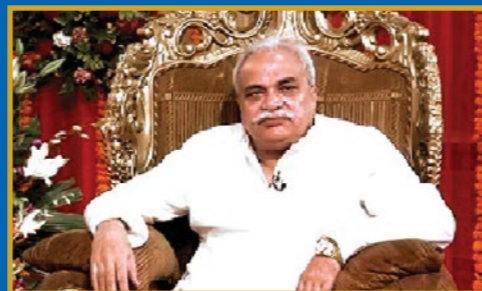


# #NOTT\_Me

No To Titles...Me

**Join the movement**  
Stop honorification of the ordinary



~~संत  
EXCELLENCY  
परमपूज्य  
HON'BLE  
YOUR LORDSHIP  
YOUR HONOUR  
MY LORD  
ESQUIRE  
REVEREND  
WORSHIP  
श्री श्री श्री.....  
ENDLESS~~

**SAY WITH  
RESPECT  
JUST**

**MR | MRS  
SHRI. | SMT.**

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No To Titles...Me

Asaram Bapu's conviction of life imprisonment by the Special Court at Jodhpur for raping a minor girl, beyond the role of modern day Godmen, has several messages to the society. From Ghetto boy to Godman to Jail bird is a repeat of the story of several Godmen who claim super powers.

Bhopal has two places named after Asaram – a road crossing and "Asaram Bapu Bus Stop" both located near his Ashram on the outskirts of the city near Raja Bhoj Airport. The name boards were promptly removed after conviction. Other landmarks named after him are vanishing, rightly so. There is nothing like the saffron business – low start up cost, minimal investment and a self created crowd of followers who are partners in the loot. Kushwant Singh once wrote about the business of these fake Gurus

'Bus Ram naam Japna, Chelo ka maal apna'  
बस राम नाम जपना चेलों का माल अपना

The law has invariably caught up with most of them.

'Sant' Rampal, claiming to be a successor to mystic Saint Kabir and to his followers he was 'Kabir reborn' is in jail. To the long list of charges levelled against him is added murder and treason.

'Swami' Nithyananda raped his female followers. He claimed to be able to levitate his followers. He further claimed that he can perform 'Praana Pratihtha' making a physical idol able to answer prayers and grant boons.

**Wheeler dealer Chandraswami**, spiritual advisor of former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao swindled \$100,000 from a London businessman and was charged Rs. 9.0 crores for violating the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. Tantric, astrologer and a man who could read minds and cast spells on other could not read his own fortune.

'Swami' Sadachari, tantric and advisor to several high ups in power was

arrested for running a brothel. He claimed he could light branches of trees with the energy of his eyes. He was caught using chemicals placed discreetly under the branches while showcasing his powers.

'Swami' Premananda set up ashrams across 15 countries. He was found guilty of raping 13 girls and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences. True to his name, he had 'Prem' for all his young female followers.

'Shreemurath' Dwivedi better known as **Ichhadari Sant Swami Bhimanand Maharaj Chitrakootwale** was arrested for running a prostitution racket from his Ashram.

**Gurmeet Ram Rahim** of Dera Saccha Sauda is cooling his heels for several crimes he has committed. The Rockstar Guru is on trial for murder.

'Swami' Sachidanand was stripped of his 'Maha Mandaleswar' title (one of the 80 high priests) within a month of involvement in 'liquor business'.

TRP Superstar '**Nirmal Baba**' has been accused of tax evasion, cheating and spreading superstition.

The list is serpentine and never ending. Each time a 'Baba', 'Sant', 'Parampujya', 'Pujyasri', 'Swami', Sri Sri.....endless is convicted, we feel ashamed that we elevated ordinary men to the status of God, added to their wealth and clout and look stupid when the true colour of the person manifests in the open.

Can self created 'Sainthood' be a passport to an ever expanding business empire. **Baba Ramdev**, the Yog Guru is today a high profile businessman who has challenged the might of the multinationals. There are disturbing reports on the quality of a few of 'Patanjali's' products. Is it the unleashing of the arsenal of the competitors or Patanjali's profit maximization, time



'Swadeshi' cannot be the only route to expanding market share.

will tell. 'Swadeshi' cannot be the only route to expanding market share. Baba's success story is an inspiration but could he have achieved this without the 'Baba' tag is anybody's guess. If places of worship can become centres of Commerce creating markets for several trades, why should 'agents' of God lag behind. If we are inspired by the work of a few saints, let us follow the path that they show rather than shower them with titles and our wealth. Most Babas claims political clout and proximity to high constitutional functionaries with several branches worldwide, acres of prime land and each one claiming immunity from several laws of the land. It has become a race for who has been able to grab greater public attention, amass wealth, get a celebrity status and hoodwink gullible public, all in the name of religion. Some very knowledgeable people said that the word Religion means 'joining it again' or 'tying it again'. Man who was one with God in the beginning separates from Him either because of his ignorance or his 'Karma'. He thinks that he is operating independently. To remove this feeling of 'separateness' and rejoin him with God and to reintroduce to him his original and natural qualities is the purpose of religion. When Godmen are equated to God, religion loses its purpose and in the name of religion, exploitation of the faithful takes place. While a 'Guru' has a special place in religion, it requires the Shishya to wean away from superstition and separate the grain from the Chafe.

Sanyasa is the life stage of renunciation within the Hindu Philosophy of four age based life stages known as ashramas. A Sage reaches that stage early in life without experiencing Grihastha (householder) and Vanaprastha (retired, literal meaning to dwell in the forest). To him who has renounced everything and surrendered to the Lord, to be of service to Him, What do titles mean? A true 'Baba' (Sanyasi) would abhor any title to him or credit him with powers beyond the ordinary.

Judges too are from mainstream life discharging a specialised responsibility. 'My Lord' 'Your Lordship' in courts is a relic of colonial era and a sign of slavery. While refusing to entertain a PIL filed by 75 years old Advocate Shivsagar Tiwari in January 2014, Justices H. L. Dattu and S. A. Bobde observed that Judges should be addressed in courts in a respectful and



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dignified manner and it is not compulsory to call them "My Lord", "Your Lordship" or "Your Honour", you call Judges 'Sir', it is accepted. While the Supreme Court could have seen merit in dismissing the 'PIL', how many clients would risk their counsels not bolstering the ego of the Judges. Would it not have been more appropriate if the highest court had thrown to dust these colonial remnants and simply accepted addresses in courts across the country as 'My Judge / Mr. Justice'. Our memories are still fresh of a former Judge of the Supreme Court on sexual misdemeanor. Corruption in judiciary has reached obnoxious levels. These are trying times for Judiciary. Its credibility as a consequence of series of events, is at its lowest. This is the time for judiciary to be indulgent in accepting legitimate criticism. The fear of contempt should be removed while expressing honest opinions. Sooner or later they would be seen as yet another arm of the constitution discharging a defined function. The centuries of tag of nobility for 'Education' and 'healthcare' have given way for their acceptance today as just yet another profession.

Physician heal thyself. Let the Judges make a beginning by accepting a simple salutation. Contempt laws are a deterrent from calling names for Judges who offer justice for a price.

If such titles are status symbols, the sooner we discard such salutations, it would be good for our democracy. The Union Government took a welcome step, effective 1.5.2017 to ban red beacons atop cars of all ministers, politicians and bureaucrats ending a privilege that was seen as ultimate status symbol. Ambulances, vehicles of fire service, police and army were allowed to use blue flashing beacons to cut through traffic. Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi tweeted. **"Every Indian is special. Every Indian is a VIP"**. The Supreme Court had earlier on 10.12.2013, called beacons atop cars of ministers and bureaucrats "ridiculous and synonymous with power"

Shri. Morarji Desai, the 4<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister abolished all civil awards like Padma Awards recognising the intense lobbying for these awards. Between 13<sup>th</sup> July 1977 and 20<sup>th</sup> January 1980, these awards were not given. These

awards are a political business. Of the 45 Bharat Ratna awards, as many as 23 of them have been given to politicians. The number of Bharat Ratnas in the field of Art and Culture is pitifully small – Just Six. What the monarchy sought to do in medieval times, popular governments do them in modern times. If merit and objective considerations should play a role in giving the awards, only an autonomous Awards Committee can do that. If Lokpals appointment can be made by a body not deeply linked to the Government, such an independent Awards Committee can be constituted, by the President of India with its tenure “At Will”.

With his foresightedness, Sardar Patel had observed “There may be party governments, there may be other governments, they should have no authority to give any inducements or to corrupt people in order to built up their party or to obtain or derive strength by unfair means (CAD 30 April 1947 Vol. III)

The urge to recognise meritorious services and to give verbal expression to such recognition has ever been a human habit; whether governments officially recognise them or not, the people at large have always been keen to express their esteem and devotion. In India also the people were keen to express their love and respect by using reverential epithets for their leaders. Gandhi was popularly known as ‘Mahatma (Great Soul) though he always disapproved of the use of any adjective denoting his personal qualities. However, the epithet came to be universally accepted and became an inseparable part of the name of Gandhi. It was not conferred by the state. It was the result of an emotional urge on the part of the people who wanted to recognise in an appropriate manner the services of a great man. There was nothing undemocratic in it. Gandhi was recognised not by the British rulers; he was not given official recognition. But he was recognised by the people. There have been many other illustrious leaders in this country who were recognised by the people. Subhas Chandra Bose was called ‘Netaji’, C. R. Das was hailed as ‘Deshbandhu’, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was popularly called ‘Lokmanya’, Vallabh Bhai Patel was better known as ‘Sardar’ and Rajendra Prasad was called ‘Desh Ratna’. Even Vinoba was reverentially addressed as ‘Sant Vinoba’ and Jayaprakash Narayan as ‘Lok Nayak’. The respect for these leaders has been spontaneous and came from the hearts of the masses who got inspiration from them during freedom movement

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and later. This was the simple and unsophisticated people of India expressed their love and gratitude to their leaders. In recent times, the Government has prohibited using the Padma Awards as titles to the names of the recipients. Instead of ‘Padma Shri XXX’ it is today Mr. XXX, Padmashri Awardee. The desire to hold on to titles cannot be wished away by Government regulations.

**Swami Dayananda Saraswati**, the Vedantic Scholar, whom Shri. Narendra Modi looked upon as his Guru, once told me, Don’t call me Swamiji. This ‘G; has a different connotation in present times. The numerical G, ‘2G’, ‘3G’ are symbolic of the endemic corruption that has seeped into the system. I would prefer to be called by my Sanyasa name and there is no need for suffixing any ‘G’, ‘Ji’ (phonetically similar). Infact, Saints adopt the name given to them by their teachers. Indra Saraswati is lineage of Lord Indra. ‘Daya’ is compassion, ‘Ananda’ is bliss. Atleast Swami Dayananda Saraswati lived upto his name. Increasingly, beneath the saffron robe, lies a devil out to exploit the gullible public.

Academic titles are a fruition of years of intense study. Doctorate in Philosophy (Ph.D), ‘Dr.’ for a medical practitioner are an acceptable addition to the name for the society at large to identify their profession. “Prof” denotes years of work as a teacher before he reached that grade. ‘Honoris Causa’ is a degree awarded without examination as a mark of esteem. In Latin, it means ‘for the sake of honour’. To use the title ‘Dr.’ for honoris causa is an aberration and it does send wrong signals. In Tamil Nadu, universities ‘deemed’ or regular, clamour to give this doctorate to politicians, film actors, some of them have never gone to a university. Can that person be called a ‘Dr.’ at all? A legislation in this direction is overdue.

**His or Her worship** is an honorific prefix for Mayors, Justices of Peace and Magistrates in Commonwealth countries. It deserves to be scrapped. Which Mayor of any corporation since independence has done work worthy of worship.

**Esquire** is a polite title appended to a man’s name when no other title is used, typically in the address of a letter or other documents. It is usually a

courtesy title. In United Kingdom, Esquire historically was a title of respect accorded to men of higher social rank particularly of landed gentry above the rank of gentlemen and below the rank of Knight. In USA, it is used to denote a lawyer. Time has come to dump this title. Fortunately, we do not use it in India often.

'**Reverend**' is a title or form of address to the members of the clergy. If saffron titles deserve to be scrapped, 'Reverend' is no exception. Pope Francis has offered hope to victims of child sex abuse with a call for stringent action. Under his Papacy, the Church has been responding to the UN accusation of Vatican systematically adopting policies allowing priests to sexually abuse thousands of children. There is no reverence in such dastardly crime on humanity.

Islam warns of using a name that has a pronouncement of one's integrity (tazkiyatul nafs). Use of names '**Muhyi al Deen**' (one who gives life to the religion) are disliked. '**Hadrat**' is an Arabic title. **Emir, Sheikh, Maulana** are part of the world of titles. Islam too needs to limit glorifying ordinary people with titles that are only a means for pleasing a person.

A man has three names; the name he inherits, the name his parents give him and the name he makes for himself. It is the name that he makes for himself that survives him and much after he is gone, he is remembered by that name. 70 years after his death, Gandhi is still 'Mahatma'. He shall be remembered so forever not because a title was thrust on him but a name which came naturally from a grateful society. When no other name survives, why at all then give one in the first instance?

Kumari Jayalalitha was held guilty in the disproportionate assets case and for acquiring wealth by use of her constitutional office. The Supreme Court did not dilute its order in respect of the dead. It cited the law and if she had survived, would have been behind bars. Yet the Tamil Nadu Government sees no merit in public outcry at her portraits in all Government offices. The Tamil Nadu Government had the cheek to demand 'Bharat Ratna' for her and have her portrait in the Central Hall of the parliament. Rightfully,

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Let the Sant, Parampujya, Paramavandaniya, Sathyasheela, My Lord, Your Honour, Hon'ble, Excellency, Esquire, Reverend etc. vanish from our lexicon.

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these demands were turned down. It could be good business for AIADMK to use her name to perpetuate their Government. There is a message also. Her welfare schemes for the poor and the marginalised have had a deep socio-economic impact that despite being held guilty by the highest court of the land, ordinary people refuse to accept that she was guilty. Nothing adverse, legal or otherwise sticks to her name.

Pope John Paul, the VI<sup>th</sup> once said

"Honour and Shame from no condition arise,  
Act well your part, therein the honour lies"

It is one thing to deserve an honour, and not have it, yet another to have it and not deserve it. Dignity lies not in possessing an honour but deserving it. It is best that the work speaks and not external glorifications, deserved or otherwise.

The patron saint of Tamil Nadu 'Thiruvalluvar' who lived over 2000 years ago, in his 'Thirukurral', the Tamil Veda as it is often referred to wrote

பிறப்பொக்கும் எல்லா உயிர்க்கும் சிறப்பொவ்வா  
செய்தொழில் வேற்றுமை யான்.  
(குறள் 972: பெருமை அதிகாரம்)

All of us are born equal. We are distinguished only by our work. Its' time we recognise this reality and stop honorific titles. "Mr., Mrs., Kumar, Kumari, Shri, Smt., Sir" have stood the test of time and are more than adequate to address a person with dignity. Why give exalted titles and regret later?

The Twitter, Facebook, a few months ago became the rallying cry for women all over the globe; the words "**me too**". The movement kicked on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and became one of the largest trending topics on Twitter with over half a million tweets and a large number of shares on Facebook too. What started as a women centric movement on sexual exploitation in work place grew to include queer and cis-male experiences. A small beginning was made. Today countries world over are looking at eradication of sexual harassment at workplace.

The Asaram Bapu episode has triggered this "NOTT\_Me" hashtag (NO TO TITLES). I will not give titles to anyone, Honorific or otherwise except the conventional and acceptable.

Let us reserve 'Hon'ble' only for our highest constitutional functionary i.e. the President of India. The 14<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic Shri. Pranab Mukherjee approved a new set of protocol to be used in greeting and meeting dignitaries. He discontinued the use of 'His Excellency', 'Mahamahim' for the President and exhorted the people to address the President as 'Rashtrapati Mahoday' and

Hon'ble before the title of the President or Governor. The traditional Indian greetings of 'Shri' or 'Smt' should precede the same.

Let the Sant, Parampujya, Paramavandaniya, Sathyasheela, My Lord, Your Honour, Hon'ble, Excellency, Esquire, Reverend etc. vanish from our lexicon. Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you. May the Asaram Bapu episode unfold a new chapter in honorification. Tweet "NOTT\_Me"..... to create a movement against glorification. Spread the good word with shares on the Facebook too.

