

EDITOR'S VIEW

Amid all the pain, where is the love?

People killin' people dyin'
Children hurtin', I hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preachin'?
Would you turn the other cheek again?
Father, father, father help us
Send some guidance from up above
'Cause people got me, got me questioning
Where is the love?

This is a question that the American group, Black Eyed Peas, raised in the song, *Where Is the Love?*, and one that I've reflected on given the headlines of the last few days.

From Cape Town came the news that the body of a 19-year-old student who went missing over a week ago was found – dead. She was allegedly lured by a post office worker who brutalised and killed her.

This incident comes after champion boxer, Leighandre-Baby Lee-Jegels, was killed by her partner in East London and Verusha Padayachee allegedly killed by her estranged husband in Pietermaritzburg.

In Gauteng, a six-year-old Grade R pupil was kidnapped in front of her school in Vanderbijlpark. Thankfully, she was released hours later.

Meanwhile, in the Johannesburg city centre, and other parts of Gauteng, foreign-owned shops were looted while on our roads, trucks were set alight because the drivers were foreigners.

Online you may be protected from physical abuse but words can be equally harmful. Just ask Verashni Pillay, the former editor in chief of the Mail & Guardian and HuffPost South Africa, who spoke at our Women's Day event recently.

She made a mistake and apologised. But it was not enough.

"It's never that someone has made a mistake. Instead, the message that is repeatedly driven is that they are a mistake. As a human being. And that nothing they can do will change that."

There is something seriously wrong with our society. And we must shoulder responsibility because we have brought up the people who now carry such hate.

The police also need to do their jobs. They can't simply stop the violence. They must also gather evidence to successfully prosecute those who break the law. The madness will only stop when we realise there are consequences for our actions and when we change our ways.

In the words of Black Eyed Peas ...

... if you only got love for your own race
Then you're gonna leave space for others to discriminate
And to discriminate only generates hate
And when you hate then you're bound to get irate
Madness is what you demonstrate
And that's exactly how anger works and operates
Man, we gotta set it straight
Take control of your mind and just meditate
And let your soul just gravitate
To the love, so the whole world celebrate it.



Project Tito sparks excitement

Document on economic reforms can work

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

LAST week, our National Treasury released a discussion document titled: "Economic transformation, inclusive growth, and competitiveness: Towards an Economic Strategy for South Africa."

Government, it says, needs to urgently implement a series of reforms that can boost South Africa's growth in the short term, while also creating the conditions for higher long-term sustainable growth.

Specifically, it calls for immediate interventions to modernise electricity, telecommunications, transport and water.

More broadly, it speaks of:
● Lowering barriers to entry and addressing distorted patterns of ownership through increased competition and small business growth.

● Prioritising labour-intensive growth: agriculture and services.

● Implementing focused and flexible industrial and trade policy to promote competitiveness and facilitate long-run growth

● Promoting export competitiveness and harnessing regional growth opportunities.

I'm going to refer to this as Project Tito because it has the stamp of our Finance Minister all over its thinking; plus it's the sort of document that stands out because it is quite drastically different from much of what has emanated from our national leadership of late.

Let's look at some of the nuts and bolts, which got me excited.

Government should consider exemptions for small business to bargaining council agreements.

These agreements have caused massive job losses in the textile industry because small firms cannot afford the same pay scales as large players.

Encourage immigration from skilled workers with tertiary qualifications from accredited institutions.

We currently have a massive brain drain through emigration; while there is a wealth of intellectual capital sitting unemployed north of the Limpopo.

Metro rail should be handed to the metros as part of an integrated transport plan.

I've been beating this particular drum for years. Cities can then integrate public transport with urban planning.



FINANCE Minister Tito Mboweni | NOKUTHULA MBATHA African News Agency (ANA)

Transnet should become a rail infrastructure provider, but private companies should have access to their network.

This will create opportunities for private freight operators as well as opening up opportunities for luxury tourist trains.

Substantial reforms in electricity generation and delivery.

Households generating solar should be allowed to sell excess into the grid.

Companies generating their own power should be able to use Eskom's grid to deliver electricity to other sites.

Ending of supermarket monopolies.

Right now, one is unlikely to find both Checkers and Pick 'n Pay at the same shopping centres because players insist on keeping competitors out. Such exclusive leases should be banned, says Project Tito.

Structures for pricing of fuel needs to change.

Consider, for example, that Sasol produces fuel from coal locally, but such fuel is sold at the same price as that from imported crude.

Project Tito wants the pricing to reflect lower production costs, which will mean a reduction in the price of fuel.

But before we get too euphoric about all this great stuff, let me digress for a bit.

Driving back from Limpopo to Johannesburg over the weekend, I was listening to a recent interview with Raghuram Rajan who is former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund and former governor of the Reserve Bank of India. He had this to say:

"It was when the government promised you that they wouldn't steal your property, that it became possible for the market to become more competitive. ... As the government could limit itself and promise that it wouldn't steal your property, then you had the possibility for individuals to become more competitive; you had this laissez-faire philosophy come in – free the markets, let us do what we can, don't interrupt the process. "Which country had greater economic strength? A country that had more dynamic

“ Educational reform cannot happen if the best and brightest are excluded by race quotas.

markets. How do you get more dynamic markets? How do you get more productive efficiency in the markets? You have to convince them, in a sense, that what they make is their own – you're not going to seize it as a State."

Rajan's words resonated with me because they cut to the chase as to why we as a country were so successful during the Mbeki-era. Government policy at the time allowed business to fly; then took the tax rewards of economic growth and poured that into poverty alleviation.

Then came the Zuma-era with the imposition of regulatory policies designed to take money from those who had earned it and give it to those who had not.

The scenario described by Rajan came to pass.

Think about it: why would anyone invest capital in a new business when they would need to give away a significant chunk of profits in the form of a Mining Charter or Black Economic Empowerment? Why build a new hospital if National Health Insurance will steal it? Far more profitable to leave the money passively invested and simply earn interest or dividends; preferably offshore.

Project Tito addresses some of this up front: "Businesses face a significant amount of uncertainty related to the timing and content of government policy changes, as well as the potential impact that these policies will have on firm profitability. ... Delivering policy certainty in a few policy areas is vital to re-establish trust and create an enabling environment for a social consensus to emerge."

But this does not address the elephant in the room. Skilled immigration cannot be implemented if race-based quotas continue to exist in the workplace. Educational reform cannot happen if the best and brightest are excluded by race quotas.

All in all, I see Project Tito as the first sign of something intelligent to emerge from the Ramaphosa administration since Zuma was recalled. I want it to succeed. I remain sceptical.

Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, "the unstoppable force", which gives us the modern word Juggernaut. Kanthan Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

Women must be freed from religious bondage



YOGIN DEVAN

WOMEN'S Month has just passed but the calls for gender-based violence and abuse, prejudices, and situations that keep women in bondage would have fallen on deaf ears.

Many Hindus, through ignorance or without thinking, will continue to impose silly restrictions on women, all in the name of religion and tradition.

There is scant respect and regard for the feelings of women and what they must endure and that is only because they continue to live in a society dominated by patriarchal norms.

How often do we not hear that only men can do this – or women are not allowed to do that?

I snigger when I come across orthodox Hindus who forbid women – especially widows – from performing funeral rites.

My friend, Vaidel Maistry, who founded Ispingo Funeral Services five decades ago, must have been ahead of his time as a gender activist.

When his daughters Mona and Pam were old enough to start working, he roped them into the family business. This at a time when women were scorned if they dared go anywhere near a graveside or the furnace room during a funeral.

These two powerful Maistry women, who virtually run the undertaking operation, do not only sit in the office. They collect bodies even in the dead of night, often in rural areas. They prepare bodies – bathing and dressing them – for the funeral service. They drive hearses to cemeteries and crematoriums. They oversee the committal of bodies into graves and furnaces.

I salute Mona and Pam for being fearless and for daring to defy the conventional beliefs espoused by many Hindus, who foolishly proclaim that women have no role to play in the matter of death.

Here are two young women dedicatedly serving bereaved families by arranging dignified funerals. This does not make them lesser Hindus. They remain devout and God-fearing and worship frequently at temple.



WHEN a woman's husband died, the kumkum or sindoor, was washed off her forehead, her bangles were broken, and her thaali or mangalsutra was removed from around her neck. | Commons.Wikimedia.org

Yet there are so many priests who have made Hinduism a religion of fear. They will not go anywhere near a funeral as it will be theetu – a Tamil word that connotes ritual pollution and treats people socially as if they are contaminated. Instantly, people become untouchables.

The idea behind this theetu concept (suthak in Hindi) was to keep clean and hygienic. But in due course, it was extended to a stupid extent covering almost every facet of life.

Theetu manifests during childbirth, death of a family member, or menstrual cycle of women. For different reasons, these circumstances are deemed as unclean or unholy and certain rituals must be followed for each of them for a set number of days. Of course, the more rituals, the more moolah for the pundits.

In some cases of theetu, an individual must not have physical contact with anyone

that is not a family member.

Sometimes there is a ban on going to the temple or attending religious events.

In days gone by, theetu applied to death because the body – which was usually kept at home before burial or cremation – would start decomposing, thus contaminating the surroundings.

Nowadays the corpse is stored in a refrigerated mortuary.

As long as one is neat, clean and hygienic, theetu need not be applied. Being over finicky about this issue is unwarranted.

The stigma of menstruation must be stopped. I believe anything that occurs naturally, upon which human beings have no control, must be accepted without disgust or hatred.

I cringe when I think of the plight of women in years gone by, who were kept in isolation for a few days each month. Instead of according them rest and comfort, embar-

assment and humiliation were heaped upon them by banishment.

Society must protest against temples that bar menstruating women from entering the inner shrine. Will God treat the children he or she created with contempt because of a simple biological process, which is the reason for our existence?

A learned friend recently wrote about it being time that women stopped sheepishly following certain traditions.

She said it used to be customary for a woman to wear a white sari when her husband died. The marriage symbols were deleted. The kumkum or sindoor was washed out of her forehead, her bangles were broken, and her thaali or mangalsutra was removed from around her neck.

"So, what does a man remove when his wife dies?" she rightfully asked, adding, "a man who loses his wife does not sit in the house for three months, six months, or one year like a new widow is expected to do by a senseless society."

She also said it was only in South Africa that – especially – Tamil women would wear white saris when visiting the temple.

For too long women have been made to harbour guilt feelings – all in the name of God. Men, aided and abetted by priests bent on retaining the status quo, are to blame.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the modern religious reformer known globally for his spiritual wisdom of Hinduism, argued for equality of men and women.

He worked tirelessly for the freedom and equality of women and identified that the ignorance of women was the main hindrance for the progress of India.

He insisted that women should be put into the positions of power to solve their own problem in their own way and this could not be possible without education.

Hence today, you will find hundreds of colleges for women all over India bearing his name.

Having just one month in a year dedicated to women is not good enough. Let's make the whole year, nay, all-time, committed to ensuring women are not discriminated against in any form.

We owe this to all women. Where would we be without them?

Devan is a media consultant and social commentator. Share your comments with him on yogind@meropa.co.za

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