

MAURITIUS TIMES

• "Democracy is only an experiment in government, and it has the obvious disadvantage of merely counting votes instead of weighing them." — William R. Inge

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The Path to Autocracy

Approximately a year ago, in these very columns, we asserted that conditions could not deteriorate further than they had since the instalment of the MSM-led government in November 2019. Regrettably, our prediction was off the mark. The situation has not only failed to improve, but misgovernance and institutional dysfunction have plummeted to an unprecedented low, akin to what is observed in countries on the path to autocracy or already entrenched in it.

Our evaluation last year regarding the state of Mauritius' democracy — or rather, its retreat therefrom — did not rely on the V-Dem Institute, which ranked Mauritius among the "top 10 autocratizing countries" in its 2021 report. Instead, it was based on the findings of the judicial inquiry - chaired by Magistrate Vidya Mungroo-Jugurnauth - into the murder of MSM activist Soopramanien Kistnen and its potential political motivations. Extracts from that report, published by the media, revealed more about the state of misgovernance in the country than international rating agencies ever could. The inquiry exposed, among others, the "abhorrent" conduct of criminal investigations by the police, underlining their disregard for both the Magistrate's and the DPP's directives in completing various aspects of their murder investigation.

However, the rot seems to have extended beyond the revelations of the judicial inquiry. Aside from the public perception of organized cover-ups related to shocking cases and questionable methods used to silence perceived adversaries, the track record of the anti-corruption agency, ICAC, shows the institution in a poor light. It appears either unable or unwilling to fulfil its mandated role as prescribed by the law, as evidenced by its prolonged investigations into cases involving government members or those close to the political leaders of the day.

All this appears to be part of a multi-pronged strategy - that of utilizing propaganda (via MBC-TV), imposing censor-

ship (through IBA and ICTA regulations targeting private broadcasters), engineering cover-ups (as perceived in high-profile cases by investigative agencies), and repressing potential adversaries - all aimed at shielding those in power from political discomfort. Our comments from last year, still valid today, did not even touch upon potential irregularities in the regime of permits and licences, or debt write-offs favouring the privileged and their associates. Nor did it address the damages inflicted on horse racing and gambling, as well as the scourge of drug abuse in the countryside - which would have painted a darker image of the country's reputation.

For anyone harbouring doubts about misgovernance and the direction the current government is taking the country, the passing of the Financial Crimes Commission Act - a year ahead of the next elections - drafted over eight years and debated by MPs in just one week should serve as an eye-opener. Besides other contentious issues associated with this legislation and addressed in these columns these last two weeks with regard to questions on the constitutionality of the law and the potential for political spying, the timing and haste in enacting this legislation raise questions about the government's true motives in appointing what effectively is tantamount to a political nominee to head the FCC, with powers that can terminate investigations, especially those involving political figures aligned with those in power, without the involvement of the Office of the DPP. This could potentially shield those close to power from any form of censure through a no-questions-asked decision by the FCC to end investigations in such cases.

While Mauritius has made significant economic progress despite its limited resources, much credit is due to its adherence to the principles of good governance, the rule of law, and the separation of powers embedded in its Constitution. Unfortunately, the passing of the FCC Act does not align with these principles.

The Conversation

People love to vote in a new democracy – and then they rapidly lose interest

Voting patterns over decades show how hard it is to maintain enthusiasm for democracy.



Tunisians were elated to vote in their first free elections since the fall of their dictatorship in 2011 – but turnout has since fallen from 90% to 11%. Pic - EPA

Poland's recent election has been hailed as a great triumph of democracy in a global environment of democratic backsliding. It brought to power a coalition of pro-democratic forces led by Donald Tusk, the former president of the European Council.

This election was also considered a historical landmark because it saw Poland record its highest voter turnout since 1919. Participation was even higher than the election that cemented the fall of Communism, paving the way for democracy in the first place.

Yet this election seems to be an outlier. Patterns of voter turnout over several decades have shown a systematic and consistent decline. And this decline is much more accelerated in new democracies, such as those that have transitioned away from communism following the end of the USSR.

This pattern is puzzling. We might

expect enthusiasm for democratic transitions to boost voter turnout. Citizens who have ached to exert their democratic rights during a long period of political repression might naturally head out to the polls in their droves.

In the immediate term, this is the case. The euphoria and enthusiasm of the democratic transition can lead to higher turnout in a new democracy's first election after transition.

I've examined electoral turnout in 1,086 elections across 100 countries between 1946 and 2015 and found that turnout in the first election after a democratic transition is about three percentage points higher than other elections (in new and established democracies).

But the high turnout rate in the first election is a short-term phenomenon.

Roman Gabriel Olar,
Dublin City University

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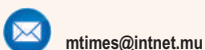
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A Very Warm Thank You
to all our
Readers, Business Associates and Well-Wishers
for their Support and Good Wishes during the year.
Merry Xmas & Best Wishes for the New Year

Our last edition this year will come out next Friday. Kindly note that our office will be closed for the end-of-year festive season as from Friday 29 December 2023.
We will resume work on Monday 8 January 2024.

Mauritius Times

Panem et Circenses

The Politics of Freebies, Salary Increase and Diversion

Platonix

“Panem et circenses,” Latin for “bread and circuses,” refers to a strategy employed by ancient Roman emperors to pacify and control the populace through the distribution of free food and entertainment. The phrase is attributed to the Roman poet Juvenal, who criticized the citizens of Rome for being more concerned with their own pleasure and well-being than with political responsibility. While the phrase originated in the context of ancient Rome, “panem et circenses” has been invoked in modern times to criticize similar practices where governments use populist measures, often in the form of economic benefits or distractions, to maintain support or divert attention from more significant political challenges. The term is a reminder of the delicate balance between meeting the immediate needs of the populace and addressing long-term societal issues within a political system.

In the dialogue that follows, Socrates engages with Cephalus, a wealthy and retired old businessman, head of a business family. Socrates had known him a long time and admired him.

Socrates: Greetings, dear friend! Today, let us embark on a jovial journey, exploring the realms of salary increase and compensation, and the tantalizing dance of election freebies, the modern “panem et circenses”. Pray, tell me, have you ever found yourself in the midst of negotiations for a salary raise?

Cephalus: Ah, Socrates! The dance of salary negotiations is as intricate as a minuet. I mean... just like a slow, stately ballroom dance. One must tread lightly, gracefully, and occasionally throw in a pirouette for good measure.

Socrates: A delightful analogy, my friend! But do you not find it curious that in these negotiations, individuals often feel the need to justify their worth with a list of accomplishments, as if preparing a scroll for the approval



Socrates was an ancient Greek philosopher who lived in Athens from 469 to 399 BCE. He is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Western philosophy. Unlike many philosophers of his time, Socrates did not leave behind any written works. Instead, his ideas and methods were conveyed through the writings of his students, particularly Plato, who documented Socratic dialogues in his works. In a typical Socratic dialogue, Socrates engages in a conversation with another person, often someone claiming to have knowledge on a particular subject. Through a series of questions and responses, Socrates challenges the perspectives of his companions, encouraging them to refine their thoughts and consider alternative viewpoints.

of the gods?

Cephalus: Indeed, Socrates! It's a grand spectacle, a performance where one must present their feats as if challenging Hercules to an Olympic duel. “Behold, I have conquered the spreadsheet of doom and slain the dragon of inefficient workflows!”

Socrates: A heroic feat, no doubt! Yet, let us not forget the grand carnival of elec-

tions, where politicians parade their promises like kings throwing gold coins to the masses. Do you see a parallel between the salary dance and the political circus?

Cephalus: Absolutely, Socrates! In both cases, there's a theatrical element. It's as if politicians and employees alike are auditioning for the lead role in the grand play of life, hoping for a standing ovation and a shower of golden drachmas (a former monetary unit of Greece).

Socrates: Golden drachmas, you say? How fitting! It is a spectacle indeed.

Now, in the realm of election freebies, it's as if they've discovered a magical treasure chest filled with promises that can solve all of society's problems.

Cephalus: Precisely! It's a spectacle, a grand circus where politicians juggle promises like skilled acrobats, hoping that the audience won't notice the lack of substance.

Socrates: And what of the citizens, my friend? Are they not like children in a candy store, gleefully accepting every sweet promise without consi-

dering the nutritional value?

Cephalus: Oh, Socrates, you hit the nail on the head! It's a political candy store, and the citizens are filling their baskets with promises, not realizing that they might end up with a stomachache after the elections.

Socrates: One might argue that politicians are not just offering promises but attempting to outbid each other with extravagant gifts. Does this not resemble a marketplace where votes are the currency?

Cephalus: A brilliant observation, Socrates! It's like a boisterous auction where politicians flaunt their wares — free education, free healthcare, free everything for all! The citizens, in turn, play the role of discerning buyers, hoping to snag the best deal for their votes.

Socrates: An auction of promises! How intriguing! But, my friend, does this not lead to a paradox where the electorate, like shoppers enticed by flashy advertisements, might prioritize immediate gains over the long-term well-being of the state?

Cephalus: Ah, the paradox of the political marketplace! It's true, Socrates. Citizens may get so caught up in the allure of freebies that they forget to read the fine print, missing the part about responsible governance and sustainable policies.

Socrates: A cautionary tale, indeed! So, as we waltz through the dance of salary negotiations and marvel at the spectacle of election freebies, let us not lose sight of the bigger picture. In the grand theatre of life, a balance must be struck between personal gain and the collective welfare.

Cephalus: Wise words, Socrates! Let us navigate these theatrical realms with grace and humour, mindful of the responsibilities that come with both negotiating our worth and choosing leaders for the grand stage of democracy.

Socrates: Well said, my friend! Let us hope that in the grand carnival of democracy, the citizens do not get lost in the dizzying whirl of freebies and remember the true essence of self-governance.



BUILDING & LAND USE PERMIT APPLICATION

Notice for Permission for Land Use

Take notice that I Rajcoomar Jhoty will apply to the District Council of Flacq for a Building and Land Use Permit for a proposed Cold Storage at Moncellement Mon Reve Camp Ithier.

Any person feeling aggrieved by the proposal may lodge an objection in writing to the above-named Council within 15 days as from the date of this publication.

22 Dec 2023

République de Maurice: Des 'snaps élections' au début de l'année prochaine?

La fenêtre de tir pour la majorité comme pour l'opposition semble être bien plus proche qu'on ne le pense

Par A. Bartleby

In'aura échappé à personne qu'un "mood" ou une disposition envers la campagne électorale plane déjà sur le pays. L'alliance PTr-MMM-PMSD a effectué sa tournée du pays avec ses congrès, malgré une annulation - celle du dernier congrès début décembre. Parallèlement, les partis extra-parlementaires s'activent également à s'organiser et à déployer leurs candidats sur le terrain dans leur circonscription respective. Certains rapprochements se font alors que d'autres se défont, comme ce fut récemment le cas entre Roshi Badhain et Patrick Belcourt.

Le MSM est lui aussi à la manœuvre, avec Pravind Jugnauth qui a pris soin de faire la tournée des circonscriptions pour les célébrations de cette fin d'année. 2023 fut marquée par le 40ème anniversaire du MSM, et le parti du soleil avait planifié un calendrier s'échelonnant sur toute l'année afin de célébrer ses quatre décennies d'existence comme il se devait.

En matière de bataille des images, chaque camp affine ses armes avec des manifestations plus ou moins réussies et maîtrisées. Dans tous les cas de figure, le sentiment plane que cette période festive serait la dernière de la mandature présente et que la République de Maurice aurait un autre gouvernement pour les fêtes à la fin de l'année prochaine...

Pravind Jugnauth: "Mo mem Père Noël"

En matière de politique publique, l'augmentation du salaire minimum est apparue comme une surprise en cette fin d'année. Et cette dernière a ouvert la voie aux multiples spéculations quant au calendrier politique de l'année prochaine. En effet, beaucoup s'attendaient à



tion du salaire minimum, suivie de la revalorisation salariale.

En réalité, ces augmentations étaient urgentes au regard des effets de l'inflation sur le pouvoir d'achat des ménages, et sur celui des petits salaires en particulier. Mais cette augmentation reste néanmoins une munition politique qui vient d'être tirée. De ce point de vue, il ne reste pas grand-chose sur quoi le gouvernement peut jouer en termes d'augmentation du revenu des ménages. Nous savons que le ministre des Finances s'est donné les moyens d'augmenter la pension de vieillesse sans passer par un autre budget, ce qui laisse à penser que la pension pourrait bientôt également augmenter.

L'autre clavier sur lequel pourra jouer le gouvernement sera la mise en place de subsides sur les denrées, permettant une diminution du coût de la vie. Ainsi, entre l'augmentation des salaires et de la pension, et une diminution des coûts des denrées de base et peut-être des énergies, il se pourrait bien que le gouvernement permette à la majorité des ménages mauriciens de retrouver le sourire en 2024.

gouvernement pour appeler la population aux urnes.

Nous pouvons spéculer que la dissolution du Parlement et la date des élections se tiendront avant la fin du mois d'avril ou au milieu du mois de mai. La raison à cela est simple : les élections générales se tiendront à la fin du mois d'avril et au début du mois de mai en Inde, et nous devinons que Pravind Jugnauth ne voudra pas empiéter sur le calendrier de son "grand frère" Narendra Modi, qui devrait être facilement reconduit aux affaires de la Grande Péninsule à l'issue de ces élections.

Diego Garcia: Dénouement favorable par rapport à la question du loyer?

Cette fenêtre de tir semble réaliste au regard des données actuelles. Toutefois, il se pourrait que Pravind Jugnauth ait d'autres plans et souhaiterait aller jusqu'au bout de la mandature actuelle. Nous avons du mal à voir comment il fera cela sans l'apport d'une entrée importante d'argent dans le budget national. Or, il se pourrait également que le gouvernement actuel mise sur cela. L'augmentation du salaire minimum constituerait ainsi une fuite en avant en attendant des développements de grande envergure au niveau des finances publiques.

Certains parlent d'ailleurs d'un dénouement favorable par rapport à la question du loyer de Diego Garcia. Les médias locaux se sont montrés pessimistes quant à cette conclusion, relayant un article publié en Angleterre mais dont le fondement reste à être démontré. Pravind Jugnauth, lui, n'a pas réagi à ce propos, gardant le cap en espérant sans doute qu'une résolution favorable pour la République de Maurice soit trouvée au début de l'année prochaine. Il est aussi connu que Narendra Modi en a fait une condition de ses discussions avec le Premier ministre britannique, Rishi Sunak sur la question de l'accord commercial que ce dernier espère tant conclure avec l'Inde...

Si c'est le cas, alors le gouvernement jouera la carte du temps. Une entrée d'argent de cette envergure lui donnera d'immenses moyens pour accélérer ses projets d'infrastructures et pour permettre aux Mauriciens de retrouver un niveau de vie auquel ils aspirent. Si tel est le cas, alors l'opposition pourrait se retrouver en mauvaise posture avant même l'annonce des prochaines élections générales. Mais nous n'en sommes pas encore là, et la fenêtre de tir pour la majorité comme pour l'opposition semble être bien plus proche qu'on ne le pense.

☞ Voir plus en page 5



une série de politiques du type «fer labours doux», Pravind Jugnauth affirmant lui-même lors d'une sortie qu'il va être comme le Père Noël et qu'il va distribuer des cadeaux. Est-ce donc le début de la mise en place de la stratégie du MSM en vue des prochaines élections?

Le "timing" de cette augmentation a ainsi de quoi surprendre de par le fait que les finances publiques sont actuellement dans une situation complexe. Cela ne signifie pas que le gouvernement n'a pas les moyens de se montrer généreux, mais cette générosité devrait être particulièrement raisonnable, donc rationnelle et frugale.

En d'autres termes, le gouvernement n'a pas les moyens d'entrer dans la surenchère des politiques de la gratuité ou du "welfare". Il a une marge de manœuvre, mais il n'a pas autant de munitions qu'on peut le penser. Or, une munition vient déjà d'être tirée avec l'augmenta-

Mais cette embellie ne pourrait être que momentanée. L'économie mauricienne reste extrêmement exposée aux risques des fluctuations de l'économie mondiale et 2024 se présente déjà comme une année compliquée avec une "outlook" ou une perspective qui reste pessimiste globalement. Même si certains autres enjeux poussent vers un optimisme réel, la prudence est de mise.

Ainsi, il semble évident que le gouvernement a bel et bien mis en place et a inauguré sa stratégie électorale avec l'augmentation du salaire minimum. Il y a une séquence d'événements culturels et religieux qui vont s'aligner à partir du mois de janvier, et nous devinons que les élus de la majorité afficheront une présence effective sur ces différents fronts. Ainsi, nous pouvons nous attendre à un "build-up" de trois à quatre mois avant que Pravind Jugnauth n'use de sa prérogative de chef du

Le monde est-il devenu plus dangereux en 2023?

Lorsque le chancelier allemand Olaf Scholz, dans un discours prononcé devant le parlement le 27 février 2022, a qualifié l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie de « tournant », le risque d'extension de la guerre était déjà perceptible. Mais avait-il prévu que nous assisterions à un enchaînement de guerres régionales, ou que les tensions entre grandes puissances s'exacerbent presque jour après jour ? Sans doute non, mais force est de constater, malheureusement, que nous en sommes là aujourd'hui. De plus, la spirale guerrière qui a été initiée à la sortie de la pandémie de la Covid-19 ne semble pas ralentir.

La guerre Ukraine-Russie n'était que le premier domino de la lutte enclenchée entre pouvoirs. Par la suite, le Hamas a lancé une attaque terroriste brutale contre Israël depuis Gaza, en tuant 1,400 Israéliens – pour la plupart des civils – et en enlevant plus de 200 autres. Comment un coup aussi meurtrier a-t-il pu être porté à la plus grande puissance militaire et de renseignement du Moyen-Orient ? Une organisation terroriste comme le Hamas aurait-elle pu accomplir un tel exploit par ses propres moyens ?

Prenez en compte la précision de l'attaque et toute la planification dont elle a fait l'objet. De toute évidence, l'objectif n'était pas simplement d'organiser une démonstration de brutalité impitoyable, dans un bain de sang, contre des civils israéliens, y compris des grands-mères et des enfants en bas âge. Mais ne s'agissait-il pas plutôt de réactiver le traumatisme juif en reproduisant une démonstration de violence qui n'est pas sans rappeler les atrocités de la Shoah, c'est-à-dire la tentative des nazis d'exterminer l'ensemble du peuple juif ? Le message pour les Juifs n'était-il pas qu'ils ne doivent jamais se sentir en sécurité, même avec la supériorité militaire d'Israël ?

Quoi qu'il en soit, l'attentat du 7 octobre a laissé l'ensemble du Moyen-Orient au bord d'une guerre majeure. La réponse israélienne a été d'une telle violence, avec plus de 14,000 morts du côté palestinien, que toute tentative de désescalade semble aujourd'hui compromise, et ce, pour un certain temps. L'existence même d'Israël étant en jeu, les Etats-Unis et l'Europe ont inévitablement été impliqués. Mais d'autres aussi, par exemple, la Chine (grand importateur d'hydrocarbures iraniens) a déployé des navires de guerre dans la région.

De son côté, Israël qui soutient qu'il n'avait d'autre choix que de riposter militairement pour rétablir la dissuasion, même si cette guerre va encore coûter de nombreuses vies civiles et va aggraver la haine entre les deux camps. Ceux qui ont planifié l'opération du 7 octobre ont sans doute misé sur ce résultat, ce qui suggère que le Hamas n'aurait pas agi seul et que des objectifs géopolitiques de déstabilisation d'une région déjà instable sont à l'œuvre.

Vers l'émergence d'un nouvel ordre mondial

Un parallèle frappant entre les guerres en Ukraine et à Gaza, c'est que toutes les deux impliquent une lutte pour la survie même d'un État-nation existant. Mais ce qui est tout aussi important, c'est que ces deux guerres confirment que nous assistons vraiment à l'émergence d'un nouvel ordre mondial. Alors que l'Occident se tient fermement aux côtés d'Israël, des puissances autoritaires telles



La guerre Ukraine-Russie n'était que le premier domino de la lutte enclenchée entre pouvoirs. P - RTBF

que la Russie et la Chine se rangent opportunément dans l'autre camp, tout comme une grande partie du Sud global, en raison de ses propres souvenirs traumatisants de la colonisation.

L'Occident ne peut se contenter d'accepter cette dynamique « nous contre le reste du monde », ce qui est devenu évident avec l'attaque de la Russie contre l'Ukraine. Dans le long terme, une telle polarisation géopolitique ne fera qu'aggraver la situation de tous.

Mais, pour inverser la tendance, il faudra des efforts de diplomatie héroïques. Et étant donné cette nouvelle donne, il se pourrait que le Sud global ait ici un rôle essentiel à jouer. En tant qu'élément essentiel du nouvel ordre mondial, le Sud global exige d'ailleurs d'être reconnu et de s'asseoir à la table des négociations. Alors que la fonction même des Nations-Unies, et de son Conseil de Sécurité, semble aujourd'hui plus inutile que jamais, il y a peut-être là une piste sérieuse à explorer.

Outre les guerres en Ukraine et au Moyen-Orient, la menace d'un conflit militaire en mer de Chine méridionale ou dans le détroit de Taïwan – qui impliquerait directement deux superpuissances, les Etats-Unis et la Chine – se fait de plus en plus pressante. Dans ce contexte, d'autres guerres – comme par exemple, celle qui a opposé l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan au sujet du Haut-Karabakh – risquent d'être oubliées.

Ces événements sont passés entièrement sous silence actuellement à Maurice, où les médias sont entièrement concentrés sur l'actualité locale. Pourtant les développements mondiaux pourraient avoir un impact bien plus important sur notre vie quotidienne qu'un texte de loi passé en l'absence de l'opposition.

Historiquement, les efforts visant à modifier l'équilibre mondial des pouvoirs, ou à réviser et imposer un nouvel ordre international, ne se sont jamais déroulés sans violence. C'est d'ailleurs une donnée primordiale de l'histoire de la géopolitique. Tout nouveau monde qui est sur le point d'être enfanté naît d'un accouchement douloureux, sanglant même. Le ton de plus en plus agressif des grandes puissances les unes envers les autres n'en est que plus inquiétant.

L'effondrement de la Pax Americana

Le monde de la Pax Americana d'après 1945 semble plus vulnérable que jamais. Plutôt qu'attendre de voir s'il finira par s'effondrer de lui-même, ses principaux adversaires sont impatients d'exploiter ses faiblesses apparentes. Dans la mesure où il existe encore une communauté internationale, sa volonté de maintenir le statu quo semble avoir considérablement diminué, pour ne pas dire que la capacité de maintenir ce statu quo est aujourd'hui quasi-inexistante.

Il est difficile, dans ce contexte, de ne pas penser à 1914, lorsque les événements ont pris leur propre envol et ont précipité la Première Guerre mondiale. La bascule du monde dans le 20ème siècle devint le plus meurtrier de l'histoire humaine. L'honneur et l'ambition prirent le pas sur la raison, laquelle une fois de plus, redevint l'esclave des passions religieuses et nationalistes.

Dans la tourmente d'aujourd'hui, nous avons déjà un aperçu d'un monde sans ordre. Ceux qui se moquent du président américain Joe Biden en raison de son âge devraient réfléchir à ce qui se passerait si cette dernière crise au Moyen-Orient devait se dérouler sans une direction aussi prudente et expérimentée à la Maison-Blanche. Le monde serait plus incertain et plus dangereux qu'il ne l'est déjà.

Alors que l'année 2023 arrive à son terme, la question de savoir si elle a été l'année d'une augmentation du danger mondial est donc posée. Et il serait utopique et chimérique de répondre par la négative à cette question. Que nous réservera 2024 de ce point de vue ? Disons que cette nouvelle année ne se prépare pas sous les meilleurs auspices, et que nous avons une multiplicité de raisons d'être pessimistes. Nous consacrerons, la semaine prochaine, la dernière page de l'année 2023 aux perspectives locales et internationales pour 2024.

Japon, vers la fin d'une constitution pacifique

La remilitarisation du Japon aura des conséquences réelles sur la géopolitique mondiale

La Constitution du Japon est unique au monde du fait d'avoir été rédigée par les Américains, sous la supervision de Douglas MacArthur, alors commandant suprême des forces d'occupation alliées après la défaite du Japon et la fin de la guerre du Pacifique en 1945.

La Constitution de 1947, ou la Nihonkoku Kenpo, a été votée le 3 novembre 1946 et est entrée en vigueur le 3 mai 1947. Elle fait suite à la Constitution Meiji de 1889 qui avait été capitale dans l'ouverture de l'ère de modernisation et d'industrialisation qui allait faire de l'Empire du Soleil Levant une puissance régionale

majeure au 20ème siècle.

Bien que la Constitution de 1947 conserve des similitudes avec celle de 1889, elle comporte néanmoins des différences majeures. Et l'une de ces différences est l'article 9 qui déclare que le Japon renonce à jamais à la guerre. Cet article est la conséquence directe des exactions japonaises avant et pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, mais surtout du traumatisme causé par les bombardements nucléaires d'Hiroshima et de Nagasaki les 6 et 9 août 1945 respectivement.

A. Bartleby

☞ Suite en page 7



Anil Madan

A Survey of Significant Events of 2023

The year highlighted even more starkly than is usually the case, that the more things change, the more they stay the same

As we look back over the events that captured our attention during 2023, I am struck by how the year highlighted even more starkly than is usually the case, that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

For the duration of the year, the most significant ongoing event was Putin's unrelenting war on Ukraine. As the year moved on, it was difficult to see anything displacing that major story. But the ongoing climate-related disasters around world and the frequency of adverse weather events showed that we are simply not meeting, and perhaps without even trying, the challenge to mitigate and adapt to catastrophic storms, floods, and fires.

Just as the Middle East seemed to be simmering down, albeit with Iran's malevolent Ayatollahs always lurking, we had the October 7 attack by Hamas deep into Israel. Whether Iran had anything to do with the specific attack remains to be seen, but there are already dispiriting indications that high level Iranians were in fact in on the planning.

The third most important story was the deterioration in China-US relations and the ratcheting up of China's pressure on Taiwan. China's ongoing repression of the people of Hong Kong took a stark turn near the end of the year when the trial of 76-year-old Jimmy Lai started.

But there was a glimmer of good news on the China front. Presidents Xi and Biden had two somewhat productive discussions in Bali and San Francisco. High-level contacts from Secretary of State Blinken, Treasury Secretary Yellen, and Defense Secretary Austin, suggest that there is a conscious effort to lower the temperature. Treasury Secretary Yellen pointedly stated that the US does not seek disengagement from China. Nor should the US or China continue to approach the relationship with the idea that the other is hostile.



Pic - Yahoo News

“On October 7, 2023, the face of the Middle East was changed when Hamas attacked inside Israel, killed 1,200, and took some 200 hostages. As that event unfolded, I predicted that Hamas had made a major mistake, that this attack would give Israel carte blanche to go after Hamas and wreak devastation such as we have never seen before. Sadly, I was right. We have perhaps seen only the first chapters that will eventually chronicle of what Hamas wrought on October 7, 2023...”



Rising Ukraine war fatigue endangering US, EU support. Pic NY Times

“2023 showed us that the noblest of intentions of countries that have been Ukraine's staunchest supporters have begun to yield to war fatigue among their citizens, and the immense financial and materiel cost. So it is that both the European countries and the US are seeing pressure to stop the flow of aid to Ukraine. This wavering, in the face of no disagreement that Ukraine is doomed without continuing aid is troubling. The resolve of the Ukrainian people, and their tenacious desire to be a free and democratic nation, has seemingly lost its allure for the nations who initially cheered it as the raison d'être for their declared unwavering commitment...”

President Xi called on President Biden to stop providing military aid and support to Taiwan and to allow the unification process to come about peacefully. There is a serious disconnect here. Forcing reunification against the will of the Taiwanese people is a notion that runs contrary to every American democratic value. At the same time, it is not realistic to think that America can rebuild its manufacturing base that has largely gone to China or, indeed, relocate it to other countries. There is simply not enough capital to build replacement factories and if there were, where would the world find the workers to run them?

The two countries seem to be working towards an understanding that China could invest in manufacturing in other countries. This would be to the mutual benefit of China and the US and would ease the impact of China's demographic bomb as it is called — the effect of a shrinking and aging population, and a consequent slowing of China's great growth trajectory.

Surge in anti-democratic authoritarianism

There was generally, a seeming surge in anti-democratic authoritarianism and a rise in local conflicts around the globe. The most blatant offenders, in no particular order, include Erdogan of Turkey, Lukashenko of Belarus, and Orban of Hungary. Repression of journalists and opposition politicians in India remains an ongoing story, but one difficult to fathom since Prime Minister Modi does not appear to require oppressing others to stay in power and his record in improving the lives of ordinary Indians is quite remarkable.

If we consider Putin's ongoing war on Ukraine, the folly

of human nature should confound us. Whereas it appears that neither side can prevail in the short run, as I prognosticated back in 2022, it will be difficult for Ukraine to hang on. True, the prospects for a Ukrainian victory — which really means survival as a nation — have been heartening with reports of Ukrainian successes from counteroffensives and severe troop losses by the Russians. There is, however, the other side of the equation. In large measure, as much as Ukraine's strength is the resolve of its people, the reality is that without continuing and unbegrudging aid from the US and EU/NATO countries, Ukraine cannot go on.

2023 showed us that the noblest of intentions of countries that have been Ukraine's staunchest supporters have begun to yield to war fatigue among their citizens, and the immense financial and materiel cost. So it is that both the European countries and the US are seeing pressure to stop the flow of aid to Ukraine. This wavering, in the face of no disagreement that Ukraine is doomed without continuing aid is troubling. The resolve of the Ukrainian people, and their tenacious desire to be a free and democratic nation, has seemingly lost its allure for the nations who initially cheered it as the raison d'être for their declared unwavering commitment.

President Biden who promised massive aid for Ukraine and delivered up to a point, has suddenly seen that his ability to continue American support is dependent on the acquiescence of the Republican controlled House of Representatives. And the extreme right wing Republican Party Congressional representatives are unwilling to compromise on aid to Ukraine unless Biden compromises on border enforcement. It is not clear whether the extreme right-wing faction of the Republican party is opposed to aid for Ukraine on any principled basis or is merely using something that is apparently near and dear to Biden's heart to gain leverage over him.

Threats to democracy and stability in Ukraine came from outside its borders when Putin attacked. The long list of wars and conflicts going across the world shows that threats to democracy and freedom are spurred by internal threats as well. In Niger, the military overthrew the country's elected president. Gabon's military also took power. The elections in Thailand might as well not have happened. The winner was not given a chance to form a government. Instead, the armed forces installed a puppet or pro-military government. In South Sudan, war erupted among two warlords and their supporters. In Latin America, elected governments were not safe either, most notably in Peru and Guatemala.

Victor Orban of Hungary was able to defy the will of all other EU members when he seemingly beat a retreat and allowed for talks on Ukraine's admission as a member of the EU to proceed. But notably, he has not abandoned his threat to veto Ukraine's eventual admission as a member.

Erdogan was able to defy the will of NATO countries to admit Finland and Sweden. He relented as to Finland and may yet give up his opposition to Sweden's membership in NATO.

Surprisingly, the remaining EU and NATO countries didn't move to boot Hungary out of the EU and Turkiye out of NATO. A little bit of reverse authoritarianism against autocrats might go a long way.

On October 7, 2023, the face of the Middle East was changed when Hamas attacked inside Israel, killed 1,200, and took some 200 hostages. As that event unfolded, I predicted that Hamas had made a major mistake, that this attack would give Israel carte blanche to go after Hamas and wreak devastation such as we have never seen before. Sadly, I was right. We have perhaps seen only the first chapters that will eventually chronicle of what Hamas wrought on October 7, 2023.

● Cont. on page 7

A Survey of Significant Events of 2023

• Cont. from page 6

For now, the situation remains in flux. Israel's quest to destroy Hamas does not allow for a ceasefire of any substantial duration. Yet the pressure on Israel is immense to stop its widespread bombing that necessarily kills large numbers of Palestinian civilians. Already, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is intense and we may yet see death tolls rising exponentially from starvation and disease.

The COP28 conference, a sorry exercise and a sham

The COP28 conference in Dubai was, to most dedicated climate change aficionados, a sorry exercise and a sham as Sultan al Jaber, the head of the conference is an oil industry executive. The conference ended with a concluding announcement that attendees had agreed to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems. It did not include language calling for a phasing out of fossil fuels as some had wished.



The result may well be a distinction without a difference. The major energy consuming countries are still dependent on fossil fuels to run their economies and absent a major technological breakthrough, that is not likely to change over the next 25-30+ years.

The agreement acknowledged that it is imperative that we phase down "unabated" coal burning. Hence, the notion of transitioning to "energy systems" with the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. As well, the agreement called for accelerated

action in the remainder of this critical decade.

Unabated coal burning means uncontrolled release of CO₂. Abatement implies that carbon capture and storage technology will be used to keep CO₂ emissions from being released into the atmosphere. However, the attendees left without defining what effective abatement should achieve at a minimum. What we were left with is a system that still clearly lacks any standards. How much of the CO₂ emissions need to be captured before abatement is considered sufficient to meet environment-saving goals? Is 50% of CO₂ emissions or 90%? There was also no serious attempt to address the problem of methane release.

Lastly, with a presidential election coming up in 2024, a major story has been Donald Trump's continuing polling strength

among Republican Party faithful. It is not clear at all that Trump's vociferous supporters reflect anything other than a dedicated cohort among a minority party in America. But the ongoing debacle on America's southern border and the populist appeals that Trump uses to rally support among the faithful, suggest that the Biden team better pay attention.

The Colorado Supreme Court has ruled that Trump is disqualified from serving as President for another term because he engaged in insurrection against the United States and gave aid and comfort to other insurrectionists. It ordered his name removed from the Republican primary ballot. Trump has vowed to appeal to the United States Supreme Court. There are serious legal questions to be resolved, but whatever the outcome, allowing Trump to run could have profound consequences for the country if he wins, and barring him from running is likely to engender protests and howls from his supporters and Republican politicians that will create much turmoil in the US.

Cheerz...
Bwana

Éclairages

☞ Suite de la page 5

Ce fameux article 9 est absolument unique dans le monde, faisant du Japon le seul pays dont la Constitution est fondée dans le rejet total de la prérogative belligérante de la souveraineté politique et dans l'affirmation d'un pacifisme d'État. Ce pacifisme se traduit par le refus du maintien d'une armée d'attaque, même si le Japon possède des forces dites d'autodéfense, profondément ancrées dans la société japonaise moderne.

L'article 9 fait énormément débat. Depuis 1947 déjà, en réalité, mais encore plus aujourd'hui.

Tout d'abord, un pays qui refuse son droit souverain à faire la guerre est un pays qui ne peut pas assurer sa propre défense, ce qui constitue le problème fondamental de toute souveraineté politique dont l'objectif primordial est la sécurisation d'un territoire et d'une population.

Dans les faits, le Japon n'a jamais fait une croix sur la sécurité de son territoire et de sa population. Bien qu'elle rejette le maintien d'une force militaire conséquente, le Japon n'a jamais trouvé le moindre problème à ce que les Etats-Unis installent des bases militaires sur ses territoires. Ces bases dépasseraient le nombre de 100 sur tout le territoire japonais et couvriraient toutes les branches de l'armée américaine avec un personnel de plus de 50,000 soldats déployés. D'ailleurs, cette surpopulation de bases militaires au Japon porte le sobriquet de 'porte-avion américain'.

La réalité, c'est qu'au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le territoire japonais relevait d'une importance stratégique primordiale pour l'armée américaine de par sa proximité avec l'URSS, la Corée, le Vietnam, Taiwan, etc. C'est ainsi un contrat sécuritaire en bonne et due forme qui fut passé entre le gouvernement japonais et les forces américaines. D'un côté, le Japon accepte de ne plus entretenir d'armée mais de l'autre elle accepte de devenir un point d'ancrage extrêmement important pour l'armée américaine dans la région.

Cette formule a très bien fonctionné depuis 1947, et l'essor économique du Japon et son effort de reconstruction industrielle a fait que le pays s'est positionné

Japon, vers la fin d'une constitution pacifique



Face à la Chine, le Japon fourbit ses armes. P - Quora

comme un acteur majeur de l'économie mondiale, préférant jouer le jeu de la guerre économique au lieu de celui de la guerre coloniale, comme ce fut le cas lors de son incursion en Mandchourie en 1931, par exemple.

Mais les choses évoluent aujourd'hui rapidement. Le Japon n'est plus sur la pente ascendante économiquement, et les vieux ennemis de l'empire sont aujourd'hui dans une course effrénée à l'armement. C'est le cas de la Chine, de la Russie et de la Corée du Nord, qui a tiré cette semaine un missile balistique à longue portée vers le Japon (missile qui s'est écrasé en mer à quelques kilomètres seulement de la ZEE japonaise). Parallèlement, l'essor de la Chine et le renforcement de son influence sur la région produit le parallèle du déclin de l'influence américaine sur cette même région.

Cela donne naissance au Japon à un questionnement profond quant à la réelle importance d'entretenir une Constitution pacifiste aujourd'hui. Il ne s'agit pas pour le Japon d'entrer dans la course à l'armement, mais il est clair que la montée de la Chine va produire des

effets durables dans la région et la vieille alliance sécuritaire avec les Etats-Unis pourrait vite devenir obsolète. Ainsi, le gouvernement japonais se retrouve face à l'impératif de revoir sa politique sécuritaire et son propre positionnement dans la région.

Une armée ne sert pas uniquement à faire la guerre. Loin de là même. Une armée sert avant tout à avancer ses propres pions sur l'échiquier géopolitique et permet aux politiques de provoquer des situations de négociations ou encore de faire pression sur les différents acteurs engagés dans une situation géopolitique. Ainsi, sans armée propre, le Japon se trouve dans une situation très délicate en face de grands bouleversements qui ont lieu dans la région, ce qui devient plus que jamais le haut lieu des tensions dans l'Indo-Pacifique.

C'est la raison pour laquelle des voix de plus en plus influentes s'élèvent dans l'empire pour revoir l'article 9 de la Constitution et pour une augmentation conséquente des dépenses sécuritaires et militaires. C'est dans cet esprit que l'actuel Premier ministre, Fumio Kishida, a récemment présenté un "master plan" visant à la remilitarisation du Japon. Ce plan est loin de faire l'unanimité dans un Japon où les anciennes générations vivent toujours le traumatisme de la guerre et où les jeunes générations ont grandi dans la culture du pacifisme et refusent la militarisation.

Ce plan aboutira-t-il alors ? Nous avons envie de dire que le Japon n'a pas le choix que de redessiner ses objectifs sécuritaires et de se doter des moyens adéquats pour y arriver. Ce simple fait produira des conséquences géopolitiques importantes dans la région, et même si le Japon entretient de bonnes relations avec la Chine et voudra sans doute continuer à approfondir la coopération avec le géant chinois, il est clair que cette relation est fondée sur une défiance historique.

Ce qui est sûr, c'est que la remilitarisation du Japon aura des conséquences réelles sur la géopolitique mondiale, et il est impératif de suivre cette situation de près.

A. Bartleby

A Conversation with Uncle Claus



“Your politicians need a timeout, and your democracy needs rehab”

Contrary to his usual bubbly mien, it is a rather sombre Uncle Claus that we have met on his visit to our little island this year, one that he never misses despite all the odds. However, as our conversation progressed, he gradually unwound and assumed his normal jovial and acerbic self. Maybe the elves had something to do with that! So much the better though, and to our delight. The mood was immediately lightened, as it were, and together we took a tour of the universe kinda, and once again his cautionary words and wisdom came to the fore. It's up to us to pay heed and raise ourselves or feign indifference and pay the price. He has spoken. The rest is up to us...

wane, but there's a new variant that has surfaced isn't it, the JN.1 which is spreading. And once again, not even WHO is clear about what's happening behind the Chinese curtain with the outbreak of pneumonia in children. Another Wuhan in the making or what?

* **It's like a bad movie, huh? But that's not all. There's war in Ukraine and in the Middle**

several countries in conflict with China over its bid to control that waterway. Not to forget that North Korea keeps testing new missiles and weapons all the time.

* **What a package I say!**

You could say that again, what with your own packages that I have been hearing about during the year?

* **Oh, so you keep a tag on local happenings do you?**

Well, I became curious ever since I read that Mark Twain had compared your island to paradise. Over the years I have come to the conclusion that that idyllic depiction may well be eroding, not only physically with so much of the land being taken over by concrete and ill-planned infrastructure...

* **Wait a minute, Uncle, we've got the beautifully functioning metro...**

“Everything that affects the lives of people en masse emanates from some political decision or the other. And politicians are always making promises many of which are never fulfilled, but one thing that they know how to do is to manipulate people's minds...”

Mostly no doubt, but whoever heard of planting a tramway right in the middle of an already narrow thoroughfare at ground level and drive away business, among other problems with traffic in your once more functional Quatre-Bornes! Anyway, a metro stuck in a traffic jam? Brilliant planning! Quatre-Bornes today looks like a festive traffic jam!

And what have you been doing making a mockery of and murdering your democracy!

* **Very strong words coming from you!**

Well, you can't get away from facts, can you? You have so many unresolved cases such as unexplained disappearances of people and deaths, and no answers seem yet to be forthcoming from your elected representatives in your National Assembly. Why does so much of aggressivity prevail there? As regards the level of interventions, the less said the better.

☞ **Cont. on page 9**

‘Don't worry, your chaos is peanuts compared to the global circus. It's like *déjà vu* but with extra drama’

TP Saran

* **Hey, Uncle Claus? How come?**

How do you mean how come? You weren't expecting me this year or what?

* **Well, as always, I hoped but didn't quite expect that you'd want to be drawn into the chaos we're in! But it's sure great to see you.**

Don't you worry, it's pretty much the same all over the world, and perhaps even getting worse. Your chaos is peanuts compared to the global circus. It's like *déjà vu* but with extra drama. Certainly, no better than a year ago when we met.

* **I guess we could say that for our own situation here, but would you elaborate on what you have just said?**

Well, for a start this time last year Covid was on the

“You seem to be a rich country! Because the logical question that arises is: where is all the money coming from or will come from to finance all this generosity? Whatever be, even if the powers that be seem to be full of largesse, it's better for the people to watch their purses and not to indulge, rather they must save for a rainy day. And what amounts of debt are piling on your future citizens – well, that is a call that must be taken because the boom cannot last forever!”

East, that's another huge blow to global stability...

True, and sadly so. The Ukraine war has now gone on for 665 days to date, with no sign of ending. A second front has opened in Gaza after the dastardly genocide of innocent men, women and children including babies on October 7 in Israel. Already, with some regional players having joined in – Iran-backed Houthis, Hezbollah – and US warships moving into the Mediterranean, there were fears of a world war in the making.

* **It seems to be escalating, Uncle. Too bad!**

Indeed, just two days ago, it seems a third front, and potentially with greater risk of widespread escalation, has opened: Houthi rebels in Yemen have been attacking ships in the Red Sea. Their leader has affirmed that they will not stop despite the newly-formed coalition of 10 countries that includes Bahrain and led by the US that is meant to counter these attacks as well as piracy from Somalians. Global supplies are already under strain because of the Ukraine war, and a conflict in the Red Sea will definitely have major adverse impacts on global trade and business, and costs will escalate.

And who will be the victims? No prizes for the answer: the people, always the people.

* **I can see why you are disturbed...**

You bet am! And hurt as well! All these years I have been carrying messages of peace to no effect. Why, even the so-called Holy Land has forever been a hotbed of controversies and unrest that make even me give up hope!

But there's more, sadly, further to the east. China's ambition to take over Taiwan by force if need be adds to the already tense situation in the South China sea, with

'Your anti-corruption body's snoozing on pending cases. Wake 'em up!'

☞ Cont. on page 8

It truly is the case that some of your august members need to go back to school benches again!

But then again, one wonders what good will that do with your education system itself needing drastic reform!

But the latest blow to your democracy is surely the voting of the Financial Crimes Commission Bill in the Parliament. I am no expert in legal matters, but I learn that many sound voices were raised against the provisions of that Bill, and many legal luminaries concurred that the powers of the ODPP were being fundamentally undermined and that would be inimical to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. No less than a crime against democracy has been committed, so say the people. Anyway, your politicians need a timeout, and your democracy needs rehab.

*** Yes Uncle, indeed there has been widespread outcry against this bill...**

Of course, it was expected, wasn't it? When you already have so many cases pending at your anti-corruption body, ICAC, cases in which the outcomes of investigations are awaited for years together and no indication of when if ever the investigation will be completed and outcomes announced! No surprise! Your anti-corruption body's snoozing on pending cases. Wake 'em up!

*** You're right on spot Uncle. Another major concern is the manner of appointment of the Director of the FCC.**

Yes, I heard about that too. Everything goes to the *i-cloud* now, and that's my domain isn't it! So, I get to know kinda automatically! Without prejudice to the eventual appointee, there's no doubt that it would have been better if that process could have been more independent and transparent. But that's what politics is all about I am afraid.

*** I am surprised you've got such a hang on politics! You weren't like that before!**

Well, I've had to kind of recycle if you want, because everything that affects the lives of people en masse emanates from some political decision or the other. And politicians are always making promises many of which are never fulfilled, but one thing that they know how to do is to manipulate people's minds.

*** How do you mean?**

Freebies, haven't you heard of freebies my friend?

*** Yes of course, everybody has!**

“The latest blow to your democracy is surely the voting of the Financial Crimes Commission Bill in the Parliament. I am no expert in legal matters, but I learn that many sound voices were raised against the provisions of that Bill, and many legal luminaries concurred that the powers of the ODPP were being fundamentally undermined and that would be inimical to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. No less than a crime against democracy has been committed, so say the people...”



I am told that some more are in the pipeline in view of the forthcoming general elections possibly next year. The increase in the basic minimum wage – which was elaborated upon in your last week's issue that I happened to check on in the *i-cloud* – and the promised raise in the old age pension all are apparently meant to go in the same direction.

You seem to be a rich country! Because the logical question that arises is: where is all the money coming from or will come from to finance all this generosity? Whatever be, even if the powers that be seem to be full of largesse, it's better for the people to watch their purses and not to indulge, rather they must save for a rainy day.

And what amounts of debt are piling on your future citizens – well, that is a call that must be taken because the boom cannot last forever! That's my sincere advice!

*** I couldn't agree more Uncle. But on another note, what are your views on climate change and the recent meeting in Doha on the issue?**

I can only go by what I and everyone else is seeing and undergoing, namely the asymmetrical patterns of weather and of climate events that have been occurring all over the world in several countries simultaneously. There are still naysayers who deny that human activity is responsible for the unusual events that the world has been suffering from, but the catastrophes speak for themselves don't they?

Even as we are speaking, there's been an earthquake in China, massive floods yet again in Queensland Australia – with a crocodile seen swimming in the urban waters! -, a massive cyclone in Tamil Nadu with extensive flooding and stranded people on a scale never seen before, tornadoes in the US... the list goes on.

It is also true that conventional reporting along with social media livestreaming with internet facilities and enhanced TV viewing give a greater immediacy and impact to these phenomena. Nevertheless, that they are a matter of grave concern for all of humanity makes

absolutely no doubt.

*** Are you worried that these changes will affect you in due course?**

How can I deny that! They surely will at some point or the other, perhaps sooner than I imagine! After all, up at the North Pole also the glaciers are melting, and whether I will continue to travel by sleigh – ah, what will my fans say if I don't!

*** With these growing concerns about climate change, have you given some thought about adapting to and promoting sustainability in your gift-giving practices, considering the environmental impact?**

That's a lot to answer! But you are right to raise these issues because as climate change inevitably unfolds and impacts even more widely, definitely things will change radically. Besides, kids are very smart nowadays, and most of them know that I, Santa, do not actually come down chimneys to bring them gifts.

“You can't get away from facts, can you? You have so many unresolved cases such as unexplained disappearances of people and deaths, and no answers seem yet to be forthcoming from your elected representatives in your National Assembly. Why does so much of aggressivity prevail there? As regards the level of interventions, the less said the better. It truly is the case that some of your august members need to go back to school benches again!”

From the little that I know, there may be a role here for AI and Virtual Reality, at least for older kids. For the younger ones, the physical toys will still have a role to play and be significant. But for the older ones I guess the AI and VR guys could develop applications that can make them surf in VR rooms among toys and games of their choice – much as is happening now I think, so that they need only wear a headband and goggles and access what they fancy in the comfort of their homes. Does that answer your questions, sound plausible?

*** What will be your role then Uncle?**

Oh, I don't really know, I'm afraid! For all you know I may disappear altogether from homes and only be a figure in the capacious malls that are coming up all over! Imagine me next to a Santa selfie booth in one of your malls!

No regrets, I've had a long innings, so perhaps fade away ha ha!

*** Well, let's keep fingers crossed shall we.**

As you say my friend. Take good care of your country, despite everything it's still livable enough, try to keep it that way. Bye for now and Happy New Year!

Bye Uncle, see you next year!

TP Saran



Prakash Neerohoo

Sovereignty over Chagos

Leaseback option dependent upon ownership



The British conservative newspaper 'Daily Telegraph' announced on December 1st that the UK

government would not hand back the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius. After months of negotiation between the governments of the two countries, it seems that there is now an impasse in bilateral discussions over whether Mauritius can reclaim the Chagos, an archipelago of 53 islands in the Indian Ocean. The question henceforth is not **when** Mauritius will get back its sovereignty over the Chagos but **if** it will ever realize its legitimate claim.

During the negotiation, Mauritius' claim was based on a firm linkage between getting back the ownership of the Chagos Archipelago from the UK and leasing back one island (Diego Garcia) to the US for military use. The linkage was meant to respond to the US concern about losing access to an island that hosts a military base in a strategic zone of the world.

In a typical lease agreement under

contract law, a lease (rental) payment is made when the lessee (tenant) leases property from a lessor (owner), which recognizes that the property belongs to the lessor. While the lessor retains ownership of the property, it transfers the possession of such property to the lessee on a short-term lease (1 year with optional renewal) or a long-term lease (25, 50 or 100 years).

For Mauritius to be able to lease Diego Garcia back to the US, which maintains a military base on the island since the 1960s, it must first get back the ownership of the Chagos. Although the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has recognized the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos in its advisory opinion issued in 2019, the UK maintains that the Chagos is part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) that was formed following the detachment of the Chagos from Mauritius before independence in 1968. Since the UK does not

want to hand back the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, it means that Mauritius will have neither ownership nor possession of the Chagos in a foreseeable future.

A lease payment from the US for the military use of Diego Garcia Island would require recognizing Mauritius sovereignty over the Chagos and its actual ownership of the archipelago. The idea of a long-term lease of the island is not new. It was

proposed by Mauritius as an alternative to the creation of BIOT in the negotiation preceding the granting of independence (as mentioned in Philippe Sands' book "The Last Colony"). The UK itself leased the island to the US for 50 years until 2016, at which time it was renewed for a similar term. It is not known how much the US pays to the UK for the lease.

After the British PM Rishi Sunak opened negotiations with Mauritius on handing back the Chagos Archipelago, there is now a change of heart in the UK government. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs David Cameron and the Minister of Defence Grant Shapps have taken a hard line with US blessing. They do not recognize Mauritius' sovereignty over the Chagos despite the ICJ ruling. For geopolitical reasons, especially in the context of a potential war in the Middle East, both the

UK and US now want to retain ownership and control respectively over the Chagos.

This new stand is contradictory to their purported commitment to international law, which recognizes the territorial integrity of nations and their right to self-determination. That is the principle that they invoke to justify Western support for Ukraine in the war against Russia. The West countries have stated clearly that no peace is possible between Russia and Ukraine without the latter recovering part of its territory occupied by Russia. They claim that foreign occupation is against a rules-based international order. This is true except for the Chagos.

The Government of Mauritius pinned a lot of hope on a lease payment (estimated to be Rs 100 billion per year) from the US in its financial planning for the future. The windfall was going to fund popular, if not populist, projects. Any lease payment from the US to Mauritius would have been revenue credited to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the government for general expenditure. It would also have been a lifeline to the country's balance of payments at a time when foreign exchange inflow is low.

It seems that the "Perfidious Albion" has taken Mauritius for a ride all along. It started negotiations with Mauritius more than three years after the UN General Assembly asked it to hand back the Chagos. Initially, the UK gave the impression that it wanted to be on the right side of international law. However, it has now backtracked presumably under pressure from the US.

Musings

Dr Randhir Seewoodharry Buguth

I had the chance to celebrate the Divali festival after 17 years in Mauritius, as I had emigrated to the UK in 2006 with my family. I was proud that the pilots on the Air Mauritius flight were Mauritian for my incoming and departing flights.

Divali was celebrated nationally, but material values continue to take precedence over spiritual values. Big, towering houses adorned with fancy electric lights, sweets not made at home, and much less interaction with neighbours. Very few 'diya' lamps welcomed the return of Lord Rama to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. My Dadi always performed Lakshmi Pooja in the kitchen on that day with semolina (*greo*), home-made sweets, flowers, and all family members seeking the blessings of Lakshmi Mata for good fortune and success.

I found Mauritian to be less open and extroverted, with many keeping to themselves — an experience similar to a shock I felt in London in 2006. There seemed to be an atmosphere of mistrust among people, possibly due to higher crime rates, dishonesty, and a decline in sincerity and lo-

My Holidays to My Native Island: A Reflection



'Divali was celebrated nationally, but material values continue to take precedence over spiritual values. Big, towering houses adorned with fancy electric lights, sweets not made at home, and much less interaction with neighbours. Very few 'diya' lamps welcomed the return of Lord Rama to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness...'

yalty to each other.

Most people were engrossed in their mobile phones at malls, bus stops, metro stations, and restaurants. I even saw a guy cutting a bamboo hedge with both hands holding a pair of shears, struggling with a mobile phone wedged between his head and neck!

In supermarkets and malls, I observed that many families purchased non-essen-

tial commodities due to advertising or peer pressure. I relaxed on a bench in a shopping mall when I saw two young girls running into a café and opening the fridge to buy a can of fizzy drink. I checked the price, Rs 60.00, and discovered a supermarket a hundred meters away selling the same drink for half the price. Lack of customer information or too much of easy money?

I had the opportunity to attend a dental conference on Oral Surgery and invited a colleague, but he declined, stating that since his retirement, he has put his pen down and is no longer interested. We agreed to disagree. When I retire, I plan to have more time to share new ideas, expand my network, and find ways to contribute to society through my knowledge, skills, and experience. We have a significant responsibility to contribute to society's oral health. Unfortunately, 3000 people died of oral cancer in the UK last year, and dental surgeons are often the first to detect precancerous lesions.

We must be grateful for our welfare state, where any Mauritian can easily access a hospital dentist, unlike NHS dentists in the UK. We also have free education and free transport for the elderly. I used my

Metro Express card for free. What a wonderful experience.

When checking out for my return to the UK, the ground hostess of Air Mauritius at SSR Airport provided excellent customer care, but panicked at the weight of my suitcase, which was 6 kg over. I reassured her with a big smile that I would pay for the excess, and not to worry. I saw a huge relief on her face. I live in a country where the rule of law prevails, and I have my rights and duties.

Lastly, during my return flight, I sat next to a young girl going on holidays to visit her cousins in London. When I inquired about her studies, she proudly told me that she attends the Royal College Port Louis, my ex-College! It took me a few seconds to realize how much has changed in our educational system. She seemed very happy with the atmosphere in a mixed school, and that was wonderful. We parted at Gatwick Airport, where the temperature was 2 degrees compared to 26 degrees in Mauritius. I hope next year to meet a male student at the Queen Elizabeth College to share his experience. This was unthinkable for people of our generation, as I joined the RCPL in 1970.

Governor title is oppressive and colonial, say British overseas territories

Overseas territories are calling on the British government to scrap a title, commonly used by several islands as they claim it has "oppressive and colonial" connotations.

Evidence submitted to the Commons' public administration and constitutional affairs committee accused ministers of knowingly carrying on with "the disempowerment and subjugation of peoples" in the former colonies.

MPs are examining the relationship between ministers and the 14 British overseas territories (OTs) around the world and have demanded that the title of 'governor' be scrapped.

Evidence claims that the "greater times of the British Empire ... clearly informs" Government approach towards OTs, reports GB News.

The commission was also told that islanders "frowned upon" the naming of cultural landmarks after the British monarchy.



Evidence submitted by the government of Montserrat, an island in the Caribbean, claimed: "There is a need to decolonise the relationship between the United Kingdom and the [OTs]."

"The word 'governor' seems rooted in a colonial-era mindset of rule, which is outdated for a 21st-century relationship with the United Kingdom.

"It is time to consider adapting a new governance system that begins with a more suitable and inclusive nomenclature."

Former speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Assembly Shirley Osborne, called the UK's relationship

with the island "a patronising, deeply colonial one".

The Montserrat government said that the "influence and control extorted by the UK continues to reflect colonial characteristics".

It has called on Britain to recognise the "past injustices" and make reparations for colonialism.

Former premier of Montserrat Donaldson Romeo added: "The painful truth is that the past 28 years have been some of the worst, most antagonistic and degrading of the 400 years of the shared colonial history between our governments, and the nearly two centuries since emancipation from slavery."

Parliament has unlimited power to legislate for OTs and the Privy Council can issue Orders in Council to change territory laws and constitutions.

The government of the British Virgin Islands said that the right of veto over its domestic affairs was "deep and pervasive" and there was a "notable tension" in the relationship.

An FCDO spokesperson said: "As well as representing His Majesty in The King, Governors work closely with the elected leaders of each Territory to serve their people, and have specific constitutional responsibilities for law and order, external affairs and good governance.



French President, Emmanuel Macron, and migrants crossing over to France. Pic - Getty

'A shield we needed': French president Macron on new immigration law

President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called a tough new immigration law a "shield" that would allow France to better combat illegal immigration and facilitate the integration of documented arrivals.

"It is a shield that we needed," Macron said about the law that has caused a deep split in his party and sparked the resignation of his health minister, Aurelien Rousseau.

"When you govern you have responsibilities," Macron told the France 5 broadcaster.

Macron said the government needed "to stand by" the law, "and calm the tensions".

Following 18 months of wrangling over one of the flagship reforms of Macron's second term, both chambers of parliament backed the controversial legislation on Tuesday.

Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) endorsed the bill in a move some media dubbed a "kiss of death".

Macron said he "respects" Rousseau's resignation earlier Wednesday, reports AFP.

Macron denied that the law was close to the RN's ideology.

To stop the far right being elected to government "we need to handle the problems that they feed on," Macron said.

China earthquake: Scientists got this ominous signal but could not predict the location

Chinese scientists expected an earthquake to strike hours before the deadly 6.2 magnitude earthquake in Gansu – but were unable to say where it would happen, a report claimed. Over 120 people have died since the temblor struck with the epicentre in Jishishan. Although, earthquakes cannot be predicted, researchers in the Chinese province of Shaanxi developed a technique which has allowed them to forecast successfully every earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 or more in the past 10 years, South China Morning Post reported.

The scientists could not, however, predict the location of these earthquakes. Using high-precision equipment in order to monitor the Earth's gravitational field at low frequencies, scientists look for any anomalies in the gravitational waves- sign that an earthquake is imminent, reports Hindustan Times.

The researchers said that they knew the latest earthquake was on the way when they received a text alert about abnormal data readings from multiple



ChinaEarthquake. Pic - Firstpost

sensors. The team then began discussing where the earthquake might strike and calculated that the earthquake had a high probability of hitting within three to five days. The team also knew that the magnitude of the earthquake would be around 6.27.

Zhang Maoshen said, "[We] didn't think it would be this close" while Liu Huaqiang, a professor at Northwestern Polytechnical University in Xian said that as the sensors were located in different cities, the anomalous waves were all recorded at nearly the same time.

"So it wasn't hard to understand whether this was an earthquake precursor", he said, adding, "The only aspect we cannot determine is the location."

The China Earthquake Early Warning Network sent text alerts within 30 seconds of the earthquake hitting areas around the Gansu quake's epicentre. Those closest to it received a text alert in only 12 seconds.

Thailand edges closer to legalising same-sex marriage

The Thai parliament is set to begin deliberating four draft bills on same-sex marriage, moving the country closer towards its legalisation.

The deliberation comes after parliament last year debated similar draft laws and the previous government's same-sex civil union bill, but did not come to a final vote before the session ended.

The four draft bills deliberated on Thursday include one tabled by the new government that came to power after the May general election, another by civil society groups, and

two others from opposition Move Forward and the Democrats parties, all of which bear similar approaches, reports Reuters.

"In principle, this draft law is for the amendment of some provisions in the civic codes to open the way for lovers, regardless of their gender, to engage and get married," Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Thepsuthin told parliament about the government's draft bill.

"This will provide rights, responsibilities and family status as equal to the marriage between a man and a woman presently in all aspects," he

said.

Somsak said the government conducted a survey between Oct. 31 and Nov. 14 that showed 96.6% public support for the draft bill.

Thailand has one of Asia's most open and visible lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities but many political activists say the country's laws and institutions have yet to reflect changing social attitudes and still discriminate against LGBT people and same-sex couples.

* Contd on page 12

In Brief

Biden says Netanyahu must change

Biden says Netanyahu must change, Israel losing global support. US President Biden said that Israel is losing support over its indiscriminate bombing of Gaza and that Israel's leader Netanyahu should change his approach to maintain international support.

China, Vietnam upgrade ties; agree to boost security efforts. China and Vietnam agreed to step up co-operation on security in their move towards becoming a community with a shared future, after Chinese President Xi's visit to Hanoi. They signed dozens of co-operation pacts and agreed to set up more hotlines to defuse any emergencies in the contested waters.

Niger junta agrees plan to restore democracy. Niger's military leaders have agreed a plan for restoring democratic rule which will be presented to regional bloc ECOWAS for approval. The US is planning to resume security and development cooperation with Niger on the basis that democracy is being restored.

Serbia's ruling populists claim sweeping election victory. The governing Serbian Progressive Party is set to win the country's election, which has been marred by reports of major irregularities. President Vucic expects to hold around 130 seats in the 250-member assembly.

Conflict

Ukraine – 24 million telecom subscribers cut off in cyber attack. Ukraine's biggest mobile network operator, Kyivstar, has been hit by what appeared to be the biggest cyber attack of the war with Russia so far, knocking out mobile and internet services for more than half the population. Ukraine officials said Russia was behind the attack.

Hamas members arrested in Germany for terror plot. Four members of the Islamist militant group Hamas have been detained on suspicion of planning attacks on Jewish institutions in Europe, German prosecutors said.

US-led force to patrol Red Sea in response to attacks by Houthis backing Palestinians. The Iran-aligned group says the aim of its missile and drone attacks is to support the Palestinians as Israel and Hamas wage war in the Gaza Strip. Oil major BP has stopped shipping through the Red Sea in response to the attacks.

Ukraine closer to EU membership. The EU has opened accession negotiations with Ukraine, after a vote supporting its EU membership aspirations. It comes as Russian

President Putin vowed there would be no peace in Ukraine until his goals are achieved and NATO chief Stoltenberg warned of a "real risk" Putin would not stop at Ukraine, if he achieves military victory there.

Rebels claim to capture more ground in Congo's east. A rebel group with alleged links to neighbouring Rwanda claimed to have seized a key town in Congo's conflict-hit eastern region amid intense fighting, raising further security concerns ahead of the country's December 20 presidential election.



US President Biden said that Israel is losing support over its indiscriminate bombing of Gaza. Pic - Shafaq

Economics

Central banks 'risk tipping UK and other developed countries into recession'. The OECD said continued tough action by central banks to tackle stubborn inflation risks tipping Britain and other developed countries into recession next year. The OECD said the chances of policymakers getting it wrong were high and posed a threat to its central soft landing forecast for the global economy.

Argentina's devalues peso by 50 percent. Argentina embarks on a strict austerity drive, as President Milei begins radical reform. The peso will be sharply devalued by half, subsidies cut, and public works tenders cancelled in a bid to revamp the nation's economy.

Nigeria's inflation rises to 18-year high on surging food prices. Nigeria's annual inflation rose in November for the 11th straight month to the highest level in 18 years, adding pressure on the central bank to tackle the rise amid a worsening cost-of-living crisis in Africa's largest economy. Consumer inflation rose to 28%.

IMF & World Bank grant Somalia \$4.5 billion in debt forgiveness. Somalia was granted \$4.5 billion in debt forgiveness after completing years of financial reforms

under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, or HIPC.

Euro zone inflation falls. Euro zone inflation fell far more than expected this month, a challenge to the European Central Bank's narrative that price growth remains stubborn and likely fuelling bets on early spring rate cuts in defiance of the bank's explicit guidance.

Development

US and China race to shield secrets from quantum computers. US and China are in a race to devel-

op advanced quantum computers with profound implications for the international security and strategic landscape. Experts claim countries around the globe are harvesting data now to decrypt it later, when quantum computing makes current encryption models obsolete.

Tesla recalls two million cars in US over Autopilot defect. Tesla is recalling almost every Tesla sold in the US since the Autopilot feature was launched in 2015. It follows a two-year investigation into crashes which occurred when the tech was in use.

China chip firm powered by US tech and money avoids crack-down. A Chinese chip designer, part-owned by the country's top sanctioned chipmaker, is purchasing US software and has American financial backing, relationships that underscore the difficulty Washington faces applying new rules meant to block American support for Beijing's semiconductor industry.

Japan to give tax breaks for 10 years to boost EV, chip production. The scheme aims to make it easier for companies to invest in Japan by providing tax benefits for projects with high hurdles for achieving profitability, in areas the government sees as strategically important, such as green transformation.



Nawaz Sharif said Pakistan has not yet taken off the ground while India has reached the moon. Pic - AP

Nawaz Sharif: They've reached moon, we haven't risen from ground

Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif again praised India on Wednesday during his address to the party cadre on Wednesday as he said India has reached the moon but Pakistan has still not risen from the ground. Nawaz Sharif would be contesting the elections from Mansehra region of Khyber-Pakhtynkhwa. As he is warming up for his election pitch, he made several references to India. On Tuesday, Nawaz Sharif said neither India nor US were responsible for the economic condition Pakistan has been facing. "We shot ourselves in our own foot," Nawaz Sharif said.

Nawaz Sharif is running for Prime Minister for a fourth time -- thrice he was ousted from power -- in 1993, 1999 and 2017.

"In 2013, we were facing severe load shedding of electricity, we came and ended it, ended terrorism from all over the country, restored the peace of Karachi, highways were built, CPEC came, and a new era of development and prosperity began," Nawaz Sharif said.

Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan in October this year after four years of political exile in London that he took in 2019 citing medical reasons. He went to London for medical treatment while he was serving a seven-year prison sentence for corruption. But then he never returned. His return was only for the election as he took the PML-N mantle, reports Hindustan Times.

Jailed former PM Imran Khan would contest from three constituencies Lahore, Mianwali and Islamabad. On Aug 5, a trial court in Islamabad convicted Imran Khan in a case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan that involved concealing details of state gifts and jailed him for three years. The verdict meant he was disqualified from contesting general elections for five years. But the Islamabad High Court suspended Imran Khan's three-year sentence, but he still remains in jail in other cases.

Compiled by Doojesh Ramlallah



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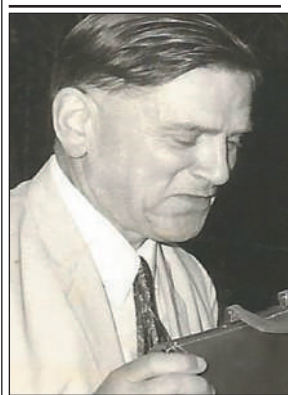
From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

5th Year No 229

MAURITIUS TIMES

Friday 26 December, 1958

● The marble keeps merely a cold and sad memory of a man who would else be forgotten. No man who needs a monument ever ought to have one. — Nathaniel Hawthorne



Peter Ibbotson

Christmas and The Socialist

Does Christmas carry any special significance for the Socialist? Is this season, secularised into a season of giving presents, exchanging greeting cards, having parties, and putting up Christmas trees, anything more than a festive season for the majority, or than a religious occasion for the devout

minority?

I believe that Christmas does carry a special message for the Socialist.

First, let me say that there is no conflict between the Christian and the Socialist. The traditionalist points to the "contradiction" between the song of the Angels on the first Christmas Day — "Unto you is born this day a Saviour" — and the song of the Socialist in the *Internationale* today — "No Saviours from on high deliver." But the traditionalist is wrong, whether he be a traditionalist politician or a traditional Christian.

There is no conflict; the emancipation of man, which we call Socialism (on the political plane), can be realised by the hundred per cent application of Christian principles. The aims of Christianity are that man shall find fullness of life, abundance, and peace; the aims of Socialism are precisely the same: fullness of life, abundance, and peace.

Christianity stems from a 33-year Plan for the rescue of humanity; not from on high but from alongside. God's method was to leave Heaven and come to earth incognito; St. Paul said of Christ that "though He was rich, yet He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich." Christ lived really poor and unknown. He was born in a



stable; He and His earthly parents were the victims of imperialism and a housing shortage, like so many people still today. He and His earthly parents were right from his start pushed around in their native country, on their native soil just like any African in Kenya or South Africa today.

An English Christian Socialist has summed it all up in these words: "As we gaze on the infant Christ in the manger on Christmas Day, cradled in poverty, weakness and suffering, we see also in microcosm the whole divine-human plan for the rescue of man — identification with the outcast and poor, the struggle with the powers that be, but beyond defeat, final victory."

Christmas thus serves for the Christian Socialist, and for the Socialist Christian, as a reminder that the poor Christ served His life in order that they might become rich.

And not only spiritually rich. Said Christ Himself: "I come that they might have it more abundantly." He shared our humanity to show that the spiritual and the material are not two separate worlds, but part and parcel of each other. Thus poverty, degradation and enslavement affront the spirit, whereas elevation of the spirit must involve elevation also of material things. Christianity must therefore challenge — indeed it cannot help challenging — any social order which in the midst of potential plenty

keeps the masses poor. It must challenge any social or economic order in which the few enrich themselves at the expense of the many; in which there is gross exploitation, underpayment of workers, and unemployment.

By the same token, Christianity must support and actively work for a new social order; one in which the bodies, minds and spirits of all men, women and children are given the opportunity of maximum development. In the new social order, there will be common ownership which means production for the common good; there will be, too, peace among men of goodwill, because they will no longer be forced into antagonism by the conflicts of a class-divided society. There will be a new Heaven and a new earth, for the former things shall have passed away; the dream of the Evangelist will be realised and there will be no more sorrow, neither weeping.

For in the new social order men will be motivated by the dynamic of Christianity; by the dynamic which brought God to earth on the first Christmas Day; by the dynamic which lies at the basis of the two great commandments, that dynamic is Love. "Love God" is the first and great commandment; and the second is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

'Where love is, God is' is the title of a powerful short story of Tolstoy and love is the mainspring of Socialism as it is of Christianity. Because of this there is a bond between Christianity and political action which demands a fuller life for the poor and underprivileged.

What did Mary sing as she awaited the birth of Christ? "He hath filled the hungry with good things but the rich he hath sent empty away... He hath put down the mighty from seat and hath exalted the humble and meek." Christians today echo Mary's words; so do Socialists; and Christmas is the time when Socialists rededicate themselves to the fulfilment of the basis of Christianity: that men might have fullness of life, abundance and peace.

IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

The following promotions in and appointments to the Public Service during the week ended 16th July, 1959, are released from the Colonial Secretary's Office:

PROMOTIONS

Mr J. R. Crouche, Senior Executive Officer, promoted Chief Executive Officer.

Messrs. J. Mohit, J. L. Theodors, R. Manrakhan, S. Manrakhan, H. O. Ravat, J.H.F. Nemorin, C. Bhadain and Mrs R. Voltaire, First Class Teachers, promoted Head Teachers.

Mr R. Robert, Store-keeper, promoted Senior Store-keeper, Granary.

Mr V. D. Ramdin, Prison Officer, promoted Principal Officer Grade II.

Miss L. R. Venchard, Stenographer, promoted Confidential Assistant.

Mrs L. G. Lajole, Nursing Officer Grade II, promoted Nursing Officer Grade I.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr J. V. Thiboudois, appointed Quantity Surveyor and Draughtsman, Public Works Department.

Mr N. Ramasawmy, appointed Draughtsman, Public Works Department.

Miss M. Michaud, appointed Temporary Typist.

ACTING APPOINTMENTS

Mr R. N. Cathan, Probation Officer, to act as Senior Probation Officer, Social Welfare Department.

Mr C. T. d'Espaignet, English Reporter, to act as Clerk Assistant, Legislature.

Mr E. Moutia, Clerical Officer, to act as English Reporter, Legislature.

* * *

IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

The following promotions in and appointments to the Public Service during the week ended 30th July, 1959, are released from the Colonial Secretary's Office:

PROMOTIONS

Mr D.H. Near-Crouch, Architect, promoted Deputy Chief Architect.

Mr M. Bell and Mr A. Busawon, Higher Clerical Officers, promoted Executive Officers.

Messrs D.K. Salemahomed, P.B. d'Argent, J.H. Duval, S.K. Ramlogun, R.N. Chetty, B. Seetha, S. N. Ponambalam, P. Murday, P.S. Rangan, H.R. Cuniah, M. Appasamy, A. Teck Young, K. Sumodhee, B. Veerasamy, G. Narayanassamy, R. Pilly-Mootanah, Clerical Officers, promoted Executive Officers.

Messrs. L.J. E. Juste, M.R. Aumeeruddy, C.L. Hermelin, Clerical Officers, promoted Higher Clerical Officers.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr H. Fraser appointed Assistant Conservator of Forests.

Dr L.G.S. Bourdet appointed Medical Officer.

Mr L.A. Bouquet appointed Radio Monitor, M.B.S.

Miss S. Cassimally and Messrs I. Aumeerally, J.S. Finette, L. Bisasur, C. S.K. Chan-Yam and L.J.G. Clarisse appointed Clerical Officers.

Mrs S. Pyndiah, Miss D. Choo-Foo and Messrs D.

Gooljar and H.J. Sewtohul, appointed Clerical Officers.

Mrs W.M.T. Rae appointed Clerical Officer.

Miss M.G.C. Bell appointed Nursing Officer Grade II.

Messrs R. S. Lecordier, K.L. Assame and S. Sooben appointed Prison Officers.

Mr Y. Nagamootoo appointed Time-keeper, Telecommunications Department.

Miss D. Mignot appointed Temporary Typist.

Misses S. Boodhoo and R. Moutia appointed Temporary Telephonists, Telecommunications Department.

Mr R. Coothoopermal appointed Temporary Messenger.

ACTING APPOINTMENTS

Mr G. Ramasawmy, Assistant Secretary, to act as Principal Assistant Secretary.

Mr R. Fanchette, Education Officer, to act as Assistant Director, Central Information Office.

Mr G.Y. Gnany, Senior Executive Officer, to act as Assistant Secretary.

People love to vote in a new democracy – and then they rapidly lose interest

Voting patterns over decades show how hard it is to maintain enthusiasm for democracy.



Spain elections - Turnout surpasses 2019 as Spaniards brave the heat to vote in national election. Pic - EL PAÍS English

● Cont. from page 2

The rate of participation in new democracies drops consistently as more elections are held.

Tunisia is a prime example. The turnout in its first parliamentary free election in 2011 after the fall of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was over 90%. But once the complicated realities of building democracy set in, turnout tumbled dramatically.

Wrangling over institutional design and the redistribution of political power and resources meant that excitement dissipated and was replaced by disappointment with democracy. Tunisians lost their faith in the ability of political actors to keep democracy alive. Participation declined sharply in this period. In the most recent election in 2023, turnout barely reached 11%.

Rapid disillusionment

The plummet in voter turnout that new democracies experience could be explained by voters rapidly becoming disillusioned with the reality of democracy. That's not to say they'd return to the undemocratic systems of their past but that they don't feel enthusiastic enough to go to the polling station on election day.

In the first election after the transition to democracy, also referred to as the founding election, a country's electoral politics naturally focuses on pitting opponents and supporters of the former autocracy against those who wanted to overthrow it. But that soon evolves into something more mundane – regular electoral politics in which parties compete over voters based on partisanship, ideology or policy preferences.

In other words, the binary choice between autocracy and democracy excites

voters, while the choices of regular electoral politics may increase apathy among voters. More simply, voters in new democracies may not be used (yet) to the complicated reality of elections in democracy.

Young revolutionaries become active voters

The evidence suggests that the way in which a country transitions to democracy plays a part in the political attitudes and behaviours of its citizens. Transitions driven by non-violent, mass mobilisation have the potential to socialise people into developing more pro-democratic attitudes. This is perhaps because citizens are made aware of their power to influence politics via participation and therefore become active participants in politics afterwards.

My research, which used survey data to capture electoral turnout among 1.2 million respondents from 85 democracies between 1982 and 2015, shows that this is

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a more powerful force among people who experience the transition to democracy during their formative years.

Those who transition to democracy between the ages of 15 and 29 are two percentage points more likely to turn out to vote later in life compared to those who experienced the transition outside their formative years, or voters from established democracies that never experienced a transition. People who experienced a transition to democracy after they turned 30 were less likely to turn out to vote in new democracies.

The transition may have socialised the first cohort into being more pro-democratic because younger people are more likely to

participate in protests – and experience the violent consequences of doing so. They are also more receptive to unorthodox ideas that challenge old forms of power.

The different experiences of the older cohort may suggest the socialising effect of democratic transitions may not be able to fully replace the socialisation experience of living under autocracy. Being socialised in an environment in which political participation is discouraged and strictly regulated by the government creates habits of disengagement from politics that may not be fully reversed by the excitement of experiencing a democratic transition.

The global decline in voter turnout, particularly in new democracies, is a worrying sign for the health of democracy. These findings suggest that countering this trend means encouraging people to see participating in democracy as being as important – and exciting – as overthrowing a dictatorship.

Roman Gabriel Olar,
Dublin City University

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Mauritius Times



Scott Lear
Professor of Health
Sciences, Simon
Fraser University

How to keep your physical and mental health on track during the holidays

The holidays can disrupt healthy lifestyle habits, like nutrition and exercise routines. Here's how to enjoy the season without derailing your physical or mental health.

With the festive season upon us, many people will be gathering with family and friends, whether it's a workplace party, a friend's get-together or a quiet night at home watching Christmas movies. While enjoyable, these events can disrupt your healthy lifestyle habits.

A recent survey reported nearly 45 per cent of people take a break from exercise during the holidays, more than half say they feel more tired and have less time for themselves, and about one-third report drinking more.

My research looks at the benefits of a healthy lifestyle on physical and mental health. And many of these same healthy behaviours can help you navigate the holidays.

Eating right

Cakes, chocolates, spiced ham, turkey stuffing, mulled wine and other delights abound during this time of year. Most of these foods are high in fat, sugar and calories. So it's no surprise the holidays are associated with a greater consumption of food. And one survey even pegged people eating close to 6,000 calories on Christmas Day. That's two to three times the daily caloric recommendation for most people.

With this amount of eating, there are many claims the holidays result in weight gain. While there is an enduring rumour that average holiday weight gain is five to 10 pounds (2.25 to 4.5 kilograms), in reality it may be much less. A study published in 2000 reported it to be only around one pound, or about half a kilogram. However, as this was an average amount, there were still some people in the study who gained five or more pounds.

While indulging on one or two occasions isn't going to derail your diet, if you have a holiday circuit of events you do, you may want to develop a strategy on how to manage your diet. First ask yourself if you need (or want) to go to all of them.

For the events you do go to, pick one or two occasions at which you'll indulge. These might have the best food, or your closest family and friends are present. For the others, try staying on the healthier side of things.

Before you go, make sure you eat well during the day leading up to your event so you're not going to the event hungry. Also, make sure you get plenty of sleep. A lack



Pic - everydayhealth.com

of sleep can make you more likely to reach for high-energy foods and eat more.

Try to enlist a health buddy, whether a friend or even the host, to keep you on track. And be mindful of alcohol intake, which can impair your self-discipline.

Staying active

When it comes to exercise, most of us are creatures of habit. This is a good thing, because having a routine is the best way to maintain regular exercise. But the holidays are anything but routine. Gyms, pools and community centres may have shortened hours or be closed. Your trainer or aerobics instructor may have taken time off.

Now, missing a few exercise sessions isn't going to affect your fitness and long-term health, but it can affect your mood. Exercise is known to increase energy levels, improve mood and reduce stress. All of which can be helpful during the frenetic holidays. And missing an exercise session can be like not having your morning coffee.

But the holidays also present numerous opportunities to get in a lot of activity — from shopping to Christmas markets to walking around your neighbourhood looking at the decorations.

You can also get into the holiday spirit by singing Christmas carols (or any other song). Singing can reduce anxiety, potentially increase your lung capacity and increase the number of infection-fighting molecules in your blood. And singing with others is known to build social bonds and release oxytocin, which can improve one's mood.

While the quality of your singing does-

n't matter for most of these benefits, the more you do sing, the more you'll likely benefit.

Managing stress

Nearly 90 per cent of adults in the

United States associate the holiday season with some form of stress. While the holidays are meant to be a period of joy, it's not uncommon to feel overwhelmed by the shopping, hosting events, expectations of others and the added financial costs.

This may be one of the reasons why the number of heart attacks and cardiac-related deaths increase during the holiday period. In addition, it's believed people delay seeking treatment during the holidays, given that emergency department visits spike after they're over.

Stress occurs when people feel they don't have control over what's going on. Setting up a holiday plan can help. Your plan could include a spending budget, which events you'll attend and which you'll say no to. If you're hosting a dinner, plan the menu ahead of time, enlist help from others or even get take-out.

Other strategies for managing, and preventing, stress include getting regular exercise, ensuring you get enough sleep, avoiding unrealistic expectations and setting aside some quiet time to do something just for yourself.

While we all want things to be perfect, even the best plans may go astray. If that does happen, that's okay and go easy on yourself. If you do find the holidays challenging, make sure you speak up to the people around you for their support.

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Close friends can help you live longer but they can spread some bad habits too

When you were a teenager, your parents probably warned you once or twice not to get a tattoo or go to sketchy parties just because your friends do it. A new study shows that the influence of friends – for good and for well, mischief – extends into our older years, as well.

The study, published recently in the journal 'Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences', found that friendships in older adults were associated with some instances of better physical health and health behaviors, as well as better mental health across the board, reports Maggie Mertens of NPR.

The study authors analyzed surveys from nearly 13,000 over-50-year-olds who participated in the Health and Retirement Study, a nationally representative panel study. While many previous studies have connected having good friends with particular health benefits, this is the largest and most comprehensive study done to date, according to study co-author William Chopik, an associate professor of psychology at Michigan State University.

"Friendships are often the first relationships of choice that we have in our lives," he said. Because of that, he says, he and his colleagues wanted to "tell everybody, everything we can about it."

Chopik and his coauthors found that those who had high-quality friendships actually lived longer. Study participants took the survey three times over eight years and those with the good friends were 24% less likely to die during that time.

Having good friends was also associated with a whole lot of positive health behaviours and benefits, like a 9% increase in likelihood to exercise, a 17% reduced risk of depression, and a 19% lower likelihood of having a stroke, among other findings.

The dangers of loneliness have become more and more apparent in recent years as one in four older



people now experience social isolation worldwide, which carries higher risks of stroke, anxiety, dementia, depression, suicide, and more, according to the World Health Organization.

"We need different people," says Rosemary Blieszner, a professor emerita of human development and family science at Virginia Tech who was not involved with the new study. "We need the emotional satisfaction of feeling close to people, and feeling like you belong to a group, and to have your self-worth reinforced, and to share interests with others."

or gabbing over coffee with your best friend from childhood.

But those peer pressure effects of friendship that your mom warned you about as a teenager? They appear to still exist in your later years, too. Those individuals in the study with the best friendships were also more likely to smoke and drink heavily.

"I will say it's not like they're smoking a pack a day,"

said Chopik. "When you look at older adults, they kind of mellow out in terms of how much they drink and how much they smoke. So it's really kind of a small difference, but we do find it."

Mysteriously, Chopik adds, even taking those negative health behaviors into consideration, the cohort still lived longer and were happier than those whose friendships weren't as strong. "It could be that they imbibe a little bit, but then they have all these positive things that counteract that and then they end up living longer," he says.

And, at the same time she says it's also been shown before that peers "can also influence riskier behaviours."

Our relationships can be very powerful influences on our health ... for good or for bad."

Holt-Lunstad, who also serves as founding scientific chair and board member of the U.S. Foundation for Social Connection, says the comprehensive nature of the study goes to show how interconnected our health is with the people around us.

"A lot of things can cluster, like people who are more socially connected are more physically active, and they can also have more of a sense of meaning and purpose in their life. That can lead them to take better care of themselves and take less risk, because they have people who depend on them, or are encouraging them and looking out for them."

Still she adds, she hopes this doesn't encourage people to smoke or drink heavily just because they have friends.



Why are some black holes bigger than others? An astronomer explains how these celestial vacuums grow

Pictures of black holes have a white outline around them when photographed, due to one of black holes' unique and key features.

Black holes are dense astronomical objects with gravity so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. Anything that crosses the boundary of a black hole's gravitational influence, called the event horizon, will fall into the black hole. Inside this deep, dense pit, it is never to be seen again.

Black holes litter the universe. Some smaller black holes are sprinkled randomly throughout galaxies like our Milky Way. Other gigantic ones, called "supermassive" black holes, lie at the centers of galaxies. Those can weigh anywhere between a million to a billion times the mass of our Sun. So you might be wondering: How can astronomers possibly see something so dark and so big?

I am an astronomer who studies the very first supermassive black holes that formed in our universe. I want to understand how black holes form and what kinds of astrophysical neighborhoods they grow up in.

Types of black holes

Let's talk about how black holes begin their lives. Two famous scientists, Albert Einstein and Karl Schwarzschild, first

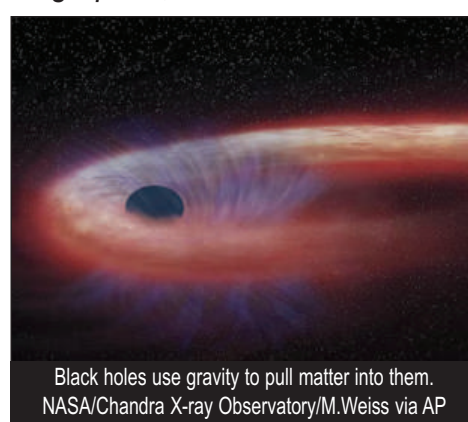
pitched the idea of a black hole. They thought that when a large star dies, its core might shrink and shrink until it collapses under its own weight. This is what we astronomers call a "stellar mass black hole," which is just another way of saying it's comparatively very small.

Stellar mass black holes are only a few times bigger than our Sun. Supermassive black holes are more of a mystery, though. They are many millions of times heavier than our Sun, and they are packed into a small area that's about the size of our solar system. Some scientists think supermassive black holes might form by many stars colliding and collapsing at once, while others think they might have already started growing several billion years ago.

Growing black holes

What do black holes look like? Most of the time, they are not actively growing, so they are invisible. But we can tell they're there because stars can still orbit around them, just like Earth around the Sun.

When something is orbiting an invisible object at high speeds, scientists know there must be a massive black hole in the middle. This is the case for the closest



Black holes use gravity to pull matter into them. NASA/Chandra X-ray Observatory/M.Weiss via AP

supermassive black hole to us, which lies at the center of the Milky Way – safely millions of miles away from you.

Meanwhile, when a hungry black hole is eating up gas in a galaxy, it heats that gas up until you can see a glowing ring of X-rays, optical light and infrared light around the black hole. Once it exhausts all of the fuel near the event horizon, the light dies down once again and it becomes invisible.

Outlines around black holes

One of the most famous "white outlines" is the image of a black hole from the

movie "Interstellar." In that movie, they were trying to show the white-hot, glowing ring of gases that are falling into the actively growing black hole.

In real life, we don't get such a close-up view. The best image of the ring around a real black hole comes from the Event Horizon Telescope, showing scientists the supermassive black hole at the center of a galaxy called M87. It might look blurry to you, but this doughnut is actually the sharpest image ever taken of something so far away.

There are lots of types of black holes out there in the universe. Some are small and invisible, and some grow to gigantic proportions by eating up stuff inside a galaxy and shining bright. But don't worry, black holes can't just keep sucking in everything in the universe – eventually there is nothing close enough to the black hole to fall in, and it will become invisible again. So you are safe to keep asking questions about black holes.

Jaelyn Champagne
JASPER Postdoctoral Researcher,
University of Arizona



Three friends stranded on a deserted island find a magic lamp. Inside it is a genie who agrees to grant each friend one wish.

"I want to go home," says the first friend. The genie grants her wish.

"I want to go home, too," says the second friend. And the genie sends him back home.

"I'm lonely," says the third friend. "I sure wish my friends were back here."

When my wife and I argue, I always get the last word.

They're usually, "I'm sorry. You're right."

Once you're married, people stop asking about your sex life.

They know you don't have one.

I play the world's most dangerous sport. I disagree with my wife.

I asked my wife which she liked better, my face or my body?

She said, "Your sense of humour."

Arguing with your partner is like trying to read the "Terms of Use" on the internet.

Eventually, you just give up and say, "I Agree."

The best way to get your husband to do something is to suggest he's too old to do it.

Marrying someone for their good looks is like buying a house for the paint colour.

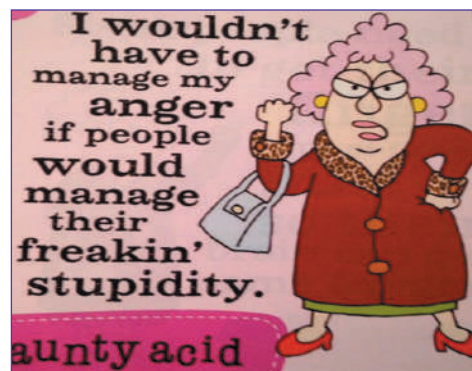
My partner and I took out life insurance policies on each other.

So, now it's just a waiting game.

I was emotional when I caught my husband looking at our marriage certificate.

Then I found out he was looking for an expiration date.

Marriage is when a man and woman become one.



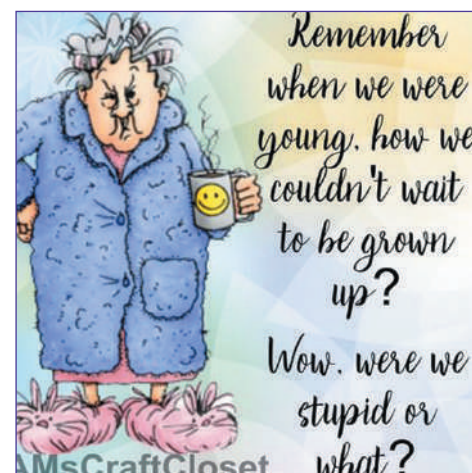
The trouble starts when they try to decide which one.

A man approaches a very beautiful woman in the supermarket and says, "You know, I've lost my wife here in the supermarket. Can you talk to me for a couple of minutes?"

"Why?" asked the beautiful woman.

To which the man replied, "Because every time I talk to a beautiful woman my wife appears out of nowhere."

A man nearing 50 decides to undergo a facelift. He spends £6000 on the surgery and is very happy with the results. On his way home from the operation, he stops at a shop and buys a packet of cigarettes. Before leaving, he asks the vendor, 'I hope you don't mind me asking, but how old do you think I am?'



'In the thirties,' he replies.

'I'm actually forty-nine,' the man replies smugly, feeling really good about himself. After that, he enters a Starbucks for a coffee and asks the young girl behind the counter the same question, to which she replies, 'About thirty!'

'I am forty-nine.'

By now, he's feeling great. While standing at the taxi stand, he asks a really old lady the same question. She replies, 'I am ninety-two, and my eyesight is weak, but when I was young, there was a sure way of guessing a man's age. If you put down your trousers, I will be able to make a good guess.'

As there is no one around, the guy lets down his pants. The old lady looks at him and says, 'You are forty-nine.' The guy is stunned. 'That was brilliant! How did you guess it?'

The old lady replies, 'I was standing behind you in Starbucks.'

In another story, a defendant was on trial for murder at the Old Bailey. There was strong circumstantial evidence indicating guilt, but no corpse. In his closing statement, the defense lawyer, realizing that in all likelihood his client would be convicted, resorted to a trick.

'Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you all,' the lawyer said as he looked at his watch. 'Within two minutes, the person presumed dead in this case will walk into the courtroom.'

Minutes passed, and no one appeared.

'Actually, I made the previous statement, but you all looked at the door to see if someone walked in. I put it to you, therefore, that there is reasonable doubt in this case as to whether anyone was actually killed and insist that you return a verdict of not guilty.'

The jury retired in confusion to deliberate. A few minutes later, the foreman of the jury returned and told the judge that they had arrived at a unanimous verdict of guilty.

The lawyer was surprised. 'You must have had some doubts; I saw you all looking at the door.'

The foreman replied, 'Yes, but your client didn't.'

The magistrate says to double-murder defendant: "You're charged with beating your neighbor to death with a hammer."

A voice at the back of the courtroom yells out, "You bastard."

The magistrate adds, "You are also charged with beating your mother-in-law to death with a hammer."

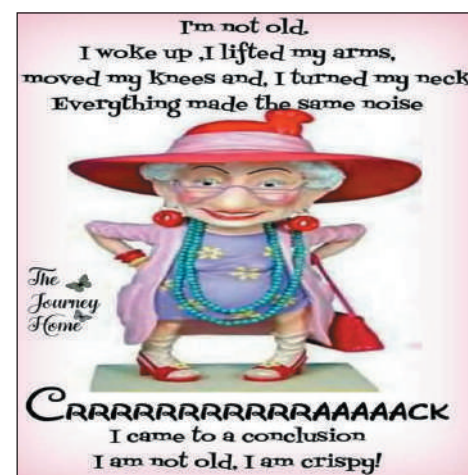
The voice at the back of the courtroom yells out, "You bastard."

The magistrate stops and says to the man in the back of the courtroom, "Sir, I understand your anger and frustration at this crime, but no more outbursts from you, or I'll charge you with contempt. Is that understood?"

The guy in the back of the court stands up and says, "I'm sorry, Your Honour, but for 12 years, I've lived next door to that bastard, and every time I asked to borrow a hammer, he said he didn't have one."

A guy took his wife to the county show.

Among the exhibits were several breeding bulls. They went to the first pen and there was a sign that read, "This bull mated fifty times last year."



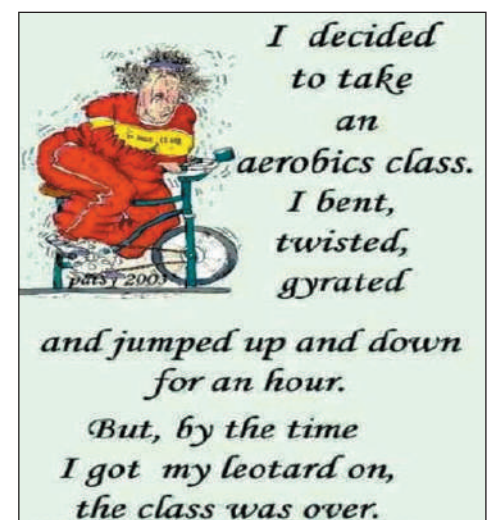
They proceeded a little further and saw another pen with a sign that read, "This bull mated a hundred times last year."

The wife said, "See that? That's more than a week. You could learn something from this bull."

They walked a bit further and came across another pen with a sign saying, "This bull mated 365 times last year."

The wife hit her husband really hard and said, "See that? That's once a day. You could really learn something from this one."

The husband replied, "Go and ask him if it was with the same cow."



I asked my wife what she would like to get for her birthday. She said she wanted one of the big-screen TVs. So I moved her chair closer to the one we already have.

After twenty-five years of marriage, a woman looks in the bathroom mirror and sighs, "God, I look old, fat, and ugly."

She begs her husband, "Pay me a compliment, darling."

Her husband replies, "Well, there's nothing wrong with your eyesight."

Marriage is full of surprises, but it's mostly just asking each other, "Do you have to do that right now?"

At every party, there are two kinds of people: those who want to go home, and those who don't. The trouble is they're usually married to each other.

Wife: Do you want dinner?

Husband: Sure, what are my choices?

Wife: Yes and no.

My wife and I always compromise.

I admit I'm wrong, and she agrees with me.

When your spouse gets a little upset, just remember a simple "Calm down!" in a soothing voice is all it takes to get them a lot more upset.

Man: I haven't spoken to my wife in 18 months.

Friend: Why not?

Man: I don't like to interrupt her.

About Men, Masculinity and Love

In the book 'The Will to Change', Bell Hooks challenges traditional notions of masculinity and encourages men to embrace vulnerability, redefine their roles, and actively dismantle harmful patriarchal structures. She emphasizes the importance of love as action, self-reflection, building supportive communities, and healing from personal trauma. The book offers a hopeful vision for a future where men and women can thrive in healthy and fulfilling relationships.

Lessons from 'The Will to Change':

Men are harmed by patriarchy: Despite often holding positions of privilege, men are also constrained by the

expectations and limitations imposed by patriarchal structures. The book explores how these limitations manifest in areas like emotional repression, violence, and inability to form healthy relationships.

Men need to embrace vulnerability: Challenging the traditional notion of masculinity, Hooks argues that men need to be able to express their emotions and vulnerability to experience authentic connection and intimacy.

Love is a verb, not just a feeling: Hooks emphasizes the importance of acting on love through commitment, care, and respect. She critiques the romanticized view of love and highlights the importance of action and responsibility in building healthy relationships.

Redefining masculinity: The book calls for a redefinition of masculinity beyond dominance and aggression. It encourages men to embrace qualities like compassion, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

Engaging in self-reflection: Hooks



emphasizes the importance of introspection for men to recognize how they have been shaped by and perpetuate patriarchal norms. Self-reflection allows for critical examination of their own behaviours and values.

Building a community of support: Men need to connect with and support each other in challenging harmful patterns and fostering healthier expressions of masculinity.

Challenging sexism and misogyny: Hooks emphasizes the responsibility of men to actively challenge sexism and misogyny in their lives and communities. This includes intervening against sexist behaviour and advocating for systemic change.

Healing from past trauma: The book acknowledges the impact of past trauma on men's emotional well-being and capacity for love. It encourages men to seek support and healing to break free from these burdens.

Embracing lifelong learning: Hooks emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning and growth for men to dismantle patriarchal conditioning and evolve towards a more authentic and fulfilling life.

Bonus Lesson: Fostering healthy father-son relationships is crucial for breaking the cycle of patriarchal patterns and raising generations of emotionally healthy men.

Wellness

What determines a human's happiness?

As I sat in the park after my morning walk, my wife came and slumped next to me. She had completed her 30-minute jog. We chatted for a while. She said she is not happy in life. I looked up at her in sheer disbelief since she seemed to have the best of everything in life.

"Why do you think so?"

"I don't know. Everyone tells me I have everything I need, but I am not happy. Then I questioned myself, am I happy? 'No,' was my inner voice reply.

Now, that was an eye-opener for me. I began my quest to understand the real cause of my unhappiness, I couldn't find one. I dug deeper, read articles, spoke to life coaches but nothing made sense.

At last, it was my doctor friend who gave me the answer which put all my questions and doubts to rest. She said, there are four hormones which determine a human's happiness - 1. Endorphins, 2. Dopamine, 3. Serotonin, and 4. Oxytocin.

It is important we understand these hormones, as we need all four of them to stay happy.

Let's look at the first hormone: Endorphins

When we exercise, the body releases endorphins. This hormone helps the body cope with the pain of exercising. We then enjoy exercising because these endorphins will make us happy.

Laughter is another good way of generating endorphins. We need to spend 30 minutes exercising every day, read or watch funny stuff to get our day's dose of endorphins.

The second hormone is dopamine

In our journey of life, we accomplish many little and big tasks, it releases various levels of dopamine.

When we get appreciated for our work at the office or at home, we feel accomplished and good, that is because it releases dopamine.

This also explains why most housewives are unhappy since they rarely get acknowledged or appreciated for their work. Once, we join work, we buy a car, a



house, the latest gadgets, a new house and so forth. In each instance, it releases dopamine and we become happy. Now, do we realize why we become happy when we shop?

The third hormone Serotonin

Serotonin is released when we act in a way that benefits others. When we transcend ourselves and give back to others or to nature or to society, it releases serotonin. Even, providing useful information on the internet like writing information blogs, answering peoples questions on Quora or Facebook groups will generate serotonin.

That is because we will use our precious time to help other people via our answers or articles.

The final hormone is oxytocin

This hormone is released when we become close to other human beings. When we hug our friends or family, oxytocin is released. The "Jadoo Ki Jhappi" from the 'Munnabhai' film does really work. Similarly, when we shake hands or put our arms around someone's shoulders, various amounts of oxytocin are released.

So, it is simple, we have to exercise every day to get endorphins,

we have to accomplish little goals and get dopamine, we need to be nice to others to get serotonin and finally hug our kids, friends, and families to get oxytocin and we will be happy.

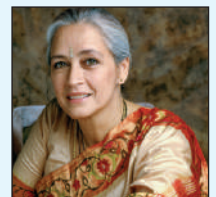
When we are happy, we can deal with our challenges and problems better.

Now, we can understand why we need to hug a child who has a bad mood.

Thoughts to Live by

When You Are Old

When you are old and grey and
full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take
down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of
the soft look,
Your eyes had once, and of their
shadows deep;



Nafisa Ali Sodhi

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face,

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled,
And paced upon the mountains overhead,
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

William Butler Yeats

* * *

If we could just eliminate newspapers...

The absence of newspapers, the absence of news about what men are doing in different parts of the world to make life more liveable or unliveable is the greatest single boon. If we could just eliminate newspapers a great advance would be made, I am sure of it.

Newspapers engender lies, hatred, greed, envy, suspicion, fear, malice. We don't need the truth as it is dished up to us in the daily papers. We need peace and solitude and idleness. If we could all go on strike and honestly disavow all interest in what our neighbour is doing, we might get a new lease of life.

We might learn to do without telephones and radios and newspapers, without machines of any kind, without factories, without mills, without mines, without explosives, without battleships, without politicians, without lawyers, without canned goods, without gadgets, without razor blades even or cellophane or cigarettes or money.

This is a pipe dream, I know. People only go on strike for better working conditions, better wages, better opportunities to become something other than they are.

Henry Miller

From 'The Colossus of Maroussi'

What if the coming year is the year you establish habits that lead to your best self? Healthy You of Medium takes you on a self-improvement trip with 10 habits to nurture for a genuinely outstanding 2024.

1. Morning mindfulness rituals to kickstart your day

Incorporate mindfulness into your morning practice to start each day with focus and clarity. Setting a good tone early on may have a significant influence on the rest of your day, whether it's a few minutes of meditation, deep breathing exercises, or just drinking your morning coffee without interruptions.

2. Daily gratitude practice: develop thankfulness

Every day, take time to show thanks. This practice not only redirects your attention to the pleasant elements of life, but it also improves your entire well-being. Make a practice of writing down three things you're thankful for to create a happy outlook.

3. Hydration habit: Feed your body

Make hydration a priority to jumpstart your metabolism and increase your energy levels. Begin your day with a glass of water and attempt to drink it regularly throughout the day. Small adjustments in hydration may have a big impact on your overall health.

4. Exercise consistency: Move your body every day

Regular physical exercise is beneficial not only to the body but also to the mind. Find an activity that provides you delight and make it a regular habit, whether it's a morning jog, yoga, or a dancing class. The key to obtaining the myriad advantages of exercise is consistency.

5. Mindful eating: Savour every bite

Mindful eating may help you transform your relation-



10 Habits to Make 2024 the Best Year Ever

ship with food. Pay attention to what you eat, enjoy every meal, and pay attention to your body's hunger and fullness signs. This practice not only encourages better eating but also increases your pleasure of meals.

6. Digital detox: Disconnect and reconnect

Set aside particular hours throughout the day for a digital detox. This practice helps you to reconnect with the present moment, decrease stress, and develop more meaningful interactions with people around you, whether it's a vacation from social media or a short time without devices.

7. Evening wind-down routine

Create a soothing nighttime ritual to communicate to

your body that it is time to unwind. Relaxing activities include reading a book, doing mild stretches, and taking a warm bath. Quality sleep is essential for overall health.

8. Make sleep a priority: Strive for consistency

Create a sleep routine that enables you to receive the required 7–9 hours of sleep every night. Sleep deprivation is detrimental to cognitive performance, emotional well-being, and physical health. Make sleep a non-negotiable part of your daily schedule.

9. Daily journaling: Plan and reflect

Journal for a few minutes each day to reflect on your experiences and prepare for the future. Documenting your ideas, accomplishments, and obstacles allows you to get useful insights into your personal development path.

10. Acts of kindness: Spread happiness

Include modest acts of kindness in your regular routine. Acts of kindness, whether they be a kind word, assisting someone in need, or donating your time, not only brighten someone else's day but also add to your own feeling of satisfaction and pleasure.

Building these habits takes time and patience, but the investment in yourself is well worth it. Consider these behaviours as the foundation for your finest year ever as you enter 2024. Accept the potential for good change and use these habits to lead you to a more meaningful and enriched life.

Men and Type 2 Diabetes

Exercise and diet geared to losing excess weight help

Although it is more common than Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 diabetes is less well understood. It is probably caused by several things and not a single problem. Type 2 diabetes can run in families, but the exact nature of how it's inherited or the identity of a single reason for it in your genes is not known.

Type 2 diabetes, once called non-insulin-dependent diabetes or adult-onset diabetes, is the most common form of diabetes. The risk for type 2 diabetes usually goes up with age. The American Diabetes Association recommends that people who don't have other risk factors for the condition should start getting tested after age 45.

Unlike people with type 1 diabetes, people with type 2 diabetes make insulin. But it's not enough, or their body doesn't recognize the insulin and use it the way it should. This is called insulin resistance.

When there isn't enough insulin or the insulin is not used as it should be, sugar (glucose) can't get into your cells to be used for fuel. Sugar builds up in the blood, and your cells don't work the way they should. Other problems linked with the buildup of sugar in the blood include:

Dehydration. The buildup of sugar in the blood can make you urinate more. When the kidneys lose the sugar through the urine, a large amount of water is also lost, causing dehydration.

Hyperosmolar nonketotic diabetic coma. When a person with type 2 diabetes becomes severely dehydrated and doesn't drink enough fluids to make up for the fluid losses, they may have this life-threatening complication.

Damage to the body. Over time, high sugar levels in the blood may damage the nerves and small blood vessels of the eyes, kidneys, and heart and put someone at risk of atherosclerosis (hardening) of the large arteries that can cause a heart attack or stroke.

Who gets Type 2 diabetes?

Anyone can get Type 2 diabetes. But the risk is highest in people who:

- Are obese or overweight
- Have family members who have type 2 diabetes
- Have metabolic syndrome (a cluster of problems that include high cholesterol, high triglycerides, low HDL or "good" cholesterol and high LDL or "bad" cholesterol, and high blood pressure)
- Don't get up and around a lot
- Eat a diet high in sugar and refined carbohydrates and low in fibre and whole grains

In addition, older people are more likely to get the disease because aging makes the body less tolerant of sugars.



What are the symptoms of Type 2 diabetes?

The symptoms of type 2 diabetes vary from person to person but may include:

- More thirst
- More hunger (especially after eating)
- Dry mouth
- Nausea and occasional vomiting
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue (weak, tired feeling)
- Blurred vision
- Numbness or tingling of the hands or feet
- Frequent infections of the skin or urinary tract.

How is Type 2 diabetes diagnosed?

Doctors will first check for signs of it in your blood (high blood sugar levels). In addition, they may look for sugar or ketone bodies in your urine.

Tests used to diagnose Type 2 diabetes include a fasting plasma glucose

test and a casual plasma glucose test.

What can I do to prevent diabetes?

Plenty. Studies show that 90% of cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented -- or significantly delayed -- simply through a healthier diet and enough physical activity. The big proof of that came in a study of 3,234 people who were overweight and had higher blood glucose levels, putting them in the crosshairs of diabetes risk.

Those who followed a program of exercise and diet geared to losing excess weight -- in this case, an average of 15 pounds -- lowered their risk of diabetes by 58%. Those in the 60-and-older set cut their risk by 71%. And these were people who already had a high risk of diabetes. Keep your weight in the normal range and stay active, experts say, and you stand an excellent chance of never getting diabetes.

Experts say that a healthy diet designed to prevent type 2 diabetes includes whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and avoids sugar and refined carbohydrates.

Studies suggest that alcohol may actually protect against diabetes. Combining data from 15 studies, researchers found that moderate alcohol consumption reduced the risk of type 2 diabetes by almost 30%. But excessive drinking increased the risk. Here, as always, the word is moderation, such as one drink daily.

Medically Reviewed by Minesh Khatri, MD - WebMD

2023
in Review

10 Best Hindi Films of The Year

2023 felt like a renaissance in terms of Hindi cinema. Even if the quality of cinema on offer may have been uneven, but distributed between OTT and theatrical, the year has produced some notable films, performances and an all-round promising pitch for the sustenance and expansion of Bollywood. Here is a flashback 2023 of the 10 best Hindi films of the year in no particular order, as reported by Manik Sharma of MoneyControl.

Gulmohar

Not only did Gulmohar boast an excellent cast, including the returning Sharmila Tagore and the always likeable Amol Palekar – in a role against type mind you – but it also brought to fore urban anxieties and turf wars being fought across doorsteps in India's joint families. Graceful, elegant and affecting, this was a poignant little film about family ties and the inheritance of loss. Predictably, it also featured one of the many scene-stealing performances Manoj Bajpayee has delivered this year.

Lust Stories 2 (The Mirror)

It's ironic that a short film, has managed to sneak its way into a list featuring full-length films, but such is the impact of Konkona Sen Sharma's *The Mirror*, a provocative, insightful and maybe epochal film in the context of pleasure, class and the female gaze. Tillotama Shome and Amruta Subhash were abnormally good, in what is easily the boldest yet most subversive film of the year.

Tarla

Contrary to *Lust Stories*, *Tarla* is a straightforward underdog narrative. As a biopic, it largely operates in safe territory, but what makes it homely and comforting is the warmth and modesty with which a real-life story is treated. The highs of TV stardom feel like happenstances, the victories middling but satisfying. The real journey here is between the wife and her doting, supportive husband. Huma Qureshi and Sharib Hashmi are excellent in straightjacket roles that feel like people out of any middle-class kitchen.



Rocky Aur Rani kii Prem Kahaani

The death of the larger-than-life romance has been pronounced many times over in the past few years, but not only did Johar succeed in reviving a genre he ruled two decades ago, he gave it intricate, progressive updates. More than Ranveer and Alia, it was this unexpected chemistry between Dharmendra and Shabana Azmi that kind of stole the show. Everything was grand, silly and felt pledged with the clarity of a teardrop. Just what we'd been missing.

OMG 2

It's refreshing to at least be able to mention an Akshay Kumar film in a best-of list. The prolific actor has delivered dud after dud, for no lack of trying. Ironically, in a film where he literally plays god, his nonchalance and groovy mannerisms came to the fore. But *OMG2*'s success is owed to the dependable Pankaj Tripathi and the courage of the creators to mainstream something that is widely considered taboo – sex education. It's the kind of film that for all of its flaws, we need more of.

Jawan

While *Pathaan* was a slick actioner about a stylish patriot, *Jawan* practically blew the lid off of Shah Rukh Khan's stardom. This rough-talking, notorious macho man we had never seen looked precociously like a new incarnation; sexier and seductive. It was the kind of film

that can only really be experienced in a theatre, with people surrendering to its whimsies and well-curated mercies.

12th Fail

Vidhu Vinod Chopra returned to the screens with a film that though hardly publicised, offered a refreshing template for the underdog narrative. Vikrant Massey was stupendous in a film that refused to give into the triggering elements of a rags-to-riches story and simply stuck to the somewhat tragic arc of an earnest man with nothing to fall back on except his desperation to get somewhere. It's easily one of the acting and maybe directing performances of the year.

Three of Us

Avinash Arun's sombre, melancholic walk down memory lane is quietly perturbing and endlessly memorable. Arun has mastered the art of quietude, and here he takes us on the solemn journey of a woman revisiting a town where she buried a part of her, as an act of edifying that which she will no longer remember. Free of platitudes and small talk, this is a film that unfurls in the silence of its many images. Shefali Shah, Jaideep Ahlawat and Swanand Kirkire were all worth their pedigree in what is easily the most beautiful looking film of the year.

Animal

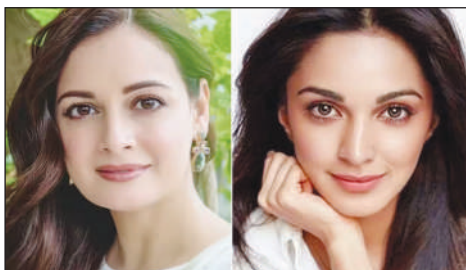
Animal isn't everyone's cup of madness and provocation. It overdoes excess in places with the sole intent of rubbing a sub-set of critics, but it has, in all earnestness, delivered the acting performance of the year. Ranbir Kapoor goes from tough guy to madman in this film that punches you in places you didn't know was possible in a film theatre. For everything he is rightfully judged, analysed for, Sandeep Reddy Vanga, is not a boring filmmaker.

Joram

Devashish Makhija's latest film is a familiar tale of a cop chasing a culprit, except victimhood here is distributed by way of identity as opposed to intent. The ones imposing the law, look more beaten than the ones being incriminated by it. It's the most political of this year's films, and its cinematography and direction are astoundingly pure and immersive. It has another of those expected features – a superlative Manoj Bajpayee

Kiara Advani to Dia Mirza - Bollywood divas with flawless skin

Many actresses often leave their fans amazed with their flawless skin. Here's a look at the secrets behind their beautiful skin, as reported by Manisha Mandal of Bollywood Life



Kiara Advani

Do you look at the B-town divas and often wonder how they have this glowing skin despite the heavy use of makeup on their faces constantly? Let's take a look at the actresses who have flawless skin and their beauty regime. To begin with, Kiara Advani often leaves her fans mesmerised

with her natural beauty and radiant skin. The actress makes sure to follow the CTM (cleansing, toning and moisturising) routine twice a day that keeps her skin healthy and glowing. She never steps out without moisturiser and SPF (sunscreen product) on her face.

Dia Mirza

Dia Mirza has flawless skin, and ageing has not affected her beauty at all. The actress swears by everything natural that keeps her skin hydrated and free of impurities. She uses a natural walnut scrub, plum, and aloe vera moisturisers with either coconut or olive oil.

Anushka Sharma

Anushka Sharma is a fitness freak, and she believes in doing a good workout for at least an hour, focusing on every part of her body with a healthy diet, and that makes her skin glow.

Alia Bhatt

Alia Bhatt, who has been sharing

some makeup tutorials these days on her social media, revealed that icing really helps take away the puffiness from her face, and she feels pink and fresh after she literally dunks her face in the ice bowl every day.

Shraddha Kapoor

Shraddha Kapoor's healthy skin regime includes five prominent steps: hydration, a healthy diet, Sun protection, regular exercise, and beauty sleep.

Madhuri Dixit

The Dhak Dhak girl, Madhuri Dixit, says that in the entire day, her night skin care routine is very critical, which includes removing all the makeup, and after that cleaning, she applies a toner and Vitamin C.

Katrina Kaif

Katrina Kaif is a radiant beauty, and she has great skin. The Tiger 3 actress believes in using everything natural and beauty oils, has a balanced diet, and

never skips this for anything.

Ananya Panday

Ananya Panday uses three simple steps to have clear skin: a simple DIY recommended by her mother, Bhavna Panday, and a spoonful of turmeric, honey, and yoghurt, which she applies to her cleansed skin at least three times a week.

Deepika Padukone

Deepika Padukone believes in the basics of cleansing, keeping skin hydrated, and using sunscreen. Well, these flawless divas never miss the daily routine of taking care of their skin, and the result is right in front of you.

Malaika Arora

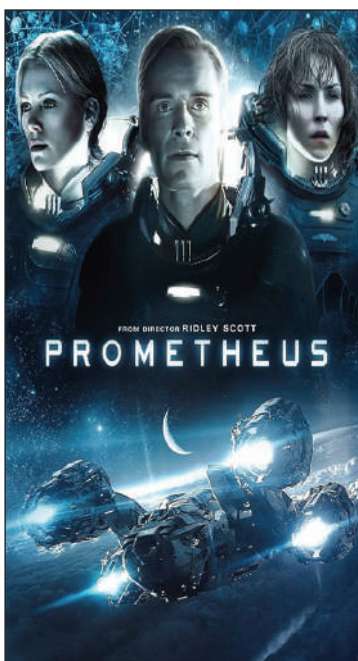
Malaika Arora prefers homemade DIYs that include organic honey, cinnamon powder, lime juice, and other various homegrown ingredients for her face and body.



mardi 26 décembre - 20.30



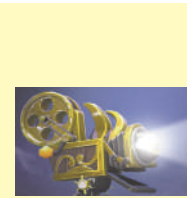
mercredi 27 décembre - 22.15



mercredi 27 décembre - 15.30



Programme TV



MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	MBC 5	Bollywood TV
mardi 26 décembre 04.45 Tele: Amour Secret 05.08 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 07.20 Serial: Pearson 08.09 Serial: Rookie Blue 08.45 Serial: Absentia 09.30 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 10.05 Tele: Amour Secret 10.30 The Gardener's Daughter 10.50 Tele: L'Envers Du Paradis 11.15 Tele: La Reina Del Flow 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Barbarita 13.15 Tele: Fierce Angel 13.45 Tele: Imperio De Mentiras 14.10 Serial: Gout De L'Amour 15.25 Film: Sur La Piste De Noel 17.30 The Gardener's Daughter 17.59 Live: Samachar 18.31 Serial: Wagle Ki Duniya 20.30 Film: Deliver By Christmas 21.55 Tele: Barbarita	mardi 26 décembre 07.29 Local: Chants De Noel 10.14 Local: Bricolo Ecolo 10.37 Local: Proze Dime 11.04 Local: En Famille 12.00 Rodrig: Saver Lokal 12.43 Local: Les Petits Genies 13.44 Local: Elle 14.49 Local: Chants De Noel 15.39 Noel Avec Les Enfants... 16.44 Local: Aktiv 16.58 Local: Nos Stars Chantent... 17.55 Tele: Imperio De Mentiras 18.29 Tele: Amour Secret 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.20 Rodrig : Saver Lokal 19.48 Local: Paroles Agricoles 20.15 Local: Priorite Sante 21.40 Local: Festival Kiltir Ek... 23.34 Local: Mots & Ecrits 00.09 Local: Profil 00.22 Local: Rodrig: Koze Zom	mardi 26 décembre 07.00 Serial: Gadget Guru Ganesha 09.10 Local: Yeh Shaam Mastani 10.00 Serial: Kundali Bhagya 12.02 Film: Anhonee 14.59 Live: Samachar 15.30 Badki Malkaain 16.00 Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 17.28 Radha Krishna 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.36 Local: Tark Vitark 19.00 Local: Bhojpuri Dhamaka 19.30 Local: Theatre 20.00 Chikitsa Aur Swasthya 20.35 Film: Aadmi Sadak Ka 22.38 Serial: Jijai Chhat Par Hain 23.00 Serial: Yeh Teri Galiyan 23.47 Local: Tark Vitark 00.35 Local: Bhojpuri Dhamaka 01.54 Serial: Badki Malkaain 02.13 Local: Tark Vitark	mardi 26 décembre 08.46 D.Anime: Patamuse 09.15 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 09.35 Film: L'Ecole Des Magiciens 11.11 Mag: In Good Shape 12.21 Mag: Tomorrow Today 12.47 Doc: Princess For A Day 13.30 Mag: Japan Video Topics 14.00 Film: Strange Magic 15.40 D.Anime: Li'l Santa 15.41 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 15.53 D.Anime: Miraculous 15.58 D.Anime: Li's Santa 16.15 D.Anime: Li'L Santa 16.38 D.Anime: Hunter X Hunter 17.05 D.Anime: The Avatars 17.30 Mag: Eco At Africa 18.00 Mag: Rev 18.31 Mag: Healthy Living 19.31 Mag: Global Us 20.02 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 20.50 Tele: La Reina Del Flow	mardi 26 décembre 14.25 Serial: Radha Mohan 15.00 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 2 15.30 Film: Aladin Starring Shubhankar Atre, Amitabh Bachchan, Victor Banerjee 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 19.03 Udaariyaan 19.33 Kuch Rang Pyar Ke Aise... 20.06 Sasural Simar Ka 2 20.38 Radha Krishna 21.08 Anupama 21.30 Mere Sai 22.08 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.29 Kabhi Kabhie Ittefaq Sey 22.55 Serial: Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 23.30 Film: Aladin 02.07 Kundali Bhagya
mercredi 27 décembre 06.01 Tele: Love And Wealth 07.00 Film: A Christmas Star 08.45 Serial: Airwolf 09.35 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 10.05 Tele: Amour Secret 10.25 The Gardener's Daughter 10.50 Tele: L'Envers Du Paradis 11.15 Tele: La Reina Del Flow 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Barbarita 13.15 Tele: Fierce Angel 13.40 Tele: Imperio De Mentiras 14.15 Serial: Airwolf 15.30 Film: The Christmas Contest 17.30 The Gardener's Daughter 18.31 Serial: Wagle Ki Duniya 18.55 Serial: Swaran Ghar 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.30 Local: Retrospective 2023 21.30 Serial: Under Pressure 22.15 Film: Prometheus 01.00 Tele: Barbarita	mercredi 27 décembre 07.05 Local: Priorite Sante 08.47 Local: Rhythm In The Mood 10.30 Local: Proze Zom 11.01 Extraits Du Festival Lamisik 12.33 Local: Rodrig - Saver Lokal 12.53 Local: Priorite Sante 13.15 Local: Paroles Agricoles 13.41 Local: Rhythm In The Mood 14.54 Local: Nu Rasinn 15.49 Local: Gwar Dantan 16.16 La Journee Sous Le Regard 16.35 Festival Kiltir Ek Langaz... 18.01 Tele: Imperio De Mentiras 18.28 Tele: Amour Secret 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.20 Local: Rodrig Spor 20.30 Local: Toc Toc Doc 20.45 Local: En Forme 21.00 Festival Kiltir Ek Langaz... 22.00 Local: Les Klips 22.52 La Journee Sous Le Regard 23.20 Local: Proze Dime	mercredi 27 décembre 07.00 Gadget Guru Ganesha 08.26 Local: Bhojpuri Dhamaka 08.56 Local: Theatre 09.23 Chikitsa Aur Swasthya 10.00 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 11.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 12.00 Film: Do Anjaane Starring: Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, Prem Chopra 15.30 Serial: Dulhin Uhe Jo Nanad Man Bhave 16.01 Serial: Suhani Si Ek Ladki 17.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.39 Local: Yatra South 19.20 Local: Kala 19.37 Gulmohur Ki Chaon Mein 20.02 Local: Virasat 20.32 Film: Kab Kahaba Tu I Love You 22.52 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 23.14 Serial: Yeh Teri Galiyan	mercredi 27 décembre 06.30 Mag: Japan Video Topics 07.00 Film: La Sorciere De Noel 08.35 Film: Le Prince D'Egypte 10.15 Film: Les Aventuriers Du Vaisseau Perdu 11.40 The Prince Of The Forest 13.30 Serial: N*Gen 14.00 Film: Ploey 15.23 Idefix Et Les Irreductibles 16.42 D.Anime: Hunter X Hunter 17.05 Serial: The Avatars 17.30 Mag: Rev 18.00 Mag: Motorweek 18.30 Doc: The Answer To Almost... 19.00 Mag: Arts Unveiled 19.30 Mag: The Inside Story 20.00 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 20.30 Live: News 20.50 Doc: Nature Always Wins 21.40 Film: Unlocking Christmas 23.05 Mag: Close Up	mercredi 27 décembre 14.25 Radha Mohan 14.58 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 2 15.27 Film: Shanti Kranti Starring: Juhi Chawla 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 19.00 Udaariyaan 19.30 Kuch Rang Pyar Ke Aise... 20.00 Sasural Simar Ka 2 20.30 Radha Krishna 21.06 Anupama 21.36 Mere Sai 22.05 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.31 Kabhi Kabhie ittefaq Sey 23.00 Serial: Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 23.26 Film: Shanti Kranti 02.05 Serial: Kundali Bhagya 02.30 Serial: Udaariyaan
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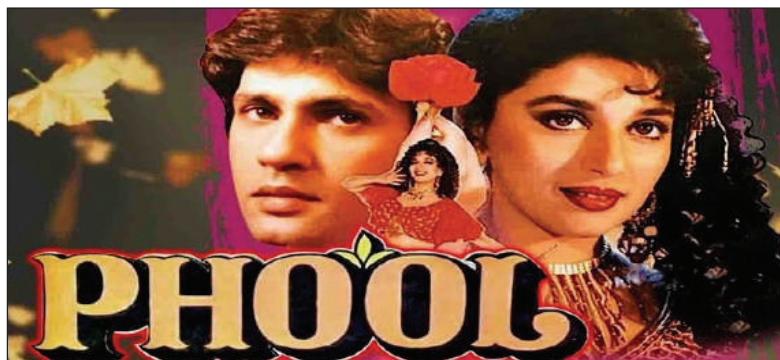
Jeudi 28 décembre - 15.28

Stars: Sunil Dutt, Rajendra Kumar, Kumar Gaurav



Jeudi 28 décembre - 20.30

Stars: Ranveer Singh, Varun Sharma, Pooja Hegde





Nita Chicooree-Mercier

Happy Mithra Day, hommage à la tradition

Nous vivons une ère de tension sur fond ethnoreligieux et aussi de civilisation qui polarise les peuples et déchaîne des passions à travers le monde. Les haines millénaires remontent à la surface ; et le drame, c'est que peu de voix osent pointer le doigt sur la véritable nature de ces poisons qui envoient les rapports entre les peuples, préférant enrober ces passions hideuses et coupables d'un discours de 'cause' légitime à défendre. Mais, heureusement, ces interdits sont en train de voler en éclats face à la nécessité impérieuse d'établir des vérités que nombreux refusent d'entendre ou de reconnaître.

Il est dommage que le déni de la réalité se soit installé dans les esprits depuis si longtemps que c'est devenu la norme. L'ambiance festive de cette fin d'année s'inscrit dans ce climat de parole libérée de toutes parts, ce qui ne fait qu'alimenter de vives tensions. Mais c'est indispensable d'y faire face car l'avenir de l'humanité est en jeu.

Une période de célébrations

Le monde chrétien, avec les cultures protestantes en tête, s'apprête à célébrer la naissance de Yeshua, le rabbin israéliite que Saül magnifia dans une épopée et que les compagnons de Yeshua perpétuèrent en y relatant leur propre expérience auprès de celui qui les inspira à fonder une nouvelle religion.

Selon les historiens, le Sémite Yeshua n'avait jamais cherché à fonder une religion en son nom. Ce sont les apôtres qui lui prêtèrent des propos visant à donner à ses prêches, qui n'avaient duré que trois ans, un caractère missionnaire universel.

Au 4ème siècle, le pouvoir impérial romain vit dans cette nouvelle religion, qui s'était répandue graduellement hors des terres d'Israël, une opportunité de l'officialiser pour justifier un ordre politique autoritaire qui s'exercerait au nom d'un Dieu unique.

Les dieux et les déesses du paysage polythéiste grec et local continuèrent à occuper l'espace religieux. Et c'est l'un d'eux qui inspira l'impératrice lorsque survint le choix d'un jour pour célébrer la naissance de Yeshua devenu Jésus.

Les Romains présents au Moyen-Orient affectionnaient le dieu Mithra de par son idéal de l'amitié et de son symbole solaire. Le dieu Mithra, un des 33 dieux des Vedas en Inde, était aussi vénéré en Perse antique à partir du sud, partageant une

frontière avec l'Inde au nord-ouest (actuellement le Pakistan).

Le 25 décembre, c'était l'anniversaire du dieu Mithra en Perse antique que les Romains baptisèrent en «Sol Invictus», c'est-à-dire «le Soleil Invincible» qu'ils adoptèrent à Rome. L'empereur en fit son symbole pour faire rayonner son aura personnel, d'autres empereurs et rois s'appro-



priaient le symbole du soleil au fil des siècles. La Renaissance italienne en pleine effervescence spirituelle et artistique entreprit de donner au dieu-homme parfait et sémitique les traits européens qui lui sont restés collés à la peau jusqu'à nos jours.

L'importance du symbolisme des festivités

Ce qui est célébré à Noël, c'est l'homme parfait devenu Dieu et porte-parole du Père. Selon les écrits des apôtres, le message fondamental de ses enseignements est axé sur le concept de l'amour, de la compassion, du pardon et de la justice. Ainsi, les mêmes notions, présentes dans le judaïsme d'où était issu Yeshua, sont mises en exergue.

Les réalités sociales d'une époque où les pauvres n'avaient pas voix au chapitre étaient propices pour un style de prêcher, et manifestement, les compagnons de Yeshua en firent un idéal. Et c'est aussi l'esprit de sacrifice de l'homme pour le bien d'autres hommes qui est vénéré et respecté. Héraclès et Prométhée de la mythologie grecque en sont les figures précurseurs. Et c'est fort probable que le réveil intellectuel en Europe qui œuvrait à émanciper le peuple au nom de l'égalité était aussi empreint d'un enseignement biblique.

L'empereur Julien fut le dernier empereur acquis au paganisme ; il promulgua un édit de tolérance qui permettait à chacun de pratiquer le culte de leur choix en l'an 361. Il exigea que les Chrétiens qui avaient pillé les trésors des cultes païens les restituent. Les cultes polythéistes traditionnels et les cultes à mystère d'origine orientale

continuèrent à être pratiqués (Mithra, Cybèle, Isis) malgré les restrictions progressives par les empereurs chrétiens.

Lorsque la nouvelle religion fut considérée comme un élément essentiel de la cohésion politique de l'empire, les autres pratiques devinrent des 'superstitions populaires' et furent dénigrées comme étant 'païennes', (le terme «païen» est dérivé de «paganus» signifiant paysan).

En l'an 392, l'empereur Théodose avait interdit les Jeux Olympiques liés à Zeus et Héra, entre autres, à cause de la nudité du corps des athlètes, car le culte du corps et de la nudité étaient proscrits par le christianisme. Peu à peu, les temples tombèrent en ruine.

L'étiquette péjorative du «paganisme» a perduré jusqu'à nos jours. Mais à la fin de deux millénaires, l'influence païenne sur les fêtes célébrées dans le calendrier des religions dans les régions désertiques du Moyen Orient, à commencer par le judaïsme, commencèrent à être reconnues. C'est le cas du moins chez les Juifs et les Chrétiens; il n'y a aucune crise pour précipiter ceux qui en font un rappel vers le feu de l'Inquisition.

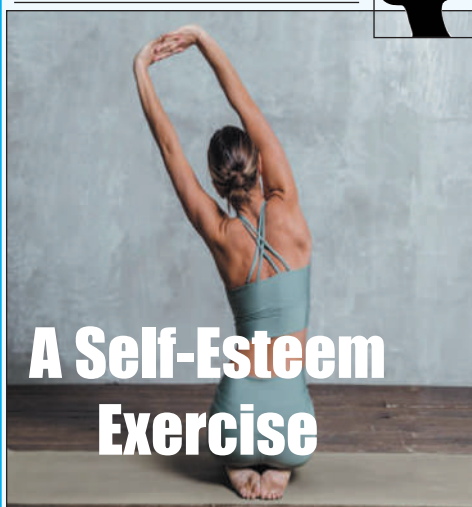
Ainsi, les légendes de l'Egypte, de Babylone, de l'Afrique et de bien d'autres contrées ont façonné l'imaginaire et les pratiques ultérieures, les rituels de prière, le jeûne, l'ablution, le sacrifice d'animal, etc. L'échange de cadeaux est l'héritage des rois étrusques à Rome, tradition émanant de la Grèce antique. La tradition celte célébrant le solstice d'hiver a aussi laissé des traces dans le calendrier des célébrations. Il est relativement aisé pour celui qui s'y intéresse de déceler la continuité et la fluidité dans les traditions à travers les siècles, et ce, en dépit d'un déni tenace de certaines voix... Le paganisme - tant décrié et voué aux gémonies - est resté pour ainsi dire omniprésent.

Revenons au 20e siècle. Le 'Christmas' en Grande Bretagne est pratiquement la seule fête d'envergure qui mobilise l'énergie et l'attention des pratiquants et des athées pendant le temps des grandes préparations bien avant le 25 décembre. Le 'Jingle Bell' anglais résonne pendant des jours. Plus que les prières, c'est dans la joie, la musique, les couleurs, les festins et l'échange des cadeaux que tous les Chrétiens et ceux qui se joignent à eux célèbrent l'enfant devenu homme-dieu.

Hommage aux traditions, us et coutumes pour célébrer le bien-être, la paix et le bonheur ! Happy Mithra Day. Happy Sol Invictus. Bonne fête à tous. Merry X-mas. Joyeux Noël.

Tree of Knowledge

Madisyn Taylor



A Self-Esteem Exercise

Having low self-esteem is a common issue -- with some introspection you can start to loosen the grip of this negative thought pattern

Our primary relationship in life is with ourselves. No one else goes through every experience in life with us. We are our one permanent companion, yet we are often our worst critic. To remind ourselves of our magnificence, we can do this exercise: "Five Things I Like About Myself."

Begin by writing down at least five things that you like about yourself. This is not the time to be modest. If you are having trouble coming up with a total of five items, you know that this exercise can really benefit you. Be sure to include more than your physical attributes on your list, since our bodies are only part of who we are. If you are still struggling with what to include on your list, think of what you like about your favourite people, because these traits are probably qualities that you possess too. Another way to complete your list is to think of five things you don't like about yourself and find something about these traits that you can turn into a positive.

Continue this process for a week, thinking of five new things you like about yourself each day. At the end of the week, read the list aloud to yourself while standing in front of a mirror. Instead of looking for flaws to fix, allow the mirror to reflect your magnificence. You may feel silly about standing in front of a mirror and reading aloud a list of your admirable attributes, but it might just bring a smile to your face and change the way you see yourself.

Remember, it is when you feel the most resistant that this exercise can benefit you the most. Because we are constantly looking at the world, instead of looking at ourselves, we don't often see what's magnificent about ourselves that others do. When we take the time to experience ourselves the way we would experience someone we love and admire, we become our best companion and supporter on life's journey.