



# SPRINGLIGHT

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## Human Chain for Fr Stan Swamy: Josephites stand by Stan

By Indumathi S



The management, staff and students of St Joseph's Institutions, Bangalore Jesuit Educational Society (BJES) and other morally conscious citizens braved rain, COVID and other perils to take part in a human chain demanding immediate release of Jesuit priest Fr Stan Swamy on October 12, 2020 in Bangalore.

The 83-year-old human rights activist was arrested in Ranchi, Jharkand by National Investigating Agency on October 8. He has been accused of having links with Maoists

and Bhima Koregaon case. The protestors stood with umbrellas and placards in a human chain that stretched all the way from Brigade Road to Shantinagar Bus depot in a three km long solidarity chain. The Archbishop of Bangalore, Rev Peter Machado too supported the cause by joining the silent protest.

"The NIA has falsely accused and implicated Fr Stan to stall the judicial process to give justice to the innocent Adivasi people in the region," stated the press release by

BJES. The arrest of the 83-year old ailing priest who spent his life advocating for the rights of Adivasis has sparked protests across the nation, and received widespread criticism and media coverage nationally and internationally.

Dr Priya, Vice-Principal, SJEC said, "Human chain organised by BJES is the right move to show our solidarity towards Father Stan Swamy. He has stood to upkeep the rights of tribal people. He has not committed any crime to be arrested. He has defended the

rights of poor citizens. This is just a beginning and will not stop until Fr Stan gets justice."

Mr Prashanth Kumar, Co-ordinator, Dept of Humanities said, "I really felt good that I participated in the silent human chain demonstration to express my solidarity with Fr. Stan Swamy who has been arrested under false allegations. In recent times, we have been witnessing the subjugation of the good samaritans of our nation who have been working to safeguard the interests of

the poor, oppressed and the marginalised from the domination of the rich people and corporate sectors. It is better to raise our voice against such incidences rather than being silent spectators."

"Between June 2018 and now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP government has jailed 16 people in connection with the 2018 violence in Bhima Koregaon village in Maharashtra state. They include some of India's most-respected scholars, lawyers, academicians, cultural activists, and an ageing radical poet, who then contracted Covid-19 in prison," reported BBC News.

## Mission of Fr Stan Swamy

By Staff Reporter

St Joseph's Evening College organised a webinar on October 10, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. on the topic, 'Unraveling the mission of Fr Stan Swamy and his impact on society – Empowering youth on Constitutional values'. The webinar was aimed to create awareness on the human rights activist, Fr Stan Swamy who was recently arrested.

The speakers for the webinar included Dr Albert Joseph Smith, Principal, SJEC; Dr Kanishka, IQAC Coordinator, and HoD, Dept of BBA; and Dr Paul Newman, Professor, Dept of History. Dr Kanishka began the session by sharing his perspective on the 'essence of Constitutional values' in the light of Fr Stan Swamy's detention. "Fr Stan Swamy should have been awarded Bharat Ratna, but instead he was arrested," said Dr Kanishka referring to the extensive work of Fr Stan Swamy for the rights of Adivasis.

Dr Paul Newman gave a detailed insight into the legacy of Fr Stan's struggle for human rights. Dr Albert Smith urged the participants to offer dissent whenever there is something unjust. "Dissent is our right," stated Dr Smith.

## Student Council organises protest on campus

By Antic & Bladina



The student council, SJEC in collaboration with other clubs and associations of the college called for a protest inside the campus on October 11, 2020 to oppose against the arrest of the Jesuit priest and human rights activist, Fr Stan Swamy.

The staff and students of SJEC actively took part in the protest to condemn the arrest of Fr. Stan on false charges. The protest was held on October 11, 2020 at 11 a.m. The protest was held adhering to all precautions and norms of social distancing. Placards with messages, songs of protest, and speeches by students were made to express

their solidarity, and condemn the injustice, and demand the release of Fr. Stan.

Ms Shilpa Nataraj, Governor, Student Council said, "As the youth of this nation and our college, the Student Council aims to imbibe and inculcate the core values of Jesuit education. The silent protest organised by the council was to create awareness about the rights of citizens as enshrined in the Constitution of India. The protest spearheaded by the student secretaries gave a safe platform to the youth of our college to express their views."

## National Webinar: 'Assert your democratic rights'

By Staff Reporter

In the light of the arrest of human rights activist, Fr Stan Swamy for his alleged links with Bhima Koregaon case, St Joseph's Evening College (Autonomous) (SJEC) conducted a national webinar on 'asserting democratic rights' on October 13, 2020, 6.00 p.m. The webinar aimed to create awareness regarding the situations surrounding the arrest of Fr Stan and the Constitutional rights of Indian citizens.

The resource persons for the webinar were Mr Ravi Nair, South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre and Mr Jagmohan Singh, Editor, World Sikh News. The session was moderated by Dr Paul Newman, Professor, Dept of History, SJEC. Referring to the arrest of Fr Stan Swamy, Mr Ravi Nair pointed out that Fr Swamy is a symbol and by arresting him the government is sending a message to be careful, and not take up issues related to Dalits as it goes against corporate interests. He called the charges against Fr Stan as a completely cooked up case, and he sarcastically referred to NIA as the National Imagination Agency.

Mr Nair urged teachers and students to come out and fight against injustice, and only then substantial change can be brought out. He also discussed that people can take up passive resistance such as boycotting Ambani companies' products (as these companies fund BJP government), and to not associate oneself with Hindutva elements. "The image of India as the largest democracy should be shaken and broken," said Mr Nair. Mr Jagmohan stated that men and women of religion have to be more forthright and forthcoming in the political sphere.

## OPINION

## Father Stan: Silenced at the altar of conjecture

By Albert Joseph Smith



Governments all over the world are fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, but the present Indian regime is using this opportunity to fight dissenters, abolish their fundamental rights and crush dissenting lucid Indians by intimidating, arresting them under fictitious cases. The deepest concern is that anyone who holds a different opinion and is not in conformity with the politics of the ruling regime is indicted with sedition, intention to cause riot against national integration, punishment for criminal conspiracy and unlawful association under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, or UAPA.

The extremely draconian and regressive, amended UAPA law has been strategically placed to exterminate dissenters. UAPA allows the government to sanction individuals as terrorists and permits the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to probe cases. A person charged under the act could be jailed up to seven years. While passing the law in Rajya Sabha in 2019, Home Minister Amit Shah claimed, "UAPA's purpose is only to fight terrorism", but now it is being used as a tool for intimidating citizens and eliminating any opposition.

When the state uses anti-terror laws without adequate proof against a person known to be working for the rights of the weaker sections of society, it is also spreading a kind of consternation. Arbitrary arrests on implausible charges is a source of anxiety to all because the police can walk into our homes and arrest us either without a warrant, or a warrant written in a language we do not understand, and then accuse us of activities about

which we know nothing. Stan Swamy, 83-year-old Jesuit priest, who spent more than half a century serving the tribals and other vulnerable communities in Eastern India has stumbled upon a similar situation, framed and indicted on false grounds. On October 8, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Father Stan from his residence near Ranchi, for having links with the Bhima Koregaon case and the Maoist. He is accused of receiving funds for furtherance of Maoist activities.

However, those who know Father Stan will enunciate that he is an exceptionally gentle, honest and selfless person. He had networked with many human rights groups to introduce several initiatives meant for the development of the state of Jharkhand. He identifies himself with the Adivasis and their struggle for a life of dignity. His silent and steady work with his humble and polite attitude earned him a lot of goodwill.

Father Stan, all through his life strived for justice and development of the Adivasis. He questioned the non-implementation of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which specified setting up of a Tribes Advisory Council with members solely from the Adivasi community for their protection, well-being and development in the state. He opposed the setting up of "land banks" which he contended would free up land belonging to the community to set up small and big industries. He opposed displacement of tribal communities, corporate loot of resources, the condition of under trials and PESA (Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas – Act, 1996).

He had also from time-to-time questioned the arbitrary arrests of Adivasi youths in the state. He had filed a public interest petition in the High Court against the erstwhile BJP government asking under trial prisoners to be released on a personal bond, and to conduct a speedy trial of such cases. He had also sought

the appointment of a judicial commission to investigate into the reasons for delay in the trial process. He also formed a persecuted prisoner's solidarity committee to take up the cause of under trials languishing in prisons. As a writer, he expressed dissent on several policies and laws of the government that were in violation of constitutional right. On learning his struggle for the adivasis, the erstwhile BJP government of Jharkhand wanted to stall the judicial process granting justice to the poor, innocent Adivasis. Therefore, they decided to implicate Fr. Stan with serious cases. Meanwhile, the Central regime took over the Bhima Koregaon case, and handed it over to the NIA, since there were change in governments in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

Father Stan at 83 is going through an ordeal, all because he chose to follow and live in the image of the god, he loved and served. Since his arrest there has been support coming in from across the globe, especially India. Many non-violent protests are being held condemning his arrest, and demanding his unconditional and immediate release.

It is necessary for us to unite as a civilised society to condemn any unethical attempt made by the present regime to change narratives of every engineered act of violence. We should all stand together in solidarity with selfless people like Father Stan, and many others who are suppressed by degenerating laws, and demand for their immediate release. We should also come together and stand in solidarity against the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and its targeted misuse by the State, especially during the lockdown due to COVID-19, to silence and threaten activists, students and organisations who are critical of the regime.

As for Father Stan, an octogenarian, suffering from old age illnesses, intimidated and hounded for two years and eventually arrested on October

8, it is the most inhuman and heartless act. Octogenarians are jewels of this nation; nonetheless, it is difficult to comprehend how the regime is treating them. He himself said, "If the price for fighting for our underprivileged fellow citizens, our rights and the survival of our democracy is to be defamed by our elected representatives, or worse, be silenced, so be it. This is a fight to the finish and at stake is humanity, democracy and above all, the values that this country stood for and must stand for. No price is too high to pay, not even our lives." He concluded with a couplet from Kahlil Gibran – "life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one" and said that if the NIA arrested him, he would be ready to face the consequences."

In hindsight, the solidarity and condemnation pouring in this case reaffirms that dissenting opinions is a Constitutional right of every citizen. We cannot offer to sacrifice innocuous citizens at the altar of conjecture, where UAPA and Covid19 are tools to attack human right and empowerment activities. However, the arrest of Father Stan is another caveat to civil society from the ruling regime that it will not tolerate dissent, freedom of expression and empowerment of the poor and the deprived. Nevertheless, the fight must go on as Kahlil Gibran puts it: 'My path is not thy path yet together we walk hand in hand'.

### 'Quote your tag'

**Varsha Madhavan & Syeda**

The commerce forum conducted an event, 'quote your tag' from August 27 to August 30, 2020, online. The event was conducted for the B.Com students to enhance their creativity, communication skills, presentation and imagination. The participants were asked to give tagline to particular products and best taglines were awarded the top three places.

The first place was bagged by Varun Vikranth, I B.Com. The second place was shared

### Yuva 2020: SJEC bags second place

By Ranjith M Menon

AICUF Karnataka in association with Karnataka Jesuit Youth ministry conducted a state-level cultural fest YUVA 2020 from August 15 to August 31. SJEC secured second place while St Joseph's College of Commerce emerged as winners. The School of Social Work secured third place.

Dinesh from II B Com won first place in collage and Thanushree from II B Com won first place in rangoli competition. Amil Roy from III BBA won third place in folk song. "It was a great opportunity and proud moment for our AICUFERS of SJEC to participate in a state-level fest. They have made our college proud by securing second place," said Mr Joswin, AICUF faculty co-ordinator.

### NSS celebrates Gandhi Jayanti

By M Balaji

NSS holds competition to celebrate Gandhi Jayanti. On the occasion of the 151 birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhi Jayanti was celebrated online with great zeal by SJEC NSS Unit on October 2 and 3.

Various events such as drawing, essay writing, paper-craft, speech, and quiz were organised on the theme, peace and harmony. Posters for the same were circulated among SJEC students through various social media platforms. More than 70 students enrolled and participated in these events.

between Arifa Bi, I B.Com 'A' and Syed Abdul Badi, III B.Com 'B'. The third place was secured by Dinesh. R, I B.com 'B' and Shree R, I B.Com 'B'.

### CORRECTION

In Vol 3, Issue 22, the report, *SJEC conducts UG final Year Examinations with COVID 19 preventive measures*, has a typographical error. Instead of September 3, it should have been September 30.

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