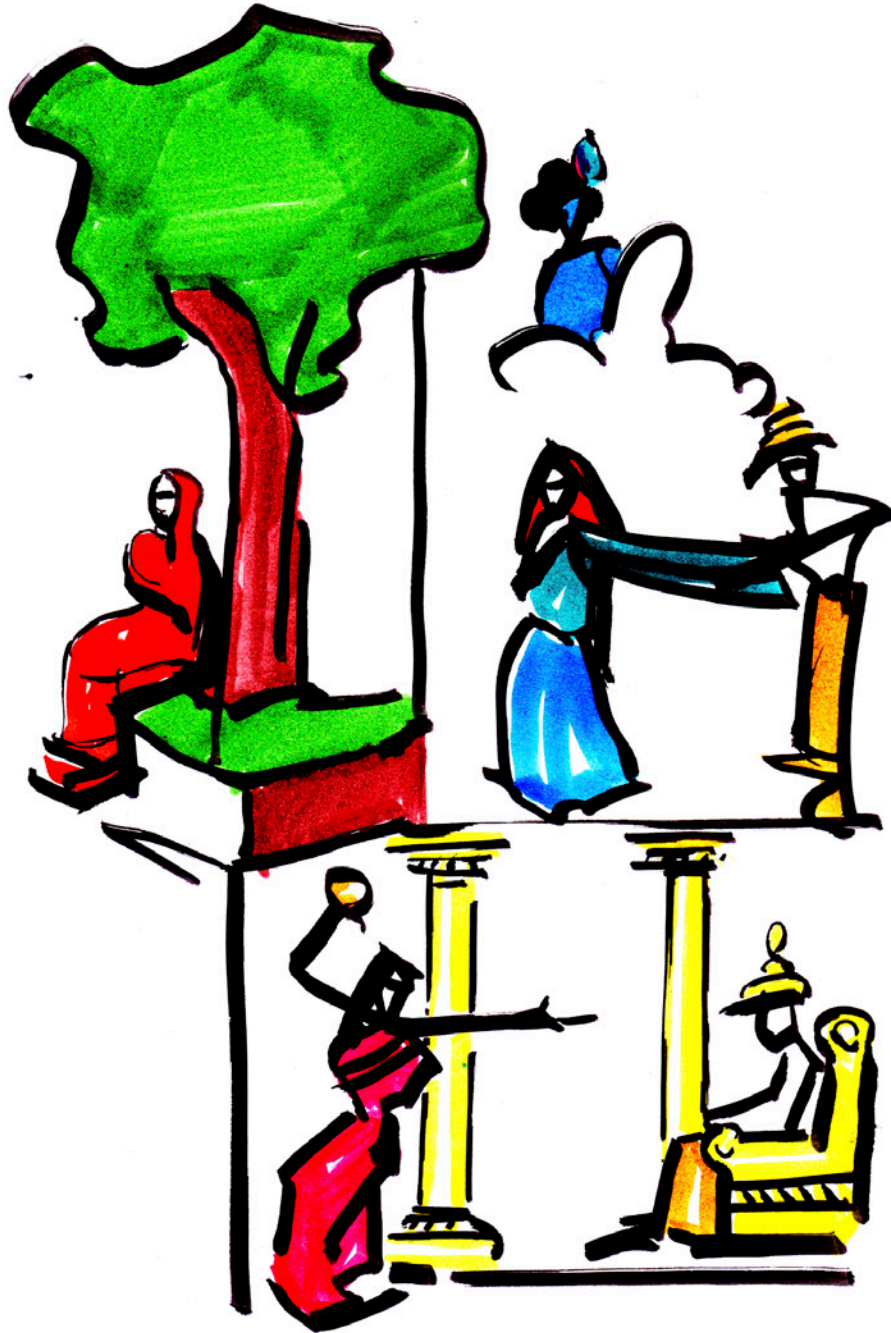


She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.

DINO TIMES

March | 2021 | Vol. I



The Great Indian Epics

Ramayana | Mahabharata | Cilapathikaram



'Demonization of the Oppressed'

An art inspired by the *process of demonisation* in the construction of Epics. Even today, most of the social narratives do use this process time and again. **'Anti-national'** is a favourite category of the modern Indian politics.

ART BY KIRAN PASHAN SJ, THIRD YEAR THEOLOGY STUDENT
FROM KARNATAKA JESUIT PROVINCE.





Letters to the Editor

Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers.

Dear Editorial Team,

The issue on "Cultural Dialogue" is incredible...
Much needed...

An issue that went beyond all the standards of
DNC TIMES...

I just hope that the Society of Jesus in India uses
this document (Yes i mean it, it is much more
than an edition) to give a wider promotion to
our various activities etc...

Thank you for this treasure.. Kudos to all who
have worked

Just a small suggestion... if you can pass on the
link to the JCSA website along with the mails
and through other social media, it would be
wonderful... Your work deserves much more
than this sending alone...

Warm Regards
Arun

ARUN SIMON PHILIP SJ, PARIS

Thank you for sending me the latest issue
of the DNC Times. The theme of faith and culture
is very relevant. The scholastics have done a
wonderful job. The presentation is attractive and
the content engaging. God bless.

VERNON D'CUNHA SJ, ROME

I am glad that the Editorial Team
has taken interest and efforts to study
the 'Jesuit Cultural Involvements'
in India. Cultural Dialogue and
involvement is the need of the time.
I believe that this is a specialised area
where Jesuit expertise has tremendous
contributions. Our history is greatly
intertwined with some of the world's
greatest cultures and it goes on.

I am really happy that the 'future of
Indian Society' is interested in cultural
initiatives. All the best you guys!

SHEISE THOMAS SJ, BANGALORE

Thanks for sending me the DNC times. It is really a treat to the eyes
and food for thought. Your design and lay-out are top of the class. The topics
are well chosen and the articles well written. Congratulations and many
blessings.

Peace, Sajeev.

SAJEEV PAINUNKAL SJ, KOLKATA

Editorial

DNCTimes | March 2021



After the war, Kunti pledges to spend the rest of her life with Dhritarashtra and Gandhari in the forest. Kunti spends her time taking care of the old couple and wondering about her own mistakes leading to the war. She finds herself often sitting in the forest and apologising for the things that she kept hidden and her selfish demand from Karna. She often sees a Nishadin listening to her as she apologizes aloud. Kunti dismisses the Nishadin's presence for she knows the Nishadin can't understand her language. (A woman belonging to Nishad tribe spends a lot of time hunting and foraging in the forest; and they are considered 'uncivilised')

One day the Nishadin speaks to Kunti and asks her When will she confess her greatest sin? She reminds Kunti of the family of six, she sacrificed to save herself and her sons in the house of lac that she set on fire. She took the family of a travelling Nishadin and her five sons, served them wine to put them to deep sleep in the house and burnt down the house and fled. Their bodies were found charred and the Kauravas believed that the Pandavas and Kunti were burnt to death. The Nishadin confronts Kunti and asks her – How many times have you invited a Nishadin to a feast? And how many times did you serve them wine? Just one time only? (Kunti O Nishadi by Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016)).

This story is one among the millions of adapted works from our great epics. Dr. K. V. Puttappa, Vishwanatha Satyanarayana, G. D. Magdulkar, R. K Narayan, Ramesh Menon, Mahasweta Devi, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, Anand Neelakandan, Devdutt Patnaik, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Girish Karnad, Shivaji Sawant, Shashi Tharoor, Dharamvir Bharati, Pratibha Ray, Gurcharan Das are a few in the list of eminent literary figures who found new rays of profundity in the great Indian Epics. The Epics are our patrimony and it continually affects our psyche and shapes our imaginations.

Every story is new every time it is retold. There is no better way to communicate and transfer ideas, values and faith to the other than stories. Epics also engage crude emotions, rotten value-systems and prejudices. Therefore the reconstruction and adaptation to the contemporary times is the need of the hour. Our attempt is in this regard. Try to read the Epics from the perspective of those standing outside the peripheries of our society.

Nota Bene: *Maybe the Epics would have said different stories if it had been written by women. (Anonymous).*



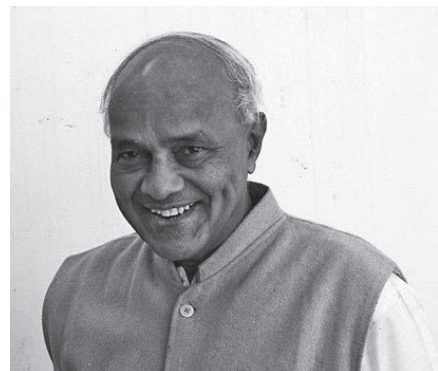
Rosan S9



‘Something is rotten in the State of Denmark’ is a much-quoted verse from Shakespeare (Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark 1: IV). ‘Nothing is wrong with Denmark’ would come as retort if any Dane were present in the audience when citation of the verse had taken place in any public gathering. It did happen! The quote and the retort could be useful to reflect upon the ‘Great Indian Epics’ in the Indian State and “to rediscover their cultural and social relevance in Modern India”.

An Epic is a form of poetry. Poetry has a much-relished role in our life since it plays with our emotions, imagination as well as concepts. These are expressed through various forms like sonnet, odes, lyrics and epics. In all forms of literature what is sought is the ‘*rasa*’ - the relish, taste, flavor, nectar, juice. The relish the reader experiences is what makes a work great and priceless and often recalled.

The Great Indian Epics



T K John SJ

When a society is on the path of break down and disintegration due to decline of values or perceived threats to its identity, glorifying the past events and the heroes, and highlighting heroics to redeem one's culture will be a concern. This is a lesson from history. This perception should guide any re-reading of the Epics.

An epic (*maha kavya*) has a grand theme, generally with several cantos (*sarga*). It places before the reader men and women of great caliber, marked by heroism and eminence. It may deal with exploits of legendary men or women, their heroism and the values they stood for. The hero represents and embodies the values of a certain culture, race, nation, religion. Obviously the reader becomes affected by the epic, which influences the overall bearing. That in its turn influences the society of which the reader is a part. The poetic experience eventually becomes deposited in the collective memory of generations of men and women.

Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Gained*, *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, *Don Quixote* by Miguel Cervantes, are some of the renowned epics. The heroic exploits of Odysseus are available to us through the epics of Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey*. These are well known epics. These are part of world classics.

Ramayana: The 'Ayanam of Rama'

In India we have two great epics (*mahakavya*), namely, Ramayana and Mahabharata. The latter has over 200,000 verses, the longest poem ever written, and the former 24,000 verses, composed probably 5th BCE. It has seven cantos, (*sarga*). Ramayana has been influencing not only individuals but also social life and culture of the Hindu community. In the family of Rama besides the hero, Rama, we have Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrughnan, Nakula and Sahadeva.

The characters in the book Ramayana are held as ideal and inspiring. They radiate lofty values, to which the subjects of the kingdom can look up with admiration and pride. The five members/brothers are depicted as endowed with heroic ideal values. Rama is an ideal son to Maratha, a good ruler for the subjects and to Sita he is a befitting husband. His four brothers find him a true and noble brother. Bharatha his step brother is ruling the kingdom as a deputy in order to help Dasaratha to keep the promise he had made to Kaikeyi. Sita is a faithful wife: she wants to be with Rama in his forest life as a true wife.

Lord Ram has had universal appeal. All-round prosperity and peace are credited to the rule of Rama when he returns and rules. Gandhi had invoked 'Ram Rajya' to counter the foreign rule in India. 'He Ram' was on his mouth when shot dead. The characters in the epic are often models for generations of spouses, sons, and brothers.

If the wail of the Krauncha bird led to creation of an epic, the wail of dalits and other subaltern sections, kicked down by modern 'vamanas', as Jotirao Phule has explained in his *Gulamgiri* (1875), has to rend the hearts of the higher ups in today's social hierarchy.

History tells us that the problem of suffering, aging, and death of human person, born to be happy healthy and living, deeply moved the heart of young *Siddhartha*. Buddhism was born of his brooding over the fate of the humans and the meaning and purpose of life as humans. Rama is the central figure in the great epic Ramayana. The appeal of the original work in Sanskrit was great and generated two more of it: *Tulsi Ramayana* by Kalidasa and *Kampa Ramayana*.

Mahabharata: The Subtle Art of Dharma

The Indian epic Mahabharata deals with two branches of one family of Shantanu and Satyawati. Dhritarashtra is blind, but the grand sire has to see what fate has for Pandavas and Kauravas, involved in the conflict. Family heritage is the central theme. Drona, Duryodhana, Vidura, Karna are among some of the names in the Kaurava family. Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadev are names in the Pandava family. Draupati also called Panchali is their wife.

If the pathos generated by the separation of the loved Krauncha birds created Ramayana, in Mahabharata it is the *greed* for royal throne that brought the two collateral branches of the one family of Shantanu and Satyawati to perilous clash at Kurukshetra. Here too similar pathos is at work. The *mahakavya* portrays the tragic in the human worked out through the conflict between two clans from one grandsire, to rule over the kingdom of Hastinapura. The forces of King Pandu (Pandavas) and of Kauravas under Duryodhana are seen struggling for dominion over the kingdom of Hastinapura. The rightful heirs to the kingdom, Pandavas, are by fraud kept away, which eventually leads to the great war of attrition.

Such struggles for political power are rampant these days of democracy when 'government of the people by the people and for the people', under experimentation in India, is under strain. The phrase '*aya ram gaya ram*' was coined when toppling of government by quitting a particular party and joining another for personal glory (and financial benefit!) has become a regular menace.

Mahakavyas: A Contextual Analysis

Both Ramayana and Mahabharata deal with royalties and dynasties. But, without being overawed 'we the people of India' look at the characters in the two epics as 'people'. The critical mind in us should be sharpened to gaze on all, even on royalties. For when a society is on the path of break down and disintegration due to decline of values or perceived threats to its identity, glorifying the past events and the heroes, and highlighting heroics to redeem one's culture will be a concern. This is a lesson from history. This perception should guide any re-reading of the Epics.

The two epics, Mahabharata by Vyasa and Ramayana by Valmiki, have contributed much to Indian literary heritage. The present day Indian society has many heroes and heroines, but not all are highlighted. Their sorrows and tragedies are abundant but not brought on the stage. The heroes and heroines among dalits and the tribes need to be video-graphed and made available to wider sections, especially those in upper strata of the society and governance.

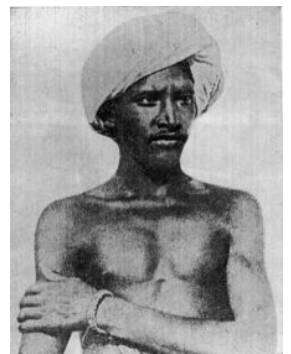
Mahabharata depicts Yuddhishtir, known also as Dharmaputra, as a noble person, a man above others. Yudhishtir consults his brothers, but decisions are by him. He gives due recognition to others. When he presents himself at the court of Virat, easy acceptance is gained because of the evidence of his personality. When Drona is injured, Yudhishtir gives him chance for an honourable retreat. He tries to follow the ethical rules of war expected to be the guide and norm.



Dr. B R Ambedkar



Kumaranasan



Birsa Munda



Shanta Toofani

Such struggles for political power are rampant these days of democracy when 'government of the people by the people and for the people', under experimentation in India, is under strain.

Dr. T K John SJ is a veteran Jesuit theologian belonging to Delhi Province. For many years he was a professor of systematic theology in Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. His areas of interests and specialization are indigenization, contextualization, human rights, dialogue with cultures and religion and countering religious fundamentalism. He has been instrumental in coordinating the efforts of publication of the Dalit Bible commentaries. He has authored and coauthored several books such as *Theologizing in India, Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society, Broken among the Victims: Dalit Presence at the World Social Forum* and published a number of articles in various theological journals.

Arjuna stands out as a noble warrior. His friendship with Krishna gains him wisdom and dharmic aura. He has been very popular among the people, and is considered as an ideal or standard for the age. He respects Drona, his guru, even in battle. When Drona is injured, he also gives him chance for an honourable retreat. But not so with Duryodhana: when he takes to flight, Arjuna chased him with taunts. Bhima's physical prowess is recognized by friends and foes alike. His temper can be hot but he is obedient to Yudhishtira. Physically strong but emotionally tender. Draupadi plays her role well. She is gracious and beautiful even when working as a 'dasi' in the court of Virat during the days of life incognito.

But there has been rock-bottom social change in India. If royalties and nobilities drew the attention of authors those days, it is the excluded—*dalits*—that is the major force for social change today. Poets and social critics from the common run of society are heroes today. Poets like Kumaran Asan and Kabir, social critics like E. V. Ramaswamy alias Periyar, social change makers like Jotirao and Savitribai Phule, and law-makers like Dr. B. R. Amedkar, ethical-moral forces like Gandhi and modern visionaries like Jawaharlal Nehru are leaders of our times and path makers for the future. Leaders like Birsa Munda are stars for the masses of tribal population of India.

From that sector of the new age another epic heroin for our times stands up humbly but fearlessly before us. She is the late 'Shanta Toofani' of a slum in Delhi. Born in a slum, working for people of the slum, gifted with legal acumen, involved in several rights movements, Shanta Devi died a fighter against class-caste structure and as a shining symbol of awakening from below. The title of a book about her is *Life and Times of SHANTA TOOFANI, Story of a Survivor* synthesized by Dimple (Amreen) Oberoi Vahali and Diamond Oberoi Vahali, Published in India by Daanish Books, Delhi, 2009. It is developments in the social sectors to which Shanta Devi belongs that give hope for a future Indian society. For when the deprived and the oppressed know the causes of deprivation, they wake up, organize and try to deal with the causes of deprivation.

Pandavas were subject to many intrigues and foul plays. The game of dice and the episode of the 'lac' palace were frauds of those times. But today there are marathon frauds committed for gains in the market. When the victims become adequately informed of the true nature of the society—its structure, controllers of the resources etc., awakening will commence. Once that takes place they are sure that they are on the way to liberation.

Karl Marx, the modern brooder over society and social structures, saw them as marked by class conflicts, raised before the world the need for kindling consciousness in all to create a just society. He predicted a social revolution as a solution to all forms of inequalities.

KANNAKI



AN ICON OF JUSTICE



Pyari Minj OSF

India is a land adorned with beautiful hills and vallies, plains and mountains and rivers, and it is often personified and deified. It is known for its diversities of religions, cultures, traditions and languages and is lavishly enriched by an abundance of Epics. These epics are the source of ancient India's literature, mainly written in Sanskrit. Epics are poems written from ancient oral traditions of the land. Most of these epics play a major role in the structures of Indian religions, cultures and traditions. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the two well-known epics. Besides these, there are many other ancient writings like Panchatantra, Sangam literature, Kamasutra, Abhijnanasakuntalam, Shishupalavadha, Kiratarjuniya and Cilappatikaram.

Cilappatikaram is the epic which is written not in Sanskrit but in Tamil. It is composed by a Jain monk Ilango Atikal. Seemingly it was written in 5th or 6th century. It consists approximately 5000 verses. This epic is divided into three parts each set in the capital of one of the three Tamil kingdoms, "the Eastern part of Pukar, the capital of the Chola Kingdom; Madurai, the inland capital of the Pandya Kingdom and the capital of Chera kingdom on the west coast"¹. The heroine of this epic is Kannaki, the wife of Kovalan a rich young marchant of the city of Pukar. She is worshipped as a goddess of revenge for justice.

The Woman who Ripped off Her Breasts!

The epic Cilappatikaram tells us the story of loyalty, courage, steadfastness, endurance and love for justice which are the main character traits of the heroine of this epic. Kannaki was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of the city of Pukar. She was given in marriage to a young wealthy merchant of the same city named Kovalan. Initially they seemed to have lived a happy married life for a short period. But soon Kovalan falls in love with Madhavi a temple dancer. He deserts Kannaki and goes to live with this sensual temple dancer. Yet Kannaki remains loyal to her husband, she takes care of her aging in-laws which was Kovalan's duty. She even tries to protect his reputation in the society. On the other hand, unfaithful Kovalan squanders his wealth to please his lover Madhavi and sells all his assets, gold and jewellery. At last he becomes bankrupt and penniless. He returns to his wife Kannaki. She accepts him without any fuss. He realised his mistake; he acknowledges his foolishness of abandoning his wife who never refused to love him and who offered him financial support whenever he needed it. Now that

1 Stuart Blackburn, Phd, *Cilappatikaram (the lay of the anklet)* from Humanities Institute. Pg.1

<http://humanitiesinstitute.org/assets/2720915.CILAPPATIKARAM.pdf> (Accessed Dec 2020)

Kovalan is penniless, Kannaki found a solution even for this. She offers a pair of golden anklet gifted to her by her mother on the day of her marriage. Kovalan refused to accept it but she insists that he sells them and earns money to begin their new life once again. They decided to live in the city of Madurai. In order to reach the city of Madurai they had to make a long journey on foot because they had no money in their hand. However, they were assisted in their journey by the local people especially by several Jain monks. While passing through the crowded city Kovalan meets a goldsmith and makes a deal with him to sell the golden anklet of his wife. But the goldsmith tells Kovalan to wait at his shop because he had to show the anklet to the king of the city and then only he would buy it. In fact, the goldsmith had stolen the anklet of the Queen which was similar to Kannaki's and he wanted to put the blame of theft on Kovalan. So he informs the king that the thief of the queen's anklet is waiting at his shop. The king sends his soldiers to arrest him and bring him to the king. Kovalan pleads his innocence but the King turns a deaf ear to his pleading and he accuses him of theft and later Kovalan is executed.

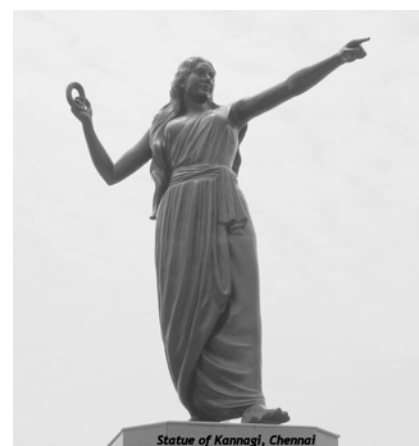


The apotheosis of Kannagi into the elemental force that brings down the city of Madurai.

Kannaki gets the news of her husband's death and rushes to the city. She was enraged! She proves to the king that the anklet which Kovalan had, was not that of the queen, it was hers. Kannaki crushed the anklet to reveal the rubies inside the anklet whereas the anklet of the queen had only pearls inside it. The king realizes his unjust behaviour and dies of grief, and soon the queen also dies. But Kannaki was not satisfied with the death of the king and the queen but she wanted justice for her husband. Her anger burst out when she ripped off one of her breasts and flung it at the city; and the city was in flames. At this time the goddess of the city appears to Kannaki and requested her to calm down. Kannaki then withdraws her curse and the flames consuming the city gets extinguished. Kannaki withdrew herself to the hill in the distant Chera Kingdom and she died there and was lifted up to the heavens to reunite with her husband Kovalan. After the death of Kannaki, the story of her purity, loyalty and righteous anger spread far and wide. The king of Chera kingdom heard about the goddess Kannaki and he was highly impressed. He decided to honour her. For this purpose, he travelled to the distant north India to the mountains of Himalayas to look for a special kind of stone to sculpture her statue. When it got ready he placed the statue in the newly built temple on the hill where she died.

Stand for Justice and Truth- No Matter What!

Kannaki could have killed herself along with her husband in sati but she stayed back to get justice for her unfaithful husband.



The statue of Kannagi at Marina beach, Chennai.



Gauri Lankesh



Adv. Sudha Bhardwaj



Daya Bhai

The main themes of the epic “Cilappatikaram” are justice, revenge, money and loyalty. In this epic the essential nobility of Kannaki shines out. She is not a heroine of unjust wars and laurels. What is outstanding in her is the moral courage, presence of mind, endurance under difficult circumstances and the desire to vindicate her sensual and unfaithful husband. In this epic justice is highly honoured that the king faints and dies feeling guilty of injustice. He did not try to extenuate the circumstances, instead he was overwhelmed by his act of injustice and willed himself to death. Right from the start of the epic till the end we find injustice being vindicated and the denial of justice being challenged. In ancient times kings were considered divine on the basis of truth and justice. “In Tamil the word for palace and temple is same which indicates that kings were expected to stand for truth and justice”², failure to keep truth and justice, will cause suffering to both the king and his kingdom. The epic also tells us the story of a docile wife, a very meek woman, a loving personality but in the end she is shown as very furious and revengeful person who can stand up for truth and justice; in the end she is deified as goddess who is capable of striking down wrong doers.

The Power of Womanhood

Our land is patriarchal and for long time women were discriminated for different reasons. But at present there is a lot of improvement in women’s condition in the society and in the state. Women still continue to face the problems of discrimination and violence mentally, physically and sexually. We still find that women are looked upon as sexual objects by men. The Kannaki story reveals the power of womanhood, woman who is capable of victory; victory over evil forces. Her weapon is not merely her anger and revengeful attitude but the many virtues with which she is well adorned. She is not merely ‘abla’ (helpless, weaker sex) but she is really ‘sabla’ (courageous, strong). She is like a spark of flame which has the power to turn the thick forest into heap of ashes.

The present government and politicians need to ensure justice in the society. Today our country needs many more Kannakis, to be born again to fight against the evil of injustice done to the people especially those who are at the peripheries of the society. There are many Kannaki’s in our country who are behind bars like Sudha Bhardwaj, Stan Swamy and many other human right activists and social workers. There are some who were killed like Rani Maria FCC, Valsa Thomas and Gauri Lankesh. In our fight for justice and truth we should not ignore the power of women. Monumental figures like Kannaki should inspire our dreams and colour our choices.

Can I Ever Be Shikhandi?

“O pitaamahaa....O... Bheeshma.... Look at me... does my gender trouble you so much that you are ready to give away your life, your five generations old valuable life! Does this Shikhandi scare you so much, O great warrior!”

My voice was at its peak. The words from my mouth flowed fiercely as the intensity of drums and cymbals increased. Just as the music shook the entire congregation, my words shook every human and tore open every heart. There lay finally Bheeshma, on the bed of arrows, with his eyes fixed on me and I stood there with majesty for having taken revenge and been the reason for the end of world's finest warrior.

The applause reached the sky as the curtains came down. The praises come from all four corners for the role that I played. I take it all. I start walking back all alone with only but positivity all around.

“What a splendid show macha!!!” said Ramanna.

Sunitha was not far behind in expressing her appreciation, “You blew all our minds away...!!!”

“Oh my...what passion...what poise...what performance Ashwath...!!! No fellow is a match to you...,” said the panchayat leader Mahadevappa.

The young and dashing Sachin too had his opinion to share about me, “You would be making every man fall at your feet if you were a lady in real self.” “Even a lady isn't a competition to you.”



Nithin Machado SJ

NITHIN MACHADO
IS A THIRD YEAR
THEOLOGY STUDENT
FROM KARNATAKA
JESUIT PROVINCE.

I felt more than myself. This was how I always wanted myself to be. This was when I felt I was free, this was when I felt the real me.

The 30 minutes' walk back home was all but appreciation. I reached home. My being was already full; stomach didn't even care for any food after what the being had received. No sooner did I reach home; I was in my bed room.

The pants rolled down and the shirt was taken away. The nighty which I had hidingly robbed from my Ashwini's closet was decorating my body. The hair extension soon followed. The earrings and nose rings were overjoyed to adorn me. The bangles made their way up to me. I felt more than myself. This was how I always wanted myself to be. This was when I felt I was free, this was when I felt the real me.

This was when I felt being Ashwitha and not Ashwath...!!!

"Even a lady isn't a competition to you!" this went on playing in my mind. "All will fall at your feet if you were a lady in real!"

Ofcourse I was on my bed. But my bed seemed like a distant relative. The only thing that felt real to me were the words, "All will fall at your feet if you were a lady in real." These words and the one that uttered these words had totally engulfed me. These words were making me feel freer and they were pushing me to embrace that freedom.

"Ashwitha, where is your energy? Where is your confidence? I asked myself as I thought of embracing for once my real self after such a long battle. I gathered all strength as I rolled towards my phone. The call log signaled it to me as to whom I wanted to talk to. But today this call was taking an eternity of time. Finally, I gather myself and let myself fly to experience this moment of freedom, to experience this moment to be the real me. I call him.

"Kuch naa kaho, kuch bhi na kaho..."

The phone was ringing and I wanted to let Sachin know how much this Ashwitha loved him.

Hello Ashwath, what news? came the voice.

Hi Sachin...I am not Ashwath, I am Ashwitha. I love you!

Beep beep beep...
I lay there, heart-broken.



'Rule of the Dice'

An art inspired by the life of Draupadi. The roll of dice is still deciding the lives of millions across the globe.



ART BY FRANCIS LOBO SJ, THIRD YEAR THEOLOGY STUDENT FROM PUNE JESUIT PROVINCE.





DRAUPADI

A SYMBOL OF FEMINISM



Anush Prasad D'Cunha SJ

There are many women characters in the Indian epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata. Draupadi is one who in all her unenviable situations of life, stood firm and proved in her a tough woman. Draupadi is an unsung heroine in the epic Mahabharata. It is her ability to overcome adversity in a venerable manner that sets her apart from other women. Reading the life of Draupadi from a feminist perspective enables us to empower the plight of women in our country. We have been witnessing a lot of atrocities against women and girl children. Draupadi could be regarded as one of the many women who overcame one's suffering in a bold manner and perhaps women of today could learn something from her in order to overcome and manage hardships and difficulties with a spirit of never to give up attitude.

Draupadi within the Patriarchal Context

Strangely, in the epics, women characters have not been given a platform to exist independently. These women are only brought to the fore when they concede with the lives of male heroes, ultimately rendering their roles as subservient to those of their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. In this context, Draupadi can be seen as an unsung heroine of the epics.

A fact that makes us much disturbed is that Draupadi was a wife of five husbands. While on the one hand, we can find the male hegemony in terms of dealings of men with Draupadi on the other, Draupadi had to undergo horrific experiences under such patriarchal society. Karna for instance, publicly called Draupadi a whore for being a wife of five men (Mahabharata, Sabha Parv Chapter 61). Despite all these horrific experiences, Draupadi never deterred as an individual from the harsh treatment she received from her male counterparts. She became stronger and resilient in her approach to life. She continued to display her individuality, strength and unyielding determination for both justice and vengeance, thus becoming an empowering character.

Women as Possession of Men

When the five brothers (Pandavas) arrived at the household, they asked their mother to come and see what they had brought from their outing. The mother without knowing the episode instructed the brothers to share amongst them equally. There was no doubt that there seemed to be total ownership over Draupadi as a daughter-in-law, a wife and a mother.

Reading the Indian epics from the perspective of the less privileged broadens our horizons in understanding their struggles.

Draupadi did not have a say in the whole saga simply because she was viewed as a possession. Hence the sons did not see the need to tell their mother that this time they had brought a woman and not the alms. Consequently, Draupadi became a possession of five men even though she had chosen her real husband during the swayamvara.

Motherhood of Draupadi

Motherhood defines a woman in Indian culture. A woman is recognized and accepted by the family and community once she gives birth to a child. In India there is still an emphasis on producing an heir who is a boy, for various reasons: for example, to keep the family name alive, to perform ritual during his father's cremation to mention, to name but a few. This explains why Draupadi in the midst of her suffering decides to stay in the marriage rather than go back to her natal home. This is partly because she did not want to shame her natal family by returning, and most importantly she wanted to be with her five sons and raise them instead of abandoning them. In other words, she had to forgo her freedom for the sake of raising her children.

Humiliations and Shame

The humiliation, the pain and the shame that Draupadi had to undergo during her stay in the marriage was beyond comprehension. The highlight of this unacceptable and atrocious treatment came at a time when she was dragged to the royal court by her hair and disrobed. She was subject to horrific indignity, being ogled at while wearing a garment stained with her menstrual blood. She was disrobed in front of a group of men. (Mahabharata Sabha Parva Chapter 67)

War of Justice and Resistance

Draupadi had to undergo many humiliating experiences. Knowing that she was at the mercy of the men in the court and seeing that her husbands were not going to rescue her, she called on Krishna to intervene. The humiliation was the worse of its kind but she did not curse the men who are fascinated in seeing her naked clad body. She called Krishna to rescue her. This was an interesting twist of events because Krishna came to her rescue and her honour and dignity was restored.

Conclusion

Reading the Indian epics from the perspective of the less privileged broadens our horizons in understanding their struggles. Draupadi can be viewed as subversive character who emerges a victor. In the recent past we have witnessed many atrocities against women. Hatra incident has really shocked us. There have been many more such inhuman incidents in our country. From the Indian epic, here is an example for all women. In the midst of the humiliation, torture, suffering and abuse, Draupadi found strength in herself to fight the injustices meted out to her by cruel males in a male-dominated society.

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Forest Exile

Journey to Spiritual Maturity



Nilesh Tigga SJ

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. And in both the epics we see forest exile, which becomes a spiritual journey for them. It plays a significant role whereby they grow in knowledge and wisdom and in skills to defeat the evil. Moreover, the spiritual power is enhanced in them, which is the results of their constant prayer, meditation, yoga and the guidance

The exile was not a pointless sojourn. But it was a journey of self-discovery. The reasons for their exile appear to be unfair in both cases. Yet the exile in the forest was a journey of self discovery and the heroes emerged from it strengthened.

of the sages, with whom they lived in the course of their exile. They used to discuss the various moral aspects of life with sages and with which they were illumined spiritually and intellectually.

In Ramayana, during the exile Ram, Laxman, and Sita passed their time in prayer, recitation and repetition of Lord's name. They lived a very simple and austere life, far away from the luxurious life they lived in the palace. Everyone was very happy and contented. Thoughts of dissatisfaction, inconvenience, and longing for palace life never entered their mind anymore. They manifested a very high degree of detachment from attractions to worldly desires.

In Mahabharata also the exile was not a pointless sojourn. But it was a journey of self-discovery. During their exile they earned divine merit and blessings of the sages. They also nurtured their anger towards adharma. They became more powerful and they received divine weapons from by Lord Shiva himself. The Sun God also blessed them with a special vessel. They waged war against mighty demons the Kauravas and won victory over them. Most importantly, they repented for their acts of adharma. During their year long Agyatavas, they lived as the servants of king Virat during which they learned humility and simplicity of life.

However, this exile was plotted against them to divest them of their power and possession but it turned out as a source for acquiring divine power, which further enabled them to regain their power and possessions. Ramayana depicts the values of truthfulness, morality and nobility as supreme ideals of life. Similarly, the Mahabharata describes the virtues of valor necessary for living in a crooked world as well as the need for cultivating higher ideals of truthfulness and righteousness.

The heroes of both epics face exile in the forest. The reasons for their exile appear to be unfair in both cases. The life in the forest was difficult and they fought against many dangers with patience and divine support. Therefore, the exile in the forest was a journey of self discovery and the heroes emerged from it strengthened, mainly because of the time they spent in the company of the hermits.

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Every culture impacts a person's worldview. This in turn colors the understanding of the reality of the world around. Therefore, it helps us to realize the ultimate meaning of human existence in a unique way. Investigating deeply into the literature and the Epics, we find that the worldviews are colored by the beliefs and traditions found in these literary works. One such great Indian epic is Valmiki's '*Ramayana*.' There are many versions of his work in various cultures. There is a Bengali version of it by Krittivas Ojha, known as '*Sri Ram Panchali*.' It was composed around fifteenth Century, a time marked by the growth of the bhakti movement in Bengal.

Compared to Valmiki's emphasis on the utopian ideal man, Krittivas vividly depicted the Rama of the society and culture of Bengal. This was because Bengal culturally remained free from the Vedic dominance. Krittivas gave less prominence to the dogmatic aspects and the Varna system and described in a picturesque way the depth of ancient Bengal's socio-cultural life. For instance, in his work, it is found in the '*Lankakanda*' section that all the demons paid great devotion to Rama, including Ravana. Their aratis and bhajans melted Rama's heart and he did not want to hurt his devotees. Eventually, Narada appeared and suggested to him to perform the '*Akal Bodhan*,' or the untimely worship of goddess Durga to defeat Ravana. Urged by Narada, Rama pays his devotion to the goddess and gets the boon to destroy Ravana. Again, the dangerous battlefield is contrarily portrayed as a place of prayer and worship. Besides this, Krittivas has specifically brought out the painful emotions of each character in an effective manner. For instance, the episode of the death of Dasharath, the grief of Bharat in meeting with Rama at Chitrakut, Agnipariksha, Vanavas of Sita, Patal-pravesh, all these tragic experiences are pretty much close to people's heart. Hence, Krittivas reminds us that pain and misery are part of human life and that Rama can help us face them courageously. In other words, the essence of bhakti blossoms in his writings.

Therefore, we can say that Krittivas' '*Sri Ram Panchali*' overcame the traditional mythological-religious values and instead brought out a wonderful amalgamation of various emotional-religio-cultural aspects. The text became a source of bhakti which in the future aided the Vaishnava bhakti movement in the Gangetic parts of Bengal. This movement had an enormous impact in the ethos and intellectual mindset of the people of Bengal. The epic also left a deep and lasting impact in the future Bengali literature as well. In conclusion, it can be said '*Sri Ram Panchali*' is an Eternal Epic of Bengal.



Sri Ram Panchali

Bengal's Eternal Epic



Sagar Tudu SJ

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gandhari

Recently I listened to a lecture by Dr. Sunil P Ilayidom, a critic and a writer, about the Mahabharat. In this he speaks about the differences between the Mahabharat and the Bhagavad Gita. According to him, one of the differences is that in the Gita there are only men but in the Mahabharat, there are women with their singular struggles and agonies... In this article I would like to look at the present world through the character of Gandhari, the wife of Dhritrashtra and the mother of the Kauravas in the Mahabharat.

A Brief Glimpse of Her Life

Gandhari was the daughter of Subala, the king of Gandara. Bhishma, the 8th son of King Shantanu, arranged her marriage with his great grandson, Dhritrashtra, then the prince of the Kuru Kingdom. However, Bhishma concealed the fact that her spouse was blind. Only after the marriage rites were completed, did she come to know that her husband was blind. She *voluntarily* had her eyes blindfolded and remained blindfolded for the rest of her life. She gave birth to a hundred and one children: hundred sons and a daughter. She even refused to remove the blindfold to



Jobin Sebastian SJ

Is the Gandhari who lives within us is the Gandhari who blindfolds her eyes so that she gives her life for the well being of the humanity or she blindfolds just not to see the humanity's struggles and sufferings?

look at her children. However, she made an exception. On the eve of the last day of the war of Kurukshetra, she opened her blindfold and poured out her whole power into her eldest son, Duryodhana. Fifteen years after the Kurukshetra War, Gandhari, along with her husband Dhritarashtra, her brother-in-law, Vidur and sister-in-law, Kunti, left Hastinapur and settled near the Himalayas. She died there in a forest fire.

Voluntary Blindfold

The voluntary blindfold of Gandhari can be taken in two ways:

- 1) First, we can see it as an action of a faithful and dedicated wife. She had her eyes blindfolded since her spouse was blind. She denied herself the pleasures that her husband could not enjoy. It could be seen as a noble way of being one with the suffering, the needy especially sacrifices made for one's near and dear ones. In our present context Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ, is a stunning example of one who volunteers to blindfold himself to render self-less service to the tribal people of Chotanagpur and to raise his voice in defence of their inherent right to "*jal, jameen aur jungle*".
- 2) Secondly, we can see Gandhari's act of blindfolding herself voluntarily as a protest to the way in which she was cheated by Bhishma, withholding the information that her husband-to-be was blind. In this sense she was protesting against the unfair Bhishma treated her. In "choosing to be or not to be", she chose 'not to be'. Often a protest is a difficult matter to understand. In history we see that in order to get something, people are ready to lose something else. At present in Delhi, we see Farmers protesting against the Farm Bills. They have left their fields and have been camping for the past three months around Delhi, hundreds of kilometres away from their own villages, enduring both cold and rain. Every protest is a demand for the rights and dignity which is a person's birth right. In the case of the farmers in Delhi, the protest is against the denial of their right to be consulted when making a law for them.

Conclusion

Gandhari in the story of the Mahabharata dies in the forest fire. However, the Gandhari, who lives within us need to be questioned: "Is the Gandhari who lives within us is the Gandhari who blindfolds her eyes so that she gives her life for the well being of the humanity or she blindfolds just not to see the humanity's struggles and sufferings?" Let us introspect into our innermost self and become aware that, there is a need for us to be passionate about our religious commitment, to stick our neck on the chopping block, to become estranged and vulnerable in the likeness of our Saviour for the sake of our fellow Indians who are going through the most excruciating desert experience, with very few raising their voices for them in the right places.

The Tale of Two Temples



Rosan Roy SJ
Jibu Varghese

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It was during my novitiate days that I came across the life of a legendary Jesuit brother, Benedict Goës, who had travelled a lot in the Central Asia, searching for the enchanted Christendom of Prester John. Disguised as an Armanean merchant calling himself Abdula, he travelled from Europe to Asia by land, rediscovering the lost Silk Route and thus becoming the first documented European to travel from Europe to India by land. Upon his arrival at the Mughal court and joining the Jesuit Mission to Akbar's court, a Muslim merchant from Kashgar brought reports regarding China and the Jesuit mission that was already there. Although they seemed to have been somewhat puzzled by the geography, the Jesuits in Agra concluded that this was the same country described by Marco Polo, perhaps this was the long-sought out kingdom of the legendary Christian ruler Prester John. Benedict Goës thus was chosen (partly because of his knowledge of Persian) to travel on an exploratory mission to China via Kashgar. He died before reaching Beijing; what survived of his notes and letters and some oral accounts were later (1615) compiled by the famous Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci into a journal.

Why do I start this travelogue on tracing the roots of Kannagi in Kerala with a bizarre and absolutely irrelevant information? It is because Goës was playing in my mind when I set off on a three-day journey to seek out the roots of Kannagi in Kerala.

Two of us, Jibu Varghese of Verapoly diocese and myself, started our journey on a vintage RE Bullet 350 from a small town called Aluva, 14 kilometers north of Ernakulam. Our first destination was Kodungallur Bagavathy temple and the adjoining historical township of Musiris. Although our initial interest was to visit the temple in which Kannagi was worshipped as Devi, I didn't know that I was in fact setting off on a journey to my own roots as a Jesuit and as a Christian!

There is something spiritual and mysterious about the town, Kodungallur. Is it perhaps because of its historical importance? The town was once a maritime port of international reputation because of its strategic location, at the confluence of the Periyar River and the Arabian Sea. Kodungallur was a gateway to the ancient India, because of its status as a centre for trade. It was also the starting point of two major religions in India - Christianity and Islam. It was called Muziris by the Greek and is the place where St. Thomas first preached Christianity in India. Cheraman Juma Masjid, the first mosque in India (629 CE) is situated here.

Our first destination was the Bagavathy temple. The temple is dedicated to the Mother Goddess, facing the north direction. The temple is officially known as Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi temple. The idol of the Goddess is carved out of jackfruit wood and measures seven feet in height. The goddess here can be seen with eight arms holding different weapons in each hand.

The temple is the place where Kannaki, the heroine of Ilango Adigal's Tamil classical Cilappathikaram attained salvation.

It makes no sense, why Kannagi would have chosen Kodungallur as her final resting place? She in fact comes from Puzhal, another maritime city of historical importance on the Eastern side of Indian subcontinent. Her husband Kovalan was a trader at the port before he became bankrupt. She being the daughter of a maritime merchant, was at home in a prosperous city like Kodungallur where merchants from Greece, Rome, Arabia and China were frequent visitors. Although the epic explains her vanaprastha in the Chera Kingdom leading a life of exile and renunciation, I try to see it as her journey back to her childhood which makes perfect sense!

We reached the temple around noon. Naturally the temple was closed so we couldn't get inside. The first item that caught our attention was a rock carving right outside the temple's outer wall. We couldn't fully figure out whether it was a sacred stone or a piece of art. Despite the Pandemic restrictions, there were a lot of devotees sitting leisurely at the althara (platforms around the several ancient banyan trees in the campus). Some were praying, some perhaps meditating or sleeping, some were having food and a few were just observing what was happening around. We went around the temple's outer walls to capture the events taking place. Perhaps our casual nature and timidity at the temple premises caught the attention of two people. The first was an elderly man who offered us the Prasada. The second was an elderly lady. She happened to be a fortune teller. She approached me saying, "although you gave up your education very early, I tell you, you are a resilient man!". Well, she was trying to make me interested to let her tell my future. She greeted me saying, "Well, young man, your life seems to be flowing smoothly now, however, there is a danger lurking round the corner". Naturally I was curious to know what it was, so she bargained for 500 bucks to tell my fortune, eventually agreeing for 50. Getting to know one's fortune for 50 bucks indeed seemed a fair deal to me. She assured me that the blessings of Bagavathy will ward off an impending danger to my life from a certain evil man called "Babu". With that note of assurance, we set off to other sites of Kodungallur.

Our next destination, after having completed visiting the Juma Masjid, St. Thomas Church, Ambazhakkad (Sambaloor) Jesuit sites and township of Musiris, was Kumili, the eastern point of Kerala bordering Tamil Nadu in Idukki district. It is around 200 kilometres away from Kodungallur. It is at Kumili the famous Mangala Devi temple is situated. Since it was a long journey, passing by some other important destinations like Athirappilli Water falls, Ilaveezhaponchira and Malankara Dam, we planned to reach Kumili by the next day evening. Our visit to Sambaloor Jesuit sites requires a detailed explanation, perhaps we could do that in another issue.

The eastward journey in Kerala changes the geography drastically. We were climbing from sea level to almost 3000 ft. of the western hill



Bhagavathy Temple, Kodungallur



Bhagavathy Temple Premises



St. Thomas Church, Kodungallur



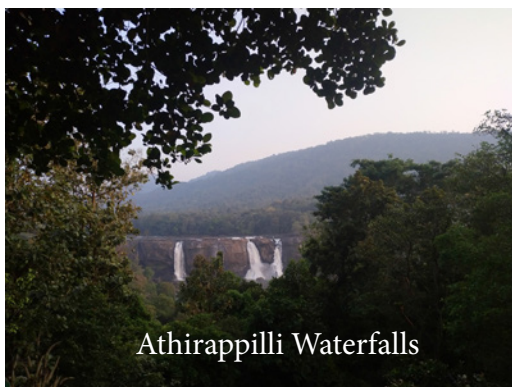
Cheraman Juma Masjid

View of 'Tamizhagam' from Ramakkalmedu viewpoint.



View of Malankara dam from Ilaveezhaponchira





Athirappilli Waterfalls

stations. Culturally we were travelling from a fishing land to the land of cardamom estates and linguistically from Malayalam to Tamil. We passed through three distinct geographical areas during this journey: the coastland, the midlands and the high ranges. We marvelled at the beauty of the hills and valleys as we wound our way up to the high ranges!

When Kodungallur offered us the fragrance of turmeric and fish, Kumili welcomed us with the intoxicating aroma of cardamom. Zig-zag roads through the cardamom estates is worth a treat to the five senses. Kodungallur of ancient days became a world trade centre because of the aroma of the hill stations of Idukki, known as the land of spices.



Kannagi Para, Ramakkalmedu

We couldn't visit Mangaladevi temple as it was deep inside the forest and it was within the Periyar Tiger reserve, a forbidden area for visitors without permit. We also needed to travel through areas under dispute between TN and Kerala and go through cumbersome bureaucratic hassels.

Cheran Chenguttuvan, the king of ancient Cheras, had erected the temple for Kannagi roughly 2000 years back at Vannathiparai and he called it 'Kannagi Kottam' or 'Mangaladevi Kannagi temple' and performed regular pujas there. It sits at an altitude of about 1,337 m (4,386 ft) above the sea level. It is surrounded by lush greenery and is closed throughout the year except during the Chitra Pournami festival. The view from the temple premises is spectacular and one can see part of Kodai ranges and some villages from the adjacent state of Tamil Nadu. People believe that it is from this point Kannagi had her final adieu to Pandya Kingdom before setting out to Kodungallur.



Paddy fields in Thamizhagam

We were not completely disappointed because someone told us about a small 'pratishta'- called 'Kannagi Para', near Ramakkalmedu. We reached there in the evening. There is a small stone placed on the top of a rocky hill with a place to keep 'chirat'. We realised that Kannagi cult is still very much alive among the hill people as there are a number of smaller 'kavus'(groves) and temples dedicated to her in the different part of the hill country. I believe that the moral stature of this woman provides a solace to the toiling generations of the hill country.



Cardomom Plant

We had a final glance to 'Tamilagam' from Ramakkalmedu view point. One can get a breath-taking panoramic view of acres of green paddy fields, distant villages and towns, several hillocks and narrow streams. Though Kannagi had cursed the land, she would have changed her mind and blessed it because of its exquisite beauty, even without the command of Goddess Meenakshi to remove the curse. *The simple and hard lives of the farmers and their oxen sweating away at the paddy fields, toiling to feed the entire world, against all the odds of nature (for this region lies in the rain shadow) and the exploitation of the rulers, would have evoked the benevolent womanhood within her!*



LOVE OF SHURPANAKHA



Kiran Kodiganti SJ

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'Love' is a familiar and beautiful word that is understood in differently in different contexts. There are good many love stories depicted in the Puranas. There are stories of love of the parents, siblings, friends and between young men and women. These narrations of love between young men and women have great impact on the society. Each love story has got some message to convey. Shurpanakha's love for Rama is also one of the narratives of love which we come across in the Ramayana. This part of the narration receives the least attention in the Epic. Shurpanakha is the actual cornerstone of the Epic, Ramayana. She falls for the beauty of Rama and finds rejected and insulted by his brother Laxmana who disfigures her. As a consequence, she instigates Ravana, her brother against Rama. This incident in the story of Ramayana is the cause for the mighty war between Rama and Ravana. Today the life story of Shurpanakha is available in the different versions of the Indian mythologies. Various dimensions are highlighted in each version. There are many lessons that can be drawn from the love story of Shurpanakha.

Shurpanakha is a virtuous woman of great humility, boldness and courage. She had the spontaneity to express her feelings for Rama and Laxmana. Though she was a Princess, she was humble enough to approach and propose her love to an ordinary man leaving her possessions and wealth. There is a saying, "the bearer knows the weight" and that is the condition of Shurpanakha. She undergoes her pain and agony of life all by herself. Unless we get into the heart of Shurpanakha, we will not experience her pathetic plight.

An irreplaceable damage is done to Shurpanakha for expressing her love towards Rama and Laxmana. She was miserably humiliated by them, who broke her heart completely by cutting off her nose and breasts. This injustice was done to her. It should alarm and warn us about all sorts of injustices done to women of our time. Shurpanakha's love in the story represents the goodness in every creature created by God and also teaches us that goodness should never be exploited or destroyed. Gabriel Bell, an atheist and a prolific writer says, "Love can easily become corrupted, twisted and so turn into something evil". We see this happening in the life of Shurpanakha. Being rejected by the lover whom she loved ardently, her mind turns destructive, boiling with jealousy, vengeance and anger and manipulating her brother to go to war against Rama.

For every generation, the episode of Shurpanakha in the Ramayana is a great lesson to acknowledge the goodness in others despite various weaknesses and sins. Shurpanakha is, therefore, an important person in the Epic, and she is "present" within each one of us cautioning us against giving vent to our destructive emotions and acting undiscerningly.

Formation feature

OUR VISION & OUR DREAM



I desire that every scholastic strives to become a good human being—loving, compassionate, free, creative, honest, joyous, courageous, balanced and integrated person.

Arjen Tete SJ



I believe that we are all multiple personalities in a healthy sense: Everybody is like all the others, because s/he is a member of the human race; Everybody is like some others, because s/he belongs to a culture; Everybody is like no others, because s/he is unique.

Edward Mudavassery SJ



The best way to express your gratitude is to work hard to develop your talents for the greater glory of God and better service of our brothers and sisters.

Job Kozhamthadam SJ

DNCTimes would like to congratulate our dear professor Fr. Arjen Tete on his becoming the new Conference Delegate for Formation (CDF). We wish him all the best for the various endeavors he is going to undertake as CDF.

We thank our dear Rector, Fr. Edward Mudavasserry SJ, for all his support and encouragement to DNCTimes in the past years.

We congratulate Sch. Royal Saldanha SJ, the new Editor of DNC Times and his team. We pray that the new team may take the publication to newer heights. (Sch. Royal Vinod Saldanha is a final year theology student from Kohima Jesuit Region.)

From the Desk of CDF

Since GC 36 the Society has been calling for radical renewal of our apostolic life. In our world infected with hostility, all our ministries ought to seek to build bridges, to foster peace, and to promote hospitality to create a reconciled and peaceful family according to the dream of God. Heeding this call to renewal, we Jesuits have received a well-discerned Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) and a Conference Apostolic Preferences (CAPs) documents. What sort of formation we need to make a qualitative difference in our apostolic engagements?

Formation is primarily meant to mould the formees to love and to serve. We Jesuits know who we are by looking at Jesus. In the Gospels we see Jesus who is supremely free and loving. His personal freedom empowered him to identify with the marginalized and confront the powerful. The main agent of formation is the formee. I desire that every scholastic strives to become a good human being—loving, compassionate, free, creative, honest, joyous, courageous, balanced and integrated person. Personal issues that aren't dealt with in a healthy way can and often do come back later in life and ministry to cause problems for us and others.

Our formation is not intended to prepare “good Jesuits” to keep the works of the provinces running. We cannot remain satisfied with the *status quo* of our ministries. Our world has been going through tremendous turmoil. We cannot seek to be complacent, content, safe and secure. I wish that scholastics open their eyes and ears, and above all their hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are but anguished and unsettled by the challenges of the time.

Jesuits ought to be men of spiritual and intellectual depth, learned men who are well prepared and articulate, who can move beyond the surface of things into deeper meanings. Since Jesuit formation gives ample opportunities for prayer and reflection, study and research, I envisage that scholastics learn well and prepare themselves to think creatively, constructively and critically to answer the questions that people actually have.

The STAN-event has been producing some courageous responses of solidarity from scholastics who dare to take a Stand-with-Stan. Their bold efforts are certainly commendable. But, we cannot have solidarity staying in a citadel. I wish that the Spirit of God rouses us to lift up our voices and say: “I-want-to-be-Stan.” I dream that we all embrace Jesus' extraordinary freedom, revolutionary love and unwavering fidelity as Stan did, and work together as companions in the mission of reconciliation and justice.



Arjen Tete SJ

Very soon I will be bidding farewell to DNC Community where I spent 6 happy years of service. It is said: *“Leadership is primarily about people. It is a mission not a promotion. Within the Society, titles of merit do not exist. When commitment to a service is terminated, it is over. This helps avoiding commitments becoming a personal affair”*. Moreover, *“there are four profiles of a leader: the charismatic who leads through the capacity of personality; the intuitive, who points to the future; the executive who excels in implementation, the caring who takes care of his subjects. Ignatian leadership is a combination of all four, even if all these elements are rarely found in one person.”* (From Euro-Mediterranean News ,28 Jan 2021)

I also believe that we are all multiple personalities in a healthy sense: Everybody is like ALL the others, because s/he is a member of the human race; Everybody is like SOME others, because s/he belongs to a culture; Everybody is like NO others, because s/he is unique. One time or other these aspects have come to the fore and receded in my life too.

I was a stranger to DNC because I have never lived in DNC or Pune. For the fist timers, DNC is a big establishment in several ways, its façade looks like an imposing heritage building and on the inside there are very long corridors and the campus is spacious and the community too is very large, (perhaps the biggest Jesuit formation community of the SJ) and therefore it stands out for the onlooker. Going back into its history, it is the oldest institution in the campus; the grey imposing building will bear witness to that. It has been also instrumental in inviting several other religious communities and the Christ the King Parish into its campus. It has generously donated its land for the expansion of JD. Together with the Papal Seminary this conglomerate of Institutions, resources and personnel can be compared to a modern Titanic, encompassing all these within its belly! Though the life within was a beehive of activities, this gigantic enterprise seemed sailing safely close to the shore. But a ship is meant for the ocean, not to be sailing in the shallow waters near the shore.

All of a sudden out of the blue a little virus appeared from nowhere and disrupted the cozy life of the whole world and of us too. Everything was shutting down, everyone was ordered indoors, traffic and production centers went silent, and there was an eerie feeling and shock. On the other hand, animals were now venturing out into the human habitations and the pollution levels were coming down, the skies were becoming clearer and once again bright stars were sparkling in the sky. Simultaneously, we were also witnessing the great divide in our society and the limitations of our achievements. Our scientific and technological progress had no answers to the pandemic and the pandemic refugees in millions. Side by side we could see, in spite of the



PARTING SHOT!



**Edward
Mudavassery SJ**
Rector

Some people are built to serve the world. Others want to serve the twenty-five closest people to them. But in either case, humans are built to serve. If you're not happy right now, it's because you're not serving enough people, or you're not serving the people in your life deeply enough. But whom do you serve? How do you serve?

risks to their lives, medical personnel, the corona warriors, volunteers etc. venturing out into the open to offer a helping hand and succor to the needy, the sick and the helpless. One could also see the misgovernance and heartlessness of the powers that be, making political and communal capital out of this great disruption.

It took us a little while to sit up and think, how to cope with this situation. The first thought was to chip in to help the needy and to network locally with the administration. The Jesuit conference too was getting organized both with relief and advocacy.

Soon our attention was turned to our life and our mission at DNC. Except for the staff members, all the students had gone back to their respective provinces. Pretty soon everyone realized the importance of technology to reach out and to communicate with the students and the people spread far and wide. A new culture was setting in among us of participating in webinars and zoom meetings. People took many new and creative initiatives to overcome the barriers and obstacles created by the pandemic. JD's decision to keep intact the schedules of the faculties was a great challenge for both the staff and the students. With the available gadgets, online classes and courses were offered and the students participated in the regular programs of the Jnana Deepa without losing any time. Gradually both the staff and the students acquired new methods of teaching and learning, creating quizzes, Q&R sessions, PPs and Projects and presentations as integral parts of the classes. The students and the staff had to work harder and participate more in the process of teaching and learning and hopefully, this will continue even after the students come back to the classes. The staff too started realizing that their knowledge and wisdom can now be shared beyond the confines of JD even to the 'ends of the earth'! The Titanic has started to sail into the deep waters!

Here are some excerpts from Evan Carmichael, "**Built to Serve: Find Your Purpose and Become the Leader You Were Born to Be**", which made me think about the future of our education and formation. He writes, "*For generations, we have turned to our parents and grandparents for advice. We could depend on them to know the answers and steer us in the right direction. But in the past two decades, the world has transformed completely. The rules people lived by no longer apply. The opportunities open to you were not available when your parents were your age. Staying in the job you got out of college until you retire doesn't make sense anymore. Technology has changed how we live, buy, work, and even raise families. Generations of people are looking for answers...*"

He continues, "*Some people are built to serve the world. Others want to serve the twenty-five closest people to them. But in either case, humans are built to serve. If you're not happy right now, it's because you're not serving enough people, or you're not serving the people in your life deeply enough. But whom do you serve? How do you serve?*" Do these quotes challenge us in our way of proceeding and our methods of formation? May be our Universal Apostolic Preferences will help us to sort this out and fulfill the Lord's command to go out and preach the Good News to every creature, immersing them in the unconditional love of the Holy Trinity! We are in for a Great Re-Set!

4. As a scientist how do you perceive the pandemic situation wherein the faith in the divine seems to decline and science incessantly tries to find a way out? How can we strike a balance and dialogue between science and religion?

This question seems to presuppose a tussle between the divine and science. In a static worldview with its belief that work is a punishment imposed on humans there can be such a tussle. But, if we subscribe to the dynamic worldview, work becomes a privilege to collaborate with God in the ongoing process of perfecting our imperfect world. According to this new view, with the arrival of humans, divine action has adopted a new strategy to bring about progress in the universe and solve the problems that come up in the world. God takes humans not so much as mere creatures as collaborators in His ongoing process of creation. Science, technology and related developments assist humans to carry out this collaboration more effectively. God through the collaboration of humans is trying to deal with challenging situations like Covid-19. For me this is the true meaning of the scriptural statement that humans have been created in the image and likeness of God. Humans are unique from this perspective. I have no doubt that a vaccine or an effective medical treatment for this pandemic will be developed by the middle of 2021. In this process humans, using their God-given talents, are collaborating with God. It is true that atheistic-minded scientists pit God against science. For me this is small thinking, because I could ask these scientists: who gave you the scientific talents? Are they self-produced? Someone has gifted you with it, and believers hold that God is the giver of this special talent.

5. In the context of covid-19 pandemic crisis, how do you foresee the future of scientific research?

History tells us that Covid-19 is not anything unique. All through history such challenges were facing humanity. In the past plagues and similar problems used to wipe out substantial sections of the human population. Today, thanks to the media and other ways of communication much publicity is given to this pandemic. When I was a little boy some 70 years ago small pox and TB were considered incurable diseases, and all were frightened of them. Today that is not at all the case. I expect the same to happen in the case of Covid-19. These kinds of pandemics are opportunities given to humans to learn better self-control and self-restraint. It reminds them of their limitedness and limitations. For science they give an opportunity to widen the horizon of their study and deepen the level of their research.



INTERVIEW

WITH

FATHER

JOB

KOZHAMTHADAM

Prepared by:

Dasan Bernard SJ
(SECOND YEAR
THEOLOGY
STUDENT FROM
ANDHRA
PROVINCE)



6. How can we widen the horizons of the scientific researches in our country and reach equals to the standards of many developed countries?

By God's special grace I have had the privilege of visiting and interacting with people of almost 35 nations. All over these countries it is accepted that Indians are very intelligent and gifted persons. Many Indians do outstanding work in foreign countries. But within India, it is a completely different story. Somehow within India our work-ethic leaves much to be desired. We seem to follow the easy way out – we follow the wrong principle of “minimum input, maximum output.” Because of this we still remain very much dependent on other nations, particularly western nations, for innovation and creativity in the field of science and technology. We need to change our work-ethic. We need to realize that there is no substitute for hard work if we want lasting success.

7. What prompted you to take up science –religion dialogue?

From my high school days onwards it dawned on me that both genuine science and true religion are special gifts of God to humans. The more I study science, the more I become aware that science is a source of tremendous capabilities and possibilities. The same I found in the case of religion too. Since I am a person who believes in progress, I came to realize that the best way to achieve progress is to learn to pool the rich resources of both science and of religion to build up a better humanity and a better world. My life experience of almost 75 years has convinced me that I am on the right track.

8. How do you assess the Jesuit involvement in Science in India today?

Jesuit involvement in science has been very strong and fruitful all through the history of Jesuits in India. Jesuits made substantial contributions to science in India before its Suppression. After the Restoration of the Society also this great tradition continued. Today Indian Jesuits run several research centres, particularly in the Southern Provinces of Madurai, Chennai, and Karnataka. In the northern part of India in Mumbai and Ahmedabad very valuable scientific work is going on. Most of our Jesuit colleges have research centres attached to them. Much more can and should be done in this area.

9. Being a Jesuit scientist for a long span of your life, what is your message to young religious especially to the Jesuits who aspire to become scientists?

To my younger brothers my plea is that, if God has given you talent to do science, develop it to the best of your ability. It is a very special gift – be happy and grateful to God for this special gift. The best way to express your gratitude is to work hard to develop it for the greater glory of God and better service of our brothers and sisters. It will require a lot of sacrifice and hard work; but it is worth it. As I mentioned earlier, a Jesuit-scientist is, in some ways, a fuller priest since he has the privilege to be the minister of both the Book of Scripture and of Nature.

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We, the Tamils celebrated Pongal along with the community members of DNC. The day was well begun with a Solemn Eucharistic Celebration by Fr. Selva Rathinam. The concelebrants were Frs. Edward and Patrick Arockiraj. Pongal means to overflow. The time when humankind's love for nature and nature's love for humankind overflow—that is Pongal. The breakfast and lunch were prepared by the Tamil scholastics according to the Tamil cuisine. Sweet pongal was in the limelight. Before the lunch, there was a very short cultural parai dance by our philosophers and it was followed by a delicious and sumptuous meal. Tying mango leaves, eating sugarcane, wearing dhotis, and wishing Pongalo pongal were the unique features of the celebration.

- Sch. Emmanuel Akilan (MDU)
I Year Philosopher





Diaconate Ordination

14 February 2021 will be remembered highly besides Valentine's Day. This will be an important day especially for 13 of our Jesuit brothers as they got ordained to the office of deacon. On this day they affirmed their love for Christ. The diaconate ordination was conferred by Most Rev. Thomas Dabre, the bishop of Pune. The newly ordained deacons include 7 from Karnataka, 2 from Pune, 1 each from Andhra, Hazaribag, Kohima and Madhya Pradesh Provinces. The theme of this auspicious occasion read – "Sent to Heal and Reconcile." In his message Bp. Dabre said that we priests and religious have no choice but to be simple, creative and original servants of Christ in order to remain relevant to the world of today. This was a unique ceremonial mass with masks on and following the physical distancing as per Covid – 19 pandemic protocols. The event was live streamed on YOUTUBE.

- Sch. Markus Murmu SJ (HAZ)
I Year Philosopher

Congratulations...



Next Issue

JESUIT

Mission

to Mars!

*To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go*

*This is my quest,
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless,
No matter how far.*

*And I know if I'll only be true
To this glorious quest
That my heart will lie...*

*To right the un-rightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star*

*To fight for the right
Without question or pause,
To be willing to march
Into hell for a heavenly cause.*

'The Impossible Dream'
Andy Williams

New Editorial Team:

Royal Vinod Saldanha (KHM) - Chief Editor
Ravindar Bara (MAP)
Emmanuel Akilan (MDU)
Arun Prashanth (JAM)
Markus Murmu (HAZ)
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Prosenjith Gomes (CCU)
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Send your contributions and feedbacks to dnctimes@gmail.com