



## **CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA (CBCI)**

**CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, Near Gole Dakhana, New Delhi - 110 001 India**

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### **CBCI CONDEMS MOHAN BHAGWAT'S CLAIMS ABOUT PRANAB MUKHERJEE'S QUOTES**

**New Delhi, January 16, 2025:** It was shocking to read a piece of publication a few media and more particularly in Indian Express News Daily with the headlines in the front page of 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 which read, **“Bhagwat Quotes Pranab: If no Ghar Wapsi, Adivasis would turn anti-national”**.

It speaks volumes on the current trend of right-wing compliant journalism and submissive media, degrading the independent and fearless media, the acclaimed fourth pillar of Indian vibrant democracy. Fabricated personal conversation being attributed to a former president of India and its posthumous publication with the vested interest of an organization with questionable credibility raises a grave issue of national importance. Is it not the violent Ghar Wapsi program of VHP and other similar organizations, curtailing the exercise of freedom of conscience of economically deprived tribals, the real anti-national activity?

It also raises the issue, whether the alleged statement was in the scheme of things when the former President Pranab Mukherjee was invited to one of their programs. Why Mohan Bhagwat did not speak when Dr. Pranab Mukherjee was alive? The intention seems to be diabolic, sinister and not genuine. We do not believe the statement to be true and spoken by the former president, because we hold him in great esteem for his contribution to the nation and the respect for pluralistic secular ethos of our motherland.

It is unfortunate that the thrice banned organization, attached with the kind of violent Indian history as has seen over the past several decades, is allowed with impunity to call the non-violent, peace loving and service oriented Christian community as anti-nationals. Still worse is, such false propaganda getting wide publicity in the mainline media without any journalistic morality and ethical principles. Wide publicity to such unverifiable and motivated statements are prone to divide communities by inciting violence and promoting hatred.

The contribution of Christian community in the nation building is well known, appreciated and acclaimed in various fields such as freedom struggle, education, medical care, social upliftment etc.

The real issue is the right to exercise freedom of conscience, a fundamental right under Art. 25, by the tribals and other vulnerable who too are entitled to live a life with human dignity as enshrined in the Constitution of India. Calling them anti-nationals for exercising their fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution exhibits the hidden motive and malicious agenda. If at all the exercise of freedom of conscience by



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any sections of the society affects any political ambitions of the rich and the powerful, and questions the status quo in the society, should it be condemned by violent acts of

organized ghar-wapsi programs? Is it not the continued tendency of the influential classes to perpetuate the age-old subjugation and discrimination? Is it not the time for India to consider economic empowerment and educational enlightenment of all those deprived and vulnerable citizen groups as directed under Article 38, 39 and 43 of the Constitution, rather than falling into the scheming and propaganda of powerful and oppressive sections?

We, the 2.3% of Indian citizens who are Christians feel extremely hurt by such manipulated and motivated propaganda unleashed. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) condemns the manner and the contents of what is published through the above-mentioned article /news story in some of the main line publications including Indian express dated 15 January 2025.

We call upon the responsible media, the political leadership, parliamentarians and people of goodwill to rise above the destructive mindset, and respond appropriately to this divisive politics to perpetuate hatred and violence disrupting the pluralistic-secular fabric and development and progress of our great nation.

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