

# Defending Fr Frazer's right to criticise

Friday, 25 April 2014 - 6:05am IST | Place: Mumbai | Agency: dna

Shilpa Phadke

153  
Shares



▲ Interesting

▼ Not Interesting

I was a teacher in St Xavier's College, Mumbai, in 1999-2001, and much to the chagrin of many of us, the then principal defended his stand against sleeveless clothes and the increasingly strict surveillance of any college socials at night, on the grounds that as a "minority institution" they could not afford to anger the conservative powers-that-be. Fr Frazer was then my colleague in the Department of Sociology.

St Xavier's unfortunately still has a dress code but some things have certainly changed. Since Fr Frazer took over as principal of the college he has taken several principled stands. He vocally opposed the arbitrary dropping of Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey* and the strong arm tactics of the Shiv Sena. He stood by human rights activist and former student of the college, Arun Ferreira, who was in jail on charges of being a Naxalite.

St Xavier's is a far from perfect institution; it wasn't perfect when I was a student, or a teacher there and it isn't perfect now. It was often deeply classist and like other educational institutions, arbitrary in the enforcement of rules. But one thing it always was and is: secular. It was secular when teachers formed groups to carry out relief work in the aftermath of the 1992-93 communal violence and it continues to be secular today.

Today, Fr Frazer has taken a stand against fascism and lopsided development. This is the kind of courageous and forthright college I imagined I was a student and teacher of. Yes, he wrote in his official capacity — and some people think its not quite de rigueur. Some have argued that this is an unacceptable abuse of authority as the head of an institution. Others see it as an impossibly grey and ambiguous area — the act of a Principal writing to students on the eve of an election.

But let's ask why the BJP is so incensed. Fr Frazer is the head of an institution that has an influential alumni. He is not saying anything other commentators have not already said in stronger words. But Fr Frazer is speaking to the "youth", the voters the BJP desperately want and imagine they will have. And more importantly, Fr Frazer is attacking not the BJP's communal agenda but rather its so-called development model, the Gujarat model.

Fr Frazer's email makes a case for why the [Gujarat model](#) does not offer any real development, and points to the state's poor performance on the Human Development Index. Further, he praises some of the schemes of the current government. He ends his email, by writing, "Choose well!" He names no political parties or candidates. He offers no threats. He simply offers his opinion.

This reasoned and reasonable letter is written in a time when hate speech and threats abound. The BJP's (over) reaction to the letter reflects their complete intolerance to dissent. Remember also that St Xavier's is a minority institution and doubly vulnerable in a possibly xenophobic environment, which makes Fr Frazer's willingness to stand up and be counted against fascism doubly courageous.

I have been asked how I would react if the Principal of another college wrote an email supporting the Gujarat model. I would write and speak against his/her view and register my dissent. But I would not for a moment argue against their right to speak and be heard. Let us not forget that all education is political.

Faced with threats, however, empty, of being thrown out of the country if we express dissent or criticism, there is every reason for us to speak and to defend the right of others to speak and write. The fabric of our democracy is at stake.

*The writer is Assistant Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She is an alumna of St Xavier's College, Mumbai*

153 Shares    

[#opinion](#) [#Fr Frazer Mascarenhas](#) [#St Xavier's College](#) [#Bharatiya Janata Party \(BJP\)](#) [#Gujarat Model](#)

[Jump to comments](#)

#### We Recommend



**8 Things That Can Go Wrong With Your Tattoo**  
WebMD



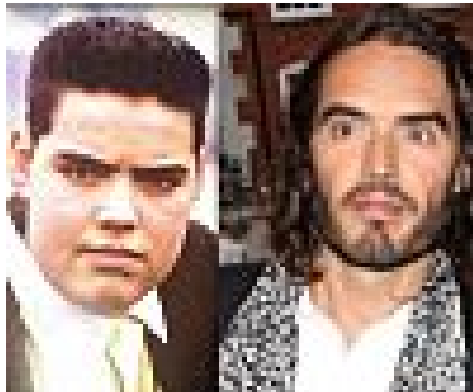
**5 Ways to Stay Entertained While Traveling**  
DIRECTV



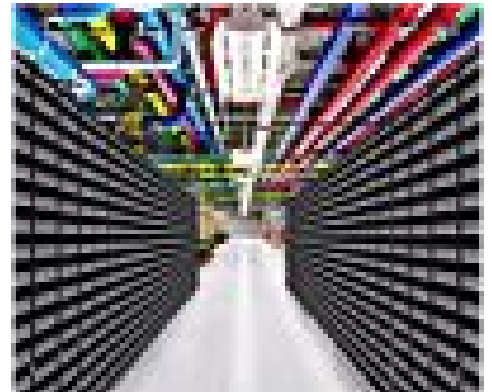
**How to Use Network Virtualization to Reduce Costs**  
VMware IT Outcomes



**Review: A Killer Smartphone for Keyboard Lovers**  
BlackBerry



**20 Celebrities Who Were Once Ugly Ducklings!**  
Perez Hilton



**The Systems Architecture Used by Facebook, Google, and Amazon**  
Nutanix

#### From The Web

- [8 Issues Caused By Tattoos](#) (WebMD)
- [8 Stars Who Have Never Looked Better](#) (Allure)
- [5 Ways to Stay Entertained While Traveling](#) (DIRECTV)

#### From DNA India

- [3 Steps to Start Reaping the Benefits of Mobile Marketing](#) (AT&T Business Circle)
- [Embracing Public and Private Cloud Infrastructure](#) (VMware IT Outcomes)
- [Ebola outbreak: What you can do to prevent the disease from](#)

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Promoted Links by Taboola

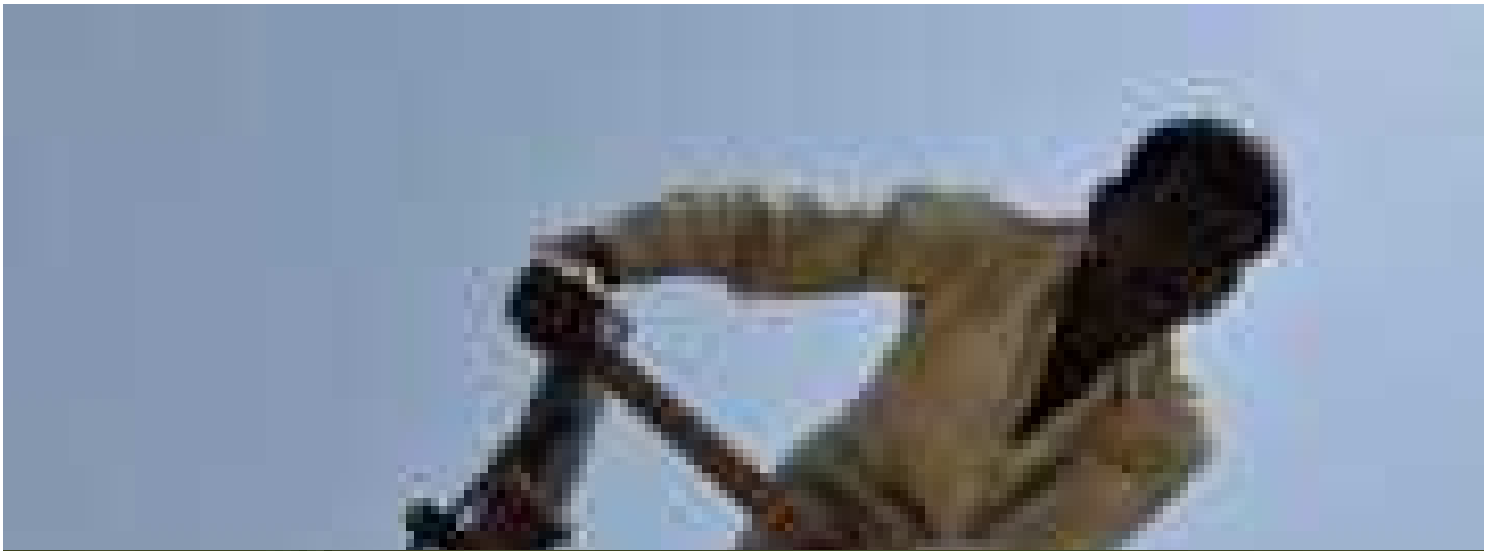
#### [ALSO READ](#)



Soaring expectations



Tactic of intimidation



LATEST VIDEOS

MORE STORIES

Virat Kohli: Aussie spirit with an Indian heart





is used in the case of control and conflict of interest, is very  
**A rewind to Steve Smith's glorious 162 at Adelaide**

...looking minority and willfully violating model code of election. He is a snake in the grass just promoting myopic view of a overzealous minority.

6 ^ [ ] • Reply • Share >



**sailor** • 8 months ago

The good father has done exactly what the moulvis do in madrasas. Why should there be any partiality. In the process he has also reduced the great institution of St. Xavier to the level of a Madrassa.

4 ^ [ ] • Reply • Share >



**Naga Sahay** • 8 months ago

The institution in question is one of the many run by illegitimate progeny of McCaulay. The alumni apparently have had no alternative as all educational institutions were established by the British to serve their colonial interests. We believed that characters like Fraser who brings up the rear of social rejects and renegades, will at least try to be average citizens of the country and keep off from spreading communal poison under whatever garb. Incidentally, the sociology departments in these establishments are basically subversive and platform for proselytization. To claim that they can pronounce judgements on developmental models will therefore, be an insult to intelligence. Note that this cheap clergy given undue powers for communal reasons, should have known that secularism - british coinage - expects the church to keep off matters of state and that christianity has nothing whatever to do with democracy

3 ^ [ ] • Reply • Share >



**Hypocrite** · 8 months ago

Perhaps it pains BJP followers to have their god sent model trashed. If Gujarat Model is very good why does not Modi or BJP debate it when leaders from other states like Tamil Nadu have criticised the model? You start doubting the model when voters in the South get freebies due to thier habit of asking 'What is in it for me?'. Vague indicators of development in the form of US style GDP numbers won't cut ice. A country exists for its people and not for its elite alone. Gujarat model which rides on capitalism alone will not be acceptable to many and should rightly be criticised. Further, Indian federal structure is designed so that states have more autonomy in all affairs. Remember India is a Union of States like the erstwhile USSR with a common ethnic and cultural brotherhood. Unless each of the states are allowed to handle their disputes on their own the nation could even go to extent of separatism (god forbid).

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**SAGE** · 8 months ago

I am saddened that Shilpa you have been a teacher and do not realize what a teacher can and cannot teach to his/her students. Irrespective of your political affiliation, whether Communist, Congress or BJP and hatred or love for Modi, you have no right to convey your preferences to your students as a teacher. You can express your opinion as an individual. Once you do that, you are contributor to the evil that our society suffers from. It includes condoning corruption and falsehood when suits you, and condemning when it does not. Even if a politician, you should desist from such immoral stands, if you really desire to improve our society.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



**acrutiapps** · 8 months ago

Everyone has right to criticize anything. Fr. could have criticized Modi on any public forum. But as a pricipal he had no right to use his position to influence his students. period!

^ | v · Reply · Share >

ALSO ON DNA INDIA

**'Christian mission has been a complete failure, both in India and ...**

4 comments · 7 hours ago

**MoronPriest** — I am a Syrian Catholic myself, but if i say these things publicly, they will ex-communicate me. There ...

**Punjab: Shiromani Akali Dal to hold dharnas at border over drug ...**

2 comments · 18 hours ago

**Rajinder pal** — Now "Dharnas" when 'Desan whichon Des Punjab ni Sahio' has been destroyed by these ...

**BJP chief minister in Delhi will be 'puppet' of centre, says AAP cheif ...**

75 comments · 16 hours ago

**Spock** — Better to be puppet of center than puppet of Dubai!

**Bengaluru blast: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announces Rs 5 lakh ...**

4 comments · 6 hours ago

**M. Chandrasekaran** — Honb'le Chief Minister Sir, Compensations are not the answer to such dastardly acts. What ...

[Subscribe](#)

[Add Disqus to your site](#)

[Privacy](#)

DISQUS

ONLY WITH STATE FARM<sup>®</sup>

Get a Quote ▶

State Farm

**EDITOR'S PICKS**

**INDIA**

'Christian mission has been a complete failure, both in India and across the world'



44 Shares 6 hours ago



**ANALYSIS**

Section 66A: Nightmare for citizens who dare to dissent

➔ 17 Shares ⌚ 9 hours ago

**INDIA**

BJP-PDP alliance may become reality

➔ 24 Shares ⌚ 6 hours ago



**MONEY**

On money trail of 2014

➔ 12 Shares ⌚ 7 hours ago



**INDIA**

World leaders embrace India

➔ 19 Shares ⌚ 7 hours ago



**ONLY WITH  
STATE FARM®**

[Get a Quote ▶](#)

State Farm®

**RELATED**

Section 66A: Nightmare for citizens who dare to dissent

➔ 17 Shares ⌚ 8 hours ago

Policy Watch: Diamonds- Un-make in India

➔ 20 Shares ⌚ 8 hours ago

Dubai in the days before it resembled mini-Manhattan

➔ 1 Shares ⌚ 2 days ago

Message in the ballots

➔ 84 Shares ⌚ 2 days ago

PK: Aamir Khan as a popcorn religious experience

➔ 12 Shares ⌚ 3 days ago

Most Viewed  Most Shared

PK: Aamir Khan as a popcorn religious experience

➔ 12 Shares ⌚ 3 days ago

Message in the ballots

➔ 84 Shares ⌚ 2 days ago

Inner Truth: What is Love?

➔ 0 Shares ⌚ 3 days ago

## Section 66A: Nightmare for citizens who dare to dissent

17 Shares 9 hours ago

10 years after Tsunami: The gendered impact of disasters and looking beyond vulnerability

56 Shares 3 days ago

### TOP STORIES FROM CITIES

Shiv Sena's transport wing to ensure safety of women on 31st

No leads in Rs one lakh Goregaon robbery

TISS launches documentation cell to highlight issues of senior citizens

Travel agent held for duping people of Rs7 lakh

Three homeless persons found dead in Delhi due to cold wave

### ACROSS DNA NEWS

Restriction on movement of civilians in Arunachal-Assam border

Uber announces additional safety measures in India in wake of New Delhi rape case

Shiv Sena dares government to capture Dawood Ibrahim in Osama Bin Laden-like operation

Police foil Naxal attack on cell phone tower in Telangana

2014: 11 lakh tourists visited Kashmir despite floods, elections

### SPORTS NEWS

Michael Schumacher still long way from full recovery, says legend's manager Sabine Kehm

'Campaign' on to 'influence' refereeing decisions, says Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho

India v/s Australia 3rd Test Day 4, Melbourne: Australia fightback to pile up 261/7, take lead of 326 runs

South Africa can rip through West Indies batting on day four, claims bowling coach Allan Donald

### TRENDING TOPICS

Jammu and Kashmir Elections 2014

Omar Abdullah

Narendra Modi

Bodo militants

Aamir Khan

Assam

Taliban

Big boss

Google

Russia

Palestinian

Yemen

Peshawar

India vs Australia

### NEWS

US President Barack Obama praises troops as US marks end of war in Afghanistan

Kashmir valley freezes under 'Chillai Kalan'; Kargil coldest

Restriction on movement of civilians in Arunachal-Assam border

AirAsia QZ8501 Live Updates: Australian plane reportedly spots objects in search area

Uber announces additional safety measures in India in wake of New Delhi rape case

### SPORT

Michael Schumacher still long way from full recovery, says legend's manager Sabine Kehm

'Campaign' on to 'influence' refereeing decisions, says Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho

India v/s Australia 3rd Test Day 4, Melbourne: Australia fightback to pile up 261/7, take lead of 326 runs

South Africa can rip through West Indies batting on day four, claims bowling coach Allan Donald

Ched Evans case: Rape victim's father claims daughter had to change name and shift home five times post Twitter trolls

### ENTERTAINMENT

'Furious' Madonna says 'no one can shut her up'

Chris Rock, wife to divorce after 19 years of marriage

Bigg Boss 8: Ajaz Khan re-enters show as first challenger of new series 'Halla Bol'

Aaron Paul in talks for 'Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens' Han Solo spin-off movie

---

Celeb chef Jamie Oliver declined Peter Jackson's offer to be hobbit

---

---

## MONEY

Rupee pares initial losses, still down 7 paise against dollar

---

Easier entry rules, competitive taxation key to boost manufacturing, says Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

---

Sensex surges 265 points in early trade on global trends

---

Rupee extends weakness, down 13 paise against USD

---

Housing sector could turnaround in 2015 with boost of FDI

---

---

Partner site: [Zee News](#)

[About DNA](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Reprint Rights](#)

©2014 Diligent Media Corporation Ltd.