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# DNCTIMES

Issue 3, September 2019

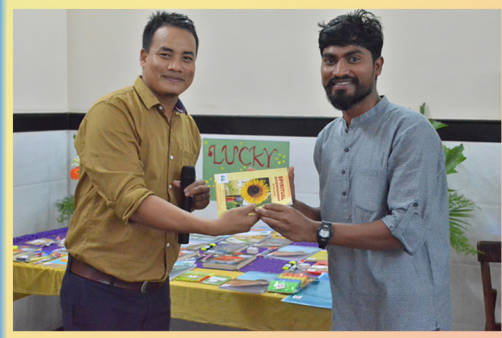


# Agri'culture'





# FEAST OF ST. IGNATIUS @ DNC



# EDITORIAL

One fine early morning, my Jesuit Companions and I went to Market Yard, Pune, as part of our summer camp based on the theme of agriculture. We happened to meet a talkative “middle man” whose job is to buy the products from the farmers and sell them to “sellers”. He said that he earned more than fifty thousand in a month as a “middle man”. He added, saying that his son as a police constable, earns less than that. We were shocked to know that! Who, indeed, sheds sweat and blood and who earns the fruit of that sweat and blood? I was disturbed right there! I am grateful to my team who thought along the same lines as me when I suggested “agriculture” as a theme for this issue. Agriculture is a field from where human civilization began in an organized form. We have studied in our school days that civilization took shape and was more or less established by the river side. Agriculture was said to be their main occupation. We have also heard countless people quoting that agriculture is the backbone of India. As a result, we always feel a sense of deep union between ‘Agri‘culture’ and ‘Human Culture’. There had been, at one time, a close network between agriculture and human development. Such was our past. Happier were our ancestors that they were privileged enough to be part of such a glorious age. But we cannot go ahead in life basking in the past glory alone. It is our responsibility that we make “tomorrow” a better place for the generations to come. That will depend on how we live our “Today”.

The current situation of agriculture is such that we cannot, but speak up for agriculture; do something for agriculture. The most basic necessity for human being is food. Approximately, the world population stands to be 7.7 billion. Can we believe that agriculture is feeding 7.7 billion people? But this question is irrelevant today. The right question will be, “Will agriculture be allowed to feed 7.7 billion people?” Have we ever thought about it? Now the hour has come that we have to think and act. It does not mean that we all go and start digging up the land. But we can contribute at different levels. Having recognised the seriousness of the issue, we have attempted to create some awareness from different perspectives. Not just doling out advice with our pen but inspiring and motivating people to think in a more practical way. I am very thankful to **Fr George Beck**, the Superior of the Philosophers’ of DNC for sharing with us the “connectedness and deep sentiments” of the tribal people with their land. **Sch. Royston** has come up with his reflection on agriculture from a Biblical point of view. **Sch. Doni Raja**, reflecting on the grim reality outside, says that agriculture is a blessing for whom it is a way of life not a means of life. **Sch. Rojas**, with a deep insight of the present reality, has expressed his flow of thoughts on the grim and dubious future of agriculture.

Agriculture is not cultivation of food grains alone that contributes at different levels but it needs contributions from different sources. All the more, in an organized system of government, it is a sector. With this background, **Sch. Steven’s** article on the “\$ 5 Trillion Economy and Agriculture” helps us to gauge this from an economical perspective. **Sch. Prosenjith** attempts to bring us in touch with the changing attitudes of people towards agriculture. **Br Raja, SVD**, on the other hand, gives us an in-depth study of the impact of MGNREGA on agriculture. **Sch. Praveen’s** write-up touches the heart-breaking problem of farmers’ suicides which is caused by the failure in agriculture and an insensitive government. **Sch. Goldenstar** expresses his sentiments attempting to use verse form to convey the grim reality. **Fr Ted Bowling’s** sharing continues, as it was well appreciated by many Jesuits and friends that met him in his hey days! This time, he overflows with his experiences and memories in India and the ways that God found in him an instrument to bring “informed” knowledge on burning issues through his involvement with IHS. His presence is a blessing and energises all our young scholastics never to rest on their laurels. There’s MORE to be done!

Knowing that these articles are only a drop in the ocean, I wish that these reflections and views on agriculture will act as a starter for our mission towards a change which will save the lives of farmers; which will develop impoverished nations; and which will satisfy the thirsty and hungry. What is our answer to Mr. L. K. Jha, of the First Brandt Commission, who raised the question, “Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and an ailing environment?” The concept of **sustainable development** is the need of the hour! There lies the fruit of God’s mission for us through our deeds, which speak louder than words!

Sch. Amalan SJ

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# Jesus, the Farmer

The Israelites, after the Exodus, came to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. But much of it was dry and unfertile other than the land which spread near the “fertile crescent”. The people started to till the land for crops and eventually, the Hebrews became farmers. The story of the first human beings on earth hints at this: Adam was forced to sweat from the brow in cultivating the land among thorns and thistles (Gn 3: 18-19). Similarly, in the book of Genesis, we read the story of Cain and Abel, which again gives us a clue that the Hebrews had become farmers. We could see throughout the Old Testament instances of people using farm products.

The Gezer Calendar, which was found in Israel, dates from the time of Solomon, in the mid-10th Century BC, described the agricultural cycle, month by month, giving the tasks to be performed at certain times of the year.

- August and September are times of harvest
- October and November are set aside for planting
- February is devoted to the cultivation of flax and,
- March, to the barley harvest, etc.

Farming was also important in the New Testament times. Farming lends itself to some great spiritual truths, as found throughout the Scripture. Through analogy, it can show us how we can cultivate spiritual growth, work hard, and be watered and refreshed by the Gospel.

Jesus talked often about the land and its products in his teachings, showing he was familiar with farming techniques. Jesus often taught in parables, an ancient Eastern literary genre. But he made use of the matter available in nature when he went around the cities

and towns of Israel. For example, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire labourers for his vineyard” (Matthew 20:1). Jesus saw what was happening in and around the Israel farming culture and used those parameters in his parables for teaching. Whenever Jesus used words pertaining to farming, he used it to as an example from everyday life to convey a spiritual truth. Jesus often used farming methods and farm equipment to illustrate important teachings. (Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 13:6-9) Why? Because he lived in an agricultural society. Many who listened to him followed farming traditions that had remained unchanged for centuries. They appreciated his references to their daily activities. He could relate to them, and they were moved by what he taught (Matthew 7:28).

We can see some parables of farming in the three Synoptic Gospels, such as

## THE PARABLES ON FARMING BY JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE	MAT- THEW	MARK	LUKE
The Sower	13:1-23	4:1-20	8:4-15
The Growing Seed		4:26-29	
The Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
The Weeds Among the Wheat	13:24-30		
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-34	13:18-19
The Leaven	13:33-34		13:20-21
The Lost Sheep	18:10-14		15:1-7
Labourers in The Vineyard	20:1-16		
The Tenant Farmers	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
The Budding Fig Tree	24:32-35	13:28-33	21:29-33

Jesus not only used words pertaining to farming but he also went further, saying His Father is a farmer. We are used to the translation in John 15:1, which says my Father is the “vine grower,” but the Greek is γεωργός (georgos) and the Latin is Agricola. Both ‘georgos’ and ‘Agricola’ mean farmer, not simply vine grower. God is the one who gives life, nourishes, tends, and brings to fruition. He is a farmer. Aquinas refers to this passage in Augustine and explains a little more what it means to cultivate God when commenting on John 15:

God cultivates us to make us better by his work since he roots out the evil weeds in our hearts. As Augustine says, “He opens our hearts with the plough of his words, plants the seeds of the commandments, and harvests the fruit of devotion”. But we cultivate God, not by ploughing but

by adoring, so that we may become better and produce a hundred fold by Him: ‘If anyone is a worshiper,’ that is, a cultivator, ‘of God and does his will, God listens to him’ (9:31).

“Cultivating” God, or worshipping Him, as these the same words in Latin, means cultivating a relationship with Him, by which we give Him honour and we are ourselves are cultivated, pruned and groomed. To be more like Him. The seeds of His life grow in us and blossom into divine life.

**Sch. Royston SJ**

***The writer is doing third year theology at JDV, Pune.***





# Tribal Identity and Land

**T**he Tribals are a group of people who accept and profess that they have descended from their common ancestors, they have their common language, culture, custom and tradition. They are governed by their own social institutions like kingship, clan, Parha-system, beliefs and customary laws. They are the group of people who constitute a homogenous unit, live in a particular geographical unit, speak a common language and with a social structure based on kingship. So for the Tribals, Jal, Jungle, Jameen (water, forest, and land) become their indelible identity

## Definition of Land:

People think of land as a plot, cycling in season and off season, producing fruits they reap. This is the utilitarian understanding of land. It is the human perception that needs to be more flexible to gain a better understanding of land

According to the perception of tribal societies, land is not property but the means of livelihood. Including agricultural land, all natural resources belong to the village community and every individual has the right to use these resources for his livelihood.

## Land in Hebrew Bible and Tribal Land

There is a great similarity between the Hebrew Bible understanding and Tribal understanding of land. For the Israelites, land was a promise and a gift. Land is given to them as a people and signifies their identity, the presence of Yahweh and therefore, an open future. The Book of Deuteronomy spoke of; *“A good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters, welling up in of brooks of water, fountains and springs flowing forth in valleys and hills... a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity a land in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.”* (Duet 8:7-9) The Exodus Tradition of liberation from slavery finds its fulfilment in the

Promised Land.

When we see the historical movements related to land, we find that it is very similar to the significance of the land in the Hebrew Bible. Tribals are known as sons of the soil, the original settlers of Jharkhand land, which is known as Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas. The land of Tribals is considered holy, the land of their ancestors and, yet that too, is a long and sad history. Wherever tribals went first, they sought for land and wanted to establish themselves well. But some alien forces (the Dikus, Turks, Zamindars) drove them away from their land and, as a consequence, they had no other alternative than to go in search of new places for their settlement until they reached the Jharkhand Plateau, ‘the promised land’. It was covered by dense forest. They cleared the forest, prepared the land for cultivation with their efforts, hard work and limited tools.

Jharkhand, on which today’s tribals live, is the same land which was prepared and cleared through their ancestors’ sweat and blood. This is a gift from God. Therefore, it is sacred and belongs to their ancestors.





### **Historical Movement Related to Land**

During the period between 1585-1765, the great Mughals conquered Chota Nagpur and gave the name Jharkhand. This time against the will of the people. The 'Raiyat' system was introduced which broke the back of the whole political system of the tribals. In order to pay a tribute to the Emperor, the kings demanded regular revenue payment. This displeased the tribals and they resisted the efforts of the kings. The Zamindari and Landlordship system was chiefly responsible for triggering off the agrarian movement of the 19th century.

British rule came to Chota Nagpur around 1765. It started its rule under the Mughal Diwani rule. The Jagirdari System was introduced and tribals were more oppressed and exploited than before. They eventually lost their land. The massive agrarian discontent finally erupted in the Great Kol Insurrection of 1831-32. Its magnitude shook the entire length and breadth of the country.

### **The Arrival of the Missionary**

The Missionaries arrived in Chota Nagpur around 1845-1886. Their coming was a big blessing for the tribals. They tried to motivate and educate the young tribal people to put up a brave front against the crisis which they were facing. Fr. Constant Lievance fought

the land cases in court, the setting up of factories, building dams and the establishment setting of mining mills. The impact of displacement on the tribals and their socio, religious and cultural life has always been devastating with deadening consequences. Such a displacement is not merely physical moving out of their homeland to another place but it is their emotional, psychological, social, religious and cultural disintegration, a virtual tearing apart of a community that has emerged out of innumerable difficulties, struggles and pain. It is really cruel to deprive of them of land, streams, rivers, forests, hills, mountains and from their affinity that is linked to these core areas of Mother Earth.

### **Conclusion:**

A Tribal is emotionally linked to land and nature. Apart from these and from nature, you cannot impose tribal identity. A tree for a business man is a thing of commercial gain. But when a tribal looks at a tree, he thinks of its shade, fruits and its direct usefulness in his life. So this is their slogan: "Jaan Dengey, Jameen Nahi" ("We will give our life but not land.")

**Fr George Beck SJ**

***The Superior of DNC Philosophers.***



# CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIAN AGRICULTURE

*“If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right in the country.”- M.S. Swaminathan.*

When I was requested to write an article on agriculture for the next issue of the DNC Times, the first thing that came to my mind was the beautiful experience of the village experiment during my Novitiate years. Engaging myself in working in the paddy fields with the tribal family with whom I stayed, I used to feel proud that I was able to contribute to the production of food-grain in the country. Those were the happy days for one to look into a farmer’s life blessed with plenty. But the sorry

1.2 % of the rural youth aspired to be farmers. The survey results came at a time when the farmer’s protests rocked several States with demands of better crop prices and loan waivers. Even the percentage of students in agricultural or veterinary courses around India amounts to less than **half a percent** of all undergraduate enrolment!

Moreover, Yogendra Yadav, a farm activist and National President of the political party, Swaraj India, said, “While the lowest Central Government job pays Rs. 22,000 a month, the income of a farm household from agriculture is about Rs. 3,800 per month... who will want to be in an occupation which requires back-breaking work without any dignity or hope of a steady



state of the farmers and agriculture in the country at present, makes me ponder over these questions: *why are people not drawn towards agriculture anymore, why are farmers looking for an alternative?*

Referring to the survey done by the non-profit organization “Pratham,” the Annual Status of Education Report 2017 showed that only

and decent income. While well-off large land owning farmers are educating their children to find a job outside agriculture, a small farmer would even prefer a job of a peon in a Government Office,” (<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/dJmimxJWI9QIV86AdUMu7N/Rural-youth-prefer-not-to-be-farmers-Survey.html>).



Further, a 2014 Survey released by the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies also showed that about 62% of farmers were ready to quit farming for a better job in the city. “When asked whether they would like to see their children engage in farming, only 18 % responded positively,” said the report titled “**State of Indian Farmers**”. Better education, more facilities and employment opportunities in the cities were the reasons for the farmers to arrive at such a pathetic conclusion. (<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/dJmimxJWI9QIV86AdUMu7N/Rural-youth-prefer-not-to-be-farmers-Survey.html>).

According to Uma Lele, the former World Bank Economist and current member of the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, there is massive poverty and malnourishment in rural areas, and, with no discomfort, she lashes out that the policy makers do not seem to accept the reality. With all of this scenario the PM still promises doubling our farmers’ income by 2022. According to Ashok Gulati, an Indian Agricultural Economist and a former Chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, providing income security to farmers and boosting investment in agriculture, are the twin factors that are needed to help our distressed Indian farmers. On the other hand, Yoginder. K. Alagh, a noted Indian Economist and former Union Minister of the Government of India, puts forward a different view point. According to him, the lack of proper

education, illiteracy, inadequate training and lack of infrastructure in rural areas are the leading factors to the agrarian crisis in the country (<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/dJmimxJWI9QIV86AdUMu7N/Rural-youth-prefer-not-to-be-farmers-Survey.html>).

Certainly, fundamental changes will ease some of the agrarian issues in the time to come. But, with the ever rising problem of the farmers, there seems a flickering hope among the rural population to think of farming as the only occupation to earn a livelihood. In any case, it seems that in our country, the simple farmers and the rural poor masses are at a loss. Given their lack of facilities, illiteracy and ignorance, they are, on the whole, an impoverished and a greatly neglected lot. Since better facilities are only to be seen in the urban areas, the farmers living in deprivation, for this reason, are rushing to the towns and cities, or they are to be seen taking to the streets to demand their rights. Are the changing trends in Indian Agriculture indicating a changing philosophy in rural India? To conclude, I would like to quote the author, Ruth Stout, who said, “**Farmers are philosophical. They have learned it**”

**Sch. Prosenjith SJ.**

**The writer is doing second year philosophy at JDV, Pune.**





# *Agriculture: A Blessing or A Curse*

**A**griculture was the bone of contention in the Nation as it was bracing itself up to face the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election. Prime-Time television invariably show highlights of the farmers' protests and their pathetic state of life - only to be lost in our short collective memory. The Opposition parties showed their g/brand-unity on a common platform to showcase their transient solidarity for the farmers. It was evident that farm-distress was not as central and motivating a factor as the anti-Modi sentiments for the imaginative-never-realized mahagatbandhan. Agriculture, farmers, and farm issues make good fodder to feed the vote-hungry electoral politics. What happens after elections to alleviate the perpetual farm distress lurks in the dark corridors of the mighty power-centers. Leaving all these aspects of politics aside, my basic take on this topic is that agriculture as a way of life is a blessing and, agriculture as a means of livelihood, is a curse.

Today, there seems to be a craze among a few youth (usually those, disillusioned by the sedentary working condition of the IT Industry and dissatisfied by the fat salary with little peace and joy) about organic farming. They seem to have a romanticized idea of agriculture and its projected outcomes. One has just to see the sympathy wave that erupts on any tragic event related to farmers. For them, agriculture and the life that follows after embracing it, comes as an intentional choice, having secured a stable future with the wealth earned through their professional jobs. For them, agriculture as a way of life will remain a blessing. One drought or a flood or a mass insect/pest attack may not spell a death knell for their immediate future. What is farming for a farmer whose subsistence or survival comes only from the produce that he harvests from his fields! His means of livelihood is dependent only on his successful harvest. I often think of comparing the

unfair importance given to investment banking and the scant and dismal attention given to agriculture. One might think that I am making a farfetched unnecessary comparison. Let us consider it this way. In investment banking, the higher the risk, the higher the returns. We take for granted the risks involved in farming and cultivation. In my opinion, there is no riskier investment in the world than investment in the cultivation of fields. This investment is treated with contempt and apathy. Anyone from a farmer's family would resonate with the statement I just made. From the time, one sows seeds, one has to do a series of operations, wait for the arrival of a temperamental Monsoon, save the crop from cattle that are tempted to graze on it, from weeds, pests and insects, meet the exorbitant cost of labour, fertilizers and pesticides and weedicides, pray ardently so that unexpected rain does not wreak havoc at the time of cultivation, and, further, wait at the mercy of middlemen to decide a reasonable price for the produce. This burden is for a medium and large farmers' community who are financially stable. Added to these woes, the mini and small farmers would have to knock at the doors of indifferent and sluggish government offices to get their loans and subsidies sanctioned. Of course, river-fed cultivation saves the farmers from the trauma of droughts and longing for timely rain, but not from the pangs of the politics of river-water sharing.

Unfortunately, in India more than 40 percent of the population is involved or dependent on this sector. There have been proposals and suggestions by scholars of economics to take people out of agriculture and to introduce them to other service and manufacturing sectors. Sometimes, it appears to be the only hope to salvage the millions of farmers from poverty. After all, farm suicides are not stories carried in the media as they occur. Only once in a while, more as space fillers for want of news items!



Every government seems to come up with eye-catching ideas for the farming sector. The present government's catchy slogan of 'doubling the farmers' income by 2020', 'more crop per drop of water' as suggested in the recent economic survey', 'various incentives and subsidies with fancy names' do not meet the actual targets. They are locked within the labyrinth of complex structures – Center-dependent agricultural policy proposals and fund distributions and State-guided implementations. There had been genuine efforts to confront issues related to farm-distress. The Swaminathan Commission report is a good example that comes to mind immediately. One of the ambitious proposals in the report is that a farmer's take-home income should be equal to that of a civil servant. Far too ambitious! Our country also has to walk the tight rope to balance the increase in the farm income and the promise of food security. These days, State Governments and the Central

Government, compete to offer regular periodical monetary assistance to farmers. There are a lot of efforts to help the farming sector. Perhaps, we always treat the issues in the farming sector as events. We need to see the events as the inevitable consequences of an imperfect process. The crisis in agriculture is a process, not an event. The wounds need quick healing, but the causes of the wounds need more considerable attention and a lasting remedy. Until we find such a resolve to the curse, let agriculture be a blessing to those who choose it as a way of life, sitting as it appears, in the lap of the luxury of their wealth.

**Sch. Doni Raja SJ**

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# The Future of Agriculture

The invention of agriculture, along with that of mathematics and language, is considered as the greatest achievement of humankind. Human beings began their journey as hunter-gatherers. At some point in this journey, around 11000 B.C., they settled and began village life. People of the fertile crescent of south-west Asia started food production by 8500 B.C. With that originated the human saga of culture and progress.

Those who were able to produce food sustainably at first gave rise to the greatest civilizations of all times. Food production was indirectly the pre-requisite for all development. The

people who had a head-start in food production thereby gained a head-start on the path of success. Even after 10,000 years, we still continue this practice.

There are a lot of emotional sentiments in the minds of many when they think of agriculture. However, is agriculture an essential part of human life? Are we really in need of it? Are we created to be farmers who are to toil in the fields? In 1870, in the United States, 50% of the population was employed

in the agriculture industry. Today, just 2% of the US population produce food for the whole country while they export food worth \$ 140 billion (2018), being the largest food exporter. It is not the muscle power which enabled them to do it. It is the use of high-end technology and smart management of farmlands and the evolution and transformation of Agriculture into Agribusiness. The US farms almost doubled their

energy efficiency in the past 25 years. In this context, we need to rethink our attitudes towards agriculture. If machines can do the job efficiently and with greater quality, the time when we give the job to the machines completely,

is inevitable and is fast approaching.

The history of Indian Agriculture began before the Indus Valley Civilization. Today 50% of the Indian workforce is directly or indirectly employed in agricultural fields. Agriculture has contributed up to 18% of the Indian GDP. However, India's agricultural practices are neither economically nor environmentally sustainable. India's yield on many agricultural commodities is low. Indian farmers suffer by a low price, rudimentary market infrastructure, inadequate irrigation and excessive regulations. The productivity of Indian farms is lower than of those of Brazil, the US and many other nations. In India, the adoption of modern agricultural practices is inadequate in comparison to counties which have adopted the latest methods. How long can the Indian work-force rely on agriculture?

**“Agri‘culture’  
had a glorious Past,  
but it has no Future”**

**The Future Is for  
the Smart-Agri-Industries**





Norman Borlaug, the Father of the ‘Green Revolution’ and the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, made the following comment “Man can and must prevent the tragedy of famine in the future instead of merely trying with pious regret to salvage the human wreckage of the famine, as he has so often done in the past.” In the last decade, he made the following comment in defence of his opposition to traditional farming: “There are 6.6 billion people on the planet today. With organic farming, we could only feed four billion of them. Which of the two billion would volunteer to die?” Within three decades there will be approximately 9.6 billion people on the planet. The planet will require a 70% increase in food production to meet their demands. There will be limited availability of land, increased need for freshwater and difficulties of unpredictable climate change. Can the ordinary farmers of the distant Indian villages who earn Rs. 6500 per month be able to meet this challenge? Industrialized smart farming will be the only solution available to solve this problem. If agriculture is to continue to feed the world, it will have to become more in the line of manufacturing.

Smart Farming can make use of the possibilities of UAV based visual thermal imagery to check the health of the crops, sensors to check humidity and temperature of the soil and availability of sunlight, GPS based soil scanning across large area, Real-time AI-based data analysis, autonomous pickers, possibilities of Internet of Things (IoT) etc. Based on this, they will be able to make better decisions on irrigation, usage of pesticides and fertilizers and decide on the best time to harvest. However,

knowledge and capital will be much more in demand. New farming technologies require more and more professional skills. A truly automated, factory-like farm, however, would have to cut people out of the loop altogether. When farms will become more like factories, the farmers need to be scientists, engineers and analysts. Manual jobs in the field of agriculture are going to face and accept a total replacement with machine technology. A single person equipped with a few electronic instruments would be able to control a large farmland.

It is predicted that 2050 will have a new class of ‘useless’ people. Irrelevance will be a problem to be addressed by many. It is highly probable that uneducated poor farmers will be among them. Cheap unskilled labourers will become far less important in the future. Only people of a high level of expertise and skills will be in demand. Underdeveloped and developing countries may face a huge crisis. Just think: What will you do when nobody wants your cheap unskilled labourers, and you don’t have the resources to build a new educational system to teach new skills?

Sympathizing with or glorifying the past days of traditional, organic farming, may not be the right thing to do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our young Jesuits of today, who are ready to help and support the poor and marginalised, need to have the foresight to see the imminent crisis that is looming up on the horizon, and to find practical solutions to this problem that could be devastating.

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## '\$ 5 Trillion Economy' & Agriculture



Timely and the untimely monsoons continue to dog and plague India no end to add to the miseries of farmers; the farmers are displaced, evacuated, shattered, and battered by the torrential rain storms. The recent rain-havoc in Maharashtra alone damaged crops of over 4 lakh hectares in the Western and Northern parts of the State. There was a colossal collapse of the agricultural economy, giving it yet another blow as it grappled with the alarming suicidal rate in the State. The idea of 'US\$ 5 Trillion Economy' too has flooded and overwhelmed the economic sphere amidst glaring global slow-down. The trillion term appears to be a ray of hope cutting through the darkest gloom, across making the nation one of the super-powers of the world. Economic policies of a country make or break its place at the world market; the Manmohan Government was known for economic policy *paralysis* and the Modi Government is known for economic policy *chaos*. The ambitious target of US\$ 5 Trillion will be a reality only if the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth rate is maintained at 9 pc. This implies that the Agriculture Sector (AS) will have to double its productivity.

### **Agriculture and the GDP:**

India's average GDP growth rate of 7.5% is commendable given the fact that the Colonial Powers had left the Indian Economy (IE) in tatters. The IE has come of age and raring to rule the world in the near future. India's AS's contribution to the GDP is disproportionate given its agrarian nature. Though its contribution to IE is much higher than the world's average (6.4%); it contributes only 15.4%. The Industrial Sector (IS) and Services Sectors (SS) contribute 23% (world's average, 30%) and 61.5% (world's average, 63%) respectively. Despite the uncertainties and vagaries of the monsoons, the AS has been doing well globally because more than the 60% of the Indian populace is busy in farming. It is a well-known fact that AS has not yet actualized its

full potential. The sector is underdeveloped and has under-performed. The SS is the primary source of India's growth surge; it contributes 60%. The global recession (GR) will axe the SS first, then the IS and finally the AS.

### **Trillion Economy: Agriculture Sector a Buffer**

Today, the IE does stand out for its relatively low manufactures share of GDP, and the high proportion of unemployment remains in agriculture. Expansion of both industry and services will draw workers out of agriculture, leaving them vulnerable to global recession. Therefore, reforming the agricultural policies and the investment ought to be the priority as we march towards the Trillion Dollar goal. GR is an issue that is troubling the world. Has India come up with a plan to tackle the mounting GR or is it blinded and distracted by the Trillion-Economy dream? If the Agricultural Sector were to contribute one third, for which we need bold and daring new pro-agri policies and strategies, then only will the unemployment issues be tackled and the pressure on the other two pillars of IE too will be reduced. The doubling of AS productivity would serve as a buffer to absorb the shocks of economic upheaval and the GR.

### **Conclusion:**

The Gospel-parable of the talents invites us to double/maximize our talents. The need of the hour is to double the AS productivity to achieve the Trillion Dollar goal. Is the Trillion Goal a no-brainer? Given our GDP growth rate of 7.5, we shall reach the trillion target comfortably. Is the Government playing with numbers to mesmerize the Bhaktas? Be that as it may, the Trillion Economy will not necessarily change the lives of the poor but the reforms in the AS would definitely.

**Sch. Steven Almeida, SJ**

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## THE EFFECT OF “MGNREGA” ON AGRICULTURE

In this fast progressive world, everyone wants to enjoy life to the fullest; they want to experience happiness to the brim. All of us want to bring about justice in the world. We help the poor, we organize and animate them, and we participate in various struggles with them. Some of us may reach out to the rich and powerful and preach to them about their responsibility to care, love, and share with the poor. But, in spite of all these efforts, society continues to remain self-centered. The number of NGOs have increased, where there are many who want to work for the poor. The concept of world politics is taking shape like that of creating a welfare state, where there is love, brotherhood, and justice. In spite of all this, when we look at today’s scenario, nothing has changed and the poor still remain poor and the rich continue to become richer. The divide between rich and poor has increased to such an extent that an alarming 80% of the world’s resources are in the hands of 20% and a mere 20% of the world resources are left for the 80%! The one possible dream for the entire world is to achieve a sustainable growth where the gap between the ‘have’s’ and ‘have not’s’ is reduced.

The Indian Government took a step to work for equal distribution of wealth. Thus they began National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (or, NREGA No 42, later renamed as the «Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act», MGNREGA), is an Indian labor law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the ‘right to work’. The aim of this act is training five crore unskilled laborers under this Act, which is the next big-ticket promise of the Central Government. Under its 100-day Agenda, the Centre is all set to revamp MGNREGA, which guarantees 100 days of employment to the rural poor. The revamp would include providing training to the rural poor to upgrade their skills and equip them for better employment opportunities. It also provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year for adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related, unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Government of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with State Governments.





It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in the country. Roughly, one-third of the stipulated work force must be women. To a certain extent this has provided financial security to rural women but it has played a very serious negative effect on the agriculture sector. The economic structure today is such that the gap between the rich and the poor keeps increasing. Wealth is like water. It flows from where it is scarce to where it is in abundance! A major criticism is that a lot of money disbursed by the Government gets siphoned off by middlemen, thus leaving a number of workers either with unpaid wages or less than the standard wages. The people who used to work in tilling their fields, are now running after this 100-days-work scheme since it means less work compared to preparing their fields to yield crops. This, in turn, has brought an adverse effect on the agriculture sector. Another criticism levelled at this scheme is that it makes agriculture less profitable. Landholders often oppose it on these grounds. The big farmer's point of view can be summed up as follows: landless laborers are found to be lazy as they don't want to work on farms since they have realized that they could get money without doing much at the MGNREGA worksites.

The worker's point of view can be summed up in that do not get more than Rs. 80 in the private agricultural labour market. There is no farm work for several months and there are a few senior citizens who are jobless for at least 8 months in a year. Farmers employ only young and strong persons to work in their farms and reject the others and hence many go jobless most of the time. Thus MGNREGA has both positive and negative aspects. The following demands were presented for implementation:

- The Government of India should increase the Central allocation for the scheme so that the number of workdays could be increased to 200 and the per-day wage could be raised to Rs.300.
- Job Card must to be issued to everyone who reports to the job site for work, failing which, after 15 days, employment benefits should be given.
- A minimum of 150 days of work should be ensured to all Job Card holders. The Minimum Wage act should be strictly implemented. Delay in wage payment should be resolved amicably.
- It should be extended to urban areas. *Gram Sabhas* should be strengthened to monitor proper implementation of the scheme and also to keep a check on any form of corruption.

When all this happens, one can be sure that people will not turn to agriculture as a way of living. This will force us to import most of the essential agricultural products from other countries. It is still held that India is basically an agri-based economy. We need to look for alternative means for which India is not still ready. This is because in the present scenario, people are losing jobs and even the industrial sector is in a state of shutting down. A country like the USA and other countries are closing its door to Indians. Thus, we have more than a serious problems to face up to and resolve as early as possible before it snowballs!

**Br. Raja SVD**

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# *Failing Land, Broken Lives*



**T**housands of precious human lives have been lost. Innumerable poverty-stricken families have been broken in body and mind. This is the hard reality of the suicide committed by farmers in India - a catastrophe that has befallen the agricultural system in India. In recent years, a large number of marginal farmers in India have put a premature end to their lives in despair and the numbers are staggering. Since 1995, more than 3 lakh farmers in India have ended their lives and their families and communities have been left shattered. The state of Maharashtra takes the largest share of those numbers and, therefore, it is known as the epicentre of farm related suicides in India.

Mass suicides relating to a single profession raises serious questions concerning the system around which the farming profession is built. No doubt, the agricultural system and the economy supporting it are not in favour of the small scale farmers. The circumstances under which farmer suicides take place vary significantly from case to case. Yet the common factors remain the same: unmanageable debt, government apathy, lack of social support, crop failure, which altogether makes up the broad term 'agrarian distresses'.

The problem of suicides by farmers is not

just an Indian problem. It is a global concern. Similar incidents of suicides have been reported even in developed countries and developing countries alike. Agriculture is hence termed as a high risk and high stress profession. However, the situation in India is different. Indian agriculture is prone to the vagaries of the Monsoon as large portions of Indian agricultural canvas are yet to be covered by artificial irrigation. Infrastructural benefits have not yet completely reached the Indian farmer. In the absence of formal channels of credit from banks and financial institutions, the marginal farmer relies heavily on costly loan from moneylenders. Thus the small farmer is even cheated and deprived of the occasional respite of loan waivers which trickles down through the banking system.

The spectre of mass suicides by farmers continues to haunt the governments at the Centre and the States. Unable (or unwilling) to tackle the menace structurally, governments have resorted to short term solutions such as announcing loan waivers. Some State Governments have even suppressed data on farmers' suicide. The increasing death toll becomes a weapon for political mudslinging. However, lasting solutions have not yet germinated. Farmers' suicide continues to remain a stain in the much vaunted modern Indian economic growth story.

The fate of the surviving family members of farmers ending their lives is even more tragic. There seems to be no escape or end to their distress. They not only carry the pain of losing a family member, who is also a bread winner, but they are also pursued by money lenders for the repayment of a loan taken at exorbitant interest rates! Not all the survivors of farmers committing suicides qualify for financial relief by the Government. Farmer suicides have pushed many households into destitution. Thus, the vicious circle is constantly pushed wider.

A fitting response to the problem of farmer suicides needs to include multi-pronged strategies. This response needs to begin with a humanitarian concern for the poor farmer. The marginal farmer

needs to be empowered by providing multiple options for earning income as well as providing psychological aid. On our part, we could express solidarity with the farmers by supporting Farmers' Movements, spreading awareness on problems of farmers, reducing waste, and promoting and practising ecological sensitivity. The farmers supply our basic human need of nourishment. In return for this service they render to humanity, they deserve a fair deal when it comes to the matter of their own survival.

**Sch. Praveen Kiran Martis SJ**

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## **HARBINGER OF TROUBLE**



Still rivers, wilted plants, cracked- wide-open soil,  
It's the death knell in the polluted land;  
Elfin-like agro-men thou scant-myth recoil,  
Muster thee thy stay on the edge of one's hand.

Sweat, labour and care in market fare  
Agro-men hike their own produce not to dare  
The silent hawk hovering o'er sand  
Slowly saps the heartbeat of agro-land  
To the rhythm of the farm; ever banned!

Peasant revolts break no cumbersome yoke  
Rhetoric, scarecrow in the field, unmoved;  
Draws economic fault lines, agro-broke  
Till mobile organic life is far removed.

Tainted loan waiver, ever in mind imprinted;  
To men doth be harbinger of trouble painted  
But, organic foliage's spring new dawn hue  
As plants fortify men with unexpected revenue.

**Sch. Goldenstar Dkhar SJ**

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# A Sharing of Memories

By Fr Ted Bowling SJ

## 6. What did India teach you over the years?

- a. For one thing, the virtue of patience, or as the Roman citizens used to say on the same topic, "Rome was not built in a day".
- b. The beauty of its flowers, when, for instance, I visited a floral competition in the Empress Gardens, near the Bishop's House.
- c. The many flowers of trees grown in India trees showing, rich colours in purple, yellow, red, white, etc.
- d. The skill of ancient craftsmen who carved out the beautiful caves and statues found in the Ajanta and Ellora caves.
- e. From the book of Fr. Cedric Rebello S.J., "The Word through Eastern Eyes," how many similar passages are found in the Bible, in either the Vedic Scriptures or in the words of famous Indian Sages.
- f. Its progress in the scientific field from the time of building the National Chemical Laboratory in Pune in 1950 - 51 to all the present accomplishments of ISRO.
- g. How recently, a few narrow-minded people, can turn one set of people against another and thus to weaken the overall strength of unity amidst diversity.

## 7. What was your first impression as you entered the DNC grounds and walked through its front doors?

After five months in India of studying Hindi near a small railroad town called Gomoh, located in the territory of the then Jamshedpur Mission, I was keen to visit the Tata Steel Mills within Jamshedpur itself by stopping there on my way to Poona to begin my Theology. The blast furnaces were like a picture of hell. However, on the positive side, I first met Frank Mc-Gauley S.J. in Jamshedpur, and we travelled

together over the hot plains of India to finally reach the city called at that time Poona. We took an auto rickshaw to reach De Nobili, and as soon as it left Nagar Road, and worked its way forward to the DNC portico, we felt the coolness of the two rows of Gulmohar and Rain Trees overhead.

When we actually entered the house, we, the Theologians, were put up in the rooms of the newly built block meant for the Philosophers. This happened because the ground floor rooms of the Theologians could not be utilized due to a first floor being constructed over the ground floor rooms. The Philosophers' rooms were small, but being brand new, they were okay for one year.

## 8. What do you consider as your biggest contribution to India?

There are three contenders, and I really don't know which of the three I would choose.

### 1. Teaching at JDV from 1957 to 2003.

Man proposes but God disposes. As mentioned under quest. 3 above, I came to India thinking I might become a High School Chemistry teacher in one of our Patna schools. However, the Northern Provinces of Patna, Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Calcutta had each to send two people to make up the new Staff for the teaching of Philosophy DNC which eventually became the future JDV. The Chicago Province itself assigned two men specifically for this task. One of them received a Visa to enter India; the second one did not. Since I was already in India, and had a Master's Degree in Chemistry, the Dean of the Philosophy Staff in 1954 or 55 asked the then Vice-Provincial of Patna to assign me to DNC as part of the Philosophy Dept. Staff. So the Vice-Provincial did so. My new job description in JDV was to teach Basic Science to those students who did not have any science courses in their High School, and a course called "Scientific Questions Connected with Philosophy" for all students except those who had a B.Sc in any branch of science. For imparting basic principles of physics and chemistry, JDV initially

had both a physics and chemistry lab. Learning the basics also helped to prepare them for taking a course on Cosmology taught by some another Professor. Since students at JDV come from all corners of India, all corners of India could reap some benefits from these courses.

## **2. Running the Institute for Home Study Correspondence Course (abr. IHS) from 1959 to 2013.**

Already in the answer to question five “Your inspiration for your missionary zeal”, (DNC Times, issue 2 July 2019, pg. 19)

I had written that Fr Sontag S.J. of the Patna Province, was the founder of the Institute of Home Study. When he was the Parish Priest of St Stephen’s Church in Danapur. He brought the IHS work with him to Poona in 1952 when he was assigned here. With other Theology students, I helped him out. He was the writer of both the introductory as well as the advanced courses.

When I joined the staff of DNC and JDV in 1957, my Provincial in Patna asked me to give a helping hand to Fr. Sontag since he was advanced in years.

After his death in 1963, I was asked to take over that apostolate, one that I could readily do, since my teaching was not a full time job.

At that time, 1959, there were only six or seven such Catholic Enquiry Centers run mostly by lay people. By my visiting Bishops in their Dioceses, or Directors of some other institutions and urging them to start a Catholic Enquiry Centre especially in the Regional language , by the year 2000 there were, by the grace of God, about 50 centers: a few big ones , a few small ones, and the rest somewhere in between. The Institute for Home Study was also responsible for printing and dispatching booklets of three different grades in both English and Hindi to those Centers who use them.

Initially the IHS work occupied two corner rooms in the Philosophate. Since the Philosophers needed more rooms later on, the IHS work was shifted to three rooms on the ground floor of the Theologate. The IHS work was eventually shifted to another house on our campus in 2013, but it only cared for the printing and distribution of booklets. We had to reprint about 14,000 booklets per year at that time.



Fr Sontag shows his booklet on Youth to a young boy.



Patrick pushing a two wheeler trolley holding booklets to the van at the front door

teaching anywhere, but especially in slum areas. Slowly also the work moved beyond the teaching of NFP to job training, legal inputs, mixing with other womens' groups etc. This Centre is still running today along the same basic lines. As I was the director of the Family Welfare Centre from 1973 to 2003 , I also became one of the founding Fathers of the "Natural Family Planning Association of India " . After learning so much about fertility and infertility from the ladies teaching this subject, I was invited by Fr Tony D'Silva S.J. , a former Professor of Psychology at JDV to co- teach a course on the topic of ("Psycho Biology" of Human Sexuality ). Many doctors or other competent lay people were also invited to give their inputs on this subject.

### 9. What was your biggest challenge in India?

Challenges change as time moves on. Originally, my biggest challenge was learning Hindi, the most used language in the Patna Province in Northern India. By 1959, I could speak Hindi well enough to give a homily at Mass and teach English to Sixth Standard boys while I managed to learn a bit more of Hindi from them. But by living here in this DNC English atmosphere, much, but not all of my Hindi knowledge has been lost. A second major challenge was to remain relevant. Since I had no classes to teach in the year 1971- 1972 due to some shift in the curriculum, I was free for a Sabbatical Year to update both my Theology as well as to improve my teaching of science.

### 10. What are your thoughts on the recent visit of Fr General to DNC?

I am used to such visitations since this was now the fourth time that I have seen different Fr Generals on our campus. It was a time of learning from him and also a time of grace. I felt very humble when after our first meal together in the Theologians' Refectory, he got up from his chair and came to my table to greet me, probably because I was the eldest in the community.

Fr General will not easily forget our JDV Academic Establishment catering to more than eight hundred students from all over India, nor the DNC Community that looks after Jesuits predominantly as well as housing some of the JDV Staff members. I was happy that it was he who could inaugurate the new Ignatian Spirituality Centre on part of the ground floor of the DNC Theologate. No better use of these rooms could be made than to provide space for an Ignatian Retreat Centre.

Interviewed by Fr Sathya & Sch. Evan.

In 1988 at a National Meeting of Enquiry Center Directors, a new organization was formed called the "Association of Catholic Enquiry Centers – India" to give more stability to the work. I was privileged to be elected the President of this Association from 19 to 2003.

### 3. Founding or starting up The Poona Diocesan Family Welfare Center and running it from 1973 to 2003.

In 1973, at the time when an Emergency was declared in India, some sterilizations were being forced on both men and women especially in New Delhi. About this time, I had already read about the Sympto-Thermic method of Natural Family Planning and, later on, the simpler Mucus method. So, with Fr. Rector's permission I volunteered to the then Bishop of Poona to start a Family Welfare Centre provided he procured a Sister nurse to be trained in these specific methods so that she could teach ladies how to plan a pregnancy if wanted , or avoid one , if not wanted. Slowly funds began to come in to pay the salaries of ladies to do this



PRANEEN

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# KARAM





Up Next

# Jesuit Priesthood

