

August, 2021

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

johar stan!



FOOTPRINTS

Stan's Life and Message

A Tribute

Standing in the prophetic tradition of yore
Your life and work is now the stuff of folklore
There are not many like you in the world today
Willing to give their all, night and day

You are not alone in the prison that seeks to bind you
There are the Sudhas, Aruns and Vernons to name just a few
Who continue to defend the Poor and our Planet so dear
Willing to pay the Price without much fear

You teach through your action to the world ill at ease
That oppression and exploitation cannot bring peace
That deforestation and the eviction of the vulnerable
Has made the lives of millions utterly miserable

Never the silent Spectator watching from a distance
You plunge into action to serve at the very first instance
Unarmed, you pursue the path of truth and non-violence
Speaking Truth to Power with conviction and vehemence

The powers-that-be wait for their chance to capture and silence
The voices that speak the truth without any pretense
Arrested and arraigned under laws draconian and of dubious legality
With scant regard for Constitutionality and Human Dignity

The prison bars and walls can only hold the body of the Prophet
His Spirit soars to reach every slum and the remotest hamlet
Inspiring many others to seize the Kairos Moment
To free captives from every chain and predicament

Innocent suffering of the Prophets will never ever go in vain
The journey for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation is fraught with pain
Inexorably leads to the Resurrection and Life-giving Existence
Enthusing many to commit themselves to non-violent Resistance.

Anthony Dias, SJ

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JIVAN

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Cover: The illustration by AMCF, Catholic Communication Centre, depicts 'the Caged Bird' finally free of all bondages flying out into eternity leaving behind melodies of an indomitable spirit of social justice.

As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Conference, JIVAN is sent to Jesuits and their colleagues, collaborators and friends. Articles appearing in JIVAN express the views of the authors and not of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia. All material sent for publication may be edited for reasons of space, clarity or policy. Readers are requested to donate generously towards Jesuit ministries.

Ignatian Mysticism heals Schizophrenia!

Rudi Heredia's article on "The Mysticism of St. Ignatius (May 2021)" was thought provoking, challenging and a pleasure to read, and re-read. He brought out well the dilemma of freedom that brings newness and authenticity, and the letter and the law that are needed to stabilise and preserve this freshness. His insight that this dilemma "cannot be resolved, (but) must be lived in creative and imaginative tension", is useful not just for Jesuits, but for all in the Church and in Congregations, struggling with the "schizophrenia of the soul."

■ Astrid Lobo Gajiwala | Mumbai

Maha khush with JIVAN

JIVAN is making huge progress in its overall presentation. Congratulations to you and your entire editorial team. Kudos.

I want to especially congratulate you for the wonderful editorial in the June-July issue. It's a literary piece in itself. There is social concern, transparency, Covid information, food for thought, spiritual insights, and it has it all. I loved the manner in which you even brought in "Titanic" too!

I am *maha khush* the way in which JIVAN is progressing.

Regards,

■ Robert Das, SJ | Pune

XIM Defeats Xavier

Recently XIM in Bhubaneswar renamed Xavier University as XIM University. The apparent logic for the change of name - 'brand XIM is superior to brand Xavier', and looks lopsided. XIM stands for Xavier Institute of Management; the latter is the legal title, while the former is just a popular short-form. Brand XIM is surely well known all over, while half-hearted efforts are made to popularize brand Xavier, the first word of their legal title.

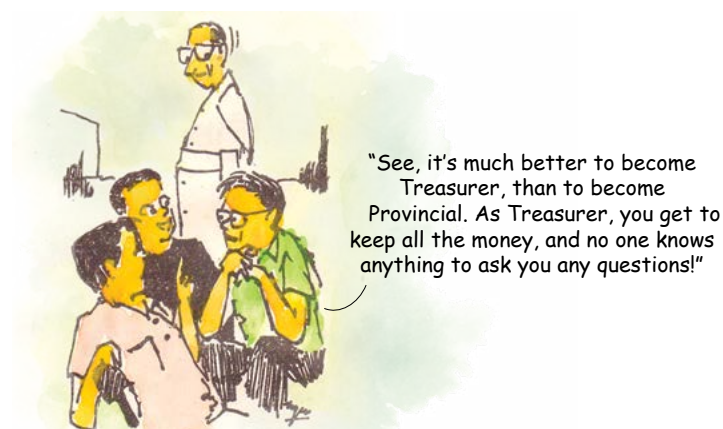
There are many institutions all over India bearing the name Xavier and have become a popular brand. Now Kolkata too has St Xavier University. Even Non-Christians have started schools named after Xavier to exploit the popularity of brand Xavier.

XIM started Xavier University with a view to highlight brand Xavier. The local government too named the square near XIM on the main road as Xavier Square, and the road passing in front of XIM as Xavier Road; both evidencing the value of brand Xavier. If XIM took one step forward by starting Xavier University, it took two steps backwards by renaming it as XIM University. Why XIM is reluctant to popularize brand Xavier, the first word in their legal title, is a mystery.

■ Alex Mascarenhas, SJ | Jamshedpur

JESWITS

■ MYRON PEREIRA, SJ | pereira.myron@yahoo.in





POSA Speaks

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ

The Song of the caged Bird

It was Monday, 5th July 2021, and I was at the POSA Consult. As we began the session, my cell phone rang and the message was: "Stan is critical". Then on, there were a spate of messages... "acid levels are high... going for dialysis...had a cardiac arrest...Stan revived after the CPR this morning...may not last long..." . And then the final message... "Sad to inform you that Stan is no more..."

The best description of Fr Stan is his own metaphor: the bird. He was a bird with a message of peace and reconciliation, equality and justice. He was a sentinel of liberty and justice to the dalits and the tribals. He not only lived and worked for these noble ideals, but also paid a price for being faithful to them. He was incarcerated and eventually yielded to brutality. Faithful to the very end!

Stan was born and grew up in a small village in Tamilnadu, and went to North India heeding the call of his Master and the Lord, inviting him to follow Him. Even as he was being prepared for the staff of a prestigious institution, he opted for the poor indigenous people, and spent a whole life time pouring out his entire being for them. And, on completing his long tenure of training social activists at ISI, Bengaluru, he went straight to the place which he was advocating to his trainees - the place of the tribals. He completely identified himself with the poor and bore the smell of the sheep, as Pope Francis would say.

Stan made a choice and stood valiantly by his choice, come what may. Of course, when one makes such a choice and specially a choice for the poor, it is inevitable to be harassed, humiliated and hounded. And that is exactly what happened. He was charged with crimes which he had never dreamt of. He was imprisoned, and finally his death was hastened by the rough and brutal treatment he received while in the custody of the State.

Has the caged bird really ceased to sing? Certainly not! The song has not been stilled. The stirring melody with its haunting notes has already started reverberating in many a heart. Father Stan has already stirred the consciences of people. He has already unleashed new energy and enthusiasm among people towards the work among the underprivileged. I am sure, people will carry forward his legacy. Therefore, even as we mourn his undeserved, untimely and unjust demise, we shall still celebrate his life wholly dedicated to the service of the last, the least and the lost.

What is next for us, Jesuits? Fr Stan attained martyrdom during the Ignatian Year. Therefore, his death will be a kairos moment for us to initiate a process of conversion within and around, in our life and mission. It will instil in us the holy boldness to recommit ourselves to the mission of justice and reconciliation, by accompanying the youth and walking with the poor with greater zeal and vigour, so as to show to all, the path to God and lead everyone towards a more just and humane world. May the faith and fortitude of Fr Stan motivate and guide us!



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

"Walking humbly with God"... and with Stan Swamy

Theologian Jon Sobrino, lone survivor of the Jesuits martyred in El Salvador in 1989, recalled the prophet Micah in a video interview about the suffering and killing of innocent people. Journalist Elizabeth Carr also quotes Sobrino, "In Job, Jeremiah, Mark, and Matthew, God asks, "What have you done for your brothers and sisters?" We might or might not hear the answer. But in the prophecy of Micah, God seems tired of asking the same question, and asks for the last time, "What does it mean to be good?" The answer of Micah is - act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly through history with God."

Through the history of his life and mission, Stan Swamy did for the tribal sisters and brothers of Jharkhand what Micah did to the people of Judah.

Stan acted justly - The life and death of Stan was a brave witness to social justice for the voiceless tribals of Jharkhand. The choice of his social agenda was based on no soft targets. He confronted head-on the political establishment and corporate multinationals.

Whether it was the Netrahat firing range or the Koel-Karo dam, his involvement against vested interests was a bold choice. It culminated in the hardest issue of all: the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court of Jharkhand demanding details of those arrested under UAPA. Little did he guess that the tiger he was chasing would turn and devour him.

Stan knew the price he would pay when he said, "One thing is certain, I feel privileged to walk the way of the Cross, and be crucified with Jesus and our people. I earnestly hope to share his death, a death that brought life, a new life, the life of the resurrection." (*50 years a Priest*)

Stan loved tenderly - Beneath his warrior spirit which was Stan's public image, there was a tender love for the poorest of the poor whom he tended with a care of a good shepherd.

Whether as a teacher in the school at Lupungutu, near Chaibasa; or as the Director of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Jamshedpur, Stan was a shepherd who carried "the smell of his sheep." He chose to live among the *Ho* Adivasis of Baraibir village. His was not a social action born out of the cerebral study of the social sciences but out of a heart that burned for and with the people. He had heard the "cry of his people." His feeble but articulate voice against their injustices carried the gentleness together with an unwavering determination.

Stan walked humbly - Stan fought his battle unassumingly. He wanted his cause to reach the media, but not for his own sake. I can see him smiling now from heaven at the titles showered on him - "martyr", "revolutionary" "saint" or "prophet" in the eulogies around. All that he claimed was that he did not want to be a "silent spectator". He just humbly wanted to be part of the process of justice, even if it meant paying a severe price. He went through the legal investigations against him like "a lamb being led to the slaughter".

On the night of 8th October, 2020, he may not have imagined he would be arrested and taken away. Even in the Taloja jail, he followed the rules and regulations with docility and obedience. He was surprised at the hue and cry about the sipper going on outside the jail. He busied himself in prison listening to the young undertrial convicts. His path of justice was the meek path of the beatitudes, a path of the "Satyagrahi" - made of truth and non-violence, and carried out like the "poor in spirit"!

Interestingly, the e-mail ID of Stan Swamy was dark.tunnel82@protonmail.com. I am sure its password must've been 'Love you, Jesus.'!! How else would he have managed to travel through the dark tunnel like a 'caged singing bird', and finally enter into the heavenly light with such fortitude, grace and humility?

Like Micah, he walked in 'fellowship with God' (6.8). May Stan inspire us too-to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly along the difficult roads ahead, knowing for sure that we do not walk alone.

In his own way, Stan was the prophet Micah of our time.



Vinayak Jadav <jivaneditor@gmail.com>

50 years a priest

3 messages

Mon, Apr 13, 2020 at 4:07 PM

dark.tunnel82 <dark.tunnel82@protonmail.com>

Reply-To: "dark.tunnel82" <dark.tunnel82@protonmail.com>

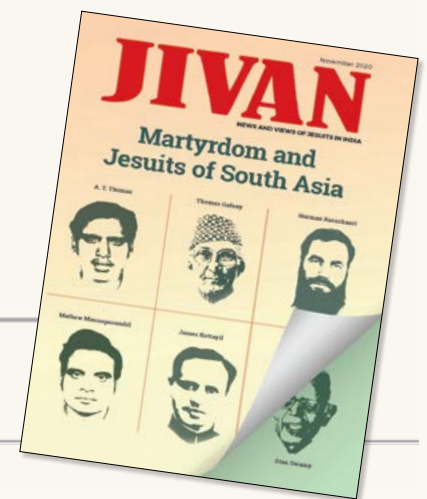
To: Editor - JIVAN <jivaneditor@gmail.com>

Dear Vinayak,
 attached pls find my 'personal out pour' on the occasion of my 50 yrs a priest.
 I wish to share it with JIVAN-readers. Hope you'll consider the possibility of doing so.
 Thanking you. Will appreciate a word from you.

Stan Swamy
 Bagaicha
 ATC Campus
 Namkum- Ranchi
 Jharkhand -834010
 INDIA

Sent with [ProtonMail](#) Secure Email.**50 years a Priest.docx**

15K



50 years a Priest Oh what joy!

*Let not your joy be so full
 that there is not in it a shade of sorrow'* [a poet]

- a personal pour out -

Stan Lourduswamy, S.J.

50 years a Priest on 14th April 2020 started off celebrating Mass with glow as often as three masses in as many places on Sundays.

But living and sharing life with Indigenous Adivasi People, accompanying them in their struggles against forcible unjust displacement, deprivation of their rights over their natural resources, denial of their due share in the rich minerals dug out literally from beneath their feet, and to add insult to injury, when

they stood up to protest against injustice meted out to them, were thrown into jails in umpteen numbers . . . started asking myself what 'priesthood' would mean in this heart-rending reality.

Was reminded of what an eminent liberation theologian said: "What is offered in most of our churches and by most of our priests is the ritual of the Mass but it is not the sacrifice of Jesus"

What would his sacrifice mean if not his whole life a life that brought him to his death killed by the powers that be for he stood up against oppression of the poor and the weak.

I then decided to take on the oppressive but mighty State filed a case on behalf of the thousands of under-trial prisoners most of whom, everybody knows, are innocent it was then the State decided to put me out of the way.

Multiple cases filed against me cases as serious as 'sedition', not a small solace to remind oneself that Jesus was also accused of 'sedition' and paid the supreme sacrifice of his life.

Arrest-warrant issued on me, was declared an 'absconder', my work-cum-living premise raided

three times. (August 2018 - October 2019) all my personal belongings (computer to mattress & pillow) confiscated ! I now have only three things I can call my own: my body, my mind, my conscience. If I was not a Jesuit, would be literally on the street.

Life with uncertainties, like a swinging pendulum. in one case, 'arrest warrant' is still live, can be activated anytime but for the change in political regime. In the second case, can be 'promoted' (!) from being a 'suspect' to 'accused' and thrown behind bars.

But one thing certain, feel privileged to walking the Way of the Cross with Jesus and our people being crucified. Earnestly hoping will share his death, a death that brought life, a new life, the life of the Resurrection.

Note: This article is providentially being published posthumously. In order not to interfere with circumstances 'sub judice', it remained pending, though now in hindsight, a premonition of Stan which we publish here in the very fonts he used!



Introduction to the Mass celebrated on 10 July 2021 by Fr. General at the General Curia, Rome in memory of Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ

On behalf of the South Asian Jesuits here in Rome, I welcome all of you who have taken time out to be here for this Mass. A special word of thanks to Fr. General who has always been concerned about the condition of Fr. Stan and who has graciously agreed to preside at this Eucharist.

We are here to REMEMBER Stan and to THANK GOD for the gift of Stan to the Society, to the Church and to humankind...especially to the tribals, Dalits and all the victims of injustice.

Most of us would never have met Stan. Some of us would have seen him in the last video message that he left before he was imprisoned. Nevertheless, we have all heard of Stan and have been touched and inspired by his love for and commitment to the poor and the cause for justice.

The first time I met Stan was in 1982 (almost 40 years ago) when I attended a course by him on Social Analysis in Bangalore. He was 44 or 45 years old at the time: young, firebrand and deeply committed to the poor!

The powers that would be in India imprisoned him but God has set him free!

He was a "caged bird" but as a caged bird, he sang a melodious tune that has rung in the hearts and minds of thousands all over the world. As one Jesuit, Fr. Paul D'Souza has written, Stan's was "a shrill voice in the wilderness, a shrill voice that has disturbed the sleep of the establishment miles away!" He stood up for what was right and for justice and was ready to pay the price!

As we celebrate this Mass in Stan's memory, we ask him to intercede for us that we too might imbibe some of that commitment to the poor, that courage to stand up for justice and that dedication to the mission of the Society of Jesus: to serve the faith in a mission of reconciliation and justice.

I am sure Stan can say with St. Paul, as you will hear in the first reading of today's Mass, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4, 7). He was truly a fire that has kindled millions of fires all over the world! God bless Stan. May his legacy live on!

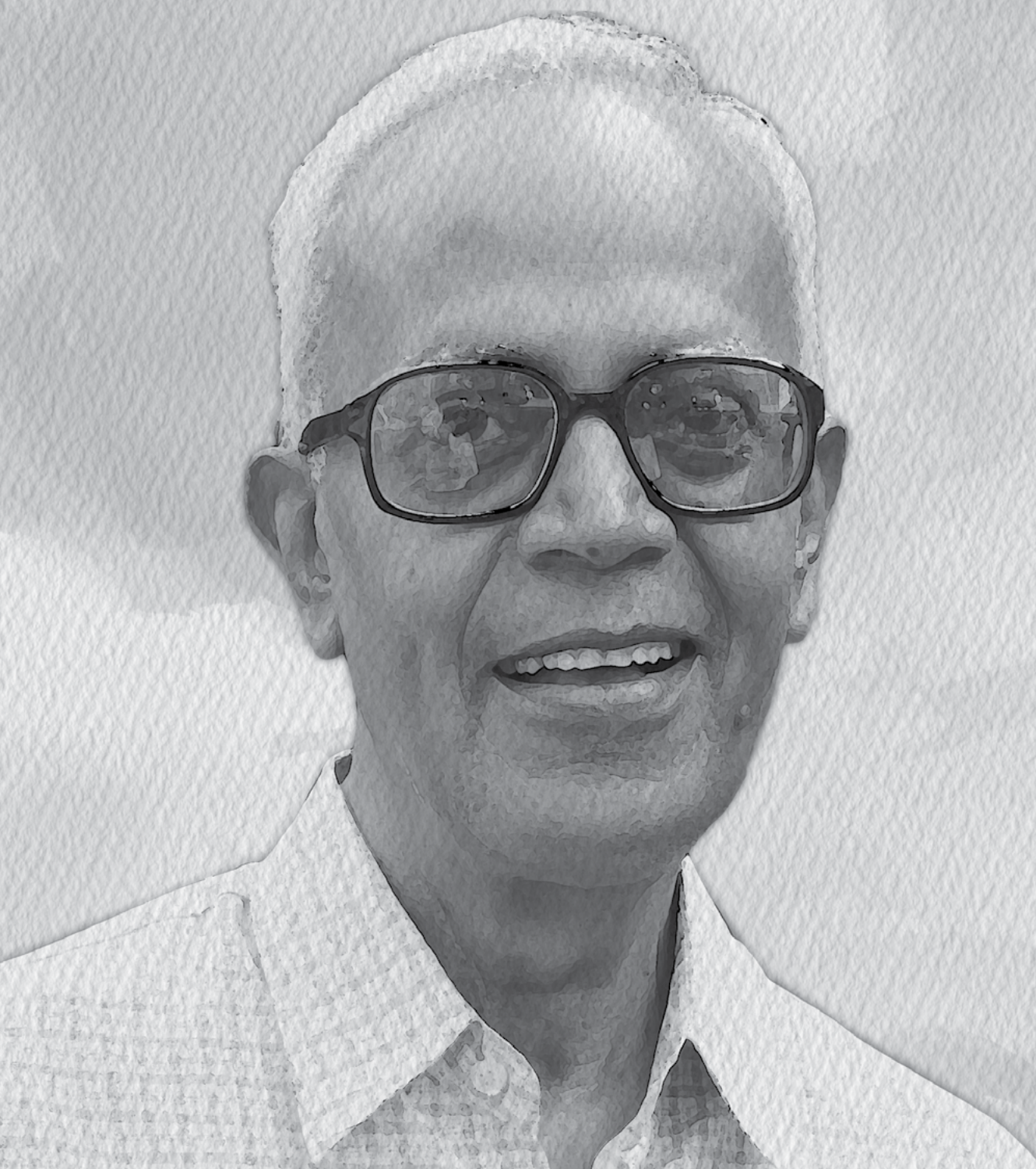
✠ **Vernon D'Cunha, SJ**


The author is General Counsellor and Regional Assistant (South Asia) of the Society of Jesus.

Contact: asm-a2@sjcuria.org



johar* इतार!





On 6th July 2021, as I blessed the mortal remains and said, “Stan, Rest in Peace”, I asked myself, what do I carry with me? I approached him with a sense of reverence. He inspired and taught many lessons on what it means to be a Christian and follower of Jesus, by his life and works, pains and sufferings, forgiving and surrendering. As a Jesuit, I felt very proud of him as he had already risen in the hearts of many people of goodwill, who were in search of meaning for their lives.

During his life on earth, he loved and embraced the poor, especially the Adivasis, Dalits and marginalized communities.

He walked with them and learnt valuable lessons from their communitarian life filled with compassion, solidarity, sharing and a sense of justice from their traditional governance system. At the same time, he was angry whenever he witnessed the poor being exploited and treated as objects. He found Jesus struggling with them in their search for truth and justice and took it upon himself to live fully the Jesuit charism of ‘Faith that does Justice’ (GC 32 D 4) and ‘Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice’ (GC 36) as his way of life, whatever be the cost. I have heard from some persons that he had been living in an ideal world. To me, he was a prophet of hope, despite all adversaries.

Even while he was in prison, he vibrated Christian hope, that death is not the end of life. I remember his words from Talaja: “Please do not worry about me. I am an old man. Let us together fight till truth prevails and the poor get justice. Paying the price is part of the game”. Even in prison, he had a positive outlook of humanity and wrote, “Despite all odds, humanity is bubbling in Talaja” and “A caged bird can still sing.” Stan truly believed that the mission of Jesus cannot be stopped until it is fully realized. His admirers and followers increased multifold at his death. Now, he can rest in peace as he has taught us to understand the word of St. Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim: 4:7).

STAN WAS A MYSTERY

From the moment he was arrested and put behind the bars in Talaja, learning that Solomon and I were his contact persons, many friends and well-wishers inquired about his health status. I knew that he had not taken food from the time of his arrest until he was lodged in prison the following evening. After discerning God’s will and listening to his jail-mates, he changed his mind. All that I could tell the Jesuits and his friends was that he was fine. I did not have much to share as Stan never made any complaints. Until he was affected by Covid-19 in mid-May 2021, Stan repeatedly said, “I am managing”. Accepting solidarity support, Stan wrote on 24th November 2020, “All of you have expressed hope that I will be released soon. Much as it may be desirable in itself, I’m beginning to question

if it is proper. I’ve met all my co-accused lodged in this prison. They are all such precious human beings who have given the most and best of themselves for the cause of the deprived. They have been in jail for more than two years but have not been able to get bail. I’m the last (16th) to be arrested in the same case. I think that my release in the near future will be justifiable only if it somehow provides an opening for others to get bail”. More than his wellbeing, he was concerned about others and the larger cause. He was unequivocal that UAPA must be challenged, and all political prisoners must be tried

soon and if found innocent, must be released. As Stan completed 100 days in prison, he wrote, “Another strength during these past hundred days, has been in observing the plight of the undertrials. A majority of them come from economically and socially weaker communities. Many such poor undertrials don’t know what charges have been put on them, have not seen their charge sheet, and remain in prison for years without legal or other assistance. Overall, almost

all undertrials are compelled to live with a bare minimum, whether rich or poor. This brings in a sense of brotherhood and communitarianism, where reaching out to each other is possible even in this adversity.” This experience led him to write a poem, “Prison life, a great leveler”:

‘You’ comes first

‘I’ comes after

‘We’ is the air one breathes

Lo, this commonality is wrought by compulsion

If only all human beings embrace it freely and willingly

All would truly become children of Mother Earth.

LOVE MUST SURPASS PROPHETIC ANGER

Stan was strongly rooted in love and compassion. Like his Master Jesus, Stan, on the one hand, expressed his prophetic anger on systems and structures that enslave humans and never hesitated to question these. But on the other hand, he was gentle, polite and respectful. NIA officials knew that Stan was speaking the truth. During one of the telephonic calls, he told me, “In all honesty, I can say that all the ‘incriminating’ documents supposedly found in my hard disk were planted without my knowledge, either before or after seizure. But the NIA officers did what they were commanded to do.”

Rooted in social analysis, Stan was able to analyze the root causes of the social problems and believed it is the poor and leaders from marginalized communities, who are rooted in an ethical value system, as opposed to capitalist and consumerist values, can be ambassadors of sustainable change. He also

* Johar in tribal dialect is a common word for greeting, thanking or bidding Adieu.

felt the Adivasi value system, which of late was getting corroded, was strongly rooted in the Gospel values and the Constitutional principles. He used the same measuring yard, while challenging the State, the Church or the Society of Jesus. When he spoke in public or wrote in journals or newspapers, it created ripples. He raised ‘uncomfortable’ questions. While the State did not approve of his writings and implicated him in various cases, Stan always demonstrated that he was a law-abiding citizen. I was longing to speak to him longer whenever he made calls from the prison. But after 4 minutes, he would say, “My time is getting over, let me end our call”.

His major concern was non-implementation of the Constitutional provisions, various affirmative laws and judgments of the Supreme Court. “We live in a country where law and order agencies neither follow the provisions of the Constitution nor the judgments of the Supreme Court. The Panchayatraj Extension in Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act is only the tip of an iceberg.” Despite the fact that justice was out of reach for the poor, his only ammunition was exploring legal course of action, through well-documented study.

He was highly sensitive to the needs of the poor, and could easily empathize with them. In one of his letters he wrote, “There is a small request on my part. There is a person who has no family, friends or advocate to pursue his defense. Although he has spent more than two years in prison, he has not yet received his charge sheet. Can you seek the help of our lawyers and send me his chargesheet? I would like to help him”. On another occasion when he asked for a pair of pants 36 inches and a formal shirt 42 inches, I knew that it was not for him. When I inquired, he said, “I want to gift it to a prisoner for Christmas.” An undertrial prisoner is eligible to receive only Rs 4,500 per month from his guardian for his personal needs. The money will be kept in the account of the person. Twice a month when the prison shop is open, a prisoner can buy things and the amount will be deducted in his account. Knowing that Stan does not spend money on himself, I asked him, “Are you able to manage with Rs 4,500?” He said, “The Society of Jesus and the Adivasis have taught me to lead a simple way of life. I am spending part of the money to fulfil the basic needs of some poor prisoners”. Stan found ways to be with the poor in all circumstances.

TRUTH, JUSTICE AND PAYING THE PRICE

In July 2020, after 15 long hours of interrogation by the NIA, Stan prepared a detailed dossier elaborating the questions posed to him by the NIA and his response. The dossier was shared with a Supreme Court Advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan. She said, “Stan has spoken the truth. Truth will set him free”.

She is yet another person who was deeply affected by the life of Stan. Truth and justice were the foundational ethics of Stan’s life and mission. He knew that justice cannot be realized without paying a price. Following his Master Jesus, he was ready to carry the cross. Imbibing the Gandhian principle of ahimsa, he could never imagine inflicting pain on others. It was unfortunate that the state completely misunderstood his value system and branded him as the enemy of the state. However, he was neither afraid of anyone, nor of the state, and said, “Truth must be spoken, right to dissent must be upheld and justice must reach the doorsteps of the poor.”

By his simple and unassuming life, he touched the hearts of the prisoners. He asked me for the book, ‘Jesus: An Historical Approximation’, by José Antonio Pagola, and shared it with his fellow prisoners. He had a dialogue with them on how he understood the mission of the historical Jesus who continues to struggle with the poor even today. He was unequivocal that in a broken world, when inequality and exclusion of the poor was the order of the day, and ethical ways of living were commercialized, if one desired to work for justice, death in the hands of others was inevitable. Hearing the demise of Stan, on 6th July 2021, co-accused persons lodged in Taloja, with the permission of the jail authorities had a special condolence meeting and shared their experiences with Stan. He won the hearts of his co-accused though he never had close contacts with them in the past. Thank you, Arun, Vernon and Anand for being Stan’s mother and companion.

HIS LAST WISH

Despite his ailing health and knowing that his end was near, he expressed his last wish in the court and to our

lawyers. “If I am granted bail, as regards where I will reside, I wish to make it clear that I don’t have a family or blood-relatives in Mumbai. I left my family and kith and kin in Tamil Nadu 60 years ago. Ranchi in Jharkhand is the only place where I can be for the rest of my life. Since NIA has a jurisdiction in Ranchi, I will be able to fulfil the other conditions that may be imposed on me.” For where your treasure is, there your heart will be (*Mat 6:21*). The Adivasis were his treasure.

By his life and mission, Stan has given a clarion call to the Jesuits and collaborators not to be silent spectators in a broken world. He has made us understand and appreciate the implications of walking with the excluded in the mission of Reconciliation and Justice (UAP 2). Truth and justice are inseparable, and love must be the foundation of all our actions, is the message that I carry with me.

Johar, Stan.

The author is the Director of ISI Bangalore.

Contact: ajoexavier@gmail.com

Not a Silent Spectator...

They (the people) were in pain
and it pierced your flesh...
There were tears in their eyes
and the agony was yours...

They were not yours, yet
you pitched your tent among them...
You stood with them, the oppressed,
so that they could stand in their struggle...

You were not a silent spectator,
but a shrill voice in the wilderness
that has disturbed the sleep
of the establishment, miles away...

Your shrill voice has awakened
the voiceless in the hills...
The echo of that voice is now a song,
across the universe, crying for liberation...

The shrill voice has been suppressed,
but not the awakened voiceless...
And millions stand in solidarity today,
for you have become a fire that kindles other fires...

You are a prophet of our times indeed,
not a silent spectator but a voice of the people in need...
You were a caged bird who dared to sing and paid the
price, only to provide the wind beneath our wings!!!

Paul D'Souza, SJ

The Prophet of Our Time

Boundaries ne'er deterred you
Language was ne'er a bar for you
Fragile body despite, ne'er weakened you
The Almighty ne'er abandoned you!
You stood up to the powerful
You questioned the mighty
You protected the weak, helped the needy
You were e'er so loving and courageous
As you walked in the footprints of Ignatius!
You were the voice of the voiceless
In front of the corrupt, you stood fearless
Though harassed, kept behind bars heartlessly,
In you, they could prove no crime justly
In prison you remained a ray of hope for many
In thy company they glimpsed the epiphany
Your deeds were ever humane
Yet emitted the presence of the Divine
Dear Stan for All Seasons and All Reasons
Your suffering was a real victory
You'll be remembered in human history.
Your tireless legs have stopped running
Your indomitable spirit will never stop inspiring.
You've lit the flame of truth e'er so fiercely
Help us to keep it alive e'er so faithfully.
You are truly, truly the Prophet of Our Time!

Sch. Pravin Jose, SJ

NOBLE STAN (Modeled on St. Ignatius' March)

Noble Stan
Leader of a jailed array
Lead us on O lead us on
We protested your jailing
every day

Though the powers
menaced so near
You did not fear,
never did fear
You didn't hide,
you did not quit
This was your pledge loud
and clear

We must search every
path like you to be
Free to stand for those
in need, those in need

Lead us on bravely on
Till all injustice is gone
Beneath the Tricolour
to fight For all the poor
and their right

And may justice rise again
A brighter sun - On every one

Never alone
Facing the strife
Braving the jail

Risking one's life
Against all odds
Struggling on
Even when hope
Seems to be gone

Growing stronger and
stronger
As protest takes longer
The cross doesn't
cower
Before brutal power
And nearer
and nearer
As freedom is surer
To strive

For a world where
Everyone's dream
Has a chance to
survive
Dear Stan inspire
us on
To ever strive

Godfrey D'Lima, SJ

STAN, LET US STAND BY "YOUR STAND"

Stan, as Priest at the Frontier;
you knew no barrier.

Body though so fragile;
yet your mission was agile.

You challenged the mighty;
just for children of Almighty.

Tribals were dear to you;
So, trials were plenty for you.

You stood with weak and meek;
For them, loud you went on to speak.

The ruling class threw you in jail;
But "bail" being your 'holy grail'.

Sick, yet tried to make possible;
"The audacity of the impossible..."

As knight of Justice, you're a son of Ignatius;
So, you're valorous, fearless and audacious.

For Tribal Justice, you fought as a "Giant";
Hence, in death, you're born a "Saint".

Stan, you taught us to take a stand;
And now let us stand by "your stand".

P. Anthony Raj, SJ



Stan: An Icon of Adivasi Articulation

Stan's death: A loss for Adivasis

In the death of Father Fr. Stanislaus Lourduswamy, popularly known as Stan Swamy, the Adivasis of India in general and those of Jharkhand in particular, have lost their friend, philosopher and guide, who laid down his life for them. In Stan's death, however, the Adivasis celebrate his life, as a martyr, for their identity, dignity and self-esteem.

He had read and heard about the plight of Adivasis in Jharkhand, the southern part of the erstwhile state of Bihar, which inspired him to join the Jamshedpur Province. He came to Jharkhand in 1960, predominantly inhabited by more than 30 Adivasi communities across the state. It means that during the last near 60 years Stan had been part and parcel of Jharkhand, a federal state of India, which was carved out of Bihar on 15th November 2000, primarily to cater to the dreams, hopes and aspirations of the Adivasis, who have been dehumanized, deprived of their resources *jal, jungle, zameen* (water, forest, land), and discriminated against by the dominant groups for many centuries.

Socialization in Adivasis' culture

He was destined to be a champion of the Adivasis in Jharkhand. He immersed himself in the Adivasis culture gradually. During his regency as a teacher and hostel prefect at St. Xavier's Lupungutu, Chaibasa, from 1965 to 1967, Stan regularly visited his boys in their villages and met their parents. This exposure taught him about the Ho culture and values, which impressed him. It became a routine for him to visit the weekly market in Chaibasa with his students when he saw for himself how the petty merchants and their *dalals* (brokers) cheated the simple Adivasis. He tried to conscientize his students about the rampant routine exploitation of the Adivasis in the market, but they looked helpless. Stan himself was pained but could not do anything about it at that point in time.

Stan's love for Adivasis, and keenness to learn and understand their culture and value system, got a boost in the Philippines. While studying Theology in Manila from 1967 to 1971, he simultaneously did a Master's in Sociology. Some subjects on natives and Indigenous Peoples, were very insightful at a macro level.

After his return from Manila, Stan still wanted to live among the Ho Adivasis in an interior village to learn their language and get to know their life from within. He lived in Badaibir village, close to the present Tepasai. He shared a room with one of the Ho families during the holidays. During his stay in a Ho village, Stan saw how the Adivasis had a symbiotic relationship with nature. Once, while staying in a Ho village, the master of the house asked his son to pluck some ripe

mangoes from the trees in the yard. When the boy had finished, Stan was surprised because one of the branches laden with ripe mangoes was left untouched. When Stan pointed out to the master about it, the latter casually replied that those mangoes were left for the birds of the air. This spontaneous response touched Stan as taking care of nature was part of the Adivasi consciousness. Thus, Stan identified himself with the Adivasis from the outset of his Jesuit life.

In Bagaicha

Stan moved to Ranchi in 2001 and founded Bagaicha, a social research and training centre at Namkum, in 2006. 'Bagaicha', a typical Adivasi concept, means a grove, where villagers assemble for deliberations, decision-making and celebrations. He was at Bagaicha for 15 years engaged in serious research, training and advocacy, before his arrest on 8th October 2020. Since Stan came to Jharkhand, his *karmbhoomi* (place of work) from his *janmabhoomi* (place of birth), he made Jharkhand his home for the past near 60 years, leaving behind his home, near and dear ones in Tamil Nadu. He spent 50 years among the Adivasis of Jharkhand. A non-Adivasi in an Adivasi world-view is considered a *diku*, meaning 'a stranger' or 'an outsider'. However, once the Adivasis are convinced that a non-Adivasi is their friend and a well-wisher, he/she is incorporated into their community and is considered to be one of them. Stan was considered as their own by the Adivasi communities. Thus, Stan was a Tamilian from Tiruchirappalli in the state of Tamandu by birth, but was an Adivasi of Jharkhand by choice.

A Champion of Adivasi Cause

The champion of the Adivasi cause was like a "suffering servant", whose residence was raided twice - on 28th August 2018, and 12th June 2019 by Pune Police. The charges against him were

- (a) That he was personally linked to extremist leftist forces, and
- (b) That through him Bagaicha was relating to some Maoists.

Stan denied all charges vehemently. In 2020, Stan was interrogated by National Intelligence Agency (NIA) for 15 hours during a span of 5 days, from 27th to 30th July and on 6th August. On 8th October 2020, Stan was arrested and taken to Taloja jail in Mumbai, the following day. Stan had to undergo all this because he stood for the Adivasi cause, come what may. In his own words, the powers-that-be were against him because he questioned the

- (1) Non-implementation of the 5th Schedule of the Constitution for Adivasi self-rule, enshrined in the Panchayats (*Extension to Scheduled Areas*) Act [PESA], 1996, empowering Gram Sabha;



Fr. Stan leading an agitation against Operation Green Hunt in Ranchi.

Photo Courtesy: Joseph Xavier, SJ

- (2) Silence of the government on Samatha Judgment, 1997, of the Supreme Court, meant to provide significant safeguards for the Adivasis, to control the excavation of minerals in their lands and to help develop themselves economically;
- (3) Half-hearted action of government on Forest Rights Act, 2006, meant to correct the historic injustice done to the Adivasis and other traditional forest-dwellers;
- (4) Government's unwillingness to carry out the Supreme Court Order that the "Owner of the land is also the owner of sub-soil minerals;
- (5) Amendment to 'Land Acquisition Act, 2013' by the previous Jharkhand government which was a death-knell for the Adivasi communities, doing away with 'Social Impact Assessment' and allowing even agricultural and multi-crop land for non-agricultural purposes;
- (6) Setting up of 'Land Bank', meant to annihilate the Adivasi people because it claims that all gair-majurwa land ('Commons') belong to the government and it is free to allot it to anybody (read: industrial houses) to set up their small and big industries;
- (7) Indiscriminate arrest of thousands of young Adivasis and Moolvasis under the label of 'naxals' because they questioned and resisted unjust land-alienation and displacement.

Moreover, Stan took legal action against the Jharkhand State by filing a PIL in the High Court, praying to

- (a) Release all Under-Trial Prisoners (UTP) on bail on personal bond,
- (b) Speed up the trial process,
- (c) Appoint a judicial commission to probe the reasons for the delay in the trial process, and

- (d) Ensure submission of all necessary information about all UTPs to the petitioner.

He was the voice of the voiceless and wrote extensively on issues, such as displacement, land alienation, government policies, land acquisition, mining, self-rule and Panchayati Raj Institutions, Adivasi rights, forest rights, *pathalgadi*, under-trials, and so on. He was also a member of PUCL. He was engaged in policy analysis and advocacy. These were the main reasons why the State wanted to put him out of the way. He was also accused of supporting *pathalgadi*, which is an important social institution of Adivasis.

Stan's book *'Deprived Rights Over Natural Resources, Impoverished Adivasis Get Prison: A Study of Under-Trials in Jharkhand'*, takes the tribal development discourse from the closet of the economic growth agenda to human development. The case study of 102 under-trials, is a critique of the development discourse of the country that ignores the rights of the Adivasis to live with dignity and self-esteem. About 97 per cent of the sample under-trials in the study were arrested under false allegations of hobnobbing with the naxals. Such anti-people and anti-Adivasi draconian law as UAPA, seems to have been misused in the context of under-trials.

As a courageous, committed and compassionate person, he was gripped by the cries and agony of his Adivasi people, and devoted 64 years of his precious life as a Jesuit and 51 years as a Priest, identifying himself completely with the last, the lost and the least of Jharkhand. Thus, Fr. Stan Swamy represented the Adivasi ethos and pathos and identified himself with the Adivasi Soul and became an icon of the Adivasi articulation.

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For Stan, the Secular was the Sacred

18th July 2021 was a landmark day for thousands of Adivasis of Jharkhand. In a statement tweeted earlier, the Jharkhand Janadhikar Mahasabha (a coalition of progressive organisations, formed to facilitate efforts to defend peoples' rights and save democracy in Jharkhand) "Stan Swamy had done pathalgadi at Bagaicha on which names of shaheeds who gave their lives for jal, jangal, zameen were marked. Every morning he used to pay his respect to the shaheeds. On 18th July, Stan will also get a place on the pathal." That act was indeed a historical one: a singular honour which Fr Stan Swamy would have perhaps accepted, though very hesitatingly. Stan lived for the Adivasis and other excluded. Ultimately, like a Good Shepherd, he laid down his life for them: a martyr. That his name is now etched as a 'shaheed' on a pathal, speaks volumes of how Stan epitomized collaboration with all women and men of goodwill.

'Pathalgadi' is intrinsic to the Adivasi way of life, drawn from an age-old custom of erecting stone plaques on the tomb of Adivasis of Jharkhand. Such stones are erected in honour of their ancestors, to announce important decisions regarding their families and villages, or to simply mark the boundary of their villages. When the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) came into force, the late Mr. B.D. Sharma, a former IAS officer, started the practice of erecting stone plaques in villages with provisions of the Act inscribed on it. This was done to empower people belonging to the Fifth Schedule, on their legal and constitutional rights. The pathals also quoted High Courts and Supreme Court orders like the Samatha judgement which emphasizes the importance to preserve tribal autonomy, their culture and economic empowerment, to ensure social, economic and political justice, and preservation of peace and good governance.

For years, Stan accompanied the Adivasis in their struggle for a more humane, just, equitable and dignified life. He was convinced that in order to realise this, he also had to work with wider secular society, beyond the confines and bastions of a church/congregational compound. He did so throughout his life. He did not expect them to join him; but he went out and joined them. Significantly, just before his arrest on 8th October 2020, in a recorded message Stan said, "what is happening to me is not something unique - happening to me alone. It is a broader process that is taking place all over the country. We are all aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers, writers, poets, activists, students, leaders - are all put into jail because they have expressed their dissent or raised questions about the ruling powers of India. We are part of the process. In a way I am happy to be part of this process. I am not a silent spectator,

but part of the game, and ready to pay the price, whatever be it". Those he referred to were his collaborators, colleagues, comrades; those whom he identified with.

Together with the Chhattisgarh human rights lawyer Sudha Bhardwaj, he co-convened the 'Persecuted Prisoners Solidarity Committee'(PPSC) with the objective of focusing on the plight of Adivasi and marginalized prisoners suffering under the criminal justice system in the armed conflict zones of central and eastern India. This Committee undertook a detailed study of the nature of undertrial prisoners (3,000 Adivasis illegally put in jail), and did their best to ensure that they have recourse to legal help. Strangely enough, both Stan and Sudha were themselves incarcerated under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

On 7th March 2021, the Gadchiroli Sessions Court convicted six activists under various sections of the UAPA, and awarded a life sentence to five of them and a ten-year imprisonment to the sixth. In a strongly worded statement condemning this judgement, Fr Stan, Sudha and others, on behalf of the PPSC said, "the judgement has been delivered clearly to serve the interests of the corporations and the state which is hell bent on plundering the resources of the Adivasi areas in the name of industrialization and development....We call upon all organizations and democratic-minded people to unite and protest strongly against this particular judgement and against the general persecution of the most marginalized sections of our population by the criminal justice system in the entire armed conflict zone of eastern and central India, and elsewhere, where the people are bravely resisting the state and corporations' relentless attack on the lives and livelihoods of the working people".

Fr Stan Swamy entered the Society of Jesus and was ordained a priest in 1970. His years of formation coincided with a tumultuous yet transformative period both in the Church and the world. The Second Vatican Council, thanks to St Pope John XXIII, (which began in 1962 and concluded three years later in 1965) allowed winds of change to enter the Church. It called for a more people-centred Church which worked with all women and men of goodwill. On 11th April 1963, Pope John XXIII shook the foundations of this earth through his pathbreaking Encyclical 'Pacem in Terris' (Peace on Earth). This was the very first one by any Pope to be addressed "to all men of goodwill". The Encyclical was written in the midst of the turbulence and conflict which had seized several parts of the world: the Cold War, the erection of the Berlin Wall, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Pacem in Terris highlighted the four non-negotiables of Truth, Justice, Charity and Freedom.



Fr. Stan Swamy protesting against Land Acquisition Bill with other secular activists.

Photo Courtesy, Joseph Xavier, SJ

In 1968, CELAM (the Conference of Latin American Bishops) met in Medellin, Colombia. From this meeting, emerged another historic document the 'Medellin Statement' that highlighted the inter-relatedness between justice, peace and poverty. The emphasis was on having "a preferential option for the poor" and the "institutionalized violence" of poverty. The 1971 Synod of Bishops on 'Justice in the World' ushered in a significant watershed moment for the Church. The Synodal document stated that, "In the face of the present-day situation of the world, marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the word of God, as he shows us new paths toward action in the cause of justice in the world."

Then came the Jesuit General Congregations beginning with GC31 in 1965, which elected Fr Pedro Arrupe as Superior General, and under his stewardship, the pathbreaking GC32 which in Decree 4 unequivocally stated that "the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement". Over the years successive General Congregations (GC35 in Decree 6, emphasised 'Collaboration at the Heart of Mission', and GC36 in its defining Decree 1 underlined the fact of being 'Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice')

Stan always took great joy in saying that he was influenced by Vatican II, the Social Teaching of the Church, the life of Brazilian Archbishop Helder Camara (who famously said, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist"); of another Brazilian Paolo Freire, an educator, who argued that the oppressed people can regain their humanity in the struggle for liberation, but only if that struggle is led by oppressed people. Arrupe was also one of his heroes, and Stan often lamented the fact that Jesuits did not sufficiently internalise the rich legacy he left us.

Stan lived the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) in very tangible and substantial ways. In an inspirational letter (19th February 2019) addressed 'To the Whole Society' spelling out the vision and direction of the UAPs, Superior General Fr Arturo Sosa, "We resolve to collaborate with the Church in experiencing secular society as a sign of the times that affords us the opportunity to renew our presence in the heart of human history. A mature secularized society opens up spaces for the complex dimensions of human freedom, especially religious freedom.... The path we seek to follow with the poor, is one that promotes social justice and the change of economic, political, and social structures that generate injustice; this path is a necessary dimension of the reconciliation of individuals, peoples, and their cultures with one another, with nature, and with God.... The preferences seek to embody concretely the mission received, as the Lord's response to the cry of a wounded world; the cry of the most vulnerable, who have been displaced and marginalized." Stan was doing exactly that!

There is no doubt that Fr Stan understood, internalised and radiated what it meant to be a Jesuit in India today. He redefined Jesuit identity in the spirituality he was brought up in: he identified and collaborated with the secular world; he accompanied the excluded and exploited in their quest for a more just and dignified life; and above all, like a true son of St. Ignatius, he gave without counting the cost, in the service of faith and the promotion of justice. For Stan, the secular was the sacred!

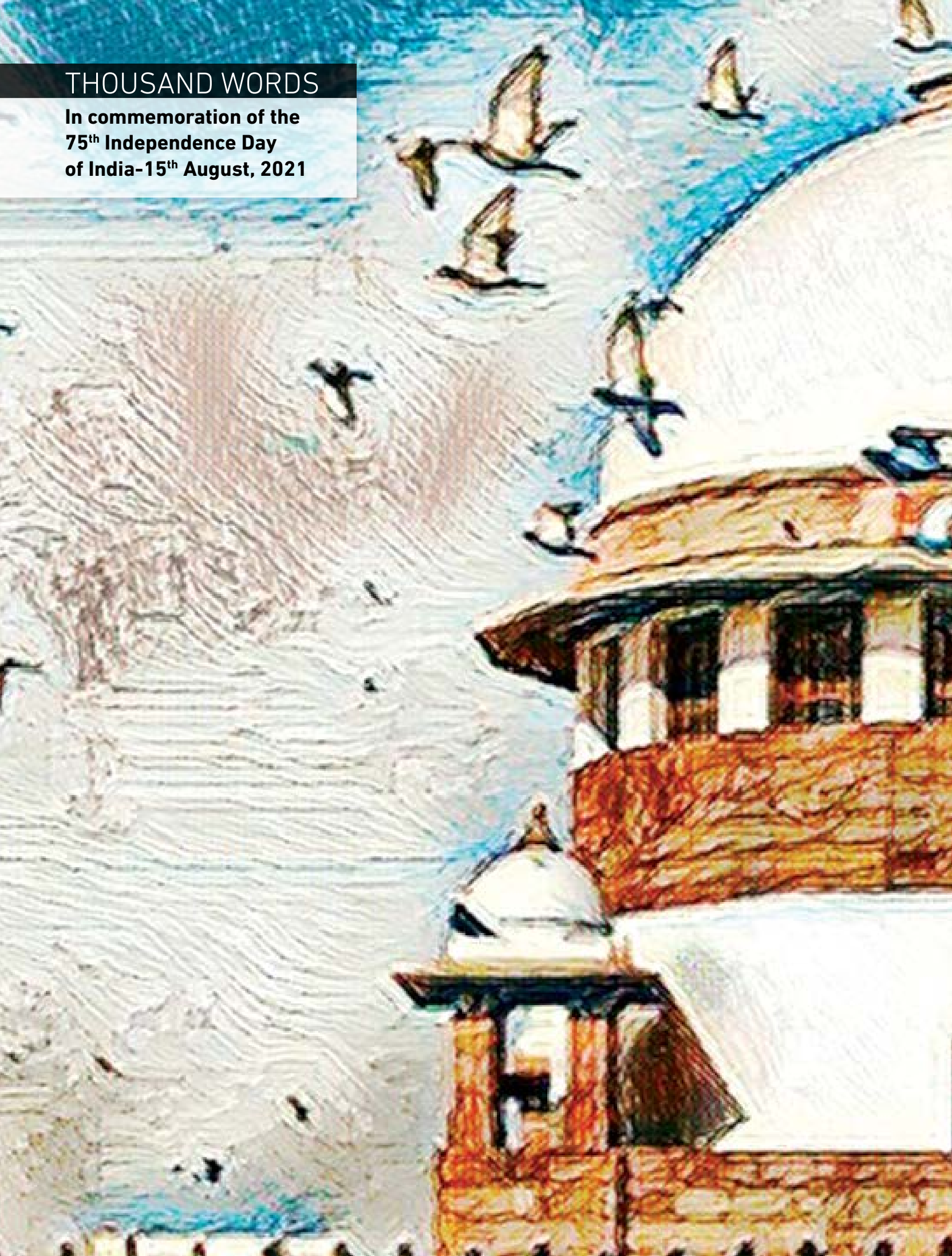
Fr. Stan's name being etched on a pathal as a 'shaheed' is certainly a matter of pride; the best tribute however, we can give him, is to emulate his prophetic courage and to walk in his footsteps!

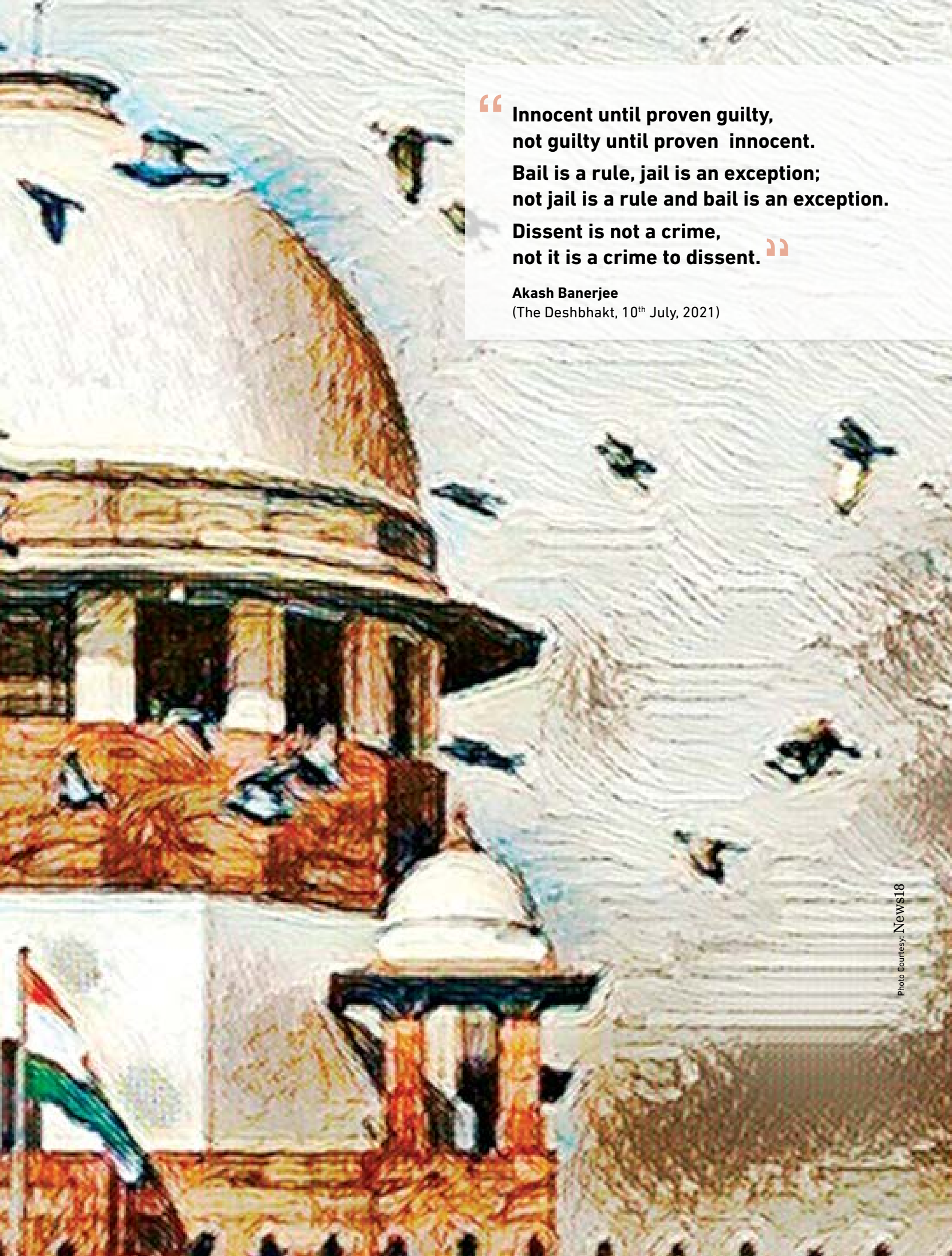
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THOUSAND WORDS

In commemoration of the
75th Independence Day
of India-15th August, 2021





**“ Innocent until proven guilty,
not guilty until proven innocent.
Bail is a rule, jail is an exception;
not jail is a rule and bail is an exception.
Dissent is not a crime,
not it is a crime to dissent. ”**

Akash Banerjee
(The Deshbhakt, 10th July, 2021)



Father Stan Swamy and the Bagaicha Movement



Photo Courtesy: Joseph Xavier, SJ

Bagaicha means a garden in which all kinds of flora and fauna flourish. Jharkhand's Adivasi lands are sprinkled with such gardens, the mango orchards being the prominent and distinct feature of its landscape. According to Dayamani Barla, the iron lady of Jharkhand, "These gardens belong to everyone. Adivasis sit under these trees to have their meetings to discuss issues that affect their lives, and come to a consensus about how to find solutions to these issues. Stan Swamy (Dada, as she calls him) chose the word Bagaicha for the social research and training center he established in Ranchi to symbolically communicate the message that the center belongs to everyone who is concerned with the issues of people who have been marginalized." I distinctly remember Fr. Stan sharing at several occasions about his and a few other fellow Jesuit colleagues' concern about increasing displacement of Adivasis from their lands and consequent dispossession since the early 1990s, the beginning of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG) in India. This concern eventually evolved into a movement culminating in the formation of a platform – Bagaicha – for human rights defenders and activists to come together.

The following part of this article attempts to briefly map the context and ideology that led to the 'Bagaicha Movement' and its 'institutionalization'.

The Context

Towards the end of British colonialism in India, very few well-educated Adivasis (mainland India's indigenous peoples) began to claim and articulate for themselves an identity that was distinct from the plains' civilizations in terms of value orientations and customary practices. Jaipal Singh Munda, lovingly remembered as *Marang Gomke* (the great master in Mundari language), asserted in the constituent assembly that the rest of India must learn the meaning of democracy from Adivasi societies

who upheld egalitarian values, practice consensus-based decision making, and authentic reciprocity in all relationships, including economic and political spheres of life, and concerning nature and the use of its resources. This assertion of Adivasis' identity began in the 1930s along with India's independence movement.

The many pre-independence insurrections by great Adivasi leaders against exploitative intruders had **forced** the British rulers to demarcate their ethno-territories as partially excluded areas with an array of special protective legislation, such as the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act 1908 and Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act 1949, most of which were later consolidated into provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These legislations and provisions aimed to shield the resources – *jal, jungle, and zameen* which would ensure Adivasi societies' continued existence as distinctive socio-cultural formations.

However, successive governments of independent India united Bihar, and now Jharkhand, have preferred to undermine them while preferring to overexploit the forests and mineral resources, often without any proper regulation enforced on extraction processes, with little benefits to local populace. The introduction of various contradictory policies accompanied by LPG in the name of economic reforms ended up allowing free hands to national and multinational corporations to exploit common property resources, accelerate development induced displacement, and dispossession of Adivasis in an unprecedented manner.

Consequently, remote rural villages, where the majority of Adivasi-Moolvasi people live, have been neglected, and remain impoverished despite so-called 'welfare schemes' mainly due to their lack of purpose. The growing trend of young and capable Adivasi-Moolvasis getting lured into a divisive path in the name of religion, political parties with

contradictory ideologies, exploitative corporate houses, and corrupt bureaucrat-contractor nexus, have added to their woes. This entanglement with forces/channels of power, wealth and honor has furthered them from the ideology of Adivasi-Moolvasis, and also their kin and kith who share the common history of struggle, rejecting caste-based stratification, alternative imaginations of justice, egalitarianism, democracy, and identity-based on a symbiotic relationship with nature – *jal, jungle, and zameen*. A non-contextual education that is being provided in predominantly Adivasi regions, eases all these processes of co-option, and has created further numbness. Of course, these processes are glazed over by the word ‘development’ in India’s mainstream vocabulary.

The ‘Bagaicha Movement’

At the backdrop of socio-political changes of the early 1990s, Father Stan Swamy returned to his home-Jesuit province Jharkhand; first spending a few years in Chaibasa, the epicenter of iron-ore mining and impoverishment in Jharkhand. During these times, Mr. Xavier Dias a veteran social activist, and late Mathew Areeparampil in Chaibasa; Tom Kavala and P.A. Chacko in Dumka; late Savari Muthu and Tony Herberts in Hazaribagh; Xavier Soren, Alex Ekka, and many other social activists in Ranchi, were the prominent voices of concern about increasing displacement and land alienation in Jharkhand. Father Stan Swamy joined his voice with these voices, to the extent that despite having severely trembling hands due to Parkinson’s sickness, he used to commute on a motorcycle between Ranchi and Chaibasa to attend meetings, workshops, and seminars in Ranchi that would build alliances among activists to consolidate various people’s movements against displacement from land, dispossession and consequent impoverishment of Adivasi-Moolvasi societies. These attempts, steps, and desires would later be consolidated into the ‘Bagaicha Movement’ and eventually be ‘institutionalized’.

The end of the 1990s saw the rampant phenomenon of Adivasis and Moolvasis being displaced from their lands and some Jesuits becoming part of the mass struggles. The *Netarhat Field Firing Range project* in Palamu and Gumla districts and the *Koel-Karo Dam* in Ranchi and West Singhbhum, posed threatening large-scale displacements of residents. The Jesuits involved in social action felt that it was necessary to establish a center in Ranchi to coordinate the efforts of organizations and peoples’ movements in fighting the massive processes of historically marginalized communities becoming further pauperized. The responsibility for the actualization of this dream was given to Stan Swamy.

In June 2001, Swamy moved to Ranchi from Chaibasa and started to live at Gharana Apartment, Purulia Road, Ranchi, wherein coordinating various peoples’ struggles against accumulation by dispossession, was one of the major tasks that he undertook. Meanwhile, the search for a piece of land for setting up the proposed social action center, named BAGAICHA, bore fruit: the Ranchi Jesuit Province gifted an acre of land on the campus of its Agriculture Training Centre, Namkum, for the very purpose. Swamy began to look for an Adivasi architect to design the structure.

The Jesuit Provincials of central zone provinces agreed to finance the construction. The construction work began in 2003 and was completed in 2006.

Since then, Swamy had been living at Bagaicha, fully involving and immersing himself in addressing various issues affecting the people of the land. He remained consistently alert to the state’s policies that violated the protective provisions of Adivasi land and resources. He organized workshops, training, meetings, and discussions in solidarity with socially concerned persons to discuss the issues affecting underprivileged people. He participated in their struggles against displacement and dispossession due to land alienation by various “development” projects proposed to be set up in predominantly Adivasi regions. He regularly wrote about the existing provisions – constitutional and legal – that aimed to protect people’s resources, advocating the state to implement them and abide by them.

Bagaicha under Father Stan’s leadership worked with Jharkhandis, to provide a strong ideological orientation and solid sense of commitment to numerous organic (Jharkhandi) intellectuals and community-based grassroots people’s movements working to bring change at various levels. Bagaicha has published many books on the topic of rights and its violation which were authored by Stan his colleagues.

Stan adopted and advocated a “scientific” analysis of social relationships, structures and systems, following that of Karl Marx, in which he distinguished the ruling class from the working class. He enabled and equipped Bagaicha to focus on issues affecting Adivasi societies defend their land and community rights over natural resources in their ethno-territories. Thus, Bagaicha remained very alert to all ideologies, processes, and policies that have been violating Adivasis’ special constitutional and legal rights, and spoke out against them.

Bagaicha’s relentless stand against displacement and the violations of Adivasi rights by the government and corporate houses has made it difficult for some companies to advance the kind of model they favored – a development that impoverishes the many, while favoring the very few advances in inequality and injustice, and causes environmental and ecological disasters. Needless to say, there had been continuous efforts by the powerful to silence Stan and activities carried out through the platform of Bagaicha.

Conclusion

Bagaicha’s soul lies in being and carrying the unified voice and force, based on Adivasi ethos and the value of *Jal, Jungle, and Zameen*. The battle is long and hard, but it’s not without its share of joy, comrades, and strength. Bagaicha, more than an institution or ideology, is a testimony or witness of carrying the fire of Jesus to our neighbors, being the voice of truth, justice and reconciliation in a tormented world. It is also an invitation or a space, to be the ‘Voice in the Wilderness’, calling out to promote justice, truth and humanity to its fullness.

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Vows in the time of the Pandemic

(aka "Love in the time of Cholera")

Our world has been traumatically transformed over the last few months. On the one hand due to the Covid pandemic, we have faced an unpredictable illness, death, fear, uncertainty, loss of livelihood, and mental health issues. On the other hand there has been an ongoing growth of right wing regimes in India, Myanmar and other countries. Religious life has come under strain – we were supposed to be out there, reaching out to people but we got confined to our houses. Others were out there – Doctors, Nurses, police, Anti-CAA protesters, Delhi student Protests. Youngsters were arrested under trumped-up charges. What does this say to the understanding and living out of our vows?

Poverty: Too often poverty is seen as a lack of material comforts and status symbols like branded cell phones and clothing. But poverty is really the lack of all kinds of resources – ideological, symbolic and material. I am reminded of that beautiful scene in the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof* – The main protagonist, sings the song, "If I were a rich man," wherein he exasperatingly says, when one is rich, people think you really know everything and they keep asking you for advice. In India we have had a taste of this: those who were in power said India had conquered the disease. And then we hit the second wave! Now, the pundits have been pontificating on the coming third wave.

On the other hand, the life of the poor, of the sick is a life of uncertainty, lack of control; you cannot define the narrative – others do that for you. Hordes of migrants walked the highways because those in power declared lockdowns that only took into account those with secure houses and jobs. This is like Jesus, who had no place to call his own, but knew he was the beloved of God, who spoke his truth with moral authority. Poverty then is to lack certainty, yet knowing that it is the Lord who knows everything. The world is under his control like Jesus asleep in the boat (Mk 4: 38-40). To be buffeted all around, and yet not to lose hope. To be somebody who is under threat, who does not have all the answers, and yet reaches out to others.

I am reminded of our own Fr. Stan Swamy – He had no control over his own life, over his residence, over his privacy, or even over his health. In his last interview before his arrest, he put this so beautifully, "...what is happening to me is not unique. Many activists, lawyers, writers, journalists, student leaders, poets, intellectuals and others who stand for the rights of adivasis, Dalits and the marginalised and express their dissent to the ruling powers of the country are being targeted," he said. And yet he was joyful that "...prison is teeming with humanity," that his voice could not be suppressed. "Even a caged bird can sing..." was what he proclaimed from prison.

Poverty is to have nothing that the world considers of value, it is to know that you are not in control, that the axis of power may crush you, and yet to have hope that the God of the anawim is with you.



The novices pronouncing their first vows at Belgaum, Karnataka

Photo Courtesy: Alpesh Macwan, SJ

Obedience: In understanding obedience, we unfortunately spend a lot of time on the will of the superior. Then what happens in times of uncertainty when superiors do not have all the answers?

In the world around, the powerful of this world have been re-ordering the world to serve their own interests – see for instance the Vista project in Delhi. The pandemic has seen an exponential growth in the wealth of e-delivery companies like Amazon while their warehouse workers are not allowed to unionise, their so called-delivery agents are treated like slaves. The powerful have the supreme power to act, to transform material and symbolic reality.

For the powerless on the other hand, it is to be constantly searching for God's will, to be ready to change course at a moment's notice. Our power does not come from the wealth we hold, it comes from our obedience to that which lies beyond death and life. I come back to the movie, the *Fiddler on the Roof* – The fiddler is one who is perched on the edge, and yet manages to scratch out a simple, pleasant tune. We live in uncertain times, but we know we have to respond in love.

Prior to the pandemic it was easy to live our lives – we knew how to run our schools, colleges, parishes and social outreach centres. The pandemic has thrown all this out of gear. We cannot have well laid-out five-year plans to guide us, we have to think on our feet. I am reminded of one Jesuit community who wanted the provincial to lay out a clear plan of action for the pandemic. I pointed out to them that they had done a wonderful job of discovering the settlements of nomadic tribes, of enthusing a group of volunteers who came from different faiths, and setting in motion a well appreciated out-reach programme during the pandemic. It would have been impossible for a provincial to know the exact social context in which they operated. In reaching out in love, they had crafted a wonderful response. In another community, the superior and his team had set up a whole fleet of vehicles that reached out to the medical and material needs of the rural populace. They had got in touch with some Sister congregations who had joyously volunteered to help in spite of the health dangers involved. As Fr. General had once said to the JCSA – we invest heavily in formation so that Jesuits can independently respond to the social context in which they are missioned. For the previous General, Nicholas, a person of the fourth vow was somebody who can be fully trusted with the affairs of the Society. Local communities

under their superiors must learn during these uncertain times how to act. Mistakes will take place, but as Pope Francis reminds us, that is how the Church grows. Learning to live with ambiguity and uncertainty without being paralysed, is a characteristic of Jesuit obedience.

Chastity: Here again we sometimes spend hours on talking about sexual abstinence. But as the post-moderns teach us, our worlds are configured through desire. More simply we can translate this to mean: What is my ultimate desire?

“Chastity is the call to rediscover what is the deepest desire of my being and to act it out in my life, in the face of the uncertainties of the pandemic.”

What is it that governs my life, what is it that makes me do the things that I do, to paraphrase Arrupe's prayer. Today's gospel puts it so clearly, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mat. 22: 37-39). To be chaste is to love a lot: To Love and serve the Lord in

the sick, in the migrant, in the oppressed. We see this in the Doctors, Nurses, Policemen who are on the frontline. We see this in hospitals that have become known for their care of Covid patients. So many nuns working in hospitals fell ill, some even died. These are martyrs for chastity. I think of Sr. Ann Rosa Nu Tawng, a nun in Myanmar who knelt down in front of the soldiers, pleading that they not shoot the innocent. She loved her Lord deeply, she loved her people deeply. All these have lived out their vow of chastity. Chastity is a dynamic attitude that responds to the call of the moment. Chastity is the call to rediscover what is the deepest desire of my being and to act it out in my life, in the face of the uncertainties of the pandemic; it is that which allows a loving response to the cruelty of the oppressor.

This ultimately brings us back to the Principle and Foundation: To seek neither riches nor poverty, neither health nor sickness, but to serve God in all things, through all circumstances to deepen our relationship with Him. We do not fear the uncertainty and fear of the pandemic, but we seek to serve the Lord in this pandemic, in this social context of right wing ideologies. This is the place He calls us to, this is the place we act in. Our interventions may seem fragile and useless, but so did the Cross to most of Jesus' contemporaries.

The author taught Sociology at St. Xavier's College Mumbai for 12 years and is currently the Provincial of the Bombay Province of the Society of Jesus.

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Intention
for
August 2021

Intention for evangelization - The Church

Let us pray for the Church, that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.



Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network





THEOLOGY ONLINE

Encountering God in Cyberspace

The year-long curfew imposed due to Corona, turned out to be a dark period for all the educational institutions, students and those interested in learning. However, the saying 'Not all the classrooms have four walls' became true in the realm of education. Thanks to the internet and technology, online classes were set up to witness classrooms-without-boundaries.

Every student was able to meet with their teachers and friends on the screen of their computers or mobile phones. Online classes have created an opportunity to transform the whole world into a classroom, a student community, and beyond the traditional classroom setting. In this context, can I, as a Christian theology and science student, compare the experience of meeting persons online in self-isolation at home, with the experience of encountering God in Cyberspace? Do these electromagnetic waves unite human persons through online classes, as the Holy Spirit unites all Christians in Baptism? In this essay we seek to answer these questions.

Spiritual Communion of Cyberspace:

Is there such a thing called divinity on the web? Conventional wisdom sees divisions between spirituality and the world of the machine. Instead of viewing creation as a chronological event, some theologians think that God's creative power could be part of evolution. That creative power can be extended to the computer and cyberspace. The term "cyberspace" coined by William Ford Gibson (b.1948), is a social system that exists entirely in representation and communication in space. So, the Internet is not only a simple communication tool but also a platform to experience real human persons.

Today it develops into a new cultural environment which determines a style of thinking, creates new territories and new types of education, and contributes to the definition of a new way to stimulate intelligence and strengthen relationships. This realization motivates us to give credibility to its form and its role in shaping our thoughts and feelings and, ultimately our spiritual realm of life. This fact is also very much affirmed by St Teresa of Jesus in her words "When you don't receive Communion and don't attend Mass, you can make a Spiritual Communion, which is the most beneficial practice; by it, the love of God will be greatly impressed on you" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, No 34). The Asian Theologian Fr. Michael Amaladoss SJ also says, "Spiritual communion is possible through the technology of livestreaming, but not of rebroadcasting the recorded". Hence, cyberspace implements and fosters solidarity among its members, ultimately helping to encounter God.

Today, the world is divided into pieces based on digital haves and have-nots, besides the traditional divisions like caste, language, religion, country and culture. Of course, cyberspace is misused to further broaden the divisions through hate sites and terrorist propaganda sites like Dark Web, while online meetings, online counselling, etc., have become a platform to unite the weak and the strong together as a cyber-community which upholds a new society of morals and humanity.

As far as Christian spirituality is concerned, following Jesus Christ means going through the loneliness and dangers of the desert which symbolizes our human hearts so as to participate in the Christ events. Similarly, cyber spirituality is to have the real and virtual realization of God through meeting online with individuals isolated at home. Now, cyber space becomes a place where the City of God takes shape amidst the new city of human persons that is the Internet.

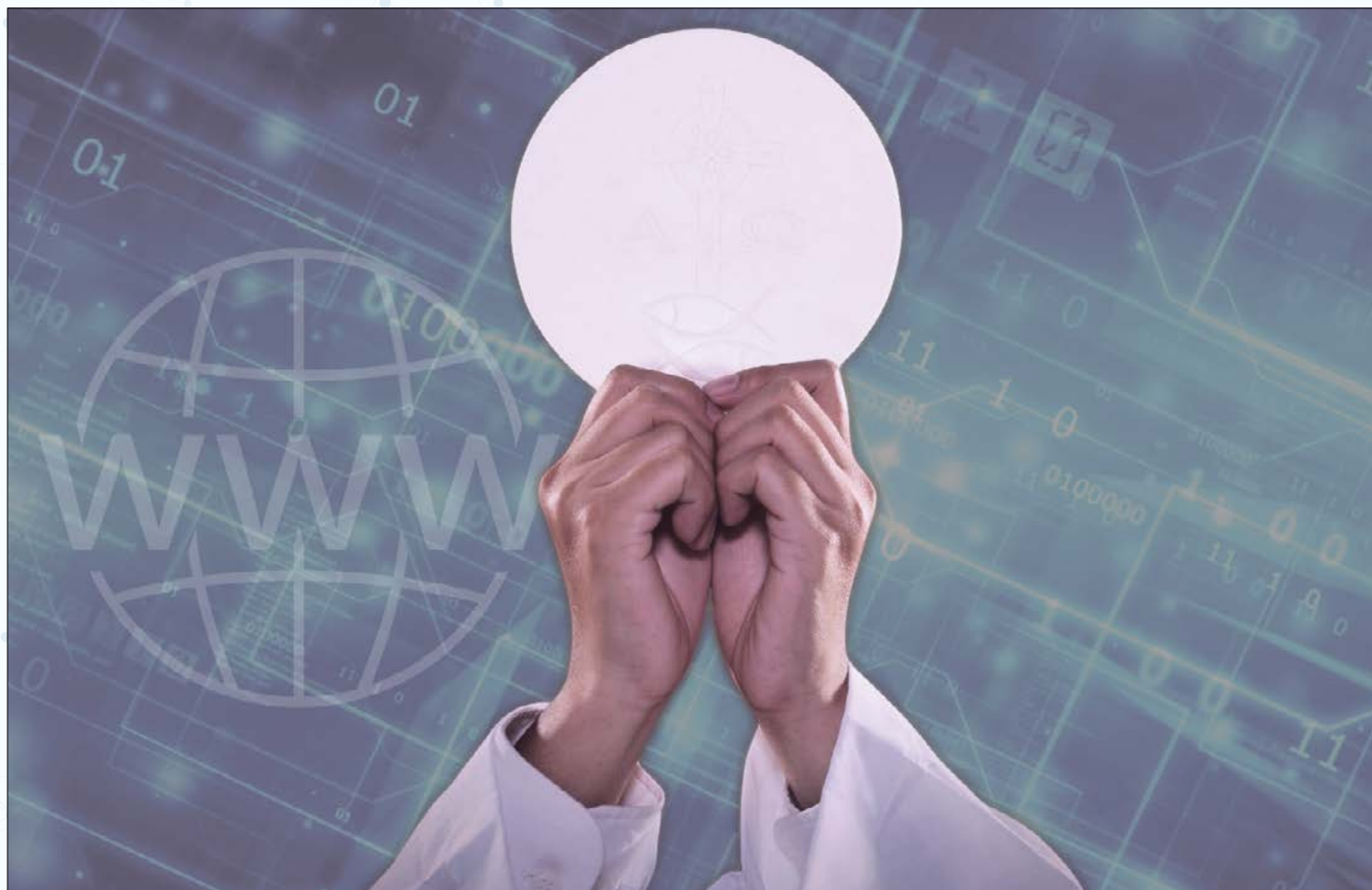
Encountering the Almighty in Cyberspace:

Online classes reproduce the scene of the Garden of Eden, calling us to relive the experience of the first parents: Adam and Eve. In the Garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge stood for the human arrogance of all-knowing, except the fact of the human person created in the image and likeness of God. Nevertheless, it called them to exercise their freedom to choose and to live. Likewise, today cyberspace stands for the tree of knowledge throwing open all the possibilities for all-knowing.

At the same time, it is each one's responsibility to make use of it for the welfare of humanity - like accompanying the isolated, counselling the depressed and helping out the unreachable during the period of lockdown. By being at home, one could make a choice of participating in the online protests and webinars to raise their voices in support of the weakest in our society.

The sight of the burning bush seemed magical to Moses. As he got closer the bush began to speak, letting him know of God's choice for delivering His people. In fact, it was not the bush that spoke to Moses, but God Himself. Likewise, in cyberspace, online meetings appear to be magical, but it helps participants from different parts of the world encounter one another, exchange their ideas and convey their concerns to suffering humanity during the lockdown.

The online platform has changed the situation of relationship-impasse into the enhancement of relationship with others. In fact, it was not the cyberspace that encounters human persons, but God Himself through the



Design: A M C F CATHOLIC COMMUNICATION CENTRE

medium of cyberspace. In today's modern world, it is now being experienced that God can also encounter humans through online meetings.

According to Christian faith, the foundational belief is centred on gathering together in communion, to remember, reflect, celebrate and witness God's love for His followers. Today that is being realised online. In fact, through papal messages and official Church documents, the Pope is leading the Church toward a Christian presence online. The Church recognizes that the digital media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to humanity, since they greatly contribute to human persons' entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God (*Inter Mirifica*, Pope Paul VI, 1963).

The Church embraced the use of Internet, and views this technological advance as 'a gift from God' since the time of Pope John Paul II. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI encourages Christians to make use of the Internet and its facilities for effective evangelisation without compromising its belief that "direct human relations should always remain fundamental for the transmission of the faith". Perceiving the effective use of Internet, Pope Francis calls it as 'a network not of wires but of humans, creating a sense of the unity of the human family (48th World Communication Day, 1st June 2014). He reiterates that by encountering fellow humans, every Christian ultimately encounters God Himself online.

The Internet in all its manifold forms and applications has permeated every aspect of modern human society. It necessitates that this form of communication must be reflected upon not only sociologically, but also spiritually and theologically in our everyday life. While cyberspace is not physical, it is not necessarily virtual. As Pope Benedict XVI asserted, "The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young." Indeed, with the rise of social networks, communication via the Internet is no longer limited to sharing information, but also representing new ways of creating and maintaining relationships that transcend proximity and other limitations presented by religion, culture, and social status.

Therefore, cyberspace must be understood as the intelligence of faith in the cyber age which influences the way we think, learn, communicate and live. In fact, if God is the one who gives hope in life through historical events, as all religions proclaim, then these online classes too are definitely about giving us the experience of God which instils hope in us. Hence, the digital environment has presented us new opportunities to encounter and to enrich our search for God.

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Note: This is the first PRIZE WINNING ESSAY of the competition among the Jesuit Juniorates of South Asia.

Democracy to Defend, Not to Destroy

Democracy is rightly defined as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people.” Real power in a democracy is vested in the hands of its citizens by the exercise of their franchise to choose a Government. The picture of a democratic republic is clear in the Preamble to the Constitution, which envisages not only a democratic form of government but also a democratic society infused with the spirit of ‘justice, liberty, equality and fraternity’. In a democracy, people have the freedom to raise their voice against the government, and express their opinion without any force, but today it is unfortunate that the values of democracy are being destroyed by authoritarianism. The backbone of democracy is being broken by suppressing people’s basic fundamental rights and freedom. The dictatorial undertakings in governance and religious fanaticism is rising in India, the roots of democracy are being weakened day by day as the country is under the regime of staunch nationalists who proclaim themselves as ‘Desh bhakts’. Let us shed some light on some of the recent incidents and news, to know the challenges faced by democracy in India.

I am not against laws, but the manner in which they are made and its unethical nature is totally unacceptable. We are well aware of the recent protests all over the country against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was passed in the parliament on 12th December 2019. It gives home and shelter to all illegal migrants except Muslims. This can be considered as unconstitutional. One of the main drawbacks of the CAA was its exclusive, discriminatory and biased nature. Second is the National Registry of Citizens (NRC). The law was enacted in Assam where over 1.9 million people were declared as foreigners. Even the citizens who have been residing in the country were declared as illegal migrants. Imagine if it is exercised throughout the country how many people will be rendered homeless. The government is making special camps to segregate our own people into them, as they are illegal!

Third, is the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the autonomy to regulate and make its own laws. People had their own freedom and ways of living, but this law snatched them away; people were denied the basic rights and could not resist. The Internet connections were stalled. Movement was restricted. The manner in which it was passed was totally unconstitutional.

Fourth, we know about the recent controversy over the Farm Bills, which is also another undemocratic move by the government. It is not benefiting the farmers, but in the long run it will be very beneficial for the big corporations. In spite of huge protests, the government is adamant in not repealing the bills.

Article 19 of the Indian Constitution tells us that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Today, one is put behind bars not because he or she has committed a crime but just because they raised their voice against injustice. Citizens have the right to question and criticize the government. Today journalists, intellectuals, social activists, lawyers, etc., or whoever is critical about the government, is being arrested. On the other hand, some people are misusing freedom of speech, expression and thought by inciting violence and spreading fake news, e.g., the ‘Godi’ media.

Religious Fundamentalism tweaked to suit needs, is a developing form of extremism seen in India. It believes that only one particular religious view is right and not the others. Today religious fundamentalism is a major concern in India. India’s diversity, with people of different cultures living together for ages, has been injected with hatred of other religious groups.

Corruption is prevalent in India. A study conducted by Transparency International recently has found that more than 62% of Indians had at some point or other, paid a bribe to a public official to get a job done. Another report showed that about 50% of Indians had first-hand experience of paying bribes. Today even judicial authorities are being bought by money. Justice is for the mighty and powerful. In the media we see only sensational news which is being controlled by the dominant political party. The media, which is supposed to be the voice for the voiceless, unfortunately has become only the voice of political parties, corporate houses and industrialists.

The unemployment rate in India fell to 7% in September 2020 from a record high of 29% since the country went into lockdown from March 2020. However, the unemployment rate later rose to 9.1 percent in December 2020 according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). The lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak has forced many industries to shut down, thus increasing unemployment across the country, but the present government is doing nothing for it.

The constitution of India declares the country as democratic, and thus its values, aims and goals of democracy should be protected from the authoritarian government. People should have their fundamental rights to live freely without any fear. The opposition leaders must challenge the present government, and need to stop their undemocratic ways of ruling the country. It is also the duty of the common people to raise their voice against the wrongdoings of the government, which is suppressing the poor, and working for corporate companies. Let us not divide ourselves based on religion, caste and race, but unite ourselves to face the future challenges of our country.

The author is a first year BA student at St. Aloysius College, Mangalore.

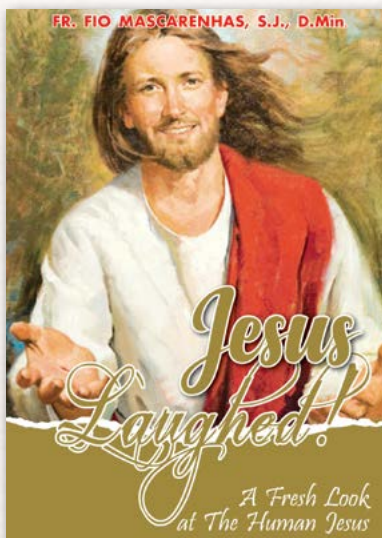
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Meet the Joyful Jesus

Fr. Fio is well known as a writer and preacher of biblical and charismatic spirituality. Here he writes as a 'happy son of St. Ignatius', to invite us to enter deeply into gospel scenes by using the Ignatian prayer method called "Application of the Senses" or Imaginative Prayer. By this "contemplative prayer" (many detailed examples of which are given in the book), the events of Jesus' life come alive, and we discover that far from being "a chronically grim person," Jesus was actually a very happy and attractively cheerful person, able to draw large crowds to listen to his preaching for hours on end.

The author then takes "a fresh look" at Jesus as a human person, and highlights the "human character-strengths of Jesus," as witnessed in various Gospel scenes. We are invited to enter these scenes through "Application of the Senses", and to recognize how Jesus is a paragon of some essential human qualities: Joy, Compassion, Wisdom, Courage and Transcendence. But the lion's share of the book deals with 'Laughter and Joy,' to convince us that Jesus, as the Model human being, was indeed a truly happy person, who used both humor and compassion to draw people closer to God. The logical conclusion is that, in imitation of Jesus, joy and laughter should be intrinsic to the life of every Christian, as also our good Pope Francis keeps reminding us.



TITLE: Jesus laughed! A fresh look at the Human Jesus

AUTHOR: FR. FIO MASCARENHAS, SJ, D.MIN.

PUBLISHER: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand

PAGES: 80

PRICE: ₹ 80/-

I urge laity and religious (Jesuits too, especially in this Ignatian Year!) to enjoy this little gem of a book. By bringing us closer to the human Jesus, it will enable us to better live out our Christian vocation: to be in Jesus' company.

— Luke Rodrigues, SJ

The three Jesuits who bridged Christianity and Islam

The three Jesuits pioneers of Christian-Muslim dialogue in India presented by Joseph Victor Edwin are:

Victor Courtois from Belgium, Christian W. Troll from Germany and Paul Jackson from Australia.

He describes their high caliber academic backgrounds and awesome travels. In this profound and meticulous work, Victor Edwin shows that they are deeply spiritual and caringly compassionate persons who located inter-personal dialogical relationships within the mystery of divine presence. He illustrates how these revered authors combined bridge-building between communities with pneumatology of the heart. They accessed the commonalities shared by Christians and Muslims through analysis of their faith and worship of the living God, through highlighting the similarities of their spiritual experiences and by describing their concrete efforts to heal social ills.

Victor Edwin demonstrates how Courtois initiated a paradigm shift in Christian-Muslim relations, moving from polemical attitudes to mystical collaboration, while Christian Troll and Paul Jackson carried dialogue forward into the areas of theology and spirituality. We learn how Christian Troll used 'discernment' and 'witness to faith' to create a spiritual confluence with Muslims, and so nurture deep relationships with them. Then Victor Edwin gives a shining coverage of Paul Jackson's plunge into the spirituality of the Sufi saint Sharafuddin

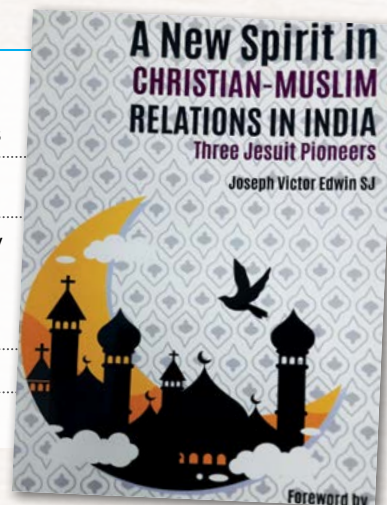
TITLE: A New Spirit in Christian-Muslim Relations in India - Three Jesuit Pioneers

AUTHOR: JOSEPH VICTOR EDWIN, SJ

PUBLISHER: The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, (ISPCK) Delhi, and the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI), Hyderabad,

PAGES: 291

PRICE: ₹ 350/-



Maneri, for whom repentance, or 'turning back' to God, has to be complemented by 'service to the needy' and 'prayer without ceasing' - a programme similar to Christian protocols.

The three Jesuits inspire us to remain rooted in Christ while building relationships with people of other faiths, so as to promote harmony and peace through inter-religious dialogue.

— Dr. Pearl Drego

Renaming Xavier University as 'XIM' University

Xavier University is now renamed as XIM University. On 3rd April, 2021, the Xavier University, Odisha (Amendment) Act 2021 was passed in the Odisha Legislative Assembly, renaming Xavier University as XIM University. Thus, the Gazette Notification was published on 11th May, 2021. As per its provisions, the University has its main campus in Nijigada Kurki, Harirajpur, in Puri District, and an additional campus at Xavier Square, Bhubaneswar, where the Xavier Institute of Management functions.

With the passage of time and based on the experience acquired over the past seven years, the Management and Board of Governors of Xavier University, Bhubaneswar, believe that the name 'Xavier University,' Odisha Act, 2013 should be replaced with 'XIM' University, Odisha Act. The University had to be renamed to keep the 'XIM' brand name, which had been known in the country and around the world for 34 years since its inception in 1987. Students who receive a certificate bearing the 'XIM' brand name will find better career prospects in the country and abroad. The business, corporations, transformation leaders, and the growth sectors all recognize this brand. XIM has brought laurels, prestige, and honour to the state of Odisha and has served the state and the nation through its extensive network and relationships.

Currently, the Jesuit-run XIM University views itself as a distinguished university that provides quality education to top-notch students worldwide. The XIM University inherits the legacy of the 34-year-old XIM (Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar), the country's premier, world-class B-School. XIM University's identity is described by its ethic of 'men and women for and with others'. Our faculty, staff, and students represent diverse faiths and identities, but we all aspire to be

men and women for and with others. What else distinguishes a Jesuit XIM University? Our students are taught the value of experience, curiosity, global experiences, and 'cura personalis', which translates to 'care for the whole person'. There is a strong intention to be the first to respond to society's needs and encourage

sustainable societies that motivate the state's and country's futures, acting as a change agent. Education for moral character, adaptability, world affirmation and faith that serves justice are all hallmarks of this philosophy.

|| Vivian Richard, SJ | Bhubaneswar



Exploring Shia-Catholic Dialogue

Iran Culture House, New Delhi organized a luncheon to explore Shia and Catholic dialogue in Delhi. Joseph Victor Edwin SJ, Secretary, Islamic Studies Association, Delhi was invited to participate in the meeting in which Ayatollah Mahdi Mahdavi-pour, Representative of the Supreme Leader of Iran Grand Ayatullah Khamenei in India, Dr. Ali Rabbani, Cultural Counselor of Iran in India and Dr. Syed Alizadeh Musavi, Cultural Advisor to the Ambassador of Iran in India, were present.

In the conversation, Ayatollah Mahdavi-pour reminded his Christian dialogue partners of Pope Francis's historic meeting with the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani during his historic visit to Najaf (March 2021). He pointed out that the meeting between the Pope and the Grand Ayatollah teaches us that we must cultivate mutual respect and enter into dialogue with prudence. "Shia Muslims and Catholic Christians must seek to sustain and develop dialogue and conversation between these two traditions from our foundations", said Dr. Ali Rabbani. "We must take initiatives to understand one another's faith traditions, whilst maintaining theological integrity of these two respective traditions", pointed out Dr. Syed Alizadeh Musavi. "We must find common grounds" for any serious dialogue, was the emphasis of the conversation.

On the occasion, Victor Edwin pointed out that, in the past, Jesuit Father Victor Courtois (d. 1960) had successfully explored Catholic-Shia relations in India. Fr Courtois was an active member of the Iran Society, Calcutta and he did much for this association, even



becoming its Secretary and Vice- President. He edited and published two learned works on *Al-Biruni* and *Avicenna* on behalf of the Iran Society, Calcutta. The Iran Government presented him with a Silver Medal in 1959, in appreciation of his services in promoting Indo-Iranian cultural relations. On the occasion, Victor Edwin presented his little volume on 'A New Spirit in Christian-Muslim Relations in India: Three Jesuit Pioneers to the Iranian dignitaries'.

|| Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ | Delhi



Br. Clestus Baxla, SJ (MAP)

"I have to praise God with my small works" was the motto of Bro. Clestus Baxla, SJ. He used to say, "Hard work makes everything possible". He remembered very much the words of Fr. Rector in Sitagarha when he told him, "Brother, we have always two or three Brothers to maintain and manage the campus. Will you be able to manage it alone?" He took it as a challenge and managed such a big property and every other thing alone, very efficiently. Constructing the boundary wall all around the campus, ploughing fields and managing workers were remarkable for his efficiency. Thus he is still remembered affectionately for his hard work.

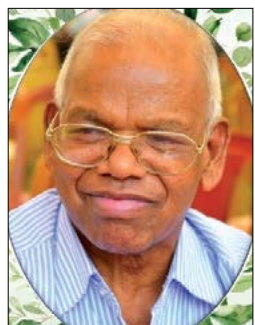
Later in Kota, he is remembered for working in the fields day and night. There was no compromise with his responsibilities and his dutifulness. Whenever it rained very heavily in the rainy season, whether it was day or night, he was always there in the

fields, with a spade on his shoulder and one umbrella in his hand. His hard work indeed brought prosperity to the community. His intention was to exemplify people around how hard work was important for human beings.

Br. Clestus dared to take challenges. Initially he did not want to study, thinking, "Have I to teach in schools and colleges? I have to serve and praise God in small things." And yet he took a challenge later to graduate himself. He never neglected his responsibilities.

Br. Clestus lived a very simple life - a life of a poor person. While discussing about the personal possessions in the Society, he said, "We don't praise God by our belongings but by our works, be it small or big". He was very happy with his vocation in the Society as a Jesuit Brother.

Michael Tirkey, SJ



Fr. Cyril Rajesh Tigga, SJ (MAP)

Departed soul, beloved Fr. Cyril Rajesh Tigga, SJ, had been inspiring to many of us youngsters in many fields: singer, sportsman, GURU for many, with Fr. William Missiaen in the Apostolic school, Ranchi. He was a religious person, very prayerful man, missionary, pioneer to unploughed land, pastoral guide, Consultor to the Province and the Diocese, a person of rich and immense spiritual wealth, a challenge to us young, a courageous administrator and a daring hostel in-charge in many institutions! As JEPASA coordinator, he served efficiently. He was one of the very active and efficient pastors in the Province. For many years he worked with Fr. Joseph Binj, SJ, in Wadrafanagar, and continued working for the Koraku school children after the death of

Fr. Binj. Finally, he himself became a victim of Covid-19. May God the loving Father who called him, challenged him and shaped him in the virgin land, grant him finally the heavenly reward deserving of him! Fr. Cyril, you have won the Crown! Now enter into His Kingdom! Cheerio! Congrats! May Mother Mary assist you.

H.G. Patras Minj, SJ



Fr. Rajarathinam Rathinam, SJ (CEN)

The Jesuits of Tamil Nadu were shocked by the sudden demise of Fr. R. Rajarathinam on 24th May 2021. He was born on 3rd April 1959 in Mathankovilpatty in Virudhunagar District. He entered the Society of Jesus on 30th July 1979, at Beschi College, Dindigul. He was ordained a priest on 24th Nov 1991, in Madurai. He composed the College Anthems of St Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, Loyola College of Vettavalam and Mettala.

From 1992 to 2005, he was teaching Economics at St Xavier's College, Palayamkottai. As the Director of STAND - the Outreach Programme of SXC, he especially won the appreciation of non-Christian villagers. He persuaded many dropouts to get re-admission. When he served as the Principal of St Joseph's College, Tiruchi (2005-11), the National Solidarity Council honoured him with "Jewel of India" and "The Best Principal" awards. He visited as one of the NAAC Peer members, to assess 12 Colleges and 3 Universities.

A court case foisted on him made his life a 'way of the cross' but he went about doing good: training students at DACA, Madurai; serving as Minister and Treasurer at LTI, Madurai; teaching Economics at Loyola College, Meghalaya; serving as Minister, Professor and Secretary at Loyola College, Vettavalam; and as Campus Treasurer, Loyola College, Mettala.

On 19th May 2021, he felt unwell and the scan results revealed a 35% lung infection due to COVID-19. So he got admitted to Apollo Hospital, Tiruchi. On the morning of 24th May, the doctors diagnosed a mild heart attack and rushed him to the ICU. Despite their strenuous efforts to revive him, he breathed his last at 10:30 am. Due to the restrictions of Government officials (on COVID deaths), and non-availability of the Jesuit cemetery at St. Joseph's Tiruchi, his body was cremated and his mortal remains were interred in the crypt of St. Joseph's College church, after a prayer service.

Maria Joseph Mahalingam, SJ





Fr. Anthony Micallef, SJ (DUM)

Fr Anthony Micallef was born at Zebbug in Malta in 1939. He joined the Society of Jesus at Loyola House, Naxxar, Malta, in 1959. He volunteered for the Santal Mission and arrived in India in 1965. He was ordained priest on 25 March 1971 in the Parish Church of Sahibganj. Fr Micallef was a man of few words and unobtrusive, yet sociable. He had a kind and compassionate heart especially for the sick.

Sensing the importance of audio-visuals in the ministry of preaching, teaching and communications, Fr Micallef set himself to become competent in the audio-visual media. In 1977, along with Fr Joe Gauci Sacco SJ, he set up a mobile unit equipped with audio-visual media and began using it in interior villages, imparting integral education to the Santals. Fr Micallef was Director of the 'Sound Studio' - part of the Communications Unit of the Santal Region. Later he set up the Dumka Diocese Communications Centre 'Sademarsal' (Sound and

Light) at SDC, Dudhani, and began producing silk-printing, flannel graphs of the Old and New Testaments, health care charts, recordings and slides, as aids to teachers in imparting integral formation.

Back in Malta in 1996, Fr Micallef was given the portfolio of Promoter of the Benefactors Association and distribution of the magazines of the Maltese Jesuits, namely, 'Lil Hbiebna' (To Our Benefactors) and 'Regina et Mater' (Queen and Mother). In 2020, he was assigned the ministry of prayer. He breathed his last on 22nd May, 2021. Dumka-Raiganj Province as well as Dumka Diocese remain grateful to Fr Micallef for the legacy he left behind him, in particular 'Sademarsal' of Dumka Diocese, which still churns out educational aids for the different educational activities in schools and villages. May he rest in the Peace and Joy of the Lord!

Paul Aquilina, SJ



Fr. Maria Jeyaraj, SJ (MDU)

Though Fr. Maria Jeyaraj was infirm for quite a long time, his death was quite unexpected. On 28th May, he was taken from Beschi Infirmary, Dindigul, and admitted in St. Joseph Hospital. At 3:15 a.m. on the following day, 29th May 2021, he peacefully breathed his last. His burial together with that of Fr. Lawrence Maria Gabriel took place in the Beschi cemetery with a restricted group of people because of the COVID lockdown.

From 1968 to 1976, Fr. Jeyaraj served as the Director of St. Peter's Minor Seminary, Madurai. From 1975 to 1978, he was at Beschi Illam, Dindigul, first as Minister, then as a Teacher of Tamil and lastly as the Socius to the Novice Master. His love for the Tamil language and culture, Tamil bhakti literature and his ability to sing Tamil classical hymns with devotion, were commendable.

He had a short stint as an ashramite at Aikiya Alayam, Chennai (1978-1981). Later, after a break of six years,

he went again to Aikiya Alayam and remained there till its closure in 1998. He was taken up with the style of ashram life and interreligious dialogue which he held on to, till his death. During the long period when he resided at Thozhamai Illam, Kanyakumari, he carried on the ministry of interreligious dialogue, and served also as the Secretary of Interreligious Dialogue in Kottar Diocese. From Kanyakumari, he used to go to Chennai every month to carry on the dialogue ministry for a group that had been formed by Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam, to whom he felt greatly indebted. He continued his dialogue ministry during his years of retirement in Beschi, by writing a few pamphlets on the subject. Wherever he was and whatever be his field of labour, he was a humble, committed and tireless worker for the Greater Glory of God.

Dhanaraj Raphael, SJ



Fr. Lawrence Maria Gabriel, SJ (MDU)

Fr. Lawrence Maria Gabriel (81/56), fondly called Gabiri by fellow Jesuits, passed away at 8.15 a.m. on 29th May 2021, within hours after the demise of Fr. Maria Jeyaraj. As the death of Gabiri was also COVID-related, the two funerals were held simultaneously at Beschi Illam, Dindigul, strictly following the Corona protocols.

Gabiri hails from Maravankudieruppu, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari Dt. He grew up in a Catholic atmosphere thoroughly inculturated in the Tamil language and culture.

He joined the novitiate in Beschi Illam, Dindigul, in 1964, at the age of 24. During his Philosophy studies, his involvement in the parish ministries at Shembaganur parish was marvelous; he was generous and committed to this ministry. It was during this period that he started composing devotional hymns in Tamil.

He was ordained a Priest in 1974, and the long list of different types of work he was engaged in over the years is quite impressive: he was Retreat Director in Beschi Illam, Dindigul, Superior of Arul Kadal, Chennai, Superior and Pastor in Oriyur, Vocation Promoter in

Beschi, Socius to the Novice Master, Superior and Teacher in St. Mary's, Dindigul, Headmaster in Viragalur, Pastor in St. Mary's Cathedral, Madurai, Minister in Beschi, Dindigul, Spiritual Guide in Xaveriana, Tuticorin, Team Leader in Thozhamai Illam, Kanyakumari, and Campus Minister in LTI, Madurai.

Gabiri was not only a prolific writer, good poet, inspiring preacher, motivating teacher and compassionate pastor, but also a gentle companion. He was a humorous person, bringing laughter and cheer to all those who sat around him.

During his last years in Beschi, Gabiri spent time writing, teaching co-workers and doing spiritual ministry in the campus. Visitors entering Arrupe Bhavan could not miss Gabiri sitting outside his room with a pile of books on a table. He would stop reading, look up and cheerfully greet the visitors. It is God's will that he was called back to the eternal company of the Lord in these pandemic times.

Williams Christopher, SJ



Fr. Antony Cruze, SJ (GUJ)

Twenty five days of battle against Corona was well fought. Finally Fr. Cruze, SJ gave himself to the will of God, and surrendered his spirit on the 19th May, 2021. His loss is irrevocable as a witnessing missionary, enlightening educationist and a down-to-earth human being. Carrying a smile on his face at all times, described him as a cheerful giver of time and energy to all those who have encountered him as Principal, in all the schools where he rendered his service.

His deepest pride was the "Call to the Society of Jesus". From the inception of the thought to join the Society to the last breath, he never doubted his vocation. On the contrary, his ardent zeal to serve this least Society, always predominated his mind and rejuvenated him. This led him to become a vocation promotor and preserver in the Province. He enjoyed the grace of being the 'risk taker' for the well-being of others and enabled others to be courageous in turn.

What benevolence would our Jesuit education bring about, if we only capture and nurture the privileged and intellectually sound students of the creamy layer – is the question that often revolved around his mind. His heart always reached out to the tribal students. Delimiting factors like time and physical energy, would not hamper him if he had to reach out to any tribal student who was in need of his assistance. His departure has created an indelible vacuum in the life of his many students. His contribution towards my faith formation and nurturing of my vocation in the Society of Jesus will be archived as treasures of my personal life. Culmination of earthly life of a wonderful human being and cheerful Jesuit, occurred as his mortal remains were laid to rest, but deletion of his fond and life-giving memories will always remain a long struggle in my emotional realm.

Too soon to be taken away – too early to have gone away – too young to fall a prey to the pandemic. Fingers hesitate to erase your number 'Fr. Cruze' from my mobile, because such was your unimaginable availability and care for everyone. But your robust faith in God and your deepest love for Jesus, compels me to believe that now you are in a better position to love the Society of Jesus - your family, and in a least way, myself.

I Antony Suresh, SJ



Fr. Abraham Enthemkuzhy, SJ (JAM)

"Enna Thambi"- the impromptu greeting of Fr. Abraham Enthemkuzhy will no longer be ringing in our ears. Abe, as he was lovingly called by all, was promoted to eternal glory on the morning of 14th July 2021. In his demise, the Province lost a committed Jesuit and their "Annan," their elder brother.

Born on 6th November 1950, in Kerala, Abe joined the Society of Jesus in 1968. He was ordained a priest in 1982. Fr. Abe proved himself to be a very competent and able leader during his formation period. Thus, he was entrusted with the most important Institutions of higher education; **XRLI** from 1983 – 1987; 2008 – 2019 as Assistant Hostel Prefect, Coordinator HRD, Director,

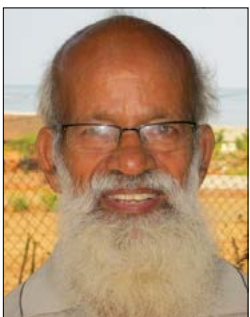
House Superior; **XIMB** from 1987 – 1989 as Dean and Superior; 1995 – 2007 Coordinator of Orissa Mission, Professor, Director, House Treasurer, Minister and Superior. He was Director of XLRI for 17 long years and Director of XIMB for 7 years. Under his able leadership, both the institutions have grown to its heights.

For many, it was the loss of the "father figure". He was a true man of God; a warm, kindhearted, jovial, and understanding human being - the traits that remained constant throughout his life. A close associate of Abe remarked, "You could take any problem to him and within a few minutes you would forget everything, even if the problem was not solved. That was his power- few kind words and loads of laughter."

Abe, you can never be forgotten. We will miss your stories. Our loss, Heaven's gain. I am sure you have already taken up charge up there. You have earned your respect.

Rest in peace.

I Tony John, SJ



Fr. Devasia Vellapani, SJ (GOA)

Fr Vellapani was born on 13th May 1939, in Mundakayam - a village in Kerala. He entered the Society of Jesus on 11th July 1961, and was ordained a priest on 26th March 1971. As a young priest, Fr Vella was sent to minister to the faithful of Ahmednagar district. In his missionary work, he had the interest of the poor at heart. He began at Rahata, and later ministered in Shevgaon, Shrirampur, Beed, Ahmednagar and Ghodegaon for about 15 years. Zeal and hard work have always been the main characteristics of his ministry.

He was a man of prayer – not neglecting his daily spiritual duties. Rising early morning he gave time for prayer, and energized by

it, he started his day's work. In 1987 he was missioned to Rosary Church, Ajra, and later he moved to St Anthony's in Gadhinglaj, where he labored for eight years, to establish it as a full-fledged mission station. In Ajra, he labored hard to put up a spacious Church and a large residence for the Jesuits. From 1998 to 2009 he toiled and "earned his daily bread by the sweat of his brow" at Xavier Farm in Santibastiwad. No work was menial to him. Wherever he was posted, he identified himself with the poor, and labored very hard most of the day, with just a break for his noon meal.

It was rightly noticed that Fr Vella was a man of many trades. In the construction work he was everything from an ordinary labourer to mason, plumber, mechanic, electrician, etc. He was also a farmer, a well-digger, preacher, teacher, driver... well, the list can go on and on. Small wonder that on several occasions he ran a mission station single handed.

I Courtesy: Socius, GOA Province



Note: With this issue of JIVAN, we conclude our popular section 'Crucial Conversations' that completed 2 years. We thank each and every contributor to it. The new section 'Cannonball Moments' in place of it invites moments of turning point or experiences of conversion in your life just as the moment of conversion in the life of St. Ignatius after the injury of the Cannonball at Pamplona. This section will continue throughout the Ignatian Year sharing moments after which your life was never the same.

THE FATHER IS VERY FOND OF ME

The term 'cannonball moment' is indeed a loaded one, as potent as a shot fired from a cannon itself. It conjures up images of a noble knight wounded in battle and the dramatic life transformation that followed. This certainly is a powerful image, but precisely because it is so powerful, most of us fight shy of applying it to our own lives. If asked to share one's personal cannonball moment, our first reaction would be, "Well, I've not experienced anything as dramatic as that."

Jerome Nadal however affirms that God deals with the followers of Ignatius as God dealt with Ignatius himself. Hence, far from being presumptuous, it is only natural to claim that each one of us has our own cannonball moment. It is this conviction that emboldens me to share my personal experience in these same terms. For myself, as indeed for most of us, the cannonball moment is far removed from any military battle but is situated instead within the ups and downs of daily life. My cannonball moment came thirty-four years ago while cleaning a library shelf in the novitiate!

The Long Retreat is always seen as the key experience for a Jesuit. While that retreat did bring me many graces, I was still left with a feeling that something was lacking, that there was something yet to be experienced. My disappointment was tempered by an inner conviction that it is God's prerogative to grant deep consolations and, if I were chosen for it, this experience would come in God's own time. About a month after the retreat ended, I was assigned to clean the library during manual work time. Armed with a rag and with the fervour of a novice, I attacked each shelf and book with a fierce determination to remove the smallest trace of dust found there. In the midst of this work, something happened that transformed my life.

While dusting, my eyes were drawn to a book by Fr. Edward Farrell titled "The Father is very fond of me". And even as those words flashed before my eyes, my first reaction was, "O my God, it's true! The Father is indeed very fond of me." Rooted there for several minutes, I felt the truth of that phrase sinking in through my mind, my heart and whole being. Over the next few days, the experiences of childhood, the uncertain moments of youth and graces of the long retreat all fell into place and began to take on a new meaning.

The Father is very fond of me! So simple, and yet so profound and sweet. This phrase has been the axis of integration that brought unity to everything, confirming my identity as a pilgrim, a disciple of Jesus and a precious child of God.

From that moment on, this identity has been the bedrock of my life, the foundation upon which everything else stands. Its solid security has enabled me to be (by and large) a happy and cheerful person. Through the eyes of this identity, I look back and gratefully recognize the Father's bounty towards me and also eagerly look forward to the many blessings stored up in the future. The not-so-good situations that periodically arise, can never detract from that identity and the security it gives. The pleasant experiences on the other hand affirm and strengthen the experience of being cherished by the Father.

Beautiful as this experience has been, it has come with challenging implications. I briefly mention three challenges that flow from the experience itself. The first and strongest challenge is the obvious implication that all are my brothers and sisters. What then do I make of the injustice and inequality all around? How can I talk about the providence of God in the face of so much suffering? I continue to struggle with this question. A second challenge has been the realization that my experience is couched in terms that are not gender neutral. My recent engagements in ecological issues have opened me up to the motherly, nurturing features of God but there's still a long way to go before this insight is fully integrated into my spirituality. Finally, there is the temptation to domesticate God, to reduce the Divine to a benevolent father-image and stay within the comfort of a filial relationship. The guidance of wise spiritual directors has helped me to recognize this pitfall, move beyond sentimental images, and embrace the uncertainty that is part of any mature relationship.

Identity and mission are inseparable and my identity as beloved son has shaped my understanding of mission. The apostolic works assigned to me have been varied, but through them all, the underlying mission of my life has been the same – to encourage and guide others towards discovering (or deepening) their own belovedness and identity. In fact, I see this article as part of that same mission. My intention here is not merely to share about who I am or what has happened to me. What I really desire is that the vulnerability of sharing my experience may serve as a catalyst for you dear readers to cherish and deepen your own God-experience. Yes, each one of us has had our own Abba experience, our own unique cannonball moments. This article is an invitation to recognize those moments and allow them to shape our lives and destiny.

The author is the Secretary of the Faith Commission of Bombay Province.

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“My cannonball moment came thirty-four years ago while cleaning a library shelf in the novitiate!”

A Chapel with a Cosmic Countenance



Photo Courtesy: Sabina Pathrose, RGS

When we, the Good Shepherd Sisters, decided to build our new Provincialate in 2018, in Nagpur, I dreamt of a chapel which would reflect emerging spirituality. I wanted it to embrace the Universe and its interconnectedness, and demonstrate that we are all part of a greater reality.

On a visit to Eluru, in a small chapel, I was delighted to see the same design I had in my mind. I convinced the artist, Johnson Puthenpurackal, a Capuchin Priest, to come to Nagpur to paint our chapel.

Initially there was some objection from the Parish Priest, but we insisted, "this is our Chapel and we will design it the way we want." However, for the inauguration, to pre-empt any unnecessary comments, an explanation of the backdrop was provided.

The painting depicts the universe singing the glory of God, and proclaiming the Divine Presence. Although the whole cosmos is saturated with the presence of God, in a pre-eminent way God is present on the Earth; we experience 'God with us'. Every church /chapel celebrates 'God with us', but as God has come down to the Earth to dwell among us, is not the Earth the tabernacle of God's presence?

'God with us' reminds us that God's presence on the earth is a dynamic, creative presence, continuously creating the universe, keeping the cosmos moving in perfect order, rhythm and beauty.

'God with us' as a salvific presence that saves the whole cosmos is represented by the cross of redemption, adorned with the Good Shepherd's staff, linking heaven and earth, and the Divine and the human.

'God with us' shouts aloud the sanctifying presence of God symbolised by the sun lighting up the whole cosmos. The whole universe is made holy by the merging of the sacred and the secular.

Dwelling in and caring for our common home in the universe, we become cosmic persons in our cosmic home, where everyone and everything is interrelated and interdependent. It is the re-enactment of creation with its spirituality of the cosmic embrace, ecological homeliness and paradise.

In the cosmic spirituality of interrelation, the Blessed Virgin Mary stands prominent, since it is through her unconditional fiat that the Divine came down to dwell, one among humans in the world.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Instruments for Liberation



Image Source: The Better India

Is it possible to give the marginalised children a future by musical instruments? If you happen to listen to Dr Luis Dias, Goa, you will realise that it is possible. He is an obstetrician and gynaecologist who practised in India for 10 years, and spent a decade in the UK. But today he runs Child's Play Foundation that works with children from socially and economically marginalised communities to empower them through western classical music. The kids are taught the violin, viola, cello, recorder, transverse flute and piano, which they then perform in concerts across the state. And they earn for their living. More importantly, in the process of learning instruments, they learn life skills to build their self-esteem and positive attitude to overcome their past.

That life changing moment happened when Dr Dias attended a BBC concert in July 2007 at the Royal Albert Hall in London. The concert was played by the poor and underprivileged children from South Africa and South America. The children told him that music saved their lives from drugs and crime. This made a huge impact on him. He gave up his lucrative career in UK, and returned to India to

found Child's Play that provides the kids of the underprivileged communities a high self-esteem and a sense of direction in their lives, by teaching them to play musical instruments and conduct concerts that are attended by people of all walks of life. The foundation started the Santa

Cruz Village Project that works with schools to conduct after school projects, teach these village children instruments and conduct two concerts a year. The foundation has two orchestras – the Camerata Child's Play India for senior students, teachers and local musicians from the community, and Junior Camerata Child's Play for younger students (<https://childsplayindia.org>).

Learning musical instruments creates a platform for the children who can't afford formal school education to uncover their hidden creative potentials. It gives them a sense of self-dignity in the context of their past life on the peripheries of society. The music keeps them away from dangers of abuse. It is both creative in terms of music, and transformative in the sense of the social change that is seen in their lives. A simple transverse flute is then not just an instrument of music but an instrument for liberation – a musical social transformation.

