

END OF LEGEND

The tragic demise of the nightingale of the country Lata Mangeshkar, who after rendering great contributions to the music world for almost 8 decades bade goodbye to the materialistic world on February 6, 2022 in Mumbai, is really an end of a golden era of the music industry, as the legendary singer is believed to have sung more than 25,000 music numbers in Hindi and many other regional languages. The entire teary-eyed nation bid farewell to their music maestro which was cremated with full State honours on Sunday. Besides a huge gathering of the common populace, a galaxy of dignitaries including eminent Bollywood stars, political leaders, ministers and the Prime Minister himself was present on her funeral to pay last respects to the departed soul. As a mark of respect to the legendary singer, the Government also announced two-day mourning across the country. Not even the leaders of the country but the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapakse, Pakistan PM Imran Khan and President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari have also expressed their condolences on demise of Lata Mangeshkar, who was also known as a melody queen. Born in Indore on September 28, 1929, Lata Mangeshkar started his career in music at a tender age of 13 years with the recording of first song in Marathi for the film 'Kiti Hasaa' and in October last year; almost 79 years later her last song was recorded. It is really surprising that the freshness and melody in his voice remained the same always and no one can judge her age from her voice. She is survived by three sisters namely Meena, Asha and Usha and a brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar. Pertinent to mention here that the singer was the proud recipient of highest Civilian Honour of the country Bharat Ratna along with Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Award and several other awards of the film industry. There are several timeless classics which have been sung by the melody queen several years back and are still fresh and listened quite often by people. The demise of Lata Mangeshkar is really going to cause a great wedge in the music industry of the country, which will not be filled easily in coming decades as legends like Lata Mangeshkar are born once in centuries.

WHY NOT IN J&K

It is bit confusing that the Government in Jammu & Kashmir is going slow on the issue of reopening schools despite the fact that the cases of coronavirus have seen considerable decline and most of the children of age between 15 years and 18 years have taken the first dose of the vaccine besides the age groups of over 18 years. There are many states and UTs which have given the nod for reopening the schools looking into the fact that online studies are not adequate to harness students towards attaining enough knowledge and customary education which is essential for building the careers of the young lot because online studies are merely for namesake especially for the young children. Punjab, Delhi and even Assam have decided to start the process of imparting education in schools with physical classes on but J&K is surprisingly still waiting to give a nod although the government in the UT has allowed coaching centres to start offline classes with a limited number of students. The way the J&K Administration is moving at snail's pace to restore the normalcy with regard to COVID-19 restrictions it is possible that indefinite time will be taken to bring J&K back on track. The Omicron peak has already gone and the cases are plummeting with a fast pace and this is the reason that the government should ponder reopening schools as already young students have lost interest in studies and many are reportedly indulging in unfair means to score record marks in exams. The government in J&K should at least clear the picture about its plans to reopen the schools and also about the mode of exams viz offline or online in the following months because taking the decision at the last moment will create problems for the students and the same should not be the case. If Delhi, Punjab and many other states can give a nod to reopen schools then what is stopping J&K administration from taking the decision is a big question because it is concerning the future of the students of J&K which is already facing so many problems due to three decades of turmoil and tumult.



Religion vs Spirituality

earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

After the fall of the first man, the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth was necessary. The message of the Lord Jesus was not on religion but on relationships in His Kingdom. From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) Repent means changing your mind because the kingdom of God has arrived. Therefore, we must understand the concept of a kingdom and its King and how they function. The concept of the Kingdom comes from no one other than the King Himself, but the concept of the Kingdom in its original, pure sense has been lost in our modern world mostly because of religion.

Religion is defined as the adherence to a set of beliefs that regulate the moral, social, and ritualistic behavior of the individual. This definition could include atheist, secular, communist, socialist, humanistic, agnostic, and yes even political and religious organizations. They all adhere to a code of beliefs, acceptable behaviors, systems, and traditions (or habits). Where did all of these "religions" come from? Out of the mind of mankind.

Bishop Lalachan Abraham

India-Spirit of oneness & politics of division it suffers

■ M R LALU

Rahul Gandhi's assertion to differentiate Hinduism and Hindutva to his Jaipur audience was an attempt to politically attack his opponents. In an attempt to take the subject of discourse across the country, underscoring the distinction, he went on calling himself a true Hindu while terming his saffron adversaries Hindutvavadis. The difference that he tried to paint as crucial between the terms Hinduism and Hindutva, was well defined by the Supreme Court referring to all the evidence that was available. Hinduism, for that matter, has never been defined as a religion. When sectarian polities divides the country so deeply into watertight compartments, it is necessary to look into what the Supreme Court had opined about this subject of controversy. In its attempt to explain the difference between Hinduism and Hindutva, in no judgment the apex court has identified Hindutva as a militant element of Hinduism. The court in its statement clarified the idea of Hinduism and Hindutva as difficult subjects to be defined inside the precincts of any ordinary religion. As Hinduism does not claim any prophet or particular book for its philosophical ideals, comparing it to the standards of other religions is impossible. As for the Supreme Court, Hinduism which is a way of life cannot be brought under the parameters that fit for other religions. To quote from the Upanishads, the basic ideal India stands for is 'Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti', which means truth is one and people call it by different names. Irrespective of religious differences, all the religions are taking their followers to the same supreme truth. We as a country have accepted, respected and followed this principle.

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The continuous, constant and persistent rise in the prices in an economy is called inflation in the economic sense. This process of continuous rise in prices of commodities is a serious problem affecting people and their lives in India. But the phenomena of the rising prices seem to be no concern and priority of the political parties and the ruling party seems insensitive to the problem of the continuous rise in the prices. Rising prices or inflation is the characteristic of all developing economies and as such Indian economy is of no exception and as such is facing the problem of the rising prices which is because of great hardship and suffering to the people and especially to the poor people and the commoner. The prices of goods and services are rising continuously in India and it is a burden and drain on the pockets of the consumers. In fact, back of the common man has broken by the continuous rise in price levels and he is unable to make his both ends meet because of continuous rise in prices of daily need goods, the prices of which are beyond his capacity to purchase. It is very unfortunate and unbecoming that on one side the prices of the goods and services are continuously rising but on the other hand the ruling BJP and its all powerful leader Narendra Modi is giving and manipulating concocted statistic to give a non believing feeling about the price rise and is saying that the inflation during his regime is less than five percent. It seems far from actual reality in the ground because the people are bearing the brunt of the continuous rise in the prices of the essential goods and services which he is unable to buy because of their soaring prices. Thus there are no takers of the government version about the prices because the people are already burdened by the problem of continuous rise in the prices. It is very disturbing that the prices of the goods

The question that surfaces here in this context is that, are we too polarized to forget the spirit of oneness that we nurtured, cherished and flourished with. The best way to delve into this subject is to refer to what Swami Vivekananda spoke of it long ago. Vivekananda was Shankaracharya of Modern India and Shankaracharya, to reinstate the essence of oneness as a nation, established 4 spiritual monastic centers in four directions of this country. To keep a politically scattered landmass, an agglomeration of regions together, Shankaracharya discovered, promulgated and used idea of Advaita Vedanta like the inner golden thread that joins the pearls of a necklace. Both saints considered this land as motherland which, for them, was sacred and divine as the great Goddess herself. For them, the land was her body, her social, economic and political life, her mind, and her philosophy and culture, her soul.

When Swami Vivekananda proclaimed that each soul is potentially divine, Shankara had long ago accentuated it through his Advaita doctrine. Both had spiritual ideals experimented and elaborated to the people of their time barring all other differences and focusing on one practical principle, which was to realize the ultimate truth in everything. The truth, they said, attempts to withhold people from dissecting their intellect in the name of religious differences but helps them find a unifying essence that goes through every religious doctrine like a thread connecting beads of plurality. Swami Vivekananda proclaimed to the western world that truth is one and we identify it as many. For India, its culture was so supreme that it could easily accept even the idea of atheism without any grudge. Shaking the nation and its people from their self-forgetfulness, he

awakened the national spiritual consciousness by genuinely injecting in them the idea of oneness. This was indeed an effort to indirectly elevate the mass into a divine national consciousness which essentially strengthened the country through its millions of freedom fighters. An invigorated freedom struggle against the colonial rule in the country began with full force as the words of Vivekananda swayed across the country. Subhash Chandra Bose and many more moved forward in the path of acquiring freedom igniting the fire of wisdom and essence of oneness that Vivekananda astutely spoke of. For him, religion was a mechanism to serve the poor irrespective of the beliefs and traditions it followed. But there have always been efforts to downsize the essential Indian thought of oneness by an academia with vested interests in India and abroad. Repeated cries, alleging that country is pitching a war against its minority, are heard on a daily basis. The genocide against Muslims that the country is blamed for is because present dispensation at the center is believed to have a saffron mandate. India with more than 200 million Muslims contributing to its progress in a big way has always been inclusive allowing all its diverse beliefs and faiths enjoying freedom to flourish. Chiseled out of India, our two newborn neighbours with a disproportionate population of minorities including Hindus, Sikhs and Christians, have successfully curtailed the wings of their generations from prospering, forcefully brushing them under the fear carpet. Being a civilised nation, amicable coexistence was India's priority irrespective of unscrupulous attack on its secular national credentials. Mahatma Gandhi had imbibed this essential oneness that India stood for generations and wanted to revive that in

a country which was free from the British hands. The future of the country stays on such an inclusive ambience that never discriminates people based on their faith, language, tradition, lifestyle and religion. Artists, actors, comedians, students, politicians or anybody for that matter enjoys the freedom to diminish and tarnish the essence of our spiritual ethos from platforms in India and abroad. Strengthening its democratic credentials, the country with its majority population, has never reacted to such onslaughts of deliberate denials in a way such situations could have been dealt with in countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh. On one side, a deliberate attempt to demonize India by vested interests is on, but on the other we can see a world intensely inquisitive about the inclusiveness that India stood for generations, taking lessons from it. Wooing the vote banks, Manmohan Singh was not regretful as he batted for the Muslims to have first claim on the country's resources. Decades of Congress Raj in India was a ceremonial attempt to appease the minority to advantageously nibble from their unshaken vote bank. Now what backfires, Congress is BJP's entry into Indian polity with Ayodhya, Mathura and much more in disguise of a savior of the nationalistic, pluralistic Indian-ness. Rahul Gandhi needs more time to dive deeper into the oneness that Hinduism and Hindutva stand for. Political Hindutva what he is trying to pin the blame on is an outcome of minority appeasement policies that his party is known for. For India, Sabka Sat Sabka Vikas by Modi Government should be a benchmark of oneness that India stood for ages with development knocking all doors with unprejudiced dynamism.

(The author is a freelance journalist, teacher and social-worker).

Control Rising Prices

and services are increasing without any respite and putting the people to hardship and sufferings. It is not hidden from anyone that the prices of the daily-use goods and services are skyrocketing and affecting the lives of the commoners who suffer a lot due to continuous rise in the prices of the goods which consumers need most in their day to day existence. The prices of petrol and, diesel is increasing without any break and because of this increase the prices of all other essential goods and services also increase and put a great burden on the pockets of the common Indian. Thus, price of domestic cooking gas, Atta, flour, rice, sugar, soap, detergents and the like increase beyond imagination and paying capacity of the common consumers. One fails to understand as to what has happened to the prices of the edible oils because the prices of the edible oils has doubled in the rule of the BJP and there seems no respite to the rise in the price of the edible oil and this is putting the consumers to untold sufferings and hardships. The edible oils has to be consumed and used by all the people and the commoner particularly are burdened by the increase in the prices of the edible oil and feel unable to purchase it but after all they have to purchase it for their daily use. The inflation affects the purchasing power of the people and reduces it as the consumers have to part with more money to purchase the same amount of the goods and services. The parting with money is a painful exercise and when one has to part with more money to purchase the goods of daily use because of the reduction in the purchasing power of the people because of the continuous rise in the prices, it is very disturbing and unfortunate as it puts all of us to trouble and suffering as the poor people are unable to purchase the goods which they daily need to make both ends meet. The price of the domestic gas is increasing day by day and it now costs

about one thousand rupees which the man in the street finds it difficult to buy but he has to buy it for sustenance and thus he suffers a lot because of the continuous rise in its prices. BJP Government has done away with the subsidy of the domestic gas and because of this the price of the domestic cooking gas has increased and put a heavy burden upon the consumers. The budget of the housewives has been adversely affected due to the continuous increase in the price of the cooking gas. The prices of the perishable goods like vegetables and fruit have touched a new high as their prices are increasing continuously and it is a cause of concern to the consuming public who find it difficult to buy the daily consumed vegetables because of the steep rise in the prices the daily consumed vegetables. The prices of the various pulses and rice, which is staple diet of the majority of Indians, also rise continuously and badly affects the purchasing power of the common Indian who find it very difficult to buy their staple diet. But the rulers of the day are least concerned and least sensitive to the continuous increase in the goods and services. The problem of the rising prices perhaps is not in the agenda and priority of the government as it seems insensitive to the inflation and rising prices. During rule of UPA, the goods and services were under control because of the efforts of the government and people were find it easy to buy the goods of daily use but such is not the case now as the common people find it very difficult to purchase the goods of daily use as they are unable to buy the daily use goods because of their skyrocketing prices. The Government of the BJP is only marketing and advertising its performances and achievements and it hardly concentrates on the important issue of the price rise as if it is no concern of the powers. Because of non-sensitiveness of BJP government towards the price rise, some

political Pandits and common people also allege that the BJP Government is friendly to the corporate and hence they feel no need to control the prices of the goods and services. It seems very queer that as five state assemblies are going to polls but the political parties especially BJP is silent about the menace of the rising prices and it does not find any mention in the election manifestoes as if the continuous price rise is no concern to them. The people of the country are fed up with the inflation and the government should come to the rescue of the common man by taking the appropriate steps to control the prices of the essential goods and services for the interest of the common Indian. Before it is too late, the BJP Government should show its sensitivity to the rising prices and form a policy to provide the daily use goods to people at affordable prices if it is really interested in the welfare of the common masses otherwise the people will only recognise it as the Government of the rich corporate houses. Thus the government of the day should pay top most attention to the continuous rising prices and take meaningful steps to control the rising prices in the interest of the common Indian and give him some respite from the menace of the rising prices. In the development planks of the BJP the control of the rising prices should also form its part, so that it becomes it really becomes a people's document and not remain confined to the document of BJP only. In brief, the Government should pay attention to controlling rising prices in the interest of the people so that the common man will be saved from the problem of increasing prices and be able to purchase the daily use goods with his meager income. Let the Government come to the rescue of commoner and control rising prices for giving some relief to him, from rapidly soaring prices.

(The author is retired Education Officer and Columnist).

YOUR COLUMN

Save environment to save life

Dear Editor,

Environmental pollution is one of key problems faced by modern world. Though there have been massive technological advancement in these recent days, it has also invited negative effects to environment. By doing a simple thing like planting a tree, we shall be making the world a better place and for sure we shall always be proud of our achievement. Saving the environment is not just an issue anymore. It is a survival truth. Individuals, organisations and Governments need to come together and join hands to protect what is left of our planet so that future is not wiped out before it's time for a curtain call.

Experts say that proper handling of waste materials, such as reusing or disposing of them properly, should constitute an important part of our efforts to preserve energy and protect the environment. Countries worldwide should use less coal and more reusable power like hydro or solar power. Let us plan our cities according to the available water resources and not avail water for too many homes that have been crammed into development. Saving energy reduces air pollution and greenhouse gases. The less we pollute our environment, the more we prevent global warming. Let us check seas from rising and submerging our lands. Increasing number of organisations is being formed to prevent planet from premature extinction. More and more corporates have joined the race to save the planet. We can simply begin by buying recycled products for our office, home or school. The greater the demand for recycled products,

the more these companies will be encouraged to add recycled material to their products. We can also make simple changes, like using reusable bags and containers. We should try and conserve electricity by turning off lights, TV or other electrical appliances when not in use. Use cold water in washer whenever possible. Buy less disposable products. Ban plastic. Buy more fuel-efficient cars such as a hybrid or electric and recycle your engine oil. Use public transit whenever possible. Let us walk more and drive less to conserve fuel and prevent auto-emission. We should avoid littering our roads and highways besides preventing others from doing so. Always dispose your litter properly as littering is not just bad for environment, it is also an offence carrying heavy fines. We use more organic fertilisers. Our farms need less pesticides and more organic methods. Plant trees to improve air quality. Take a stand against deforestation. Losing our rainforests means losing millions of trees that would otherwise be cleaning the air for us. Let's teach our children to respect nature.

Mool Raj, Doda.

Workplace bullying - a major concern

Dear Editor,

Bullying at workplace has now become a common practice in India & many companies and organizations inadvertently perpetuate a bullying culture by failing to take a proactive approach to anti-bullying policies. It is indeed very sad that workplace bullying has assumed alarming proportions and has become now the talk of the town. Bullying can affect us in one way or the other but its ramifications are very serious in nature. Workplace bullying is basically repeated, intentional behavior directed at an employee that is intended to degrade, humiliate, embarrass, or otherwise undermine

their performance. It can come from colleagues, supervisors, or management, and is a real problem for workers at all levels. Workplace bullying can be discreet, hard to define and challenging to explain to another party, which means that many victims feel powerless to take action. Being pinned into a corner by an angry boss shouting and jabbing a finger into one's face would obviously be widely recognized as bullying, but many manifestations of workplace bullying are far subtler. It has been highly observed that employees are being mentally harassed and psychologically beleaguered by their bosses in the private as well as public sectors. Everyone knows that workplace bullying is bad, but a large number of companies and bosses mistakenly believe that bullying is simply not an issue within their company or under their watch, so they don't pay the issue much mind. Anti-bullying laws and policies needs to be implemented at the workplace and those indulging in bullying activities should be charged under law and harsh punishment should be given to them. This way bullying can be eradicated to some extent. To stamp out the bullying culture from the workplace completely and to create a culture of zero tolerance for bullying, it is vital to take a proactive approach to the issue and an environment should be created where an employee can put forward his/her bullying issues to the bosses without any fear. Bosses should establish an open door policy for the employees so that they can speak in a safe and supportive environment without any judgment and penalty. To run any organization successfully, the key prerequisite is to make the working culture and environment very feasible and employee friendly. Secondly the bullying cases at the workplace should be eradicated completely from the ground level. Last but not the least is that an employee should be treated like an employee but not like a slave. After all an employee is a human being but not a robotic and programmed machine.

Vivek Koul,
Gole Gujral, Jammu.