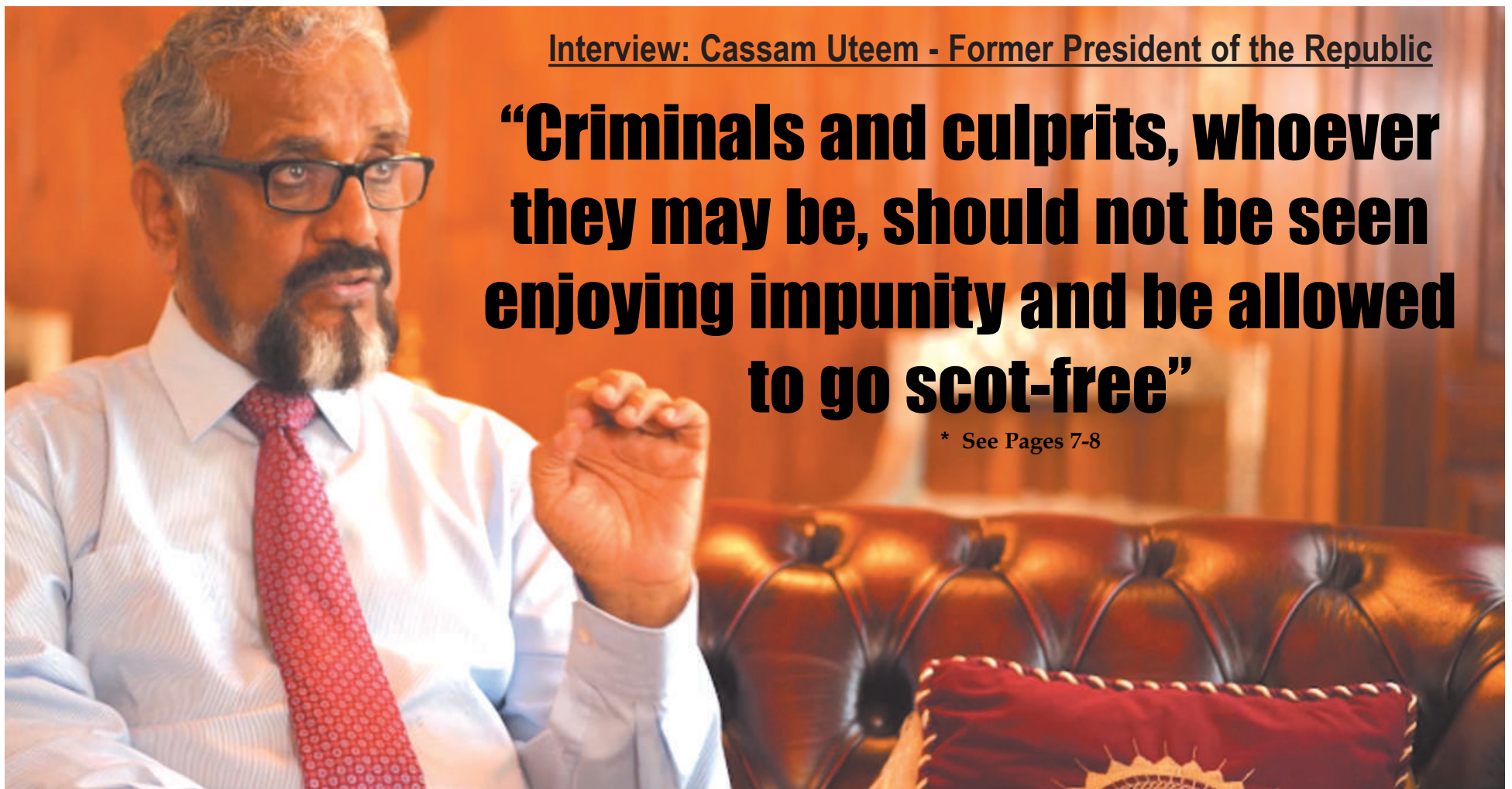


MAURITIUS TIMES

• *The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant. -Max DePree*



Interview: Cassam Uteem - Former President of the Republic

“Criminals and culprits, whoever they may be, should not be seen enjoying impunity and be allowed to go scot-free”

* See Pages 7-8

The Country in Turmoil



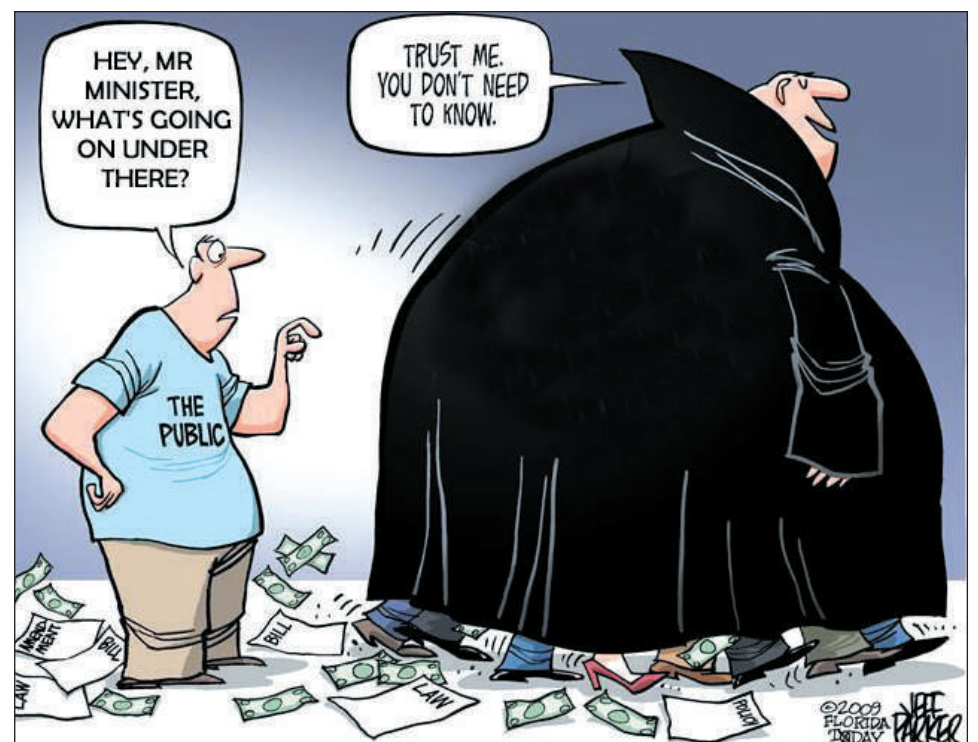
By Mrinal Roy * See Page 4

Trump impeachment trial

Decades of research shows language can incite violence

By Kurt Braddock, American University School of Communication

See Page 2



Privilege and opportunity to serve

Dr R Neerunjun Gopee * See Page 3

Extreme Trust Deficit

Two ministerial resignations occurring within a week: the first by Nando Bodha, long serving Secretary General of the MSM – mostly under Sir Anerood Jugnauth –, motivated according to him by his frustrations with the current political culture prevailing inside the Pravind Jugnauth-led government, and the other by Yogida Sawmynaden following intense public pressure in the wake of disturbing revelations in relation to public procurement procedures during the lockdown and suspected cases of murder of a few individuals, including MSM activist Sookpramanien Kistnen.

The difference between these two resignations is that while Nando Bodha has resigned from all the ‘instances’ of the MSM, but not as an MP, Yogida Sawmynaden has merely take a ‘*congé politique*’. He stays as MP and as member of the MSM. Although his case in court is yet to be determined, the amount of evidence that has come to public knowledge about his dealings and their ramifications can potentially blacken his reputation as a reliable representative of his constituency. Inevitably this impacts the image of not only the MSM but of its leader as well. As it is, Pravind Jugnauth had initially stated that after his own enquiry he had concluded that there was nothing against Yogida Sawmynaden. The fact that the latter has now been forced to step down shows, at the very minimum, that he himself has felt that he can no longer discharge his duties as Minister. With more evidence piling up, can his leader still continue to support him as strongly? Is he not an embarrassment to the party and to the Parliament?

While the general view once Yogida Sawmynaden began to be investigated was that he ought to have taken leave as Minister, the PM didn’t concur with that view and, contrary to what happened in the case of Ivan Collendavelloo, he didn’t ask Sawmynaden to take a break. But now the circumstances are different, and only the PM knows why he needs the latter so much in the MSM.

Whatever be, Pravind Jugnauth still commands a comfortable majority in Parliament, and on that basis he may see himself as being in control of his party, his government, and of the political agenda in the country. But the succession of revelations in Court one more incriminating than the other, his continuing support to Sawmynaden, the catalogue of cases of irregular appointments and of appointees not fit for purpose, and the worrying socio-economic situation of the country point in another direction: that the tide may be turning against the government. The public demonstration planned for tomorrow with the theme and objective that the government, more so Pravind Jugnauth must go, may well – if it is successful – be a defining moment in the country’s history, according to former President of the Republic Cassam Uteem.

For any country, democratic or otherwise, it is better that its government be one that is there by popular mandate through a voting process. It is also preferable that it goes out too by the same route than be forced to give up power by street protests and violence – verbal, and physical which can rapidly escalate and worsen an already precarious law and order situation. Whether we are approaching that eventuality – of forcible regime change – may perhaps be a premature speculation. But what is absolutely without a doubt is that, despite the government’s relatively positive track record on a few fronts, there is a mounting lack of confidence in the government’s ability to steer the country towards a safe and stable future. The legal battles being waged are going to be protracted, vitiating the atmosphere in the country even more. Public opinion is swaying towards perceiving a change of government as being the only viable solution to the ills that the country is enduring. This cannot last for long.

From a severe trust deficit, the flag has now changed to red – an extreme trust deficit in the government now prevails. Whether the situation can be reversed is entirely in the hands of the government and its chief executive, the Prime Minister. A formidable challenge to which he only can give the answer. It had better be soon.

The Conversation

Trump impeachment trial

Decades of research shows language can incite violence



Members of Congress evacuating the House as it was being attacked by protesters. Drew Angerer/Getty Images via Getty Images

However, decades of research on social influence, persuasion and psychology show that the messages that people encounter heavily influence their decisions to engage in certain behaviours.

How it works

The research shows that the messages people consume affect their behaviours in three ways.

First, when a person encounters a message that advocates a behaviour, that person

is likely to believe that the behaviour will have positive results. This is particularly true if the speaker of that message is liked or trusted by the target of the message.

Second, when these messages communicate positive beliefs or attitudes about a behavior – as when our friends told us that smoking was “cool” when we were teenagers – message targets come to believe that those they care about would approve of their engaging in the behaviour or would engage in the behaviour themselves.

Finally, when those messages contain language that highlights the target’s ability to perform a behaviour, as when a president tells raucous supporters that they have the power to overturn an election, they develop the belief that they can actually carry out that behaviour.

Consider something we have all encountered in a more light-hearted context – messages designed to motivate exercise. These messages often tell us one (or more) of three things. They tell us that exercise will lead to positive outcomes – “You will get physically fit!” They tell us that others exercise or would approve of our taking part in exercise – “Work out with a friend!”

Language affects behaviour. When words champion aggression, make violence acceptable and embolden audiences to action, incidents like the insurrection at the Capitol are the result.

Senators, acting in the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump that begins on Feb. 9, will soon have to decide whether to convict the former president for inciting a deadly, violent insurrection at the Capitol building on Jan. 6.

A majority of House members, including 10 Republicans, took the first step in the two-step impeachment process in January. They voted to impeach Trump, for “incitement of insurrection.” Their resolution states that he “wilfully made statements that, in context, encourage – and foreseeably resulted in – lawless action at the Capitol, such as: ‘if you don’t fight like hell you’re not going to have a country anymore.’”

Impeachment proceedings that consider incitement to insurrection are rare in American history. Yet dozens of legislators – including some Republicans – say that Trump’s actions leading up to the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol contributed to an attempted insurrection against American democracy itself.

Such claims against Trump are complicated. Rather than wage direct war against sitting US representatives, Trump is accused of using language to motivate others to do so. Some have countered that the connection between President Trump’s words and the violence of Jan. 6 is too tenuous, too abstract, too indirect to be considered viable.

Kurt Braddock,
Assistant Professor of Public
Communication, American University
School of Communication

➔ Cont. on page 11

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Doojesh Ramlallah, Sultana Kurmally and Kersley Ramsamy

Pearl House 4th Floor Room 406 - Sir Virgil Naz Street, Port Louis
Tel: 5-29 29301 Tel/Fax: 212 1313



mtimes@intnet.mu



www.mauritiustimes.com



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Privilege and opportunity to serve



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Being elected to public office or holding a high position in society in any capacity – as individual or part of an organisation – should be considered a privilege and an opportunity to serve others. Whether one takes this view or not depends on what values have been inculcated in the course of one's upbringing in the family, with additional inputs that can be acquired from formal educational set-ups and in the course of exposure to vocational and professional environments.

Additionally, one must be inspired by a higher ideal, one that would ennoble one's life, with fallouts in whatever field of activity one engages in. To my mind the highest ideal is captured in the oft-quoted saying of Swami Sivananda: 'Service to man is service to God'.

With God as one's Guiding Light, one is not likely to falter or to deviate from the right path. But if one is an atheist, one can still look up to illustrious people who have been living examples, who have served their countries with distinction and honour.

Among the few names that come to my mind are those of Dr S Radhakrishnan, philosopher who became President of India, and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam who too became India's President. In his autobiography Dr Abdul Kalam writes about how he was lifted out of his dejection on not being selected as an air force pilot following an interview held in Dehra Dun in North India. Before returning to Madras where he hailed from, he walked from Dehra Dun to Rishikesh, where he met with Swami Sivananda - the founder of, the Divine Life Society - at his ashram. The circumstances of the encounter are themselves an inspiring lesson from Dr Abdul Kalam's life, but I will limit myself to reproducing what Swamiji told him:

'Accept your destiny and go ahead with your life. You are not destined to become an air force pilot. What you are destined to become is not revealed now but it is pre-determined. Forget this failure, as it was essential to lead you to your destined path. Search, instead, for the true purpose of your existence. Become one with yourself, my son! Surrender yourself to the wish of God' (italics added).

No one is perfect, so let us not pretend to be, as the Mauvilac advert claimed about its white paint, 'plus blanc que blanc' - for right now all seems to be rather 'plus noir que noir'



“With God as one's Guiding Light, one is not likely to falter or to deviate from the right path. But if one is an atheist, one can still look up to illustrious people who have been living examples, who have served their countries with distinction and honour. Among the few names that come to my mind are those of Dr S Radhakrishnan, philosopher who became President of India, and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam who too became India's President...”

lics added).

As is well-known, after this, Dr Kalam went on to steer the strategic Indian space and missile programmes, and to become the 11th President of India. He was reputed for his spartan way of living, but one episode stands out which should be another lesson for those privileged to reach similar positions. He paid down to the last rupee the expenses incurred during the stay of his relatives at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, when they had come for his inauguration as President.

I recall reading that President Radhakrishnan used to retain a token salary of one rupee, returning the rest to the public treasury. I cannot vouch for this piece of information, but I would not be surprised if it were correct.

So, service to others or self-service? The quasi-explosion of scams and scandals linked to several leaders of government and of corporates or business elites around the world in recent times, not sparing our own country, belie the goody-goody image they project – or pay for such? – of themselves in the media. Haven't we heard so many of them proclaim their commitment to serve the people and the national interest or public good umpteen times, from the time of their elevation to their respective positions and during the continuous coverage that they are adulated with? And which becomes stale and sickening after a while? But so blinded do they become by their own falsehoods that after they have exited or been forced out they have no remorse at all, and shamelessly try to rationalize their infamous demeanours. Which for all we know do not stop, for habits – especially the wrong sort – die hard.

While all that finds its way into the public space is there for all to see, it is not as if those who come forward to clamour for justice are necessarily free of the same

sins – such as corruption, lack of transparency, shady deals, nepotism, interference in institutions, yielding to lobbies -- they are denouncing. After all, we have so often heard of and experienced *bonnet blanc, blanc bonnet* that we cannot be blamed for becoming cynical, stopping to believe all and sundry who pretend that they are the next – *encore!* -- messiahs. Because, once more, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

But there are other equally condemnable or damnable things that take place under the surface or behind closed doors about which bits and pieces of information circulate or get picked up in the course of conversations. Like lobbies that give financing to both sides in an election, calibrating the amounts according to their projections of which is likely to be the winning horse. Horse, incidentally, is an apt metaphor, because whipping goes on before and after. Horses' mouths don't lie, if we go by the adage.

It would be naïve to think that it is only in the political sphere that the rot exists. There are examples known of finance professionals conscious of their fiduciary responsibilities to their clients being pressured to resort to the more expensive in-house stockbroker, rather to external ones that would be to the client's advantage. And what about 'creative accounting' – euphemism for cooking the books?

On the other hand, former workers at the residences of personalities in their current or previous positions have many a tale to tell, and are well aware that the well-aided public declarations are at great variance from what happens in practice. As those familiar with PG Wodehouse's 'Jeeves' novels will appreciate, the butler knows all about the master...

“While all that finds its way into the public space is there for all to see, it is not as if those who come forward to clamour for justice are necessarily free of the same sins – such as corruption, lack of transparency, shady deals, nepotism, interference in institutions, yielding to lobbies -- they are denouncing. After all, we have so often heard of and experienced *bonnet blanc, blanc bonnet* that we cannot be blamed for becoming cynical, stopping to believe all and sundry who pretend that they are the next – *encore!* -- messiahs. Because, once more, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose...*”

No one is perfect, so let us not pretend to be, as the Mauvilac advert claimed about its white paint, '*plus blanc que blanc*' ('whiter than white') – for right now all seems to be rather '*plus noir que noir*' ('blacker than black'). We all have our faults and foibles – which is all the more reason why we should be ready to seek wise counsel and guidance from those who can give them dispassionately, who have no axe to grind. Trying to fool, deceive or cheat people who have placed their trust and confidence in good faith in one is a crime for which the chastising will come, and it will be in the here and now. What goes round comes round isn't it?



Mrinal Roy

This week, the United States Senate has started the impeachment trial of ex-President Donald Trump on charges of inciting an insurrection. A three-quarters majority is required in the Senate to convict Donald Trump. 17 Republican Senators will therefore have to join the Democrat Senators for this to happen. Despite the difficult odds, a bipartisan majority of US Congressmen support the impeachment process as it is considered to be a crucial pedagogical exercise, at a juncture when America is so deeply divided, to reaffirm the seminal principles and values which underpin US democracy. However, it does not necessarily mean that the required majority in the Senate will be obtained to convict Donald Trump when a vote is taken.

The process and the arguments put forward will help teach cardinal lessons on the core anchors and ethos of US democracy to the people. Such a fact based exercise will *inter alia* enable people to measure the enormity of the widely decried storming of the Capitol, a key symbol of US democracy, by Trump supporters. It will also help people see through the unfounded Trump narrative of widespread fraud or irregularities in the presidential elections and accept the reality that the official outcome of the presidential elections has been rigorously verified and attested by Federal agencies overseeing the election process and security as the most secure in American history.

As is expected in a vibrant democracy, elected Congressmen and Senators, who are elected representatives of the people as well as democrats across the US, consider it necessary to reiterate and strengthen the fundamental pillars and founding principles and values of US democracy every time when these are threatened by politicians bent on undermining them.

Democracy and its core values can only be safeguarded and strengthened if the political class and those elected as well as the people unswervingly protect them

The Country in Turmoil

When politicians err, the onus is squarely on the people to promptly sanction and set things right



“Nando Bodha, a dissenting Minister and secretary general of the MSM, who has served the party from its tenuous beginning for forty years has resigned from these posts and the party because ‘the values and culture of governance of government no longer reflect the principles and values which have guided his political commitment.’ His resignation has rocked the political Establishment and spawned the wildest conjectures as to his future intent. The political class is all agog...”

in their country against thick and thin and never allow the ethos and guiding principles of democracy to be watered down by political high-handedness. When politicians err, the onus is therefore squarely on the people to promptly sanction and set things right.

Shameful state

In contrast to such lofty ideals, democracy and the standard of political ethics in Mauritius plagued by a growing array of scandals and allegations of corruption and other wrongdoings involving Ministers are in a shameful state. At no time since Independence has there been any attempt by those in power to reboot democracy, governance and political ethics in the country to the seminal ideals, ethos and principles which underpinned the battle for Independence and the pledges made to the people. The pursuit of power and its trappings by all means as opposed to realizing the promises made to the people to establish a far better socio-economic and political order have driven and shaped the mode of gover-

nance.

Dissent and difference of opinion are essential elements of a democracy. When dissent on fundamental democratic principles and mode of governance are bridled, Ministers and MPs who are imbued with high democratic values and a modicum of self-respect cut loose from the shackles of subservience.

Nando Bodha, a dissenting Minister and secretary general of the MSM, who has served the party from its tenuous beginning for forty years has resigned from these posts and the party because ‘the values and culture of governance of government no longer reflect the principles and values which have guided his political commitment.’ His resignation has rocked the political Establishment and spawned the wildest conjectures as to his future intent. The political class is all agog.

Déjà vu

As expected, the usual suspects who have thrived through the systematic fragmentation of the people have been prompt in slapping a caste dimension to this resignation. True to form, the government has spun conspiracy theories contrived around political shenanigans and fixations of the past. The media is having a field day. It all smacks so *déjà vu*.

In a bid to exorcise its own angst and fears, the government has pilloried Nando Bodha with a blitzkrieg of uncalled for attacks and innuendos aired on national TV since his resignation. Is he and the timing of his resignation considered a potent threat to government in the light of the rising clamour against the appalling state of governance in the country?

A cohort of people, press-ganged into parroting government narratives on national TV, cannot stop and silence the growing public outcry. It should also be flagged that in contrast, dissenters from the MMM who joined the MSM in an alliance to contest the last general elections continue to be rewarded with appointments to key ministries and posts in the government hierarchy. They could not have envisaged a better outcome.

Paradigm shift

Is it not time that as a nation we measure the leadership and competence of a politician not by his ‘social profile’ (a vogue expression excessively used presently in editorial columns) or the dynasty lording it over his party but more pertinently by his qualifications, intellect, professional credentials, commitment of service to the people, standard of ethics, connect with the people, ability and managerial acumen, etc.? Is it not time for such a salubrious paradigm shift in the choice of politicians entrusted to competently manage the affairs of the country at a juncture when the country needs the best brains and professional expertise of the country to grapple with the extremely daunting socio-economic and health challenges in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic? Should we remind all those trapped in the narrow mindset of parochial clans that we are all Mauritians first with the same rights and obligations?

The political class must necessarily be a representative sample of the best intellect, talent, professional expertise and competence in the country.

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Emirates Mars Mission: Hope spacecraft enters orbit

The United Arab Emirates is celebrating its first mission at Mars.

It has put a probe called Hope in orbit around the planet, making it only the fifth spacefaring entity to do so after the US, the Soviet Union, Europe and India.

The spacecraft, which left Earth seven months ago, had to make a braking manoeuvre to be sure of being captured by Mars' gravity.

UAE scientists can now look forward to studying the planet's atmosphere.

Their satellite carries three instruments that will observe, among other targets, how neutral atoms of hydrogen and oxygen - remnants from Mars' once abundant water - leak into space.

In the process, Hope will return spectacular, high-resolution, full-disk images of the planet.

Tuesday marked the most critical phase in the mission.

Hope had been approaching Mars at over 120,000km/h (relative to the Sun) and needed to execute a precise 27-minute burn on its braking engines to scrub some of that speed or risk skipping off into ever deeper space.

"Mars orbit insertion was the most critical and dangerous part of our journey to Mars, exposing the Hope probe to stresses and pressures it has never before faced," said Omran Sharaf, the Hope mission's project director at the



The Hope probe weighed 1,350kg at launch, much of that fuel.
Photo - cdn.thelivemirror.com

Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre.

"With this enormous milestone achieved, we are now preparing to transition to our science orbit and commence science data gathering."

The past few days have witnessed tremendous enthusiasm for Hope and its mission, with public monuments, buildings and heritage sites across the federation all lit up in red.

Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the tallest human-made structure on Earth, had been flashing a countdown to Tuesday's big moment.

Hope is regarded as a triumph for a small gulf nation

that dared to think seven years ago that it could inspire the next generation by launching the first Arab interplanetary space mission.

"We wanted to arrive at Mars; (I'm) really grateful, and it's like a weight of seven years has been lifted from my shoulders," said Sarah Al Amiri, UAE minister of state for advanced technology and chair of the UAE Space Agency.

"On arriving at Mars. I'm now truly looking forward to the scientific discoveries. And I truly hope this mission will impact an entire generation to strive to do things that are even bigger," she told BBC News.

Hope is now running in an initial ellipse around Mars that comes as close as 1,000km from the planet and goes out to almost 50,000km. Over the course of the next few weeks, this will be trimmed to a 55-hour, 22,000km-by-43,000km orbit that is inclined to the equator by about 25 degrees.

Hope is leading a wave of missions to Mars this February.

On Wednesday, it will be the turn of China with its Tianwen-1 orbiter. Like Hope, it must complete a braking manoeuvre to be captured by the planet's gravity.

Tianwen-1 is carrying a rover that will be despatched to the surface, most likely in May.

Next week, on Thursday 18 February, the Americans will arrive at Mars with another of their big rovers. The Perseverance robot is being aimed at a crater that once held a giant lake. It will look for signs of fossilised life.



Joe Biden has announced the formation of a special Defense Department task force on China. Photo - www.ft.com

Joe Biden announces new Pentagon Task Force on China

US President Joe Biden announced Wednesday the formation of a special Defense Department task force on China and ordered an immediate review of the military's strategic approach to the challenge from Beijing, reports NDTV.

Speaking during a visit to the Pentagon, Biden said the review was crucial "so that we can chart a strong path forward on China-related matters that will require a whole-of-government effort."

"We need to meet the growing challenges posed by China to keep peace and defend our interests in the Indo-Pacific and globally," he added.

The new task force was given four months to come up with assessments and recommendations on US military strategy toward China; technology, force structure and force posture; and alliances and bilateral defense relations with Beijing.

He said the Pentagon review needed to be backed by both political parties and Congress, and from allies and other partnerships.

"That's how we will meet the China challenge and ensure the American people win the competition in the future," he said.

North Korea stole \$300 million in crypto to fund nukes: UN experts

North Korea has stolen more than \$300 million worth of cryptocurrencies through cyberattacks in recent months to support its banned nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, a confidential UN report said.

Compiled by a panel of experts monitoring sanctions on Pyongyang, the report said the country's "total theft of virtual assets from 2019 to November 2020 is valued at approximately \$316.4 million", citing a UN member state.

Financial institutions and exchanges were hacked to generate revenue for Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development, said the report, which was seen by AFP.

The vast majority of the proceeds came from two thefts late last year.

The North is known to operate an army of thousands of well-trained hackers who have attacked firms, institutions and researchers in South Korea and elsewhere.

It has also been accused of exploiting its cyber capabilities for financial gain.

The North is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic



North Korea is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons.

missile programmes, which have made rapid progress under leader Kim Jong Un.

A summit between Kim and then-US president Donald Trump in Hanoi in February 2019 broke down over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return.

Nuclear talks have been stalled ever since, while the North showed off several new missiles at military parades in October and last month, when Kim pledged to strengthen his nuclear arsenal.

The UN panel said it was investigating a September 2020 hack against a cryptocurrency exchange that resulted in \$281 million worth of cryptocurrencies being stolen.

A second cyberattack siphoned off \$23 million a month later.

Pyongyang's cyberwarfare abili-

ties first came to global prominence in 2014 when it was accused of hacking into Sony Pictures Entertainment as revenge for "The Interview", a satirical film that mocked leader Kim.

The attack resulted in the posting of several unreleased movies as well as a vast trove of confidential documents online.

The North is also blamed for a huge, \$81 million cyber-heist from the Bangladesh Central Bank, as well as the theft of \$60 million from Taiwan's Far Eastern International Bank.

The North's hackers have allegedly stepped up campaigns to raise funds by attacking cryptocurrency exchanges as the value of bitcoin and other cybercurrencies soared.

They were blamed for the 2017 WannaCry global ransomware cyber-attack, which infected some 300,000 computers in 150 nations encrypting user files and demanding hundreds of dollars from their owners for the keys to get them back.

Pyongyang has denied the accusations, saying it has "nothing to do with cyber-attacks".

* More on Page 6

Slower Covid spread in Asia? A protein may be key, say Indian scientists

Deficiency of a lung-protecting protein in the Caucasian population may have made Europe and North America more susceptible to the spread of a coronavirus variant as compared to Asia, suggests a study by Indian scientists which also reveals how mutant forms of the virus may find new ways to infect people.

The study, published in the journal 'Infection, Genetics and Evolution', assessed the global spread of the coronavirus variant with the D614G mutation, which is the predominant lineage infecting North America and European populations, reports PTI.

This variant spread so rapidly that in just 10 weeks between February and March 2020 over 64.11 per cent of globally infected individuals were identified to carry the mutant virus starting from only 1.95 per cent in January.

However, the researchers, including those from the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) in Kalyani, West Bengal, said this subtype took a significantly longer time to reach a 50 per cent relative frequency in East Asia -- 5.5 months -- compared to the 2.15 months it took in Europe, and the 2.83 months it took in North-America.

According to the scientists, a deficiency of the protein Alpha-anti-trypsin (AAT) across the populations of Europe and North-America is one of the main factors that explain the rapid spread of this variant in the two continents compared to its transmission in Asia.



Protein behind less spread of coronavirus variant in Asia than Europe, North America, says study. Photo - etimg.etb2bimg.com

"For the coronavirus to enter cells, its spike protein binds with the ACE2 receptor in human cells, and the human enzyme TMPRSS2 cleaves at the junction of two subunits S1 and S2 of the protein, enabling the virus to fuse with the cell," said study corresponding author Nidhan K Biswas from NIBMG.

"But due to the D614G mutation in the spike protein, the virus gained an additional cleavage site which enables it to fuse better with cells," Biswas told PTI.

In lineages of the coronavirus carrying the D614G mutation, the 614th molecule of the virus spike protein -- aspartic acid -- denoted by D is replaced by the molecule

glycine, noted as G.

"Instead of one cleavage site, the mutated virus has two such sites, and it can take dual advantage of this and enter cells more easily," Biswas explained.

Based on the current study, he said this site in the virus is cleaved by the host protein neutrophil elastase which is normally involved in clearing up bacterial infections in the lungs.

The levels of the elastase molecules in the body are naturally kept in check by AAT whose main function is to protect the lungs from inflammation and tissue damage, the study noted.

"The issue is that if we have high neutrophil elastase then it also creates more damage to the lung cells. So there is a balance mechanism via the AAT enzyme that already exists by nature in everyone's lungs," Biswas explained.

According to the study, AAT deficiency is highly prevalent in European and North-American populations, but much less in East Asia.

Specifically, Biswas said AAT deficiency in the general population is very high in Italy and Spain.

The researchers believe this finding, along with other social factors may explain the differential geographical/ethnic spread of 614G.

While the findings offer clues about the transmission of the virus variant, Biswas cautioned against any interpretations of the study on disease severity and mortality caused by the strain.

He said the research also provides some clues on the spread of other variants of the coronavirus such as the ones first reported in the UK and South Africa which are "built on the backbone of the D614G mutation."

"The UK and South African variants also have this mutation backbone so they may have a similar transmissibility pattern, and probably they may have additional capabilities that scientists need to find out," Biswas added.

However, he said further experimental studies on lab-cultured cells are needed to validate these conclusions.

Indian navy undertaking mega exercise in the Indian Ocean region

The Indian Navy is carrying out a mega war game involving almost all operational assets like warships, submarines and aircraft over a vast geographical expanse in the Indian Ocean Region to test the force's combat readiness in a complex multi-dimensional scenario, officials said on Wednesday.

The biennial "Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX)" aims to validate the Navy's offensive as well as defence capabilities and safeguard national interests in the maritime domain besides promoting peace and stability in the Indian Ocean, they said.

"Indian Navy's largest war game, the biennial TROPEX 21, which commenced in early January is currently underway with participation of all operational units of Indian Navy including ships, submarines, aircraft as well as units of the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard," the Navy said.

It said the exercise will culminate by the third week of February.

The exercise is taking place at a time China has been making increasing forays into the Indian Ocean region as part of its offensive military manoeuvre.

"The exercise is being conducted over a vast geographical expanse in the Indian Ocean Region including its adjunct waters and is aimed at testing combat readiness of the Navy in a complex multi-dimensional scenario set in the context of the current geo strategic environment," the Navy said in a statement.



Indian Navy's largest war game, the biennial TROPEX 21. Photo - Economic Times

It said the conduct of TROPEX is being overseen by the Naval headquarters with participation from all three commands of the Indian Navy and the tri-services command at Port Blair.

"TROPEX is being progressed over distinct phases that also test the Navy's transition from peacetime to hostilities," the Navy said.

As part of the first phase of the exercise, the Indian Navy along with other stakeholders held a two-day mega

drill in January covering the country's 7,516 km coastline and exclusive economic zone.

The "Sea Vigil" exercise from January 12-13 was billed as India's largest coastal defence drill and it was aimed at validating the coastal defence setup which was revamped after the 26/11 terror attack.

"Valuable lessons emerging from the exercise are being incorporated in the existing procedures to further fine-tune the coastal defence architecture of the country," the Navy said.

The amphibious exercise was aimed at validating India's capabilities to safeguard the territorial integrity of its island territories and enhance operational synergy and joint warfighting capabilities amongst the three services, the Navy said.

"The weapon workup phase of TROPEX, which concluded recently, witnessed multiple "on-target" ordnance deliveries including missiles, torpedoes and rockets from frontline warships, aircraft and submarines and demonstrated the lethal firepower of the Indian Navy," the Navy said.

It said the "weapon workout" phase also reaffirmed the Navy's capability to carry out long range maritime strikes in the Indian Ocean Region, a capability that is central to meeting operational challenges and ensuring safe seas and secure coasts.

Compiled by Doojesh Ramlallah

Cassam Uteem - Former President of the Republic

“Criminals and culprits, whoever they may be, should not be seen enjoying impunity and be allowed to go scot-free”

Mauritius Times: Political leaders generally, but mostly Prime Ministers, usually want to remain in control of the political agenda in the country or of the government they are heading; they have to anyway if they want to remain at the top. Do you get the impression that the current Prime Minister is gradually losing his grip on his own government and on power, or is he still very much in command?

Cassam Uteem: In most, if not all countries with political systems similar to ours, Prime Ministers are also party leaders - party leaders are actually made Prime Ministers after winning the general elections - and, in their dual capacities, they cannot afford not to exercise control both on the political agenda of the country and the government they are heading.

Otherwise they run the risk, on the one hand of having to submit to external diktats and pressure, inside and outside Parliament, of those allowed to set the political agenda, leading eventually to a weakening of their parties and losing power when comes the day of reckoning or even earlier, if outvoted in Parliament as a result of the phenomenon - albeit a rare one in Mauritius - of rats abandoning the sinking ship. On the other hand, losing control on the government can only lead to its implosion, with Prime Ministers left with no option but to resign and call for early elections.

We are not there yet. Prime Minister Jugnauth is still very much in control of his troop. Even after losing Nando Bodha, the Secretary General of his party, the MSM, and one of the rare efficient ministers of his Cabinet, who unceremoniously slammed the door in his face and in spite of being lumbered with the cumbersome and shady figure of Yogida Sawmynaden even if he steps down as minister, he still commands a comfortable majority in Parliament. And in our Westminster model of democracy it's the only factor that matters for the Prime Minister and his party to stay in power, especially that the Executive here has complete grip on the Legislature. It decides and the latter acquiesces!

*** Would you say, based on your long years of political experience, that we might be reaching an inflection point in local politics where, sooner or later, things are likely to change at the level of the political leadership of the country?**

The new trend that we have been

With his long experience in politics, former President of the Republic Cassam Uteem is well-placed to share his views and observations on the events that are shaking up the country. To him, although the Prime Minister is in control of his troops because he still has a comfortable majority in spite of the resignation of Minister Nando Bodha, he is losing ground in the governance of the country despite some successes such as control of the pandemic and fulfilling some electoral pledges. He urges the Prime Minister to start taking remedial measures that are needed, and feels that the sitting President has the moral authority if not the constitutional powers to draw the attention of the PM to the ills the country is facing and to advise him accordingly.

observing, for some time now, especially after the running aground of the bulk carrier Wakashio and the oil spill that polluted our lagoons followed by what is perceived as a clumsy and revolting attempt of cover-up in criminal cases involving political pundits, is that the political agenda, that we have just discussed, has gone out of the Prime Minister's control.

It is the civil society, through political activists, and to a lesser extent, the Opposition parties that are dictating terms, taking the initiatives of convening the population to mass demonstrations against the government. The latter's reaction has so far been very lukewarm, with the Prime Minister visibly on the defensive and giving the impression of being mired in self-doubt, cornered as he is on the Angus Road saga!

The protest march calling for the Prime Minister's resignation, if successful, could well be a defining moment in our political history.

“The police must be seen to be impartial and able to ensure that law and order are respected. Criminals and culprits, whoever they may be, should not be seen enjoying impunity and be allowed to go scot-free. There should no longer be any political interference in the various institutions that should go strictly by the book...”



“Bodha's resignation was, for the opposition, manna from heaven since Bodha is seen as stuff of which Prime Ministers are made. Be that as it may, as long as the Prime Minister can command a majority in the House, the Opposition will perforce have to keep Bodha on the back-burner for a while...”

*** Many people, especially those in the opposition, have seen a “glimmer of hope” in Nando Bodha's resignation - the first breach in the citadel's wall, it would appear. But that could turn out to be a mere flash in the pan event, and the government's parliamentary majority will see it through anyway, whether it has the support of a majority of the people or not. What do you think?**

Nando Bodha's resignation has been vastly acclaimed, especially by a population that could not thus far find in the Opposition a viable alternative to the government. More importantly, the people were desperate for a credible prime ministerial candidate that could garner sufficient

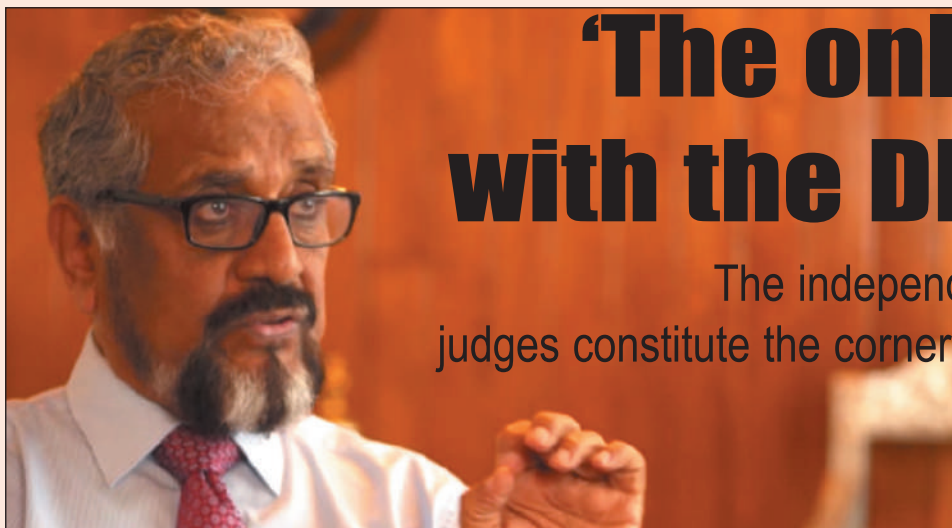
popular support to outmanoeuvre the current Prime Minister.

Bodha's resignation was, for them, manna from heaven since Bodha is seen as stuff of which Prime Ministers are made. Be that as it may, as long as the Prime Minister can command a majority in the House, the Opposition will perforce have to keep Bodha on the back-burner for a while.

*** What is wrong with this government anyway? It has demonstrated it can and does deliver on its electoral promises, whether in relation to old-age pensions, minimum wages, infrastructure and housing. It also handled the Covid-19 situation reasonably well...**

Some of the electoral promises made have indeed been kept and the Covid-19 pandemic has been, on the whole, reasonably well-managed. While it is much too early to make a fair assessment of government record, it can be safely affirmed that “le pays va mal!”

☛ Cont. on page 8



'The only glitter of hope lies with the DPP and the Judiciary.'

The independence of these two institutions and the integrity of the judges constitute the cornerstone of the rule of law and of our flawed democracy'

“Right from the start, it was clear to everybody that the defence lawyers of those members whose election was being challenged were splitting hairs and looking for all possible loopholes in the law... It stands to reason though that electoral petitions need to be addressed within a reasonable delay, if not fast-tracked. I haven't yet heard any admonition from the Court and am therefore extremely puzzled at the situation...”

☛ **Cont. from page 7**

There is however a lot of complaint and recrimination against the newly-elected government which has failed the people especially during the confinement period when the procurement of essential medical and sanitary supplies has been a real disgrace and shame, with public coffers being looted by those close to power.

Government seems to be impervious to the people's cries of despair, stubbornly refusing to answer to their legitimate demands for, among others, equal treatment for all and an end to flagrant discrimination, transparency in State affairs and less interference in administrative matters, the institution of meritocracy and a stop to cronyism, nepotism and corruption, real crackdown on the drug traffickers and improved law and order situation in the country by allowing the Commissioner of Police, with a proven track record, to have a free hand in the daily operations of his forces.

These are only a few of the people's demands, which unmet will widen the chasm between the political leaders and their constituents.

*** If governance is the main point of contention, why is it that the checks and balances that should operate in our constitutional set-up appear unable to block any abuses?**

Institutions meant to act as checks and balances have all been perverted by political interference. Meritocracy has been blithely flouted as never before. Cronyism, which is the appointment of political agents, friends, close associates to positions of authority in those institutions, without regard to their qualifications, training or competence, has literally killed those institutions.

Most of the nominees are square pegs in round holes that feel they are answerable only to their political masters and

not to the State or to the people of Mauritius. Good governance has given way to poor governance and in certain cases to absence of governance. Hence the widespread presence, with impunity, of abuses, fraud, corruption and what amounts to theft in broad daylight.

*** The DPP can do his bit, and so can the judiciary, but that does not seem to go far enough to reign in an overbearing government, isn't it?**

The only glitter of hope lies with the DPP and the Judiciary. The independence of these two institutions and the integrity of the judges constitute the cornerstone of the rule of law and of our flawed democracy, the Executive having, since long, encroached on the Legislature. If the DPP succeeds in shaking up the Police, the safety and security of the people would be ensured.

Moreover, in the face of the mockery that is being made of Parliament, with a Speaker resolutely on the majority's side, always ready to run to the rescue of Ministers when cornered by the Opposition, or when caught red-handed flouting Parliament's Standing Orders, the outcome of the case of Hon S Mohamed against the Hon Speaker will show to what extent our Judiciary is prepared to protect and defend our democracy.

*** One would have expected that the electoral petitions lodged since early last year would have been fast-tracked despite delaying tactics, if any. Isn't that an instance of the checks and balances in our system not operating as they should?**

Right from the start, it was clear to everybody that the defence lawyers of those members whose election was being challenged were splitting hairs and looking for all possible loopholes in the law, often raising futile objections in a bid to delay the electoral petitions against their clients being examined by the Court.

It stands to reason though that electoral petitions need to be addressed within a reasonable delay, if not fast-tracked. I haven't yet heard any admonition from the Court and am therefore extremely puzzled at the situation.

*** The same could be said as regards those in the legal profession who had been hauled up by the Drug Commission for appropriate judicial scrutiny. We have not heard much about this matter from the Courts for quite some time. Isn't the system failing us?**

I would hate to be seen passing judgment on the administration of justice, but I must confess that I have no explanation for the exceptional delay in obtaining justice through our Courts in Mauritius and that also applies to the judicial scrutiny you referred to. Our several Courts must be overburdened with cases and hopelessly undermanned! Who said that justice delayed is justice denied!

*** Law and order has become one of the most contentious issues these last months. The police force is, strictly speaking, and by virtue of its constitutional protection accountable only to the courts, but that is a long process. Could the President of the Republic, who is recognised by the Constitution**

never been spelled out or interpreted except to aver that the President holds discretionary powers, for instance, in times of crisis.

This is not the appropriate forum to discuss such sensitive Constitutional matters, but a short answer to your question would be yes, in the given situation, the President is entitled and is even duty-bound, I would say, to take up the different issues raised in your question, first with the Prime Minister and, if necessary, with the Commissioner of Police and other relevant authorities.

The Constitution provides that the President should be kept informed of all matters pertaining to the State. This is one of the reasons why a weekly meeting is invariably held between the President and the Prime Minister. When the need is felt, the President uses the authority, if not the powers, moral or otherwise, that he holds to influence policy decisions.

*** Numerous commentators have been saying lately that if the rules go on being flouted and the culprits remain unpunished and institutions do not deliver according to their mandate, the streets will sooner or later take over. Whether this can happen in a place like Mauritius or not remains to be seen, but wouldn't this create a dangerous precedent?**

“The only glitter of hope lies with the DPP and the Judiciary. The independence of these two institutions and the integrity of the judges constitute the cornerstone of the rule of law and of our flawed democracy, the Executive having, since long, encroached on the Legislature. If the DPP succeeds in shaking up the Police, the safety and security of the people would be ensured...”

as the “Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Mauritius” have sought explanations from the relevant authorities as to why police inquiries in recent crimes are not being expedited, or why Safe City recordings appear to have been lost or would be non-existent?

Your question is both interesting and complex. It raises issues related to powers conferred on the President of the Republic by the Constitution.

The powers of the President as Head of State are clearly defined in the Constitution as are the ways and the circumstances in which they should be exercised. So far, and to the best of my knowledge, however, the powers and responsibilities of the President as Commander-in-Chief have

I share the views of the commentators and wish to sound a word of caution to the political leaders of the country, in particular to the Prime Minister, to urgently bring about the necessary remedy to a dangerous situation that might any time get out of hands.

The police must be seen to be impartial and able to ensure that law and order are respected. Criminals and culprits, whoever they may be, should not be seen enjoying impunity and be allowed to go scot-free. There should no longer be any political interference in the various institutions that should go strictly by the book.

These are some of the urgent measures that need to be taken to prevent the frustration of the population to spill over into street violence.



Vina Ballgobin

Naissance d'un homme illustre le 11 février 1699

Bertrand François Mahé de la Bourdonnais

La loi du 21 mai 2001 dite "loi Taubira" reconnaît officiellement la traite et l'esclavage comme crimes contre l'humanité.

A l'île de la Réunion, anciennement île Bourbon, une pétition a circulé, il y a quelques temps, pour l'enlèvement de la statue de Mahé de la Bourdonnais, situé devant la préfecture de Saint-Denis. 1,378 personnes ont signé la pétition car ils considèrent ce Gouverneur des deux îles sœurs au 18^e siècle comme un criminel. A l'île Maurice, la majorité des Mauriciens condamnent l'esclavage et la traite négrière. Mais, pour autant, nous reconnaissons aussi les qualités de certains hommes politiques qui ont dirigé le pays. Parmi ceux-ci, il y a Mahé de la Bourdonnais.

Le 11 février 1699, à Saint Malo, un nouveau-né fait la joie de ses parents, Jacques Mahé, sieur de la Bourdonnais et Ludivine Servane Tranchant de Prébois. Cet enfant montre très vite son intérêt pour la mer et pour les études. Il fait un premier voyage à l'âge de dix ans. Quatre ans plus tard, il repart sur un vaisseau pour les Indes Orientales et les îles Philippines. Pendant ce voyage, un Jésuite lui enseigne les mathématiques. Il vogue sur les mers de 1716 à 1718. En 1719, il devient lieutenant au service de la Compagnie des Indes.

En 1723, il est sous-lieutenant en Inde où il rédige un ouvrage très utile intitulé *Traité de la mâture des vaisseaux*. Cette année-là, il se distingue par sa bravoure : il utilise un simple canot pour effectuer la traversée Isle de France-Bourbon et réparer un bâtiment de la Compagnie au lieu de le laisser couler. L'année suivante, il repart pour l'Inde en tant que second capitaine. En route, il étudie la fortification et les tactiques auprès d'un ingénieur, M. Didier.

Arrivé en Inde, il dirige les opérations du siège de Mahé. Sa compétence est remarquée car il débarque victorieux sans perdre aucun de ses hommes. Il se lance dans les affaires commerciales avec l'aide de M. Lenoir, Gouverneur de Pondichéry. Il est si ingénieux dans ce domaine qu'il amasse une fortune en quelques années. Il rentre en France en 1733 et il se marie.

Ce sont M. Orry, contrôleur général des finances, et M. de Fulvy, son frère et commissaire du roi, qui louent ses compétences auprès du Roi. Le 10 novembre 1734, Louis XV décide de nommer Sieur Mahé de la Bourdonnais, de religion catholique, apostolique et romaine, Gouverneur général des Isles de Bourbon et de France. Dans les lettres-patentes, le Roi justifie son choix : Mahé de la Bourdonnais a été un employé fidèle de la Compagnie et il est un excellent entrepreneur de la Marine et du Commerce.

Responsabilités du Gouverneur général des Isles de Bourbon et de France

- Mahé de la Bourdonnais a la lourde charge de commander aux habitants des deux îles, aussi bien qu'aux commis et employés de la Compagnie, et à tous les autres Français et étrangers établis ou qui ont l'intention de s'y établir dans le futur.



Photo - histoiresmauriciennes.com

« Contrairement aux idées reçues véhiculées par certains Mauriciens d'ici ou de la diaspora – car ils ne connaissent pas l'Histoire de leur pays – la corruption existe depuis bien longtemps à l'île Maurice, que ce soit à l'époque des Hollandais ou à l'époque des Français. Lisez les mémoires de Mahé de la Bourdonnais, lisez ce que les autres ont dit sur lui, et vous comprendrez que cet homme bon, discret, humble, honnête et loyal envers la Compagnie des Indes finit ses jours en prison... »

- Il est aussi Président aux Conseils Supérieurs y établis. Il doit maintenir la paix sociale, contenir les soldats dans la discipline, gérer le commerce et le trafic de la Compagnie dans les deux îles.
- De plus, il assume la difficile tâche de rendre la justice, civile et criminelle, conformément aux Edits d'établissement des Conseils dans les deux îles.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais n'est pas grand, il mesure un peu plus de cinq pieds... Il a des sourcils et des yeux noirs, et un peu d'embonpoint. Toutefois, il est vif, spirituel et de bonne humeur. Mais ce qui le caractérise, c'est son humanité. Pendant onze ans, tous les habitants le contactent directement pour régler leurs problèmes à tel point qu'on y répertorie un seul procès à l'Isle de France pour cette période.

Pour certains observateurs, Mahé de la Bourdonnais est un de ces rares génies qui sont capables de réussir des objectifs ambitieux avec de bien maigres ressources. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814), auteur du célèbre ouvrage 'Paul et Virginie' (1788), estime que chaque construction de Mahé de la Bourdonnais sur l'île est utile, voire indispensable.

A l'Isle de France, Mahé de la Bourdonnais donne l'exemple : il est un modèle du travailleur exemplaire. Il se lève tous les jours à quatre heures. Il travaille sur les chantiers pendant la journée, que le temps soit ensoleillé ou pluvieux. Puis, le soir, il continue de travailler dans son cabinet jusqu'à fort tard sur les plans de construction, entre autres. Il construit non seulement des charrettes pour transporter des pierres et des bois mais il pense aussi à construire des chemins pour que la circulation soit possible dans les faits.

Il suffit de se promener pour observer ses œuvres:

deux hôpitaux, des magasins, des batteries, des casernes, des fortifications, des arsenaux, des logements pour les officiers,... et aussi des moulins, des aqueducs (entre autres, celui qui transporte l'eau de Petite Rivière à Port-Louis) des ponts, des quais, des canaux, des cure-môles pour nettoyer le port,...

Quand les autres ne savent pas comment s'y prendre ou protestent que « ce n'est pas leur travail de faire ceci ou cela », il relève les manches et se lance lui-même en premier sur le chantier. Graduellement, il rétablit la discipline chez les soldats et contrôle l'insubordination, source de paresse, de laisser-aller et de laisser-faire avant son arrivée.

Il trouve les habitants indolents, voire paresseux, alors que ces derniers se plaignent de la disette... Il leur apprend la culture du riz et du blé. Il les forme à la chasse et à la pêche... Il fait venir des troupeaux de bœufs et de vaches de Madagascar pour satisfaire les besoins des habitants et des navigateurs de passage. Il exploite les ressources de l'île Rodrigues, notamment les tortues. Il commence la plantation avec le coton, le sucre et l'indigo.

Dans les conditions sociopolitiques prévalant au 18^e siècle, Mahé de la Bourdonnais participe au commerce des esclaves. Il met un terme au marronnage en créant une maréchaussée et en armant des noirs fidèles. Et, bien entendu, il réunit une main-d'œuvre servile à sa disposition pour entreprendre tous les travaux dans les deux îles. Pour lui, il s'agit de satisfaire un besoin alimentaire de base à tout être humain vivant et travaillant sur les îles. Alors, pour les esclaves, il expérimente la culture du maïs et du manioc.

● Suite en page 10

Naissance d'un homme illustre le 11 février 1699

Bertrand François Mahé de la Bourdonnais

● Suite de la page 9

Il fait passer une ordonnance pour que chaque habitant plante du manioc dans 500 pieds carrés de terrain par tête d'esclave à son service.

Bien entendu, en tant que Gouverneur, et donc, chef de la sécurité maritime et terrestre, Mahé de La Bourdonnais a la responsabilité morale et le devoir de contrôle de ces îles et des alentours : il est hors de question que l'Isle de France soit une passoire pour n'importe qui, n'importe quand, à n'importe quel point géographique entourant l'île... Par conséquent, il construit des découvertes pour repérer des navires en mer à une distance d'environ six kilomètres.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais pense même à une fortification pour protéger femmes et enfants, et aussi animaux et munitions, en cas de guerre. (*Le Réduit* sera construit en 1749 par son successeur, Barthelemy David...) Il place aussi des postes d'observation dans les îles voisines et son champ de vision s'étend jusqu'aux Seychelles. Sous ses ordres, le capitaine de l'Elisabeth, prend possession de cet archipel en 1742.

Ses talents sont reconnus car il ne propose jamais de projet extravagant, farfelu ou fantaisiste. Ses projets sont simples, peu coûteux, répondent à un besoin pressant et sont exécutables avec les moyens du bord. Il a « une vision » claire et nette de la direction dans laquelle il voudrait porter les deux îles. Il prévoit ce dont celles-ci auraient besoin dans le futur pour faciliter les affaires ou la vie sur place. Ainsi, à l'île Bourbon, il construit un pont volant pour charger et décharger les navires lorsque la mer est impraticable et les vagues sont grosses ou scélérates.

À l'Isle de France, il prévoit un endroit qui sert de retraite aux transporteurs en cas de raz-de-marée. Il y installe un chantier de construction où les colons radoubent et réparent les navires. Ensuite, il se lance dans la construction. Ses vaisseaux tels que *La Créole* et *Le Nécessaire* (150 tonneaux), *L'Utile* (250 tonneaux), *L'Insulaire* (350 tonneaux, 24 canons) jouissent d'une réputation égale à ceux fabriqués en France, en Bretagne, à Lorient. Remarquons les noms que cet homme d'une rectitude morale irréprochable donne aux bâtiments car il aurait pu choisir de les nommer Mahé de La Bourdonnais 1, Mahé de La Bourdonnais 2, Mahé de La Bourdonnais 3 ...

L'Isle de France avant l'arrivée du Gouverneur: une terre de débauche et de corruption

Pendant qu'un homme honnête travaille, que font ses détracteurs et tous ceux qui avaient l'habitude, avant son arrivée, de passer du bon temps sous couvert que rien n'était possible en des lieux si éloignés de tout?

- Certains habitants se plaignent : Trop de travail! Trop d'heures de labeur! Il y a, chez certains, un esprit de calomnie qui dépasse tout entendement : il s'agit de dévier l'attention du Gouverneur et de l'occuper à régler des problèmes «bas de gamme» inventés par eux-mêmes au lieu de se concentrer sur des projets novateurs, intéressants et «nobles».
- Certains ingénieurs racontent qu'il est trop agaçant, trop pointilleux, trop harceleur,... Il faut savoir que ces mêmes protestataires prennent trois ans pour exécuter ce que Mahé de la Bourdonnais exécute en trois mois avec les mêmes ressources humaines et matérielles...



« 322 ans se sont écoulés depuis la naissance de Mahé de la Bourdonnais. Voilà un homme qui a dû lutter jusqu'à la fin de sa vie contre la méchanceté et la corruption des esprits disgracieux, ne vivant que pour se noyer avec délectation et aveuglement dans la gourmandise des biens matériels et la luxure, et nourrissant la paresse, l'envie et l'orgueil à satiété. Mahé de la Bourdonnais a lutté jour après jour contre l'anarchie et la ténacité des corrompus pour nous donner cette île qui est notre patrie aujourd'hui... »

- Certains capitaines de vaisseaux sont jaloux de lui. Ils refusent de lui obéir sur place. Quand ils rentrent en France, ils mentent effrontément pour le dénigrer. Ils racontent que le Gouverneur ne leur donne pas suffisamment de vivres alors que les certificats portant leur signature (en possession de Mahé de la Bourdonnais) prouvent qu'ils ont reçu toutes les provisions demandées... Deux capitaines corrompus, Capitaine Boission et Capitaine Lagarde, sont connus pour leur trafic illégal d'environ 800 tortues de l'île Rodrigues à l'île Bourbon tandis qu'ils refusent d'en donner à La Bourdonnais pour soigner les malades...
- Certains jouissant de postes importants dans l'île avant son arrivée tentent de le débaucher. Ils lui indiquent les moyens de voler la Compagnie et de s'enrichir personnellement. Comme Mahé de La Bourdonnais refuse de tomber aussi bas et piétiner sa propre dignité, il augmente le nombre de ses ennemis. Des lettres sont régulièrement envoyées à la Compagnie des Indes où il est accusé de fraude et de corruption.

Mais la force de Mahé de la Bourdonnais, c'est d'avoir le courage d'écouter ces calomnies tous les jours, d'y faire face sans broncher tout en continuant son œuvre de construction – *utile* et *nécessaire* au développement d'un espace *insulaire*. Il sait que toute erreur de sa part serait fatale. Il serait obligé de garder le silence et la politique de laisser-aller et de laisser-faire aurait repris de plus belle !

Plus d'une fois, Mahé de la Bourdonnais est blessé au plus profond de son être mais il ne capitule jamais devant la corruption, l'esprit de décadence et l'âme en décrépitude de ses détracteurs. Il demeure digne et déferent. Il propose à la Compagnie de le destituer de ses fonctions si elle a des soupçons à propos de son travail.

Pour conclure

322 ans se sont écoulés depuis la naissance de Mahé de la Bourdonnais. Voilà un homme qui a dû lutter jusqu'à la fin de sa vie contre la méchanceté et la corruption des esprits disgracieux, ne vivant que pour se noyer avec délectation et aveuglement dans la gourmandise des biens matériels et la luxure, et nourrissant la paresse, l'envie et l'orgueil à satiété. Mahé de la Bourdonnais a lutté jour après jour contre l'anarchie et la ténacité des corrompus pour nous donner cette île qui est notre patrie aujourd'hui.

Si la liste de notre patrimoine matériel est longue, voilà un homme qui se distingue par sa culture du travail qu'il traduit dans ses croyances, son attitude et son comportement. Ce n'est pas un Gouverneur égoïste qui met en place des stratégies les unes plus honteuses que les autres pour s'enrichir à titre personnel en volant ce qui ne lui appartient pas. Non ! Il travaille certainement pour l'entreprise qui l'a embauché, mais sa vision, en tant qu'individu détenant un poste d'autorité, dépasse largement ce cadre étriqué. Il met l'amélioration du bien commun et le bien-être de la population dont il a la charge en avant-plan. Il se distingue en faisant honneur à sa patrie à lui, la France.

Contrairement aux idées reçues véhiculées par certains Mauriciens d'ici ou de la diaspora – car ils ne connaissent pas l'Histoire de leur pays – la corruption existe depuis bien longtemps à l'île Maurice, que ce soit à l'époque des Hollandais ou à l'époque des Français. Lisez les mémoires de Mahé de la Bourdonnais, lisez ce que les autres ont dit sur lui, et vous comprendrez que cet homme bon, discret, humble, honnête et loyal envers la Compagnie des Indes finit ses jours en prison. Il est jeté à la Bastille le 6 mars 1748 à cause du fiel de certains jaloux corrompus. Heureusement, il a aussi des défenseurs et il a droit à un procès trois ans après son emprisonnement. Il est acquitté et lavé de tout soupçon. Mais le bâtisseur de l'île Maurice meurt fatigué de toutes ces épreuves le 10 novembre 1753.

Les autorités éducatives mauriciennes font-elles suffisamment d'efforts pour faire connaître, et surtout, pour transmettre les valeurs qui transcendent l'espace et le temps, incarnées par cet homme exemplaire? Permettez-moi de poser cette question dans un contexte où l'Histoire n'est toujours pas une matière à part entière en milieu scolaire, où les historiens sont une espèce de voie de disparition avec la suppression totale du programme BA (*Joint Hons*) *Humanities* du milieu universitaire!

Vina Ballgobin

☛ Cont. from page 4

It is unacceptable that most of the political leaders of the main parties have hardly worked prior to joining politics?

Every Tom, Dick or Harry cannot therefore become a Minister in today's digital and more and more technically sophisticated world as the job of a Minister carries complex responsibilities requiring well-honed professional skills, pluri-disciplinary abilities and managerial acumen. No wonder, the country has systematically been plagued by costly blunders under the watch of Ministers and political appointees.

Costly blunders

It is distressing to note that despite repeated assurances given, Mauritius has once again failed to meet European Commission and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) norms in respect of strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing frameworks. Billions of Rupees have been lost in risky loans at the State Bank to foreign companies which necessitated substantial impairment provisions. Similarly, tens of millions of Rupees have been placed by municipalities, the Mauritius Housing Company and other government institutions in a new bank which is now in receivership.

The costly Rs 19 billion Safe City project is incapable of providing key visual evidence to help elucidate criminal cases. Government procurement tenders have been blemished by serious allegations. The country is up in arms at the opacity surrounding the conditions public funds amounting to billions of Rupees are, for example, advanced by the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd (MIC) to distressed companies to bail them out. The list is too long. How can the country continue to accept such costly government ineptitude?

For too long in the political history of the country, political leaders have nurtured cohorts of yes-men to maintain their hold over the government and the party. Such a

The Country in Turmoil



“For too long in the political history of the country, political leaders have nurtured cohorts of yes-men to maintain their hold over the government and the party. Such a set-up has scuttled party democracy and spawned dynasties at the head of the main political parties. A political status quo is therefore anathema to the multitude. The people refuse to compose with the same political class which has repeatedly failed the country...”

set-up has scuttled party democracy and spawned dynasties at the head of the main political parties. A political status quo is therefore anathema to the multitude. The people refuse to compose with the same political class which has repeatedly failed the country. They refuse to be trapped in a crippling political system which has been so detrimental to the prospects of the country

over the past decades.

An elected MP, Minister or government has a contract of trust with the people who chose and elected them. It is certainly not a licence to do whatever they want. Their mandate remains valid so long as their standard of governance and competence in running the affairs of the country is unimpeachable. Any breach of trust is unacceptable to the people who remain the sovereign arbiter at all times to mete out swift sanction.

What if?

The country is in turmoil. As a nation, we are deeply aggrieved that due to the appalling state of governance in the country we have been unable to harness the synergies and immense talent of our rainbow nation to realize our loftiest ambition for the benefit of all.

Finally, after years of enduring a decried system of governance, a Minister has slammed the door and resigned from government. What if this resignation acts as a detonator for a political big bang? There is a real window of opportunity. The country is witnessing game changing developments.

What if all those who can contribute meaningfully through their professional skills and expertise for a far better future for the country and the young raise their hands as one to trigger a sea change for the benefit of all. People are keen to join forces and help define a new *projet de société* for the country which rallies the multitude.

What if all those who want to establish a better order jettison the political dead wood and join hands to finally build the Mauritius we want for people and country. Is this the rallying signal for a new beginning?

Mrinal Roy

Trump impeachment trial

Decades of research shows language can incite violence

☛ Cont. from page 2

And they tell us that it is within our power to begin an exercise program – “Anybody can do it!”

In this context, these messages are likely to increase the message target's likelihood of exercising.

Unfortunately, as we saw on Jan. 6, these principles of persuasion apply to less benign behaviours as well.

How Trump did it

Now let us return to what happened in Washington on Jan. 6.

Even in the weeks before the election, Trump's rhetoric was belligerent. His campaign solicited supporters to “enlist” in the “Army for Trump” to help re-elect him. Following the election and in the lead-up to the attack on the Capitol, President Trump made repeated false claims of election fraud, arguing that something

needed to be done to remedy the alleged fraud. His language often took an aggressive tone, suggesting that his supporters must “fight” to preserve the integrity of the election.

By inundating his supporters with these lies, Trump made two key beliefs acceptable to his followers. First, that aggression against those accused of trying to undermine his “victory” is an acceptable and useful means of political action. Second, that aggressive, possibly violent attitudes against Trump's political adversaries are common among all his supporters.

Words have consequences

In the weeks following the election, allies of President Trump, including Rudy Giuliani, Republican US Rep. Matt Gaetz, GOP Sens. Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley and others, only rein-



Photo: www.upi.com

forced these beliefs among Trump supporters by perpetuating his lies.

With these beliefs and attitudes in place, Trump's Jan. 6 speech outside the White House served as a key accelerant to the attack by sparking the raucous crowd to action.

In his pre-attack speech, Trump said that he and his fol-

lowers should “fight like hell” against “bad people.” He said that they would “walk down Pennsylvania Avenue” to give Republican legislators the boldness they need to “take back the country.” He said that “this is a time for strength” and that the crowd was beholden to “very different rules” than would normally be called for.

Less than two hours after

these words were spoken, violent insurrectionists and domestic terrorists breached the Capitol.

In the case of Donald Trump, the relationship between words and actions never seems clear. But make no mistake, there is a scientifically valid case for incitement.

Decades of research have demonstrated that language affects our behaviours – words have consequences. And when those words champion aggression, make violence acceptable and embolden audiences to action, incidents like the insurrection at the Capitol are the result.

Kurt Braddock, Assistant Professor of Public Communication, American University School of Communication

Evidence of an impending breakup may exist in everyday conversation

months before either partner realizes their relationship is tanking

When doubts about a relationship start to creep in, people don't just blurt them out. They might not want to worry their partner and figure they'll ride out what could just be a rough patch. They probably think they can hide their feelings pretty easily.

But it turns out, hidden signs of their turmoil appear in the way they communicate.

In our recently published study, we were able to show that people's language subtly changes in the months and weeks leading up to a breakup - well before they've made a conscious decision to end things.

Mining Reddit for cracks

Breakups are difficult to research. They unfold over weeks, months - even years. To truly understand the dynamics of a breakup, researchers should, ideally, be able to track people's lives before, during and after the breakup takes place.

Historically, this hasn't been feasible. But the study of long-term relationships is beginning to change with the advent of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Reddit. An increasing number of people are now chronicling their daily lives on these platforms, which allows researchers to look at how people cope with upheavals such as breakups both before and after the event. The analysis of people's daily language can reveal information about their shifting emotions, thinking styles and connections with others.

One popular social media platform, Reddit, has designed an online infrastructure that mirrors the way we socialize in real life.

There are hundreds of thousands of communities, known as subreddits, geared to different interests, from tennis and politics, to gaming and knitting. This allows like-minded people to hang out, chat about their interests and ask for advice.

We studied a community called r/BreakUps/, where people discuss the dissolution of their relationships. We identified a group of 6,803 people who had posted about their breakups and tracked their posts up to a year before and after they ended things. But we didn't just look at their posts on the r/Breakups subreddit. We tracked their words across all the subreddits they posted in during this time frame. We wanted to see if there were signs of their impending breakup even when they weren't directly talking about it.

After analyzing over 1 million posts, we identified language markers that could detect an impending breakup up to three



months before it actually took place. And we detected changes in people's language that lasted up to six months after the event.

These changes were detectable even when people weren't talking about their relationship. It could appear when the poster was discussing sports, cooking or travel. Even though these people didn't necessarily know the end of the relationship was coming, it was already subtly influencing the way they communicated with others.

Worlds - and words - turned upside down

So how, exactly, does language change?

One big takeaway is that people tend to focus more on themselves, with increased use of "I"-words, as the breakup nears. This is common during a stressful life event, and other studies have shown an increase of self-referential language in people who are depressed or anxious.

At the same time, people's language shows drops in analytic thinking processes, which are often associated with formal and logical thinking. Their language becomes more informal and personal. They make fewer references to concepts, which causes drops in the use of articles such as "the" and "a." They're more likely to talk about other people than ideas.

Around the time of the breakup, people also tend to reference their partner quite a bit, perhaps because they have yet to separate their identity from their partner. Afterwards - as people process their heartbreak - they begin to shift their focus to

people who are supporting them during a difficult time.

People's thought processes also experience drastic changes during the breakup. They begin to probe their understanding of the relationship as they try to figure out why it fell apart. This is typical of people trying to make sense of challenging life events, whether it's trauma or bereavement.

As time moves on, people begin to craft a coherent narrative about their breakup, which causes other more logical processes - the ones that deteriorate around the time of the breakup - to reactivate. When this happens, they're ready to move on with the next chapter of their lives.

For most people in our study, it took about six months for their language to return to normal. Of course, grief is a lengthy process and it's natural to feel pangs and mourn for the loss of the relationship occasionally, even after that.

The fact that language analysis can

detect subtle signs of a relationship being on the rocks means that clinicians - whether they're mental health professionals, therapists or psychologists - could have a powerful tool at their disposal. For example, some people use phone apps to journal regularly. An app could automatically alert a user when their language is showing signs of extreme emotional distress and suggest resources or professional help.

This type of analysis is already being developed to detect and map other shifts in people's lives, whether it's their participation in a protest movement or the early stages of a health condition, and will only keep getting better as technology advances.

By Sarah Seraj, James W. Pennebaker & Kate G. Blackburn
- The University of Texas at Austin
College of Liberal Arts

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The Geography of a Woman

Between 18 and 22, a woman is like Africa. Half discovered, half wild, fertile and naturally beautiful!

Between 23 and 30, a woman is like Europe. Well developed and open to trade, especially for someone of real value.

Between 31 and 35, a woman is like Spain. Very hot, relaxed and convinced of her own beauty.

Between 36 and 40, a woman is like Greece. Gently aging but still a warm and desirable place to visit.

Between 41 and 50, a woman is like Great Britain. With a glorious and all conquering past.

Between 51 and 60, a woman is like Israel. Has been through war, doesn't make the same mistakes twice, and takes care of business.

Between 61 and 70, a woman is like Canada. Self-preserving, but open to meeting new people.

After 70, she becomes Tibet.

Wildly beautiful, with a mysterious past and the wisdom of the ages.

An adventurous spirit and a thirst for spiritual knowledge.

The Geography of a Man

Between 1 and 100, a man is like North Korea and the United States.

Ruled by a pair of nuts!!

A lawyer for marriage

A girl showed interest in marrying only a lawyer.

I asked the girl "Why do you prefer a lawyer to marry?"

She gave a very logical reply.

She said, "They bow their head while entering the room and again while going out. They say 'Your Honour' or 'My Lord' before and after every word. They don't have any male ego - because, they wear a gown! They go to a BAR where liquor is not served. More importantly, they never question the judgment at least before the person who gives it, whether they like it or not. What else does a wife require?"

Plus lent, plus vieux...

Un Airbus 380 est en route à travers l'Atlantique. Il vole constamment à 800 km/h en 30,000 pieds, quand soudain un Eurofighter avec Tempo Mach 2 apparaît.

Le pilote de l'avion de chasse ralentit, vole aux côtés de l'Airbus et salue le pilote de l'avion passager par radio: "Vol d'Airbus, vol ennuyeux n'est-ce pas? Prenez soin de vous et regardez cela !!!"

Il roule son jet sur le dos, accélère, brise à travers le mur du son, monte rapidement à une hauteur vertigineuse, pour descendre presque au niveau de la mer dans une plongée époustouflante. Il se rapproche à côté de l'Airbus et demande: "Eh bien, comment c'était?"

Le pilote d'Airbus répond: "Très impressionnant, mais maintenant regardez ici!"

Le pilote de jet regarde l'Airbus, mais rien ne se passe. Il continue à voler obstinément droit, avec la même vitesse. Après cinq minutes, le pilote d'Airbus a la radio: "Eh bien, qu'est-ce que tu dis maintenant?"

Le pilote de jet demande confus: "Qu'est-ce que tu as fait?"

L'autre rit et dit: "Je me suis levé, j'ai étiré mes jambes, je suis allé à l'arrière du vol vers la salle de bain, j'ai pris une tasse de café et un gâteau à la cannelle. J'ai pris rendez-vous avec l'hôtesse de l'air pour les trois prochaines nuits - dans un hôtel 5 étoiles, qui est payé par mon employeur."

La morale de l'histoire est:

Quand tu es jeune, la vitesse et l'adrénaline semblent être super. Mais comme tu deviens plus vieux et plus sage, le confort et la paix ne sont pas à mépriser non plus.

Ça s'appelle: Plus lent, plus vieux, plus intelligent.

Job rotation

A husband visited a marriage counsellor and said: "When we were first married, I would come home from the office, my wife would bring my slippers and our cute little dog would run around barking."

"Now after ten years it's different. I come home, the dog brings the slippers and my wife runs around barking."

Said the counsellor: "Why complain? You are still getting the same service. In the corporate world it is called job rotation!"

Life's LESSONS

The Story of the Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller

I always believe kindness in one way or the other, big or small. This beautiful story illustrates how an act of kindness can change not only one life but be a game changer.

Dr Frank Mayfield was touring Tewksbury Institute when, on his way out, he accidentally collided with an elderly floor maid. To cover the awkward moment Dr Mayfield started asking questions.

"How long have you worked here?"

"I've worked here almost since the place opened," the maid replied.

"What can you tell me about the history of this place?" he asked.

"I don't think I can tell you anything, but I could show you something."

With that, she took his hand and led him down to the basement under the oldest section of the building. She pointed to one of what looked like small prison cells, their iron bars rusted with age, and said, "That's the cage where they used to keep Annie Sullivan."

"Who's Annie?" the doctor asked.

Annie was a young girl who was brought in here because she was incorrigible-nobody could do anything with her. She'd bite and scream and throw her food at people. The doctors and nurses couldn't even examine her or anything.

"I was only a few years younger than her myself and I used to think, 'I sure would hate to be locked up in a cage like that.' I wanted to help her, but I didn't have any idea what I could do. I mean, if the doctors and nurses couldn't help her, what could someone like me do?"

"I didn't know what else to do, so I just baked her some brownies one night after work. The next day I brought them in. I walked carefully to her cage and said, 'Annie, I baked these brownies just for you. I'll put them right here on the floor and you can come and get them if you want.'

"Then I got out of there just as fast as I could because I was afraid she might throw them at me. But she didn't. She actually took the brownies and ate them. After that, she was just a little bit nicer to me when I was around. And sometimes I'd talk to her. Once, I even got her laughing."

"One of the nurses noticed this and she told the doctor. They asked me if I'd help them with Annie. I said I would if I could. So that's how it came about that. Every time they wanted to see Annie or examine her, I went into the cage first



and explained and calmed her down and held her hand. This is how they discovered that Annie was almost blind."

"After they'd been working with her for about a year-and it was tough sledding with Annie-the Perkins institute for the Blind opened its doors. They were able to help her and she went on to study and she became a teacher herself."

"Annie came back to the Tewksbury Institute to visit, and to see what she could do to help out. At first, the Director didn't say anything and then he thought about a letter he'd just received. A man had written to him about his daughter. She was absolutely unruly-almost like an animal. She was blind and deaf as well as 'deranged.' He was at his wit's end, but he didn't want to put her in an asylum. So he wrote the Institute to ask if they knew of anyone who would come to his house and work with his daughter."

"And that is how Annie Sullivan became the lifelong companion of Helen Keller."

"When Helen Keller received the Nobel Prize, she was asked who had the greatest impact on her life and she said, 'Annie Sullivan'."

"But Annie said, 'No Helen. The woman who had the greatest influence on both our lives was a floor maid at the Tewksbury Institute.'

One act of kindness leads to another! Like a ripple, it spreads far and wide! Let's keep doing small acts of kindness... We'll never know what ripples will be created!!

Women's Health

"I've gained 10 pounds in the last 2 years! Something must be wrong! Please check my hormones!" I hear this often from patients in their 40s. Each time, I brace myself as I tell them some answers that they are probably not going to like.

When you get more mature (a much better term than "aging"), your metabolism begins to decrease. So, if your diet and exercise look the same in your 30s as they did in your 20s, you will likely begin to gain weight. This happens a little more drastically as you enter perimenopause, usually around your mid-40s. With the decreasing levels of estrogen in perimenopause, you begin to lose muscle mass, and muscle has a much higher metabolism than fat. When menopause officially arrives (diagnosed as no period for a year), weight gain begins to happen disproportionately in the belly.

If the weight gain is associated with changing hormone levels, then why not prescribe some hormones to prevent it? Sadly, it's not quite that easy or I would be wearing seven estrogen patches right now. While postmenopausal hormone replacement has been associated with less abdominal fat distribution, it doesn't prevent weight gain and has many other risks, so it is not used for weight control. Perimenopausal hormone therapy has not been shown to reduce weight gain.

But it's not all bad news. With healthy diet choices and tweaking your exercise regimen, you can maintain a healthy weight through perimenopause and menopause. Here's what I tell my patients:

Get a Physical

The first step would be to get a full physical. In your 40s, you need to have a check-up every 2-3 years with your primary care doctor to check for conditions like high cholesterol and heart disease. Weight gain could be related to metabolic issues such as thyroid issues or diabetes, which your doctor will usually check for with routine blood work.

Move your body and pump some iron

We should all be moving our body at least body 30 minutes a day. Walking, Zumba, biking, spin, aerobics, running, or whatever works for you. Exercise helps your heart, mood, sex drive, and prevents osteoporosis.

However, if you are only doing cardio, you will likely begin to lose muscle as you approach menopause, so you need to add some type of weight training to your routine to build muscle and improve your metabolism. If the thought of lifting traditional weights seems boring, intimidating, or not feasible in your schedule, there are many other options. I personally recommend a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workout that uses weights because it combines your cardio and weight training. While it might seem intimidating at first, it can be scalable to all ages and fitness levels. Or yoga may be more your

Gaining Weight in Your 40s?



style. Types of yoga that really engage your muscles and core (like power yoga or vinyasa) can also help with your strength and metabolism. Yoga has also been shown to reduce other menopausal symptoms like brain fog, hot flashes, and insomnia.

Other options would be body-weight exercises than can be found in a plethora of YouTube videos, Pilates, or barre workouts. The key is finding a workout that you like (or at least don't hate) and staying consistent.

Check your refrigerator

While exercise can help improve your metabolism and maintain your weight, you cannot exercise your way out of a bad diet. I often will gain 3-5 pounds when I am marathon training (running 40-50 miles a week) because I am so hungry, I eat all the time. When I was in my 20s, I could mostly eat what I wanted as long as I exercised daily, but when I hit my mid-30s, I had to start watching my diet too. And by 40 I had to be purposeful about both to maintain a healthy weight. Many of us have let some healthy habits lax over the last year of 2020, and it's time to get our health back on track.

The first step is to cut out or significantly cut back on added sugar and alcohol. Your body doesn't need these empty calories, and they provide no nutritional value. I love cookies and wine as much as anyone, but my metabolism does not. You will also enjoy them more if they are a special-occasion treat and not an everyday habit. Next is trying to make sure you are eating five to seven servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Limiting fried foods, processed foods, and red meat is also important. I do not recommend any specific "diet," but rather finding a healthy way to eat that you can incorporate into your life for the long term.

Practice acceptance

"It's not fair. I used to be able to cut back for a week or two and drop 10 pounds and now that doesn't really work." I hear this from my frustrated 40-somethings on a weekly basis. There are no quick fixes in perimenopause. This isn't a time for fad diets, popping pills, or taking supplements to drop a few pounds for a special event. This is a time to really focus on your health.

Some patients are truly in an unhealthy place. If your BMI is greater than 30 or you

have medical conditions affected by your weight, you need to find a way to embrace healthy lifestyle changes. The health choices you make today will greatly affect your quality of life in the coming decades.

For other patients, the extra 10 pounds of perimenopause may be more of a vanity issue. If you have a healthy BMI and no medical concerns, then you have to decide: Are you are willing to go to the workout and diet extremes it takes to maintain your perceived goal weight, or can you accept your new normal? Most of us in our 40s don't have the time or energy to exercise 2 hours a day and count every calorie that passes through our lips. A healthier approach in this situation is to focus on your health and not the number on the scale.

Perimenopause is an awesome opportunity to set a healthy tone for the second half of your life. It's not a time for yo-yo diets and self-loathing, but a time to objectively look at your health and make the best choices you can. Increase your veggies, put down that second glass of wine, add in some weight training, and see your doctor for a checkup. Because you only live once, and you want that once to be an awesome, healthy, fulfilling life.

Heather Rupe
WebMD

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Bollywood celebs reveal their secret to success

Bollywood is a world full of glam, name and fame, and who doesn't want to enjoy that. Many in this country wake up every day with a dream to shine in this industry. Here are a few actors who used some methods from Rhonda Byrne's book, 'The Secret' to ensure their success. Read on:



Ranveer Singh: He revealed in a talkshow about the story of his 23rd birthday. His sister had read this book and applied the mentioned techniques for her dear brother. She replaced the candles on his birthday cake with some pictures with his face morphed on Yash Raj Films' leading heroes. Later, he kept those pictures in his bedroom and observed them every day and boom! His debut film, *Band Baaja Baaraat* was produced by YRF.

Anushka Sharma: During her audition process at YRF for her debut film *Rab Ne Banadi Jodi*, she read the book and applied the secret. She used to watch YRF motion logo on loop everyday and when she was selected, she couldn't stop her tears.



Bipasha Basu: In an interview, she talked about reading this book and realizing that she had been following it unknowingly. Everything she has achieved is an outcome of her thoughts.

Freida Pinto: She debuted as Latika in the Oscar Award Winner film *Slum Dog Millionaire*. Her sister mentions that Frieda applied the law of attraction even before she started acting professionally. She used to rehearse her award speeches every day before the mirror.

Preity Zinta, who has settled in the US and has not been seen on the big screen for a while now, talked to SpotboyE about being missing from Bollywood. She said that she cannot be involved in aggressive PR tactics and believes in letting her work do the talking.

Preity Zinta has no complaints about being away from the film industry. The actor, who was one of the most popular faces on screen in the 2000s, was last seen in *Bhaiaji Superhit* (2018) after a hiatus of several years.

In an interview, Preity said that she has been away from Bollywood because she is 'not into selling (herself)'. She added that she has never been one to pay for media coverage.

Talking to SpotboyE, Preity said, "I am not the kind of person who will stand up and complain about anything. I have no complaints against anyone. If I've been away from the entertainment industry it's because I am not into selling myself. You won't see me buying space to get written about. I want to be appreciated for the work that I do."

Preity made her debut with a small role in Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se*, after the film she was supposed to be launched in, Shekhar Kapur's *Tara Rum Pum Pum*, was shelved. She has starred in a number of successful films, including *Soldier*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Koi Mil Gaya*, *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, *Veer-Zaara* and *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*.

In 2013, Preity turned producer with *Ishkq* in Paris, in which she also starred. However, the film fared poorly at the box office. After its release, she made cameo appearances in *Happy Ending* and *Welcome to New York*.

Preity made a comeback after several years with the much-delayed *Bhaiaji Superhit* in 2018. The film, which also starred Sunny Deol, Arshad Warsi, Ameesha Patel and Shreyas Talpade, was a box office disaster.



Preity Zinta on being missing from Bollywood: 'I am not into selling myself'

Meanwhile, Preity has been busy with the Indian Premier League and her Kings XI Punjab team. Rumours suggest that she is producing the Hindi adaptation of successful British series, *The Night Manager*, for a digital platform. Reportedly, Hrithik Roshan has given his nod to the show.

Propose Day 2021: Bollywood scenes that redefined romantic proposals

When it comes to romantic date ideas, proposals, songs, and poems on love, what better place to look out for than a Bollywood film. Yes! as Valentine's week is around, you do have to struggle with Proposal ideas to confess your true feelings in the most beautiful way. India Tv brings you a few Bollywood examples for a perfect dream proposal for your loved one. From the appropriate setting to a fitting background song do not miss on anything.

Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na

The classic airport proposal. The film showed a modern love story, where two friends were unaware of their feelings. Who can forget the scene when Jai (Imraan Khan) went to the airport just to tell Aditi (Genelia D'Souza) how much he loved him. He presented his feelings with the song 'Tera Muihse Hai Pahle Ka Naata Koi'.



Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani

To all those surviving the long-distance relationship, nothing can beat this straight to the soul kind of proposal that Bunny had for his Naina. Come and knock the door of your love. No fancy gifts and no lavish dinners needed just bent down with their favourite chocolate in a ring box.

Love Aaj Kal

Many people were cough crying when the last scene of Imtiaz Ali directorial showed Meera (Deepika

Padukone) meeting love of his life Jai (Saif Ali Khan). The latter came to India to confess his love for the lady.

Break Ke Baad

In the last scene of the film, Aaliya (Deepika Padukone) proposing to Abhay (Imran Khan) is yet again, one of the cutest Bollywood proposal scenes.

Wake Up Sid

Your proposal can be a quiet, nonchalant proposal that can win his or her heart. And it's not always a guy who has to propose. Just like Aisha (Konkana Sen), ladies make the move. Sometimes words are just enough followed by a tight hug.

2 States

In the love story of Krish (Arjun Kapoor) and Ananya (Alia Bhatt), a confused Krish straight away entered to a room where Ananya was giving her job interview, to went on his knees to propose to his lady.

Anjaana Anjaani

The ultimate mid-water proposal of Anjaana Anjaani is



something we cannot forget. The scene between Akash (Ranbir Kapoor) proposes to Kiara (Priyanka Chopra) is surely going to melt your loved one's heart.

Mona Singh recalls husband Shyam Gopalan's 'super bad' proposal



Mona Singh said that Shyam Gopalan's proposal was 'super bad'. He nervously blurted out, 'Will you marry me?', and slipped the ring on her finger even before she could answer.

Mona Singh, who celebrated her first wedding anniversary with husband Shyam Gopalan last month, shared details about their love story during an appearance on *The Kapil Sharma Show* recently. She revealed that he popped the question on her birthday in 2019 and it was a 'super bad' proposal.

"Itna bekaar proposal tha, main kya bataun! Maine kya

socha tha aur kya hua (It was such an unsatisfactory proposal. It was nothing like what I hoped for). I was like, 'What is this? This is not a proposal,'" she told Kapil Sharma.

Talking about the proposal, Mona said that Shyam told her that he wanted to buy a kurta and asked her to join him for shopping. He picked her up, stopped his car at the turning of a road and blurted out, "Will you marry me?" Out of nervousness, he slipped the ring on her finger, without even waiting for her answer.

Mona said that Shyam's car

was blocking the road and other vehicles were honking behind them, so she asked him to move forward. "Usne gaadi chalani shuru ki, phir kehta hai, 'Oho, song toh play karna bhool gaya, yeh lo song!' (He started driving ahead and realised he forgot to play the song while proposing, so he played it after everything was done). Super bad, but I have a story to tell," she laughed.

Last year, in an interview with Hindustan Times, Mona talked about spending the lockdown with Shyam. "We were supposed to go to Italy and Spain, which did not happen. Now, everything is in the house only. We are exploring and learning things about each other. In a way, it has been good because I have never been home for so many days. We cook, clean, watch TV shows, movies together, order online ice-creams at night or maybe even make them at home. We have been making cookies and baking things together, video calling our families... so it is fun. I'm not complaining at all," she said.

Mona was recently seen in the Zee5 series *Black Widows* as a frustrated wife who murders her husband after years of suffering abuse. The show also featured Shamita Shetty and Swastika Mukherjee.

Hiten Tejwani on TV show ending abruptly: My reputation won't be harmed

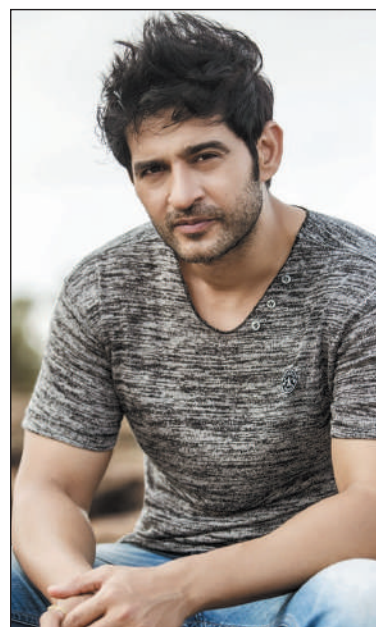
Television is unpredictable and every actor who works on the medium knows that but last month, Hiten Tejwani had a bitter realisation. His TV show, *Gupta Brothers*, was yanked off air in less than three months of launch, reports Kavita Awaasthi of Hindustan Times.

"In my career of 20 years, I have seen many shows going off air but earlier, shows at least got a year to prove themselves, make a connect with the audiences and tell the story. Now, people expect results in one month. I was not upset with the show ending, but taken aback. I wish it was better handled. Not just the actors but people behind the camera, many daily workers, they should have been informed, so they could line up other jobs. Even I was refusing other projects, because I was shooting a daily, so one knows

you don't have time to spare," he says.

Tejwani rues the fact the contracts are skewed in favour of employer, and giving notice to cast and crew would have helped. "I don't know what was the contract between the channel and the producer. When actors want to quit, they have to give a notice period of three months, so the story can be changed and a replacement can be found. It is fair but it should be the other way round too. This was too abrupt," states the Gangaa actor.

Trying to understand the decision, he explains the show was getting good ratings and was number two on the channel and that they should have got at least six months of air time. "My reputation won't be harmed but had it been a newcomer, it would have



affected him hugely. I have been here for 20 years, I have seen it all and can handle it," says Tejwani.

YOUR STARS

Sagittarius: Nov 22 - Dec 21

Single natives will have fair chances to make good encounters and soon put an end to their loneliness. Bleak professional perspectives: at work you'll have to face a person who'll be openly hostile to you; violent clashes could occur.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 9, 14, 29, 31, 36

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

You'll bring an extremely difficult and very ambitious project to a successful conclusion. The stars will be very favourable to you on the material plane: you who aren't a born manager will succeed in profitable transactions.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 30

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

You'll make business deals and will have opportunities to make money. You'll hesitate between a total change in your present love relationship, only seeing the bad side to it, and the desire not to break up your habits and psychological comfort brutally.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 9, 17, 21, 23, 30

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

Patience will still be needed: don't make definite decisions to force events or to provoke a power struggle. A favourable week for new friendships, or for the beginning of new love affairs. Your wallet isn't inexhaustible: watch out for money problems!

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 9, 14, 16, 30

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

Choose your friends with proper judgment. You could find yourself picking up the pieces of a broken love and swearing that you'll never fall in love again in your life; be aware that almost everybody goes through this kind of ordeal; don't make a drama out of your situation.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 26, 29, 31, 34, 36

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

Remarkable successes in your job; they are, however, likely to complicate your family life. Try to solve definitively certain problems which regularly disturb the atmosphere of your household; you'll succeed in this endeavour, for sure!

Lucky Numbers: 1, 4, 6, 11, 13, 20

Gemini: May 21 - June 20

In love, adopt an understanding and conciliatory attitude; the results will then be surprising. Financially, things will take a better turn than lately. You're very likely to suffer from digestive or intestinal problems.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 9, 18, 23, 25, 30

Cancer: June 21 - July 22

Your big projects will benefit from the support of the stars; victory is assured for you. Don't hesitate to make concessions so that harmony and serenity return in your household. An ideal week to begin a severe diet program.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 19, 20, 26, 29, 31

Leo: July 23 - Aug 22

In your love life, don't lock yourself up in a situation which is apparently safe but which is actually shaky. You'll carry out your activities without fail, and yet you'll come very close to overwork if you don't pay attention to your tiredness.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 8, 11, 17, 21, 30

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

You'll manage to clear up misunderstandings with your close ones and to make harmony reign in your home. Heartwise, your charm will be very effective and you'll make some sweet conquests.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 15, 16, 20, 33, 36

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

This week will bring you many successes in various fields, on condition, however, that you know how to seize each opportunity. Avoid treating real-estate transactions or inheritance matters. Beware of overwork and its harmful consequences; sleep more.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 11, 18, 20, 25, 30

Scorpion: 23 Oct - 21 Nov

This time good luck with money. Take care of your parents. Your love life will become lively: many of you will succumb to love at first sight; however there will be serious complications if you're already engaged in a stable relationship.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 9, 12, 15, 20, 27

CINE 12

Vendredi 12 Fevrier - 21.15

Coup De Foudre A La Premiere Dance

Avec: Becca Tobin, Niall Matter, Cecilia Deacon



CINE 12

Samedi 13 Fevrier - 21.15

Dyland Dog: Dead Of Night

Star: Brandon Routh, Anita Briem, Sam Huntington



CINE 12

Dimanche 14 Fevrier - 21.10



MBC 1

07.05 D. Anime: Teenie Tots
09.50 Serial: Oh Yuck!
10.12 Mag: MBC Prod
11.53 Local: Spring Festival 2021
11.05 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour
12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir
12.50 Local Spring Festival 2021
13.30 Local: MBC Prod
14.30 D.Anime: Polly Pocket
15.12 D.Anime: Yo Yo
15.42 D.Anime: Little Spirou
15.51 Film: Comme Des Bêtes
17.14 D.Anime: Astrology
17.20 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida
17.50 Mag: Origami
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Serial: Siya Ke Ram
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.20 Prod: Lottery Vert Draw
21.20 Serial: When Calls The Heart
23.00 Le Journal

MBC 2

10.00 Serial: Ki Jaana Mein Kaun
11.05 Serial: Zun Mureed
12.04 Film: 180 Nootrenbathu
14.20 DDI Magazine
15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha
15.21 Serial: Aamhi Doghi
15.44 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
16.07 Serial: Apoorva Raagangal
16.31 Serial: Tu Ishq Hai
16.53 Serial: Achra Ke Moti
17.12 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala
17.33 Serial: Chhanchhan
18.00 Serial: Bloody Romance
18.30 DDI Magazine
19.00 Live: Zournal Kreol
19.30 DDI Magazine
20.00 Serial: Band Khirkiyan
20.44 Local: Anjuman
21.10 Local: Noor-E-Iman
22.04 Live: DDI Live

MBC 3

06.00 Mag: Eco India
06.26 Mag: Shift
07.00 Mag: Urban Gardens
07.43 Dates That Made History
08.36 Doc: Une Nuit, Orsay avec...
09.22 Mag: Japan 2020
09.30 En Direct De L'Eglise Notre Des Anges, Mahebourg
11.00 Mag: Eco India
12.22 Mag: Urban Gardens
12.29 Mag: Tomorrow Today
13.50 Doc: Une Nuit, Orsay Avec...
14.40 Doc: 360 GEO
15.32 Doc: Botticelli's Inferno
16.17 Doc: Hapan 2020
16.39 Mag: Border Crossing
17.05 Mag: Eco India
17.31 Mag: Tomorrow Today
18.41 Mag: Arts And Culture
19.00 Open Univ: Student Support
19.29 Mag: Urban Gardens

Cine 12

01.34 Film: Guernica
03.24 Serial: S.W.A.T
04.06 Film: A Midsummer's Hawaii..
05.26 Tele: Muneca Brava
06.08 Serial: 19-2
06.50 Film: Zoo
09.00 Serial: The Magicians
09.45 Tele: Daneilla
10.35 Tele: Tanto Amor
11.00 Serial: S.W.A.T.
12.00 Film: A Midsummer's Hawaii
13.30 Tele: Muneca Brava
14.45 Film: Zoo
16.40 Serial: The Magicians
17.20 Serial: French Series
18.05 Tele: Daneilla
19.10 Tele: Tanto Amor
20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir
20.30 Serial: Heroes Reborn
21.15 Film: Coup De Foudre A La Premiere Dance

Bollywood TV

08.00 Film: Sone Pe Suhaaga
12.05 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam
12.23/ 20.11 - Radha Krishna
12.46 / 20.32 Sanjivani
13.04 / 21.09 - Zindagi Ki Mehek
13.24 / 21.24 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai
13.46 / 21.46 - Naagin S3
14.28 / 21.59 - Ikyawann
14.43 / 22.25 - Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
15.31 Film: Agent Vinod
Starring: Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor
18.00 Live: Samacher
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya
18.52 Ek Rishta Saajhed Ka

vendredi 12 fevrier

samedi 13 fevrier

dimanche 14 fevrier

06.00 D.Anime: Dragons: Par-Delà
07.14 D.Anime: Trollhunters
08.26 D.Anime: The Garfield Show
12.00 Le Journal
12.30 Tele: Daniella
14.50 D.Anime: MFDC I Am Better..
15.00 D.Anime: Polly Pocket
15.22 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie
15.24 D.Anime: The Garfield Show
15.48 D.Anime: The Minimighty Kid
15.56 D.Anime: La Ligue Des Super
16.19 D.Anime: Astrology
16.22 D.Anime: Uma And Devan...
16.44 D.Anime: Yakari
16.41 D.Anime: Yo Yo
17.20 Serial: Oh Yuck
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Entertainment: Dance
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.00 Prod: Lottotech
21.10 Film: Coup De Foudre Glacé
23.25 Le Journal

06.00 D.Anime: Dragons: Par-Delà...
06.23 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie
08.12 D.Anime: The Garfield Show
09.30 Serial: Lucas Etc.
09.45 Serial: Magic Mania
12.00 Le Journal
12.30 Tele: Daniella
15.00 D.Anime: Polly Pocket
15.21 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie
15.35 D.Anime: The Minimighty Kid
15.44 Anime: La Ligue Des Super
16.08 D.Anime: Astrology
16.32 D.Anime: La Famille Blaireau
16.44 D.Anime: Yakari
16.57 D.Anime: Little Spirou
17.20 Serial: Oh Yuck
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Local: Yeh Shaam Mastani
19.30 Le Journal
20.00 Prod: La Meteo
21.20 Film: For The Love Of George

07.00 Film: Arth
Starring: Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil
10.00 Bade Acchelagte Hai
12.00 Serial: Nanda Saukhyia Bhare
12.24 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
12.50 Serial: High School
13.12 Annakodiyum Ainthus Pengalum
13.35 Serial: Anu Pallavi
15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha
15.20 Film: Devdas
Starring: Shahrukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Aishwariya Rai
18.14 Mag: DDI Magazine
19.00 Zournal Kreol
20.05 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha
20.31 Serial: Bitti Business Wali
21.01 Film: Ek Villain
Stars: Sidharth Malhotra, Shraddha Kapoor, Ritesh Deshmukh

07.00 Film: Do Bigha Zamin
Starring: Balraj Sahni, Nirup Roy, Nazir Hussain
09.02 DDI Magazine
10.00 Local Production
11.00 Serial: Oru Kai Osai
11.22 Serial: Santoshi Maa
12.00 Film: Dil Hai Tumhaara
Starring - Rekha, Preity Zinta, Mahima Chaudhry, Arjun Rampal
15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha
15.20 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
15.43 Eka Lagnachi Teesri Gosht
16.06 Serial: Apoorva Raagangal
17.00 Serial: Mahakali
18.30 Dance Season 5 Ep 1
20.00 Film: Love Aaj Kal 2
Starring: Kartik Aaryan, Sara Ali Khan, Randeep Hooda

06.00 What Did The Big Bang
06.42 Mag: Arts And Culture
06.55 Mag: Global 3000
07.21 Mag: Urban Gardens
07.55 Doc: Wildlife Heroes
08.47 Doc: Flying The Great Wall
09.39 Doc: Escaping Hell On Earth
10.21 Doc: The Truth About Lying
11.49 Mag: Arts And Culture
12.00 Mag: Global 3000
12.28 Mag: Euromaxx
13.49 Doc: Flying The Great Wall
16.13 Mag: Arts And Culture
19.00 Mag: Vue D'en Haut
19.30 Mag: Check In
20.00 Doc: Taste Hunters
21.00 Local: News (English)
21.10 Doc: Destination
21.23 Doc: Tarzan, Aux Sources...
22.15 Doc: Sri Lanka
23.39 Doc: Amazing Gardens
00.05 Doc: Zenith

06.00 Doc: Amazing Gardens
06.26 Doc: Zenith
06.52 Mag: Vue D'en Haut
07.45 Doc: Taste Hunters
08.37 Doc: Destination
09.43 Doc: Sri Lanka
11.10 Doc: Amazing Gardens
12.27 Mag: Check In
16.13 Doc: Amazing Gardens
18.00 Mag: Tendance XXI
18.30 Doc: Builders Of the Future
19.00 Doc: Garden Party
19.30 Mag: Future Mag
20.05 Doc: Comme Une Envie De...
21.00 Doc: News (English)
21.10 Doc: Destination
22.16 Doc: Losing Sleep
22.58 Doc: A Poisoned Legacy
23.22 Mag: Tendance XXI
00.13 Doc: Garden Party
00.41 Mag: Future Mag

01.28 Film: Coup De Foudre A La...
02.50 Serial: Dynasty 2
03.30 Film: A Bronx Tale
05.27 Tele: Esmeraldas
06.12 Serial: Heroes Reborn
06.54 Film: Coup De Foudre A La...
08.30 Serial: Midnight, Texas
09.12 Serial: Shades Of Blue
09.54 Serial: Unforgotten
10.41 Film: Coup De Foudre A La...
12.15 Serial: Dynasty 2
13.00 Serial: S.W.A.T
15.05 Tele: Amanda
15.48 Tele: Muneca Brava
17.00 Serial: Heroes Reborn
17.45 Film: The Last Bridesmaid
19.17 Mag: Ultimate Countdown
20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir
20.30 Series: Heroes Reborn
21.15 Film: Dyland Dog: Dead Of Night
23.00 Tele: Dulce Amor

00.20 Film: Heroes Reborn
01.28 Film: Dylan Dog: Dead Of Night
03.54 Film: Ironclad
05.49 Tele: Esmeraldas
06.32 Serial: Heroes Reborn
07.15 Film: The Last Bridesmaid
08.30 Serial: Midnight, Texas
09.21 Film: Coup De Foudre Glacé
10.52 Film: The Last Bridesmaid
12.16 Serial: Hawaii Five-0
13.03 Serial: S.W.A.T
15.05 Tele: Amanda
15.50 Tele: Muneca Brava
17.00 Serial: Heroes Reborn
17.45 Serial: Hawaii Five-0
18.30 Serial: Macgyver
19.34 Hollywood Best Film...
20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir
20.30 Serial: Falling Water
21.15 Film: Saint-Valentin Pour Toujours

04.05 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum
04.26 Radha Krishna
04.51 Zindagi Ki Mehek
05.08 Bade Acche Lagte Hai
05.50 Ikyawann
06.13 Ikyawann
06.11 Bin Kuch Kahe
06.34 Kundali Bhagya
06.54 Ek Rishta Saajhedari Ka
07.42 Mere Angne Mein
08.19 Zindagi Ki Mehek
10.19 Yeh Pyaar Nahi Toh Kya...
12.00 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
14.19 Sanjivani
16.00 Pavitra Rishta
18.30 Film: FUN2SHH...Dudes In The 10th Century
Star: Gulshan Grover, Paresh Rawal, Farida Jalal
21.00 Serial: Siya Ke Ram
21.45 Serial: Naagin
22.29 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek

00.40 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
02.16 Sanjivani
03.54 Pavitra Rishta
08.06 Motu Patlu
08.11 Karn Sangini
10.04 Jaana Na Dil Se Door
12.00 Piya Albela
14.00 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum
15.46 Bin Kuch Kahe
17.30 Punar Vivaah
18.00 Samachar
18.30 Film: Hindustani
21.17 Bade Acche Lagte Hai
23.08 Piya Albela

MBC 2

Dimanche 14 Fevrier - 18.30

Stars: Kartik Aaryan, Sara Ali Khan, Randeep Hooda



MBC 2

Samedi 13 Fevrier - 21.00

Stars: Sidharth Malhotra, Shraddha Kapoor, Ritesh Deshmukh



Tree of Knowledge

A Romantic Tête-à-tête



Niranjana Karthigairajan

'Nalayira Divya Prabandam' is the collection of 4000 Tamil verses composed by the 12 Azhwars, the Tamil poet-saints of South India who are immersed in devotion to Lord Vishnu. By reading their hymns, we can come across a few verses where Azhwars express their love, intensively pining for the Lord's company through *oodal*. *Oodal* is an anger that emanates out of immense love. For Azhwars, *oodal* springs out of intensifying *bhakthi* (*Pranayam*) and sense of feeling that He is mine (*Abimanam*).

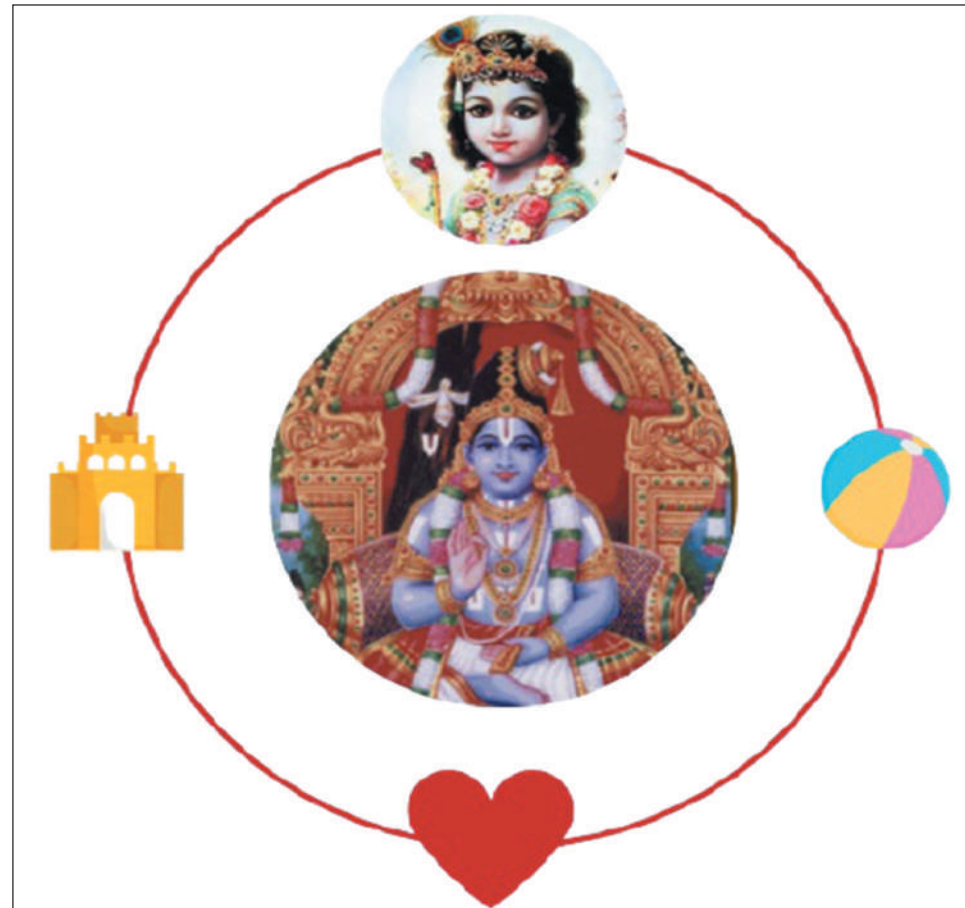
In Thiruvaimozhi, Nammazhvar (considered the greatest among the twelve Azhwars) couldn't bear the separation from Lord Narayana, and casts himself in the role of Lord's lady love - Parankusa Nayaki. She sends love messages (*Thoothu*) to Lord Narayana and waits for His arrival. While the Lord got delayed for a few minutes, the anguished Parankusa Nayaki decided to play with her friends instructing them not to turn to the Lord when He arrives. When He appeared, He saw them playing with the ball turning their faces away from Him. Fortunately, the ball bounced and rolled towards Him. Grabbing this golden opportunity, the Lord picked the ball and refused to return it to Parankusa Nayaki.

Furious, Parankusa Nayaki, commands the Lord to return the ball and walks away (*'En panthum kazhalum thandu pogum nambi'*). Azhwar's opinion is that the Lord would return the ball as she remarked "En" ('It's mine, referring to the act of making an offering to the Lord without giving up the ego: He doesn't accept it.)

The Lord, aware of Azhwar's intention, held the ball tightly to His chest. When Azhwar springs in anger, the Lord admires Azhwar's gestures, shoulders, and rotary motion of eye balls as she speaks, and the beauty of her eyelashes. Azhwar notices that the Lord admires her beauty and turns her face away. Now the Lord is much happier since He has got a chance to admire Azhwar's long lustrous hair.

The Lord says that He is late since He had gone to graze His cows. Azhwar doesn't believe Him and thinks that He has been with other girls and so has come late. The Lord pleads with Azhwar that He doesn't have any other place to go.

Azhwar : Go and tell your lie to five



lakh gopikas, they will believe.

Azhwar (*further questions*): Oh, you grazed cows in front of those girls? Why can't you do that in front of me?

Azhwar wonders now what the Lord is going to respond.

Lord: Ok then! If you don't speak, I shall speak to your doll and parrot.

Azhwar: They all belong to me. You can't speak to them without my permission.

Lord: I'm the Supreme and I don't need your permission.

Ok, I shall leave. But tell me, where should I go? How to go? And what to speak there?

(Saying this Lord tries to take few steps close to Azhwar.)

Azhwar (*shouts*): Don't come closer!!

The Lord tries to recollect and speak those romantic conversations they had while they were alone. But still Azhwar isn't convinced.

The Lord wonders what to do now and He devises a plan to snatch Azhwar's doll. Like a 'tug of war', He pulled the doll from one end (without much force) while Azhwar with her other friends pulled it from other end. The Lord didn't snatch the doll from Azhwar's hand in one shot, so that He could get a glimpse of those girls.

Azhwar: Sastras hail you as saviour. Is this the act of a saviour?

Now when furious Azhwar tries to leave the place, the Lord stands blocking the pathway. If at all Azhwar has to leave, she has to rub shoulders with the Lord or to

stand there facing Him (in both e scenarios, it is advantage for the Lord).

Azhwar: You are the creator and protector of this universe. Is it fair to snatch the doll from us?

Azhwar now takes a vow not to look at the Lord and decides to play by building a sandcastle and cooking along with her friends. The Lord gets annoyed, as apart from not looking at Him, they are also focusing on something else. And so, He kicked the sandcastle and their food.

Azhwar (*in anger*): You should have stood and admired our sandcastle. I hope you can't bear with anything that is good. If you had stood and admired our sandcastle, we might have had a sidelong gaze of you and in turn your lotus-eyes might have captivated us.

(Here, sand castle implicitly denotes

the samhaaram of Leela Vibhuti.)

Azhwar: Do you think what we have created is to be abandoned like your creation?

Lord: Why? What's wrong with my creation?

Azhwar: Unlike your creation that blends five elements of nature (namely air, water, fire, land and sky) in accordance to the law of Karma, my creation is made up of sands from holy rivers, built with our delicate hands with lots of effort. You have destroyed our superior food as well.

Lord: What's so special about your food?

Azhwar: Your food can only be consumed by you. Whereas our food can be consumed by all devotees.

(Upanishad says 'Atha Charachara Grahanaa'- during samharam the Lord consumes everything as food. It shows His Supremacy.)

The Lord is extremely elated now as He has broken Azhwar's vow that she will not look at Him. The Lord feels that winning over Ravana, Mahabali or 21 generations of Kshatriya (in Parasurama avatar) are not at all a victory, whereas winning over the heart of Parankusa Nayaki is the victory. In fact, before winning over Azhwar, the Lord even wonders what's the use of wearing His crown!!

There is a *sastra vakyam*, which says "Kshiyante chasya-karmani tasmin drishte paravare", which means, 'On seeing the Supreme, one's deeds and doubts vanish'. Similarly, for Azhwar her doubts get cleared and she starts to repent for not looking at Him.

Here, the Lord's destruction of sandcastle and food with His feet implicitly means He has destroyed Azhwar's vow that she will not look at Him. Similarly, the Lord destroys our egos that are hindrance in attaining Him through His holy feet.

For the Lord, the creation of universe is effortless comparing to the efforts He makes to break the worldly ties of every *jeevatma*.

In this season of love, let our hearts brim with *bhakthi* and love to attain His feet. Happy Valentine's Day!





Protecting lives, ensuring happiness

LIC Centre, 1st Floor,
John Kennedy Street,
Port Louis

marketing@licmauritius.intnet.mu

208 1485, Ext 24 [Port Louis]
4674960 [Qautre Bornes]

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