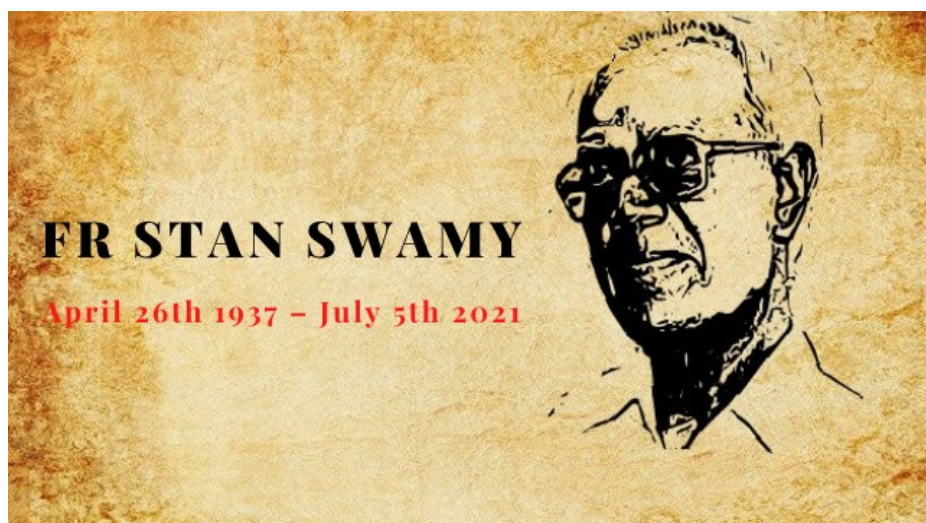




A special issue dedicated to Father Stan Swamy



“Jharkhand is a mineral-rich state, so the government and the industrial class is set to exploit the minerals by throwing Adivasi people from their hearths & homes after throwing some meager compensation at them. Now Adivasi people are becoming more aware of their rights and refuse to give their land.” – (Stan Swamy)

Also in this issue

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7. Poetry!

"We 16 co-defendants cannot meet because we are housed in different prisons or in different departments within the same prison. But we will continue to raise our voices in the future. A caged bird can still sing."

India Civil Watch International

[NewsWire Archives](#)

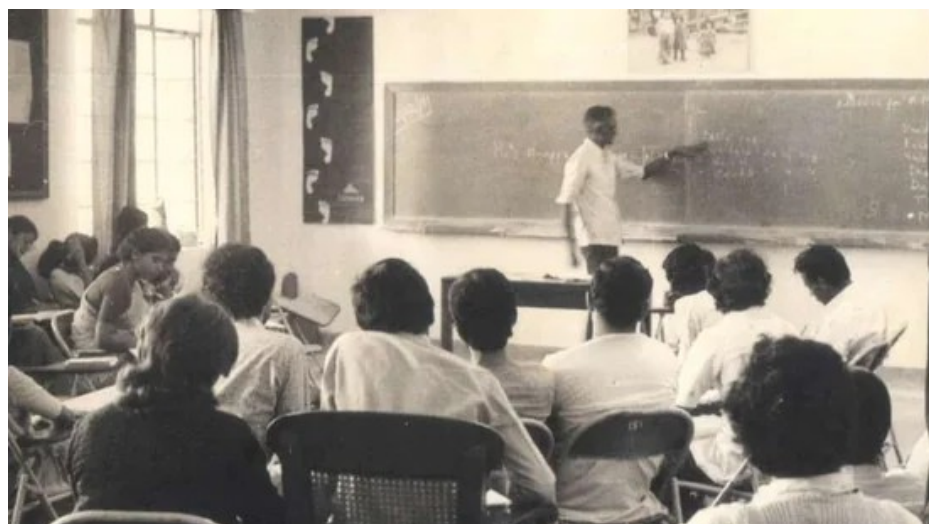
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Father Stan Swamy, at Indian Social Institute, Bangalore, where he taught from 1975-86. [source: *Hindustan Times*]

Spotlight: South Asian Dalit Adivasi Network, Canada

By Rana Khan

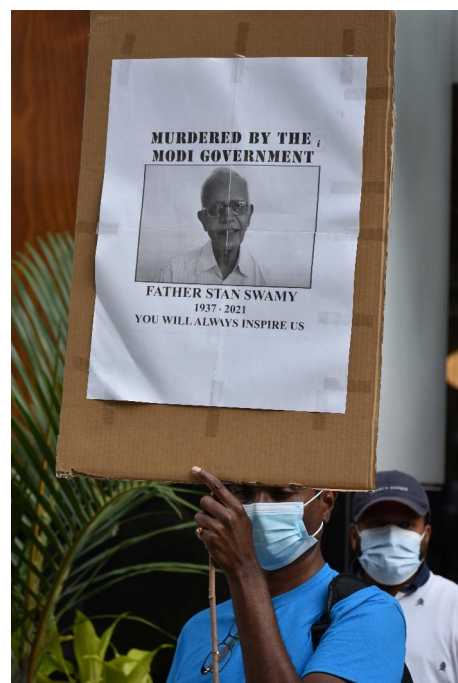
The South Asian Dalit Adivasi Network Canada (SADAN) was formed in 2019 by Vijay Puli and Chinnaiah Jangam and officially registered as a non-profit organization in 2020. The main focus of SADAN is advocacy against caste discrimination and for justice, equality, and dignity of caste-oppressed diasporic communities, persecuted minorities, and political activists inside and outside India. Self-respect, social justice, and equity are the fundamental tenets of the organization.

Based in Canada, SADAN addresses multiple forms of caste-based discrimination faced by historically oppressed communities such as Dalit (formerly known as untouchables in South Asia), Adivasis, and Bahujan or non-Brahmin castes. It collaborates with other prominent diasporic community organizations, educational, and government institutions to address caste-based discrimination and stigmatization. SADAN conducts awareness workshops and training sessions for individuals, groups, and institutions on anti-caste and anti-discrimination practices from an anti-oppression framework.

Moreover, it sensitizes people about caste-based violence, discrimination, and stigma in the Indian diaspora. As part of this initiative, SADAN conducts youth workshops and research studies to document caste discrimination in Canada and the United States of America. Moreover, SADAN provides community network support to newcomers from marginalized and oppressed communities. The organization also provides professional and culturally-appropriate counseling

and mental health support services to clients from oppressed communities as needed.

SADAN has been part of the CAA protests, has organized global candlelight vigil for the Hathras rape victim, and social media campaigns against police brutality in Telengana, launched the Dalit History Month National Event in Canada, and demonstrated recently against the custodial killing of Fr. Stan Swamy.



SADAN can be contacted via email at sadanhumanrights@gmail.com as well as through their social media handles:

https://twitter.com/SADAN_Canada

<https://www.facebook.com/Sadan-South-Asian-Dalit-Adivasi-Network-Canada-100118255117561>

Vidya Bhushan Rawat

In conversation with Rana Khan

Vidya Bhushan Rawat is a political commentator, a radical humanist, and a human- rights activist with over 25 years of work with various social movements and communities all over India. He has authored more than 15 books and numerous articles, has made films and documentaries, and has appeared on many panels and webinars. Vidya is also the founder of Social Development Foundation, an organization for spreading awareness and human rights among the Dalits and other marginalized sections of Indian society.



Q1. You had interviewed the late Father Stan Swamy (the video of which is available on YouTube <https://youtu.be/RtaQVaoH8Io>) and are familiar with his work for the underprivileged in Jharkhand and beyond. In retrospect, his words in that conversation that “...part of the struggle is also paying the price for it” sound chillingly prophetic. Share with us your thoughts about that meeting.

Father Stan Swamy had a great sense of responsibility and commitment towards the Adivasis. He was highly respected in the entire Jharkhand region. His “Bagaicha” was the place for activists from Jharkhand to learn the understanding of human rights and Adivasi values. He was deeply rooted into Adivasi history and culture, and despite being from Tamil Nadu, he felt absolutely at home in Jharkhand and wanted to be with Adivasis.

I did not know Father Stan Swamy as closely as some of his associates who worked with him, but I did have the opportunity to interview him when I was in Ranchi. I have been documenting oral history traditions, and I am particularly interested in those who work with marginalized communities. We had to keep in mind not to force him to speak too much, as he tired easily due to his age. When I was speaking to him, I tried to get his responses on major issues including ‘conversion’ as we know

Christian institutions were being targeted. He was confident and certain that nothing would happen to him as he had done nothing wrong. We would have loved to speak to him more, but I realised that he was very measured in his responses and a bit tired that time. Now that interview has become an extremely important document to understand Father Stan Swamy and his work. It also illustrates the importance of documentation of struggles and movements of people who are working at the ground and have no time to write about themselves.

Q2. What, in your view, are the implications of his custodial death, and the questions it raises about the intent and direction of the current BJP government in power?

Father Stan Swamy’s death in custody exposed our criminal justice system and its ‘helplessness’ when the government is determined to punish ‘dissenters’. Political differences are bound to happen in a healthy democracy, and it does not mean that those who critique or criticise the government hate democracy itself or are a threat to it. In fact, the biggest threat to democracies are the political leaders who have no faith in them and use the democratic system itself to promote their undemocratic ideas. Stan Swamy’s death showed how people can be killed by following ‘due process’.

I want to emphasise here that 'procedure' is the biggest weapon in the hands of officials to harass an honest citizen. Already 'procedures' are killing smaller grassroots organisations, and the same used to prolong detentions of individuals. While those linked to big NGOs or 'organised' networks get sympathy and hearing, there are numerous others who do not. They work tirelessly at the ground, may not be part of any so called 'national' or 'regional' networks and face harassment for raising social issues. Most of these smaller organisations do not even have a budget of ten lakh rupees annually (about \$13,510), and most of them

I want to emphasise here that 'procedure' is the biggest weapon in the hands of officials to harass an honest citizen.

have been compelled to keep silent in the current crisis because they don't have the luxury of "freedom of speech" which comes with one's sense of economic security. Democracies are not defined by just elections or elected Governments. Equally important for their success is the autonomy of the institutions such as judiciary, media, bureaucracy, and legislature. The track record of our institutions in recent years speak for itself. Even during the Emergency days, Justice HR Khanna became the voice of the nation, Justice Sachar too gave some bold decisions and people remember them. In contrast, one can see how the judiciary has 'protected' certain people related to seditions, CAA-NRC protests, Kashmir issues and others as they belong to the ruling party.

Q3. Tell us about your current work. Has it been impacted by the increasing restrictions on NGOs and activists? If so, how?

I continue to focus on Land Rights of the the marginalised communities through our work at Community Centre 'Perna Kendra' in Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier, in 1998, I had founded the Social Development Foundation (SDF) to encourage and develop humanist leadership on the ground to help fight for human rights issues, particularly those relating to economic and social-



cultural rights. As for restrictions, since 2014 the situation has changed drastically. Though the Congress government itself had started harassing the NGOs with stringent FCRA laws and making things more complicated in terms of procedures, the Modi government has targeted NGOs systematically. Funds got squeezed, as donors cannot afford to be interested in major issues like land reforms, caste discrimination, gender discrimination, untouchability, and superstition. We had to curtail our activities as we decided against renewal of FCRA. It was a painful decision but then we had no option. I can tell you these laws and procedures have only ensured criminalisation of the smaller organisations working on rights-based approach. Corporatisation of the NGO sector has taken

place. Big donors are more interested in 'event management' and feel good in sitting with the lawmakers. Nobody wants to go to the people or raise their issues as it would make their position uncomfortable with the government.

Q4. You believe in the Humanist movement. Given the increasing influence and power of religion in India, do you see this movement making any inroads amongst people's consciousness there?

SDF from the very beginning was a proclaimed humanist organisation. However, once you question religious taboos, and superstitions and rituals in the name of culture, you become a 'villain'. Campaigns against superstition, caste discrimination, gender disparity, and untouchability are the most difficult given the nature of our rural and urban sensibilities in which every issue is now related to 'community' identity. Unlike France, where state says it is neutral and will not promote religiosity or religious ideas, in India 'secularism' constitutionally means equal respect to all religions. Of course, since 2014, this equal respect to all religions too has disappeared as we see regular vilification of minorities, particularly Muslims. Coming back to your question, humanism seems to be the need of the hour in India. If we really understand the values of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Periyar, Phule, Bhagat Singh, and even Jawahar Lal Nehru, we can see that they all meet at one point, and that is humanism, spreading scientific temper, work against superstition, as well as acceptance of diversity and dissenting viewpoints, and human rights and dignity to all. We must have the capacity and courage to accept that certain religious views and ideas are not consistent with modern democratic ideas and should be

rejected thoroughly.

Q5. An ongoing Covid pandemic, a polarized society, a demoralized opposition, and an increasing authoritarian state -- are you at all optimistic about what the future holds for India?

This is a difficult question. We are a political democracy, but it was always fragile as socially we were, and still are, a highly undemocratic society. The fact is that Narendra Modi could come to power and continue to push the divisive agenda with such massive support shows that the social structure is now complimenting politics of division and vice versa. With over four lakh deaths as per official figures (though unofficially, experts suggest this figure could be four times more), and bodies floating in river Ganga, yet leaders are busy celebrating 'victory' over the Corona pandemic! Most of our mainstream media have become the biggest threat to democracy by acting as the mouthpiece of the government, almost becoming part and parcel of the ruling establishment, and by circulating lies and a divisive agenda.

The ruling party knows well that in terms of governance it has little to offer the people. Instead, Narendra Modi (and most of the BJP leaders) has now become like a 'patriarch' of a traditional joint family so even if the head of the family does not do anything or is a miserable failure, he can continue to preach, and members of the family are expected to just listen to him without asking any questions! Yet, despite the depressing state of affairs, I am hopeful that people of India will fight for their democratic rights. A proportional electoral system is required: the First- Past -the- Post -System invented by the British is rejected by most of the 'developed' countries but continues to be used by the former colonies. The system is used by the elite to remain in

power through various manipulations and machination. A country like India which is hugely diverse in terms of ethnic, religious, regional as well as linguistic, cannot be run through this 'minority' system which ignore the voices of the majority. Our police, media, judiciary, bureaucracy must reflect the diversity of India failing which we will always get a dictatorial leader.

India's strength is its diversity. To strengthen it, we need a coalition of people, communities and parties with long term alliances and not formed on the eve of elections. Once, we accept that this is a country with diversity and hence every state and community need fairly represented in our power structure, our issues will settle. We need to give more powers to the states, but instead the current government is focussing on more centralisation which is sad and deeply disturbing.

The answer against tyranny is the alliances of social movement, academics, intellectuals, communities which is progressive and provide an alternative vision. It is time to reinstate the spirit of idealism of Ambedkar, Phule, Periyar, Bhagat Singh, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Savitri Bai Phule and so many others. We have to acknowledge and recognise the agency of minorities and the marginalised, as well as women in this alliance.

Q6. There are numerous organizations and individuals in India as well as in the diaspora who are deeply concerned about the situation in India. How, in your opinion, can diaspora organizations (like the ICWI) best support the efforts of those in India as well as advocate in the international community for the democratic and human rights of all Indians?

It is important for friends in the diaspora to build democratic institutions in their country. We need think tanks and support groups which are thoroughly secular and have diversity in them. Networking with governments, parliamentarians and other civil society organisation is essential. Many times, those living abroad are in a better condition to speak up on issues of national concern. Diaspora should engage in bringing out articles, both online and in print, on the important issues facing our country.

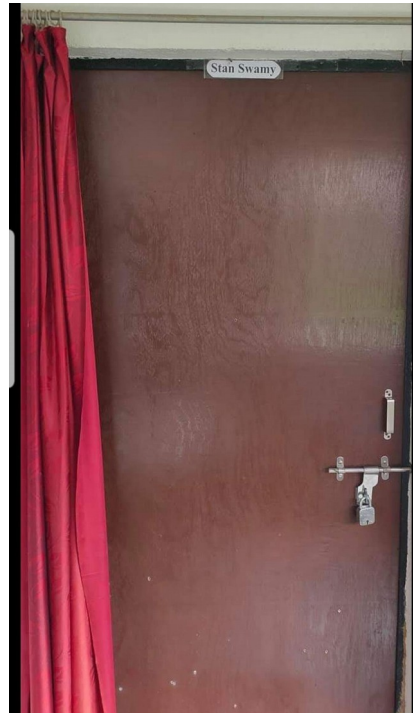
The crisis in South Asia is that each of us feel that 'minorities' are obstacle. Misogyny is part of the culture everywhere. Each of us is a minority somewhere and majority elsewhere: Hindus, Ahmedis, and Christians in Pakistan; Muslims in India and Sri Lanka; Hindus in Bangladesh. We need to speak up against authoritarianism and majoritarianism.

Finally, the Indian diaspora living in the Western world and enjoying its democratic freedom must, as a point of conviction, support democratic dissent back home. It is ironical, however, that some of them sitting in Canada or UK or USA and enjoying democratic freedom as a migrant and a minority, are pushing hate agenda in India as well as online campaigns against minorities and critics of the government. We must speak up against this hypocrisy. If you enjoy your rights as a migrant or immigrant or minority in the Western countries, what stops you to support same kind of ideas and laws in India? Let us hope the Indian diaspora will understand the dangers of a theocratic state or society at home which will only bring disaster. Our future lies in democracy, liberalism, humanism, and free thought.

India was built on a solid foundation by Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Jawahar Lal Nehru. Today, we are competing

with theocratic societies and states, but still there is hope. As an activist as well as an author, I am optimistic about our future and would like to focus on successful grassroots initiatives to strengthen the movement for social justice and human rights and give agency to the marginalised peoples. I feel

that would be the best tribute to Father Stan Swamy who never claimed to be the 'leader' of Adivasis but dedicated, and eventually sacrificed his life for their cause. We need activists like him to build up a truly people's movement that can then strengthen political democracy in India.



Writings by Father Stan Swamy

*Is Torture Part of police investigation?
Where Ants Drove Out Elephants – The Story of People's Resistance to Displacement in Jharkhand*

How long will the 6000 Jharkhandi Adivasis languish in jail?

Adivasi Resistance to Mining and Displacement: Reflections from Jharkhand

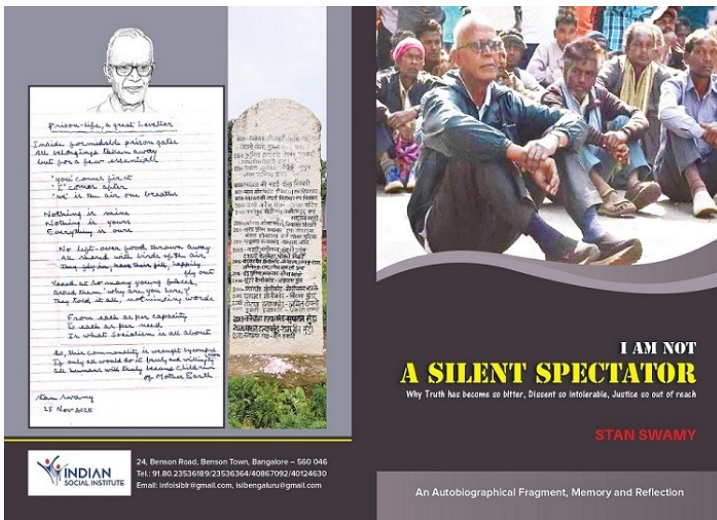
Is the Owner of the Land Also the Owner of the Minerals?

Jharkhand Human Rights Violations Report

Let Us Act to Save Common Village Lands of Jharkhand: A Constitutional Plea

Does Raising Questions on the Rights of Adivasis Make Me a 'Deshdrohi'?

An Appeal to the Conscience of the Nation – On Bhima-Koregaon case



I Am Not A Silent Spectator - Why Truth has become so bitter, Dissent so intolerable, Justice so out of reach

Stan Swamy
An autobiographical fragment, memory and reflection

Published by Indian Social Institute, Bangalore

Videos

Father Stan Swamy talks about his work in Jharkhand since 1991: <https://youtu.be/53TDM4Lwsnk>

An Interview with Fr. Stan Swamy, by Tapan Bose (recorded in 2018): <https://youtu.be/bJyJENDcVE4>

Funeral of a Saint of our time: Streamed live on July 6th, 2021: <https://youtu.be/zJVpCg1ySIY>



The Compassionate Revolution of Saint Stan Swamy (1937 - 2021)

By Shaj Mohan and Divya Dwivedi

Father Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old Jesuit priest, died in judicial custody on Monday. He spoke sweetly of, and gazed gently at, this world. Father Swamy was already suffering from Parkinson's disease when he was arrested, and in jail he got infected with COVID. The judiciary and the National Investigative Agency (NIA), which today has the primary function of suppressing political opposition, delayed his medical care. He had to petition the courts to request a straw to drink water from (due to his Parkinson's), and this request too was [not heeded for weeks](#). They denied him water!

But we knew when the police began interrogating him in Jharkhand that his execution had begun.

Now, we should remember the scene of contrast. Those who committed the most vile act of terror in the history of independent India, the demolition of the 16th century Babri Mosque in 1992 never had to languish in custody while they were under trial. Rather, they were rewarded with cabinet ranks and other state honours - and a predictable refusal by the CBI to appeal their acquittal. Here, too, the Congress party [set a precedent by rewarding](#) all those guilty of the genocide of 1984 and not punishing those responsible for the demolition of the mosque and the pogroms which followed when they held power.

India's anti-terrorism law (the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act as it is called) violates the fundamental principles of the constitution of India.

The UAPA was made stringent by the Congress when in power. The ruling BJP later modified the laws further in order to allow the state to declare an individual as a terrorist without proper investigation, and the [Congress was in favour then](#).

However, it will not be an honest account of what happened to Father Stan Swamy nor will it be a modest tribute to him unless we understand that what killed him is still killing, imprisoning, and maiming hundreds of political activists and intellectuals in India.

In 2017 one of us (Divya Dwivedi) [edited a special issue](#) of the Unesco journal *Revue des Femmes Philosophes* (Women Philosopher's Journal). It was titled "Intellectuals, Philosophers, Women in India: Endangered Species", and the title anticipated these unfolding events. The issue had contributions from many intellectuals, writers, and journalists including Romila Thapar ([interviewed](#) by Siddharth Varadarajan, published by The Wire), Ravish Kumar, Shahid Amin, T. M. Krishna, Perumal Murugan, Hartosh Bal and Anand Teltumbde who is now in prison under similar charges as Father Swamy, and is suffering from ill health. The arrests began in [September 2018](#). Then a new current of politics which brought students, the poor, workers and intellectuals together emerged in the [protests against CAA](#). And soon it became clear as the protests gathered strength that [repression will follow](#). It sent many young women and [student activists to prison](#).

We are reminding you here, because the 'active forgetting' that we practice today in all domains of life is the technique of cultivating calloused hearts. When we forget the crimes that have been committed, we inadvertently welcome their returns—nostalgia realised through active forgetting.

The events around Father Stan Swamy's judicial murder have something to do with remembrance of an event and with the very meaning of remembrance, which is to ensure that what is remembered is the duct to something better. In January 1818, an army made up of lower caste people and British troops defeated the army of a Brahmin empire in central India in the battle of Bhima Koregaon. The humiliation of this event is at the heart of the upper caste militias which sprung up later in modern India.

The annual commemoration of this battle by the activists and intellectuals calling for equal rights is called "Elgar Parishad". Elgar means loudness - to remember the events of one's oppression through the victory in 1818 in a deafening clamour such that the world awakens. In 2018, the celebration march at the location of the battle, Bhima Koregaon, was brutally suppressed by the government and Hindu right-wing organisations. Soon, arrests followed, of many who spoke at the Elgar Parishad remembrance event and those who were connected with it. They were all charged under the anti-terrorism laws.

Later an independent forensic investigation by an American

organisation found that the [evidence was planted](#) in the computers of the accused. Today we learn that Father Swamy too [was a victim of this pathetic trick](#) whose ultimate aim has been to suppress the political awakening of the lower castes, erase their icons, intimidate their mobilisation, in short, to suppress any challenge to the idea of India as an upper caste controlled country.

We can see the familiar fear and aggression of any regime of a minority of oppressors when the people they oppress arise in protest as is evident in the arrests and repressions using the muscle of the television news rooms. But the confusion for the rest of the world lies in the term "Hindu majoritarian", which they read about in relation to the authoritarian government. They do not realise that the ["Hindu religion"](#) as it is presented and the "Hindu majority" associated with it are constructs [of the early 20th century to mask](#) the fact that India is divided into the ruling oppressive minority of 10% or less, essentially 'upper' caste, and the vast majority who had been living under slavery and discrimination for millennia.

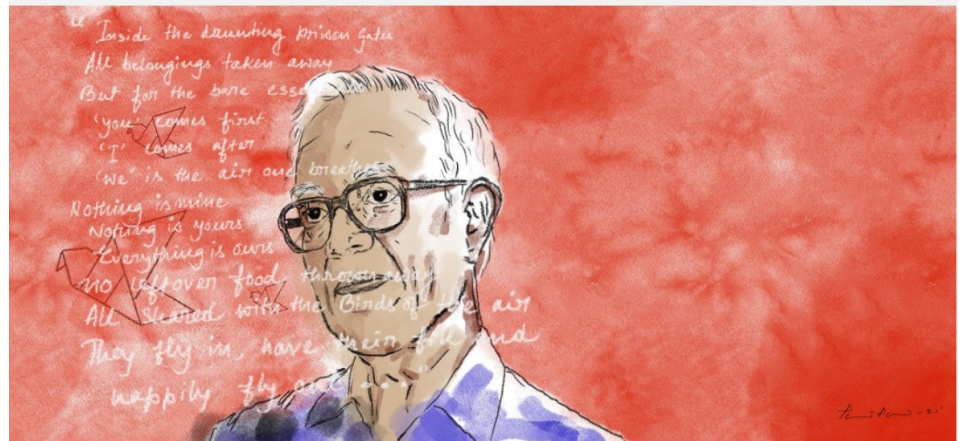
Today, those who deploy the word "Hindu" in politics mean the supremacy of this caste minority. The present Hindu nationalist regime is enabled by a colluding Election Commission, judiciary and police. But the most important role is played by the big media, which is inventing demons out of the activists, intellectuals, and the poor to be slayed by the new Aryan incarnations. Today, events like the commemoration of Bhima Koregaon challenge the feeling of absolute dominance enjoyed by the upper caste minority. The worry of the upper caste supremacist militias that India might have an egalitarian future was revealed in Sukanya [Shantha's report](#) 'Elgar Parishad: NIA Claims Arrested Accused Were Attempting to Create a 'Dalit

Militia'. This honesty of the upper caste militia and their workers is absent in our public sphere, which should be the cause for our greatest concerns. That is, the repressed question – the question of egalitarianism – will entomb us in this stasis.

However, as more and more lower caste activists and intellectuals are writing, speaking and organising in

killed. The most notorious of these crimes took place in 1999, when an Australian missionary [Graham Staines](#) and his two young sons were burnt to death by Bajrang Dal.

It should not be forgotten that severe caste discrimination is practiced in the minority religions in India [including](#) Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. That is, egalitarianism through the



Father Stan Swamy (26 April 1937 – 5 July 2021).

Art: Pariplab Chakraborty/The Wire

in India and from 'exile' in Europe and America, the repressive efforts by the present upper caste supremacist organisations are like pouring the flowing lava back into the mouth of volcanoes.

Father Stan Swamy was also punished for his religion and his tireless efforts in helping the lower caste majority and Adivasis. The oppressed had been finding a minimum of dignity, education and community through conversions to Christianity, and also into Islam and Buddhism. In recent years, religious conversion and therefore arguments for [religious freedom](#) have been treated as crimes on par with terrorism and are now opposed by the illegal force of the militia, such as the terrorist organisation Bajrang Dal, linked to the upper caste supremacist paramilitary RSS. Often [Christian priests are abused](#), nuns are raped, and many are

annihilation of caste cannot be imagined as a religious project. If the word "saint" has a designation today it will be through the revolutionary of compassion, Stan Swamy. These days, the miracle is to be courageous, thoughtful and kind-hearted in an oppressive regime. Stan Swamy performed this miracle every day for thousands of days. Saint he is, and he will re-join the struggle for respect, dignity and equality in that capacity.

But what about us? As long as we remember to ask the question – When will we become an egalitarian polity through the annihilation of caste? – these events will not appear confusing. If we are honest in our remembrance and open ourselves to the thought of equality, we will soon have the redemption of democracy.

(This article first appeared in [thewire.in.](#))

Under the Mango tree

By Madhumita Dutta

When in the early '70s Stan Swamy, a young Jesuit priest, first came as a teacher to Lupunghutu, an Adivasi village near Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district of then state of Bihar, he witnessed an incident that profoundly influenced him. Stan visited one of his pupil's village. There he saw an Adivasi man up on a mango tree plucking ripe mangoes. As Stan watched standing under the tree, the Adivasi man plucked only some of the ripened mangoes and then climbed down without plucking the rest. Stan was surprised to see this. He asked the man as he came down the tree as to why he didn't pluck all the ripened mangoes. The man replied that he took what he needed, the rest was for the birds, the squirrels, the worms and all other creatures to eat. This simple reply opened a new world to Stan. It conveyed an ethical and moral way of living – a sense of harmony with other creatures who share this earth and its resources to survive – a non-human centric egalitarian worldview. Stan realized he had much to learn from the Adivasis.

Stan was an ordinary Jesuit priest who became an extraordinary human being as he embraced the Adivasi way of being or as some may say he recognized the "Adivasi genius". He also saw what was happening to the Adivasi land, forests, and water. Governments, mining companies, and local landlords were systematically and violently displacing the Adivasis from their lands and forest, forcing them to migrate or become laborers in the mines (often on their own land) across the mineral rich state of Jharkhand. By invoking colonial era 'law of eminent domain', the state was systematically alienating Adivasi land, enriching mining

companies and dispossessing Adivasi people from their homes. A religious man, the Constitution of India became Stan's bible. He embraced it to educate and agitate against the excesses of the state and corporations. In his own words, Stan [wrote](#): "Over the last two decades, I have identified myself with the Adivasi people and their struggle for a life of dignity and self-respect. As a writer, I have tried to analyse the different issues they face. In this process, I have clearly expressed my dissent over several policies and laws enacted by the government in the light of the Indian constitution. I have questioned the validity, legality and justness of several steps taken by the government and the ruling class."

Stan was inspired by liberation theology and the life statements of many Latin American priests and nuns, including Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador who spoke up against the social injustices and violence of the military government on the local population. This led to his assassination in 1980, ordered by the right-wing political party ARENA as established by the UN instituted Truth Commission for El Salvador. Stan was influenced by people like Anthony Murmu, an Adivasi leader and former Jesuit priest, who organized his people against the local landlords and money lenders who were looting the Adivasi people. Murmu was brutally murdered along with 14 other Santhals in 1985 by landlords over issues related to fishing rights. The brutal incident is known as the [Banjhi massacre](#). Another inspiration of Stan was the Jesuit priest AT Thomas who was working in Hazaribagh area amongst the Adivasis and was brutally murdered in 1997. And

now [Stan has been murdered by](#) the State. For what? For dissenting, for questioning the government for non-implementation of the provisions of the Indian Constitution to protect the Adivasi land; for ignoring Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 that for the first time recognized the social and cultural self-governance system of the Adivasis; for ignoring Samatha Judgment of 1997 that provided safeguards to Adivasi people over the extraction of minerals found on their land.

In a searing [report](#) titled 'Deprived of rights over natural resources, impoverished Adivasis get prison: a study of undertrials in Jharkhand' published in 2015, Stan and his research team from Bagaicha, a social research organization he founded near Ranchi, showed how a disproportionately large number of Adivasi men and women aged between 18-40 years were languishing in various prisons across Jharkhand as undertrials without bail. All of them were incarcerated for allegedly being Maoists without any evidence or based on fabricated charges. In fact, the report found that 97% of those incarcerated had no such connections. The report notes many of them held in prisons for opposing the violation of their constitutional rights. Calling it a "gross misuse of the criminal justice system", the report highlighted the cultural and systemic violence by the so called 'mainstream' that creates "endemic poverty, massive illiteracy, hunger and malnourishment, rampant corruption, continued oppression and exploitation of the less privileged by the powerful." Besides, everyday mundane atrocities of the state, the report provides a critical analysis of the "ideological and schismatic differences that exist between

Adivasis and the so-called “mainstreams” which underlies at the root of on-going conflict between the two”. Stan’s involvement in the [Pathalgadi](#) movement in 2017, which perhaps is the most important movement for Adivasi autonomy (as granted under the Constitution of India) in contemporary India, was prompted by similar social analysis that guided most of his work. At the heart of the movement, Stan had believed was exploitation and “oppression beyond tolerance” of the Adivasi people at all levels from governments, institutions, corporations, and non-tribal populations.

Stan’s murder at the hands of the present regime is not just a loss to the Adivasi cause in India, but also to movements for the rights of indigenous people everywhere in the world. In murdering Stan, the Indian state has betrayed its settler-colonial ethos of greed, violence and oppression of defenseless populations.

The Adivasi way of being that Stan embodied and championed believes that the only way to live is by caring for the well-being of humans, non-humans, and everything else that makes life possible on this earth. By murdering him Indian society has lost its moral, ethical and ecological compass.

(Note: Some of the personal stories about Stan have been shared by Ajitha S George who came to Jharkhand in 1991s after attending Stan’s classes on Social Analysis at the Indian Social Institute in Bangalore. Ajitha lives and works amongst the Adivasis in Noamundi, West Singhbhum.)

(First published in **NRIaffairs**: <https://www.nriaffairs.com/under-the-mango-tree/>

Stan Swamy in the eyes of a Thirteen Year old:

By Ananya Mamatha Anil

When I first learnt about the Bhima Koregaon case, I was a fourth grader going into fifth grade. As a ten-year old, I wasn’t that happy that my mom sat me down and tried to talk to me about a topic I barely knew. I tried my best to listen, but I couldn’t grasp the real situation, so my mom just gave me the gist of it. I don’t quite remember what exactly happened after that, but I do remember very clearly, that when my mom told me that activists were arrested, my brain automatically thought they did something wrong.

My best guess was with my 10-year-old mind, I didn’t think of the possibilities of why people were getting jailed. Or was it that it was imprinted on me ever since I was little, even though my mom told me about many political prisoners? When I thought of jail, I thought of the government as the ‘good guys’ and the people arrested as the ‘bad guys’, even when it was the stark opposite in this situation.

And now, three years later, I’m a seventh grader going into eighth grade. In the early morning of July 5th, I saw my mom staring absentmindedly at the wall in front of her. When I asked her what happened, she told me straightforwardly, “Father Stan Swamy passed away.”

By this point in time, I have learnt more about political prisoners and how unfair it is for them to be arrested for helping others. I knew Stan Swamy was also a political prisoner, but I didn’t know much about him. So, my mom encouraged me to read more about him and understand his life.

I didn’t understand most of what had happened, but I slowly started to understand why Stan Swamy chose to take part in people’s struggles. I learnt that Stan Swamy had worked for land, forest, and labor rights to help Adivasi communities. The Adivasi people are indigenous people in India. In an interview, Stan Swamy had said, “When I decided to join the Jesuits, I sought to know where I will be needed more. I came to know about the Indigenous Adivasi people in central India and I lived in an interior Adivasi village for two years and came to appreciate their values...sense of equality, cooperation, sharing without counting, community-bond, consensus decision making, closeness to nature etc. At the same time, I saw how these beautiful people were being exploited and oppressed by unscrupulous outsiders. I wanted to make something of my life that would make even a small difference in their search for dignity and self-respect. That’s what I am still trying to do during the last four decades.”

What really struck me as odd, was how could someone who had been devoted to helping other people for four decades be considered as bad?

Later, as I was reading, I came across the statement by Stan Swamy that said, “This, I believe, is the main reason why the state is keen to put me out of the way. The most feasible way is to implicate me in serious cases and stall the judicial process to give justice to the poor innocent adivasis,”

What was so inspiring about this is that Stan Swamy knew what the government could do to him

if he stood up for people who are being oppressed, but he did it anyway because it was the right thing to do. I know most of us would feel scared to sacrifice our lives for others, even though that's what we should be doing.

Instead of staying quiet and not doing anything about the bad things of the world, we should take Stan Swamy's example and do something about it, even if it's just a little, so we can help change the world together.

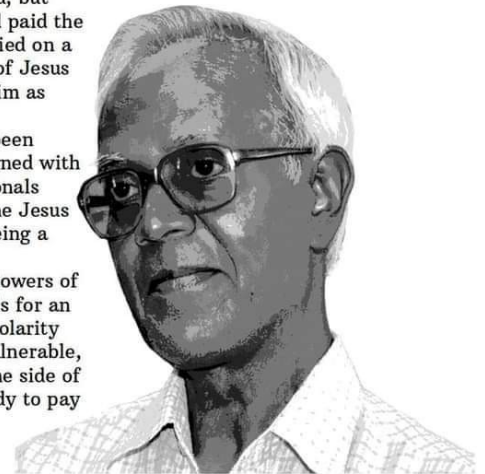


"...let it not be forgotten that there are two JESUSes ! One, JESUS OF NAZARETH who was born in a manger to a poor carpenter's family, lived his life in poverty, recruited his disciples from the poorest of the poor, preached and lived his message among the deprived and oppressed, but valiantly stood against the mighty and powerful and paid the price by being accused of sedition and cruelly crucified on a cross. His life was one of a revolutionary. That life of Jesus brought a new life to the oppressed who accepted him as their shepherd.

The second, JESUS OF THE CHRISTIANS who has been disfigured by huge properties and wealth, being aligned with the ruling class and its values, its religious professionals professing poverty but living in affluence and confine Jesus in their churches and tabernacles. Jesus far from being a revolutionary has become a law-abiding subject.

The real challenge before those professing to be followers of Jesus is to go back to JESUS OF NAZARETH. It calls for an understanding of the contradictions of increasing polarity between the rich vs the poor, the powerful vs the vulnerable, the oppressor vs the oppressed. Then clearly take the side of the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed. And be ready to pay the price in whatever form and shape."

- Stan Swamy (on 25th Dec 2019)



This Month in History

By Balmurli Natarajan

August is a month of Revolution.

And rituals. Not empty ones, but substantive ones. The indigenous people of Peru celebrate the entire month of August in honor of Pachamama - the Earth-goddess of the Quechua and Aymara peoples of the Andes. And their efforts have been rewarded when a union leader, school teacher and socialist from the mining region of north, [Pedro Castillo](#) narrowly won the national elections in Peru. Symbolically, Castillo will not govern Peru from the traditional colonial monument - the Presidential home known as the 'House of Pizarro' - named after the colonial conquistador. Much of course is still unknown as to how Castillo will carry out the promises of true freedom and *dignidad* (dignity) demanded by the indigenous *campesinos* (peasants) of his land. This depends on how Castillo will actively interpret and participate in the time-honored ritual of the *challaco* where poor peasants feed food and drink to *Pachamama* before sowing the land and hoping for a good

harvest. For land is key to Peru's future - with multinational-led deforestation and mining - wrecking havoc to the majority of its peoples.

August is also the month of revolution in Saint-Domingue (now known as [Haiti](#)) - perhaps the oldest colonized place on this planet (in modern times) and central to the story of capitalism and colonialism, even as it reels from yet another presidential assassination. If the French revolution is rightly hailed as bequeathing to us the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" on August 27, 1789, the French were themselves doing pretty horrendous things in Haiti and other parts of the world at the same time. August 1791 is the month when the first signs of rebellion occurred in a slave society leading soon to insurrections, and revolution. The revolutionary ex-slave Touissant Louverture, made his famous speech in August 29, 1793 and firmly laid the foundations for Haiti's independence in 1804 despite

all odds and the formidable opposition from the newly independent USA. Read more [here](#).

August is the month when the 'simple African man' - Amilcar Cabral - established his African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1959 with headquarters in Conakry, Bissau.



Amilcar Cabral
(www.capeverdeislands.org)

The PAIGC shaped the anti-colonial and anti-fascist movement against the Portuguese in that part of the world. Despite his assassination in 1973, the Portuguese empire crumbled and Cabral's stature as a teacher and liberator lives on.

As the inspiring words of Paulo Friere reminds us, Cabral “fully lived the subjectivity of the struggle. For that reason, he theorized” as he led (read more [here](#)).

And of all the revolutions, the one that the month August is most closely remembered for is of course the Vietnamese revolution of August 1945. The Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh seized the city of Hanoi, and soon thereafter declared Vietnamese independence from both the colonial French and the defeated fascist Japanese. As “Uncle Ho” made clear in his [historic speech](#) on Sept 2, 1945, the ideals of the French revolution rung hollow in the ravages wrecked by the French colonialists in Indochina. Ironically, his words interpreting the US Constitution’s ideals were soon to be shown to be hollow too when Vietnam entered a 20 year war best known as the “American War of Aggression”.

Closer home, August 15 looms large. It is a time when ruling elites, with no sense of history or shame, will declare, yet again, how freedom was won (even though they and their parties did not participate in it or actively worked against it), how independence was gained, how shackles were broken. They will do this even as they do their best to make freedom meaningless, rein in all forms of independent thought and practice, and remake shackles for their own citizenry. In these times, the lines penned by the revolutionary poet Pash (aka Avtar Sandhu) offer solace to all thinking minds and those fighting off the putrefaction of the heart. In a poem titled “The Most Dangerous” (original in Panjabi), Paash speaks his heart out in ways that reminds each of us that we act at the very least to ensure that this world does not change us even as we try to change it. The RSS tried to remove this poem from the NCERT textbooks (and is still trying). Here are the lines, lest we forget:

The Most Dangerous

Most treacherous is not the robbery
of hard earned wages
Most horrible is not the torture by the police.
Most dangerous is not the graft for the treason and greed.
To be caught while asleep is surely bad
surely bad is to be buried in silence
But it is not most dangerous.
To remain dumb and silent in the face of trickery
Even when just, is definitely bad
Surely bad is reading in the light of a firefly
But it is not most dangerous

Most dangerous is
To be filled with dead peace
Not to feel agony and bear it all,
Leaving home for work
And from work return home
Most dangerous is the death of our dreams.
Most dangerous is that watch
Which run on your wrist
But stand still for your eyes
.
Most dangerous is that eye
Which sees all but remains frostlike,
The eye that forgets to kiss the world with love,
The eye lost in the blinding mist of the material world.
That sinks the simple meaning of visible things
And is lost in the meaning return of useless games.

Most dangerous is the moon
Which rises in the numb yard
After each murder,
but does not pierce your eyes like hot chilies.

Most dangerous is the song
which climbs the mourning wail
In order to reach your ears
And repeats the cough of an evil man
At the door of the frightened people.

Most dangerous is the night
Falling in the sky of living souls,
Extinguishing them all
In which only owls shriek and jackals growl,
And eternal darkness covers all the windows.

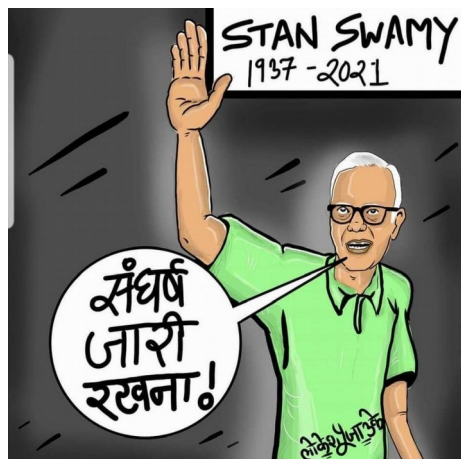
Most heinous is the direction
In which the sun of the soul light
Pierces the east of your body.
Most treacherous is not the
robbery of hard earned wages.

Most horrible is not the torture of police
Most dangerous is not graft taken for greed and treason.

(Poem by Pash. Translation by Dr. Satnam Singh Sandhu of Punjabi University, Patiala)

Source:

<https://sabrangindia.in/article/most-dangerous-thing-death-our-dreams-pash-9-september-1950-23-march-1988>



Prison life, a great leveler

Inside the daunting prison gates
All belongings taken away
But for the bare essentials

'You' comes first
'I' comes after
'We' is the air one breathes

Nothing is mine
Nothing is yours
Everything is ours

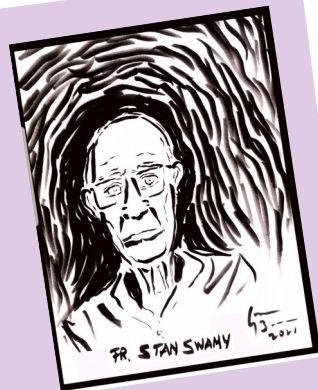
No leftover food thrown away
All shared with the birds of the air
They fly in, have their fill and happily fly out

Sorry to see so many young faces
Asked them: "Why are you here?"
They told it all, not mincing words

From each as per capacity
To each as per need
Is what socialism all about

Lo, this commonality is wrought by compulsion
If only all humans would embrace it freely and willingly
All would truly become children of Mother Earth

Stan Swamy
December 22, 2020
Taloja Central Jail, Mumbai



Also see:
'In Solidarity, Always':
Excerpts of Letters from
Stan Swamy's Prison Memoir

Excerpts from **Art, Water, Forest, Land**

a poem by Jerome Gerald Kujur (published in Yuvania in June 2021)
Translated from Hindi by Rana Khan

Today we are apprehensive.
Once, living on our own lands,
we were happy, content.
Our fields laden with wheat and corn
And we would dance with abandon, with each other in the community.

And then on our lands,
The army held a parade,
Gunfire erupted in the dancing fields,
The grain and corn burnt,
Our fields destroyed.
The hens were stolen, taken away.
Our mothers and sisters raped; their honour crushed.

Now there is only one way left for us, the only path forward.
We will give up our lives, but not our lands.
We will fight, and win
For that is the only way to save
Our waters, our forests, our lands.
Only then can we save our very identities.
We have chosen the path of struggle,
We have given the clarion call against oppression,
We have given the clarion call to revolt.

