीपावली मिलन समारोह का आयोजन किया गया। 2 नवंबर 2019 को खजराना स्थित शाबरी हाल में सर्वधर्म, दीपावली मिलन समारोह आयोजित किया गया।



25, जुलाई 2019 को श्री आनंद मोहन माथुर के जन्मदिन के अवसर पर माथुर सभागृह सुखलिया में "सब की रोटी" नामक सामूहिक भोज का आयोजन किया गया जिसमें शहर के नागरिक अपने अपने घरों से रोटीयां लेकर आए जिन्हें एक बड़े बर्तन में इकट्ठा कर ली गई, पश्चात सभी लोगों ने उस बर्तन में से रोटीयां निकाल निकाल कर भोजन किया, जिसमें किस के हिस्से में किस परिवार की रोटीयां आई यह किसी को भी पता ही नहीं चला। इस आयोजन की विशेषताएं रही कि सभी धर्म के नागरिक और, महिला पुरुषों की भागीदारी रहीं, सभी अपने

घरों से रोटीयां लाएं और किसी को पता नहीं चला कि किसके हिस्से में किस परिवार की बनी रोटीयां खाने को आई इस आयोजन को पूरे शहर में लोगों ने खूब सराहा एवं इस तरह के आयोजन बार-बार करने का निर्णय लिया गया। अभी पुनः इस तरह का आयोजन करने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है।







# Abhyas Mandal, Indore – A Civil Society Institution

*Somnath Ghosh*

**Birth of an institution :** It was 13th September 1959. Ganesh festival was on. One of the programmes organized during the festival was a public discussion on what should be the responsibility of educated youth. Among others, the program featured educationist Shastri Moreswar, Sharad Paarnekar, Sindhu Kapse and Manohar Jain. Yet, it wasn't clear what should be the responsibility. Mukund Kulkarni who was in the organizing committee suggested the formation of study circle. That gave birth to Abhyas Mandal.

It took three operational pledges. First, it would not own any property as that was often the cause of friction between organizing members. Second, Abhyas Mandal members would host visiting dignitaries in their respective houses, both as cost saving and bonding measure. And finally, it will embrace thoughts, philosophies and ideas from all sections of society.

**Purposes** Initially, every fifteen days somebody from the town would share his views on social issues and what that entailed for the youth. As such exchanges progressed, three core purposes of emerged. First, Abhyas Mandal would strive to increase the knowledge and understanding of youth about various social issues. Second, they'd engage in constructive work. Third, the underlying principles informing their actions would be democracy, secularism and equality.

**From Illustrious Speakers to Village Work** By 1962, among others, Abhyas Mandal was graced by three speakers who'd go on to become future prime ministers of India. While that sounds nice, for eight years from 1968 to 1975, Abhyas Mandal volunteers worked in the villages, offering shramdaan for road construction, growing vegetables and providing useful tips about agriculture and reacted matters.

**National Integration** In 1975, Abhyas Mandal concentrated on work relating to national integration. Between 1976 and 1990, it would regularly organize three types of programmes. In the first, Abhyas Mandal would organize 10-day programmes where college students would attend Day Camp. Here, groups of thirty students would be trained to do socio-economic survey of villages by which they'd get to know their country better. The second set of programme would revolve around understanding the Constitution. Under this vertical, lectures by prominent people were organized. In the third set of programmes, students in the age group 8-12 years from across the country would be invited for family stays, where a Marathi speaking student would be lodged with a Punjabi family, and so on.

***Socio-economic development*** In 1990, Abhyas Mandal changes track and focused on the socio-economic development of Madhya Pradesh. It had five themes: economic development, health, education, tribal development, and total overall development. Under this thrust, NKP Salve, Chairman of 9th Finance Commission came to Indore along with seven Members of Parliament. The outcome was Tribal Development Plan for Madhya Pradesh and an outlay of Rs. 480 crores was sanctioned.

***Sustainable Development*** Gradually, Abhyas Mandal came to be recognized as a go-between institution between society and government on matters relating to social and community issues. From there, the shift to sustainable development was waiting to happen. In early January, 2018, Abhyas Mandal organized (through Development Foundation, founded by it) an international conference on “Strategies of Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth in India” in collaboration with Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya (DAVV).

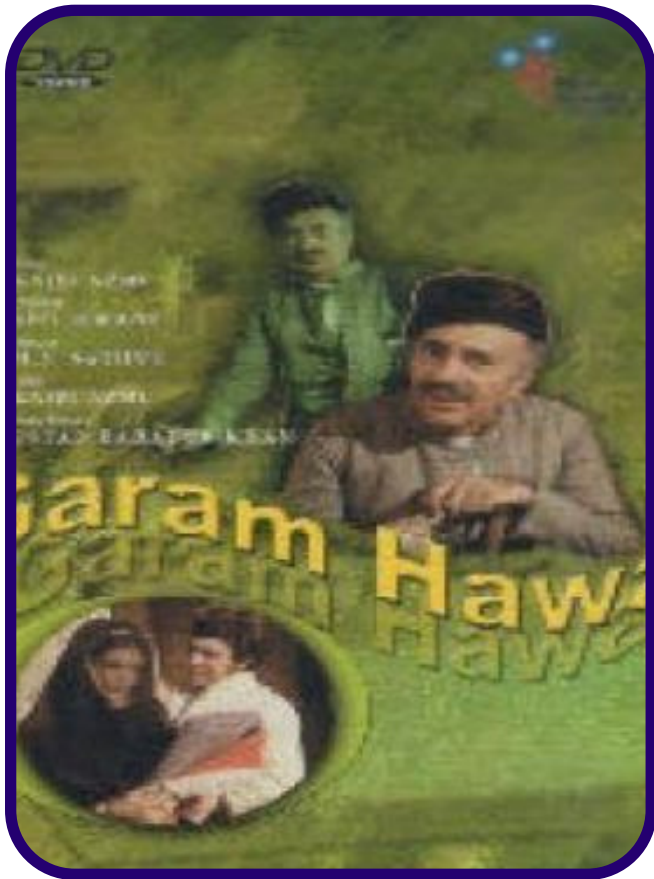
In 2019, Abhyas Mandal organized an interactive session on the topic ‘Preparing a vision document for 50 years for Indore’. On this occasion, then Chief Minister Kamal Nath dwelt on the challenges of urbanization and how important it was to improve basic facilities and adopt a wider outlook to benefit each and every sector of the society. This was followed by *Jai Jagat 2020*, a Global Peace March as a part of celebration of Mahatma Gandhi 150th birth anniversary.

***Environment and protest as a tool for societal development*** Taking a cue from Chipko movement, Abhyas Mandal organized a demonstration against tree cutting, where young girls tied raakhi on the trunks of trees. Similarly, it organized rallies for improvement of facilities at Indore railway station. And for the last two years, it has been agitating for rejuvenation of Khan river, organizing a protest by over 2,500 people. As an outcome, the government created a special cell for river rejuvenation.





## Garam Hawa Review By *Mohar Basu*



As entertainment journalists, we are often either oblivious or averse to crucial occurrences around us. Shamelessly busying ourselves into glossy gossips or bitter cat fights in Bollywood, our understanding of cinema frequently gets limited to the films which hit the benchmark of the celebrated 100 crore club. We barely question or ponder beyond the balance sheets these days.

It was while watching Abhishek Kapoor's recent little delightful venture [Kai Po Che!](#) that I thought of this film. Though antagonistic cultures, why is the Hindu-Muslim religious divide still valid enough for us to be the theme of a popular film?

The answer is not recent, is deep rooted in the intricacies of our turbulent history. And in the light of that, this week I recommend to you, Balraj Sahani and Farooq Sheikh starrer 1973 classic film *Garam Hawa*.

*Garam Hawa* is directed by M.S Sathyu, the film is based on an unpublished short story by Ismat Chughtai. Set against the backdrop of the 1947 Partition, the film's screenplay was jointly penned down by Kaifi Azmi and Shama Zaidi, Sathyu's wife. Fair enough, we have seen enough Partition based films. Contemporaries or Classics, mainstream films or art films, Partition has often played a favorite plot, thrilling enough to interest scriptwriters in our country. But it is not very often, we see a Muslim protagonist's plight because he chose to stay back in India despite all visible odds.

The film begins with Salim Mirza played by the seasoned actor Balraj Sahani seeing off his relative at the station. The tonga man there simply asks, "Aaj kisko chodne aaye the?" Faced with the pressures and pangs of Partition, Muslims gradually left India for a land of better prospects and mostly more equitable treatment. Ostracized by people, abandoned in their own country, Pakistan looked appealing to most for its promise of a brighter future for Indian Muslims.

Salim Mirza had a shoe manufacturing business in Agra which is running in heavy losses following the post-Partition economic crisis added with a clear religious discrimination. Salim, a pious man of convictions believes staunchly in the ideals of peace and harmony. He passively stands by watching his family leave one by one. His brother Halim and his family, his elder son and his family, his daughter's suitors – they all migrate to Pakistan. Letters from the other side of the border tells Mirza's family of the glories and happiness of the promising new land that provides so amply for the Muslims, way better than India.

Salim still stands by his beliefs despite waging a hopeless war against all who constantly prod him to leave for Pakistan. With his business and ancestral home confiscated by the Government, and then his daughter Amina's suicide following multiple heartbreaks of her suitors going back on her – Salim finally makes the exasperated call which he had been avoiding all along. He decides to leave India. And then there's an appalling ending which fosters a reinvigorated faith in the postulates of Democracy, not to mention a refreshed sense of respect for the likes of Salim Mirza. The final lines of the film by Kaifi Azmi very poignantly express,

***"Jo door se toofan ka karte hai nazara, unke liye toofan vahan bhi hai yahan bhi...  
Daare me jo mil jaoge ban jaoge daara, yeh waqt ka ailaan vahan bhi hai yahan  
bhi"***

Sathyu's directorial debut ran into troubled waters and its release was delayed and evaded for months! Contemplating communal disturbances, the film was received with both critical and commercial success upon its release. Salim Mirza is deemed to be Balraj Sahani's finest performance ever. His charisma almost single handedly pulls through the film.

This movie might sound like a long lecture to the urban modern youth, whose largely self oriented grievances of relationships and love formulate the themes of most Bollywood films today. Recent films have better camera work, ornate frames, and fancier foreign locales and still don't manage to strike a chord.

This film doesn't have any of those lustrous elements. But I recommend this film solely for a humane story that will overwhelm you. It draws attention to the plight of a myriad people so easily forgotten. Of course, it might sound like clawing on to our past too hard, and yet films like these give a wider insight into our present social scenario.

With tall talks of combating terrorism with Hindutva, this film will convey the mere need for Secularism; need to be religiously fair in a country so full of ethnic diversities. Garam Hawa is a salute to the immense strength of many sufferers of Partition to sustain such brutal pressures and survive in a country which has more often than not marginalized them with great hostility. As Indians, we audaciously sympathize and recklessly ostracize people based on religion, sadly till date.

Let this film hammer you hard this weekend and preach to you the importance of an equalitarian and just society, from a perspective Bollywood cinema has mostly kept alien from us.



# John Lennon's Imagine, 50 years later, resonates with a global politics of brotherhood<sup>1</sup>

*Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us, only sky*

*Imagine all the people  
Livin' for today  
Ah*

*Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion, too*

*Imagine all the people  
Livin' life in peace  
You*

*You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one*

*Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man*

*Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world  
You*

*You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will live as one*



*Source: LyricFind, Songwriters: John Winston Lennon  
Imagine lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group*

<sup>1</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/imagine-john-lennon-song-identity-based-hatred-7386609/>

## Part III– How do we deal with Nature?

---

# MIT Predicted in 1972 That Society Will Collapse This Century. New Research Shows We're on Schedule

*Nafeez Ahmed*<sup>2</sup>

A 1972 MIT study predicted that rapid economic growth would lead to societal collapse in the mid 21st century. A new paper shows we're unfortunately right on schedule.

A remarkable new study by a director at one of the largest accounting firms in the world has found that a famous, decades-old warning from MIT about the risk of industrial civilization collapsing appears to be accurate based on new empirical data. As the world looks forward to a rebound in economic growth following the devastation wrought by the pandemic, the research raises urgent questions about the risks of attempting to simply return to the pre-pandemic 'normal.'

In 1972, a team of MIT scientists got together to study the risks of civilizational collapse. Their system dynamics model published by the Club of Rome identified impending 'limits to growth' (LtG) that meant industrial civilization was on track to collapse sometime within the 21st century, due to overexploitation of planetary resources.

The controversial MIT analysis generated heated debate, and was widely derided at the time by pundits who misrepresented its findings and methods. But the analysis has now received stunning vindication from a study written by a senior director at professional services giant KPMG, one of the 'Big Four' accounting firms as measured by global revenue.

### **Limits to growth**

The study was published in the Yale Journal of Industrial Ecology in November 2020 and is available on the KPMG website. It concludes that the current business-as-usual trajectory of global civilization is heading toward the terminal decline of economic growth within the coming decade—and at worst, could trigger societal collapse by around 2040.

---

<sup>2</sup><https://www.vice.com/en/article/z3xw3x/new-research-vindicates-1972-mit-prediction-that-society-will-collapse-soon>

The study represents the first time a top analyst working within a mainstream global corporate entity has taken the 'limits to growth' model seriously. Its author, Gaya Herrington, is Sustainability and Dynamic System Analysis Lead at KPMG in the United States. However, she decided to undertake the research as a personal project to understand how well the MIT model stood the test of time.

The study itself is not affiliated or conducted on behalf of KPMG, and does not necessarily reflect the views of KPMG. Herrington performed the research as an extension of her Masters thesis at Harvard University in her capacity as an advisor to the Club of Rome. However, she is quoted explaining her project on the KPMG website as follows:

"Given the unappealing prospect of collapse, I was curious to see which scenarios were aligning most closely with empirical data today. After all, the book that featured this world model was a bestseller in the 70s, and by now we'd have several decades of empirical data which would make a comparison meaningful. But to my surprise I could not find recent attempts for this. So I decided to do it myself."

Titled 'Update to limits to growth: Comparing the World3 model with empirical data', the study attempts to assess how MIT's 'World3' model stacks up against new empirical data. Previous studies that attempted to do this found that the model's worst-case scenarios accurately reflected real-world developments. However, the last study of this nature was completed in 2014.

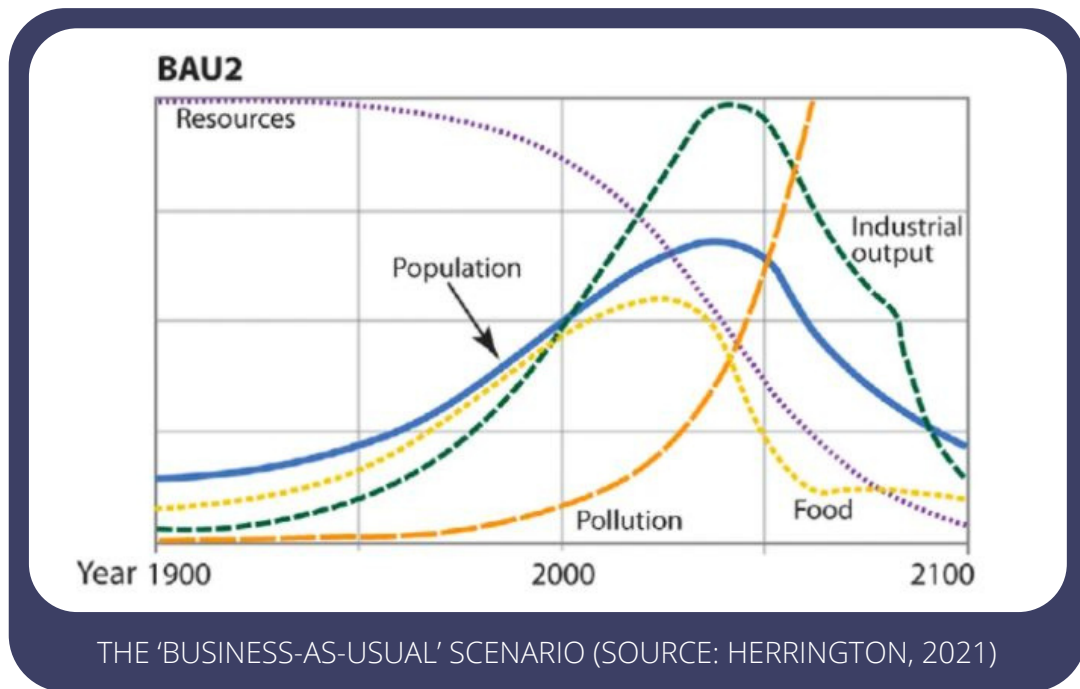
### **The risk of collapse**

Herrington's new analysis examines data across 10 key variables, namely population, fertility rates, mortality rates, industrial output, food production, services, non-renewable resources, persistent pollution, human welfare, and ecological footprint. She found that the latest data most closely aligns with two particular scenarios, 'BAU2' (business-as-usual) and 'CT' (comprehensive technology).

"BAU2 and CT scenarios show a halt in growth within a decade or so from now," the study concludes. "Both scenarios thus indicate that continuing business as usual, that is, pursuing continuous growth, is not possible. Even when paired with unprecedented technological development and adoption, business as usual as modelled by LtG would inevitably lead to declines in industrial capital, agricultural output, and welfare levels within this century."

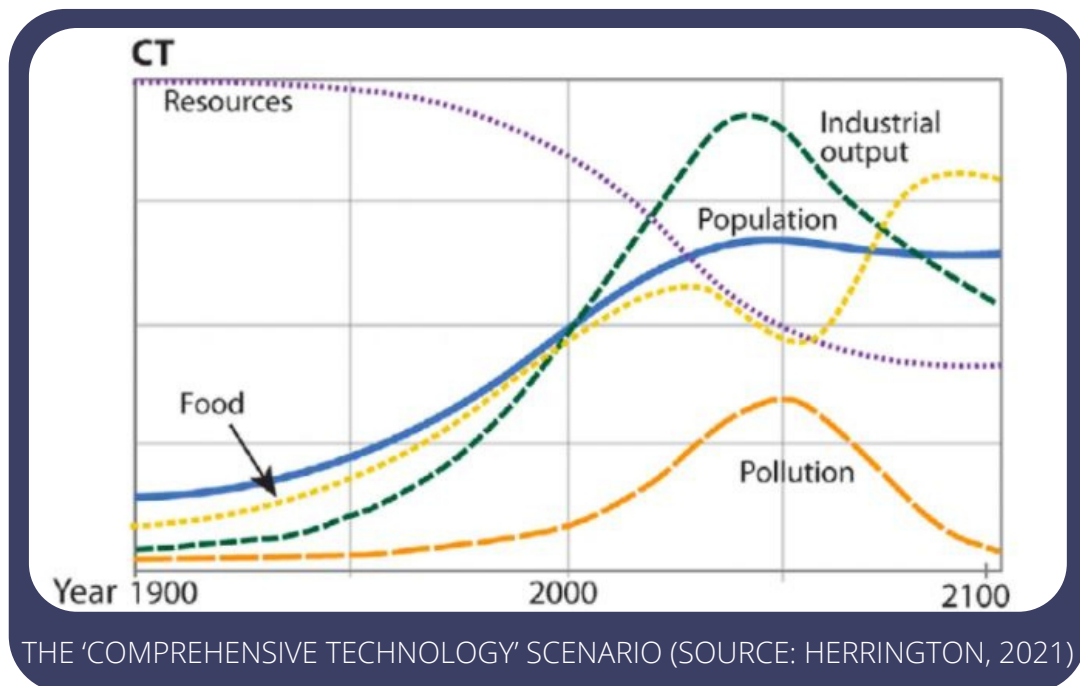


Study author Gaya Herrington told Motherboard that in the MIT World3 models, collapse “does not mean that humanity will cease to exist,” but rather that “economic and industrial growth will stop, and then decline, which will hurt food production and standards of living... In terms of timing, the BAU2 scenario shows a steep decline to set in around 2040.”

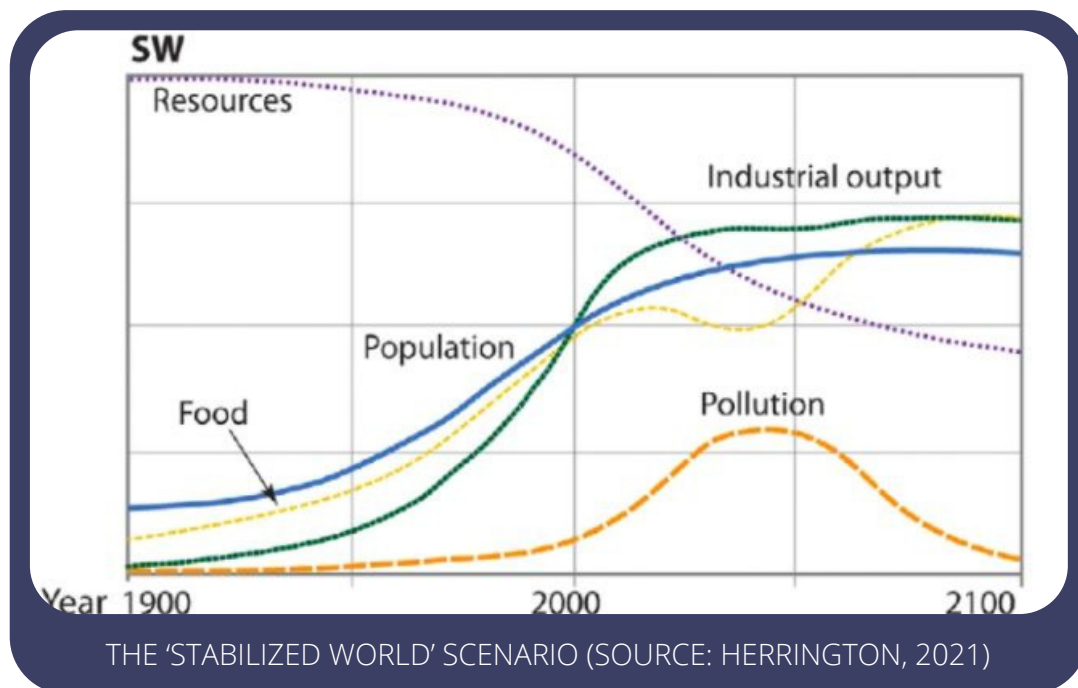


### The end of growth?

In the comprehensive technology (CT) scenario, economic decline still sets in around this date with a range of possible negative consequences, but this does not lead to societal collapse.



Unfortunately, the scenario which was the least closest fit to the latest empirical data happens to be the most optimistic pathway known as 'SW' ( stabilized world), in which civilization follows a sustainable path and experiences the smallest declines in economic growth—based on a combination of technological innovation and widespread investment in public health and education.



Although both the business-as-usual and comprehensive technology scenarios point to the coming end of economic growth in around 10 years, only the BAU2 scenario “shows a clear collapse pattern, whereas CT suggests the possibility of future declines being relatively soft landings, at least for humanity in general.” Both scenarios currently “seem to align quite closely not just with observed data,” Herrington concludes in her study, indicating that the future is open.

### **A window of opportunity**

While focusing on the pursuit of continued economic growth for its own sake will be futile, the study finds that technological progress and increased investments in public services could not just avoid the risk of collapse, but lead to a new stable and prosperous civilization operating safely within planetary boundaries. But we really have only the next decade to change course.

“At this point therefore, the data most aligns with the CT and BAU2 scenarios which indicate a slowdown and eventual halt in growth within the next decade or so, but World3 leaves open whether the subsequent decline will constitute a collapse,” the study concludes. Although the ‘stabilized world’ scenario “tracks least closely, a deliberate trajectory change brought about by society turning toward another goal than growth is still possible. The LtG work implies that this window of opportunity is closing fast.”

In a presentation at the World Economic Forum in 2020 delivered in her capacity as a KPMG director, Herrington [argued](#) for 'agrowth'—an agnostic approach to growth which focuses on other economic goals and priorities.

“Changing our societal priorities hardly needs to be a capitulation to grim necessity,” she said. “Human activity can be regenerative and our productive capacities can be transformed. In fact, we are seeing examples of that happening right now. Expanding those efforts now creates a world full of opportunity that is also sustainable.”

She noted how the rapid development and deployment of vaccines at unprecedented rates in response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that we are capable of responding rapidly and constructively to global challenges if we choose to act. We need exactly such a determined approach to the environmental crisis.

“The necessary changes will not be easy and pose transition challenges but a sustainable and inclusive future is still possible,” said Herrington.

The best available data suggests that what we decide over the next 10 years will determine the long-term fate of human civilization. Although the odds are on a knife-edge, Herrington pointed to a “rapid rise” in environmental, social and good governance priorities as a basis for optimism, signalling the change in thinking taking place in both governments and businesses. She told me that perhaps the most important implication of her research is that it's not too late to create a truly sustainable civilization that works for all.



# Why Some Biologists and Ecologists Think Social Media is a Risk to Humanity

*Shirin Ghaffary*



A group of 17 researchers across disciplines from biology to philosophy published a paper arguing that the impacts of social media should be treated as a “crisis discipline.”

*Thamrongpat Theerathamakorn/ EyeEm via Getty Images*

Social media has drastically restructured the way we communicate in an incredibly short period of time. We can discover, “Like,” click on, and share information faster than ever before, guided by algorithms most of us don’t quite understand. And while some social scientists, journalists, and activists have been raising concerns about how this is affecting our democracy, mental health, and relationships, we haven’t seen biologists and ecologists weighing in as much. That’s changed with a new paper published in the prestigious science journal PNAS earlier this month, titled **“Stewardship of global collective behavior.”**

Seventeen researchers who specialize in widely different fields, from climate science to philosophy, make the case that academics should treat the study of technology’s large-scale impact on society as a “crisis discipline.” A crisis discipline is a field in which scientists across different fields work quickly to address an urgent societal problem — like how conservation biology tries to protect endangered species or climate science research aims to stop global warming.

The paper argues that our lack of understanding about the collective behavioral effects of new technology is a danger to democracy and scientific progress. For example, the paper says that tech companies have “fumbled their way through

the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, unable to stem the ‘infodemic’ of misinformation” that has hindered widespread acceptance of masks and vaccines. The authors warn that if left misunderstood and unchecked, we could see unintended consequences of new technology contributing to phenomena such as “election tampering, disease, violent extremism, famine, racism, and war.” It’s a grave warning and call to action by an unusually diverse swath of scholars across disciplines — and their collaboration indicates how concerned they are.

Recode spoke with the lead author of the paper, Joe Bak-Coleman, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Washington Center for an Informed Public, as well as co-author Carl Bergstrom, a biology professor at the University of Washington, to better understand this call for a paradigm shift in how scientists study the technology we use every day.

The two interviews have been combined and lightly edited for length and clarity.

***Shirin Ghaffary***

You tweeted that this paper is one of the most important ones you’ve published yet. Why?

***Carl Bergstrom***

My original background is in infectious disease epidemiology, respiratory viruses. And so I was able to do some stuff that’s reasonably important during Covid. What I’m doing there is really filling in the details in a well-established framework. So it’s more, you know, dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s.

And I think what’s really important about this paper is that it’s not doing that at all. It’s saying, “Here’s a massive problem, and the way to conceptualize it, that is critically important for the future.” And, you know, it’s suggesting an alarm going off upstairs.

It’s a call to arms. It’s saying, “Hey, we’ve got to solve this problem, and we don’t have a lot of time.”

***Shirin Ghaffary***

And what is that problem? What are you sounding the alarm bell on?

***Carl Bergstrom***

My sense is that social media in particular — as well as a broader range of internet technologies, including algorithmically driven search and click-based

advertising — have changed the way that people get information and form opinions about the world.. And they seem to have done so in a manner that makes people particularly vulnerable to the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

There's no reason why good information will rise to the top of any ecosystem we've designed

Just as one example: A paper — a poorly done research paper — can come out suggesting that hydroxychloroquine might be a treatment for Covid. And in a matter of days, you have world leaders promoting it, and people struggling to get [this medicine], and it being no longer available to people who need it for treatment of other conditions. Which is actually a serious health problem. So you can have these bits of misinformation that explode at unprecedented velocity in ways that they wouldn't have prior to this information ecosystem.

[Now], you can create large communities of people that hold constellations of beliefs that are not grounded in reality, [such as \[the conspiracy theory\] QAnon](#). You can have ideas like anti-vaccination ideas spread in new ways. You can create polarization in new ways. And [you can] create an information environment where misinformation seems to spread organically. And also [these communities can] be extremely vulnerable to targeted disinformation. We don't even know the scope of that yet.

### ***Joe Bak-Coleman***

The question we were trying to answer was, "What can we infer about the course of society at scale, given what we know about complex systems?" It's kind of how we use mice models or flies to understand neuroscience. Part of this came back to animal societies — namely groups — to understand what they tell us about collective behavior in general, but also complex systems more broadly.

So our goal is to take that perspective and then look at human society with that. And one of the things about complex systems is they have a finite limit to perturbation. If you disturb them too much, they change. And they often tend to fail catastrophically, unexpectedly, without warning. We see this in financial markets — all of a sudden, they crash out of nowhere.

### ***Carl Bergstrom***

My hope is very much that this [paper] will sort of galvanize people. The issues that are in this paper are ones that people have been thinking about from many, many different fields. It's not like these are new issues entirely. It's rather that I think this paper will hopefully really highlight the magnitude of what's happened and the



urgency of fixing it. Hopefully, it'll galvanize some kind of transdisciplinary collaborations.

So it's important because it says this needs to be a crisis discipline, this is something that we don't understand. We don't have a theory for how all of these changes are affecting the way that people come to form their beliefs and opinions, and then use those to make decisions. And yet, that's all changing. It's happening. ...

There's a misperception that we're saying, "Exposure to ads is bad — that's causing the harm." That's not what we're saying. Exposure to ads may or may not be bad. What we're concerned about is the fact that this information ecosystem has developed to optimize something orthogonal to things that we think are extremely important, like being concerned about the veracity of information or the effect of information on human well-being, on democracy, on health, on the ecosystem. Those issues are just being left to sort themselves out, without a whole lot of thought or guidance around them.

That puts it in this crisis discipline space. It's like climate science where you don't have time to sit down and work out everything definitively. This paper is essentially saying something quite similar — that we don't have time to wait. We need to start addressing these problems now.

### ***Shirin Ghaffary***

What do you say to the people who think this is not really a crisis and argue that people had similar concerns when the printing press came out that now seem alarmist?

### ***Carl Bergstrom***

Well, with the printing press, I would push back. The printing press came out and upended history. We're still recovering from the capacity that the printing press gave to Martin Luther. The printing press radically changed the political landscape in Europe. And, you know, depending on whose histories you go by, you had decades if not centuries of war [after it was introduced].

So, did we somehow recover? Sure we did. Would it have been better to do it in a stewarded way? I don't know. Maybe. These major transitions in information technology often cause collateral damage. We tend to hope that they also bring about a tremendous amount of good as we move toward human knowledge and all of that. But even the fact that you've survived doesn't mean that it's not worth thinking about how to get through it smoothly.

It reminds me of one of the least intelligent critiques of the [Covid-19] vaccines that we're using now: "We didn't have vaccines during the Black Death plague. And we're still here." We are, but it took out a third of the population of Europe.

***Shirin Ghaffary***

Right, so there is pain and suffering that happened with all those transformational technologies as well.

***Carl Bergstrom***

Yeah. So I think it's important to recognize that. It's still possible to mitigate harm as you go through a transformation, even if you know you're going to be fine. I also don't think it's completely obvious that we are going to be fine on the other end. One of the really key messages of the paper is that there tends to be this general trust that everything will work out, that people will eventually learn to screen sources of information, that the market will take care of it. And I think one of the things that the paper is saying is that we've got no particular reason to think that that's right. There's no reason why good information will rise to the top of any ecosystem we've designed. So we're very concerned about that.

***Shirin Ghaffary***

One important defense of social media is that Facebook and Twitter can be places where people share new ideas that are not mainstream that end up being right. Sometimes media gatekeepers can get things wrong and social media can allow better information to come out. For example, some people like [Zeynep Tufekci were sounding the alarm](#) on the pandemic early, largely on Twitter, back in February 2020, far ahead of the CDC and most journalists.

***Carl Bergstrom***

Yeah, to look at the net, you have to look at the net influence of the system, right? If somebody on social media has things right but if the net influence on social media is to promote anti-vaccination sentiment in the United States to the point that we're not going to be able to reach herd immunity, it doesn't let social media off the hook.

...

I was enormously optimistic about the internet in the '90s. [I thought] this really was going to remove the gatekeepers and allow people who did not have financial, social, and political capital to get their stories out there. And it's certainly possible for all that to be true and for the concerns that we express in our paper to also be correct.

**Joe Bak-Coleman**

Democratizing information has had profound effects, especially for marginalized, underrepresented communities. It gives them the ability to rally online, have a platform, and have a voice. And that is fantastic. At the same time, we have things like genocide of Rohingya Muslims and an insurrection at the Capitol happening as well. And I hope that it's a false statement to say we have to have those growing pains to have the benefits.

**Shirin Ghaffary**

How much do we know about whether [misinformation] has increased in the past year or five years, 10 years, and by how much?

**Carl Bergstrom**

That's one of the real challenges that we're facing, actually, is that we don't have a lot of information. We need to figure out how, to what degree, people have been exposed to misinformation, to what degree is that influencing subsequent online behavior. All of this information is held exclusively by the tech companies that are running these platforms.

*[Editor's note: Most major social media companies work with academics who research their platforms' effects on society, but the companies restrict and control how much information researchers can use.]*

**Shirin Ghaffary**

What does treating the impact of social media as a crisis discipline mean?

**Carl Bergstrom**

For me, a crisis discipline is a situation where you don't have all of the information that you need to know exactly what to do, but you don't have time to wait to figure it out. This was the situation with Covid in February or March 2020. We're definitely in that position with global climate change. We've got better models than we did 20 years ago, but we still don't have a complete description of how that system works. And yet, we certainly don't have time to wait around and figure all that out. And here, I think that the speed with which social media, combined with a whole number of other things, has led to very widespread disinformation — [that] here in the United States [is] causing major political upheaval — is striking. How many more elections do you think we have before things get substantially worse? So there are these super-hard problems that take radical transdisciplinary work. We need to figure out how to come together and talk about all that. But at the same time, we have to be taking actions.

***Shirin Ghaffary***

The paper calls for people to more urgently understand the impacts of these new rapid advancements in communication technology in the past 15 years. Do you think that this isn't being addressed enough by academic scientists, government leaders, or companies?

***Joe Bak-Coleman***

There's been a lot of work that's been done here, and I don't think we're trying to reinvent that wheel at all. But I think what we're really trying to do is just highlight the need for urgent action and draw these parallels to climate change and to conservation biology, where they've been dealing with really similar problems. And the way they've structured themselves, like climate change now involves everything from chemists to ecologists. And I think social science tends to be fairly fragmented in subdisciplines, without a lot of connection between them. And trying to bring that together was a major goal of this paper.

***Shirin Ghaffary***

I'm biased to be very aware of this problem because my job is to report on social media, but it feels like there is a lot of fear and concern about social media's impact. Misinformation, phone addiction — these seem to be issues that everyday people worry about. Why do you think there still isn't enough attention on this?

***Carl Bergstrom***

When I talk to people about social media, yes, there's a lot of concern, there's a lot of negativity, and then there's bias by being a parent as well. But the focus is often on the individual-level effects. So it's, "My kids are developing negative issues around self-esteem because of the way that Instagram is structured to get 'Likes' for being perfect and showing more of your body."

But there's less talk about the entire large-scale structural changes that this is inducing. So what we're saying is, we really want people to look at the large-scale structural changes that these technologies are driving in society.



# Environment vs Economy

*Dialogue between Bittu Sehgal and TV Narendran*



SEASON 1 EPISODE 5

## Environment vs economy

Bittu Sahgal, environmental activist and writer, and TV Narendran, CEO and Managing Director of Tata Steel, discuss the perceived conflicts between the economy, industry, and environment.



To listen, please click on

[https://idronline.org/podcasts/on-the-contrary-podcast-social-impact/?utm\\_source=India+Development+Review&utm\\_campaign=c965cb23a6-OTC\\_AD\\_SALES\\_14\\_07\\_2021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_2be9adb876-c965cb23a6-71472199](https://idronline.org/podcasts/on-the-contrary-podcast-social-impact/?utm_source=India+Development+Review&utm_campaign=c965cb23a6-OTC_AD_SALES_14_07_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_2be9adb876-c965cb23a6-71472199)

And then scroll down to Season 1, Episode 5



# Islamic Relaxing Music



To listen, please click on

<https://youtu.be/9mEuB3BUGmY>



Follow us:

Website: <https://rgfindia.org/>

FB: @rgf

YouTube: @RGE