

December 2019 - January 2020

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**God's
Presence,
God's
Present**

The True Peace of the Prince

Jesus, the Nazarene, the Prince of Peace,
Sends a message to a world beleaguered,
Yearning for Reconciliation,
And for an elusive but abiding Peace:

"If it is the Peace of the Messiah you seek,
Seek it not in the Stillness of the Bethlehem Night
For that is long gone, although never forgotten;
Find it rather in the gathering Storms over your shores,

In the broken lives of those driven out of their ancestral homes,
Forced to live near poisoned rivers that once spawned life,
Or inhabit the wounded forests felled by inhuman greed,
On streets and bastis, forced to eke out a sub-human existence.

Find My Peace on farmlands that witnessed Mass Suicides;
Where children inconsolable cry as their mothers wail in vain,
You will find Peace in the decrepit homes of the victims of Hate
Who long for your gentle touch and reassuring presence.

You will find that Peace in the Movements and Marches
Of Farmers marching to ask for their right to live with dignity,
Of Women and children harassed, used and abused,
When you call out abusers, stalkers and predators.

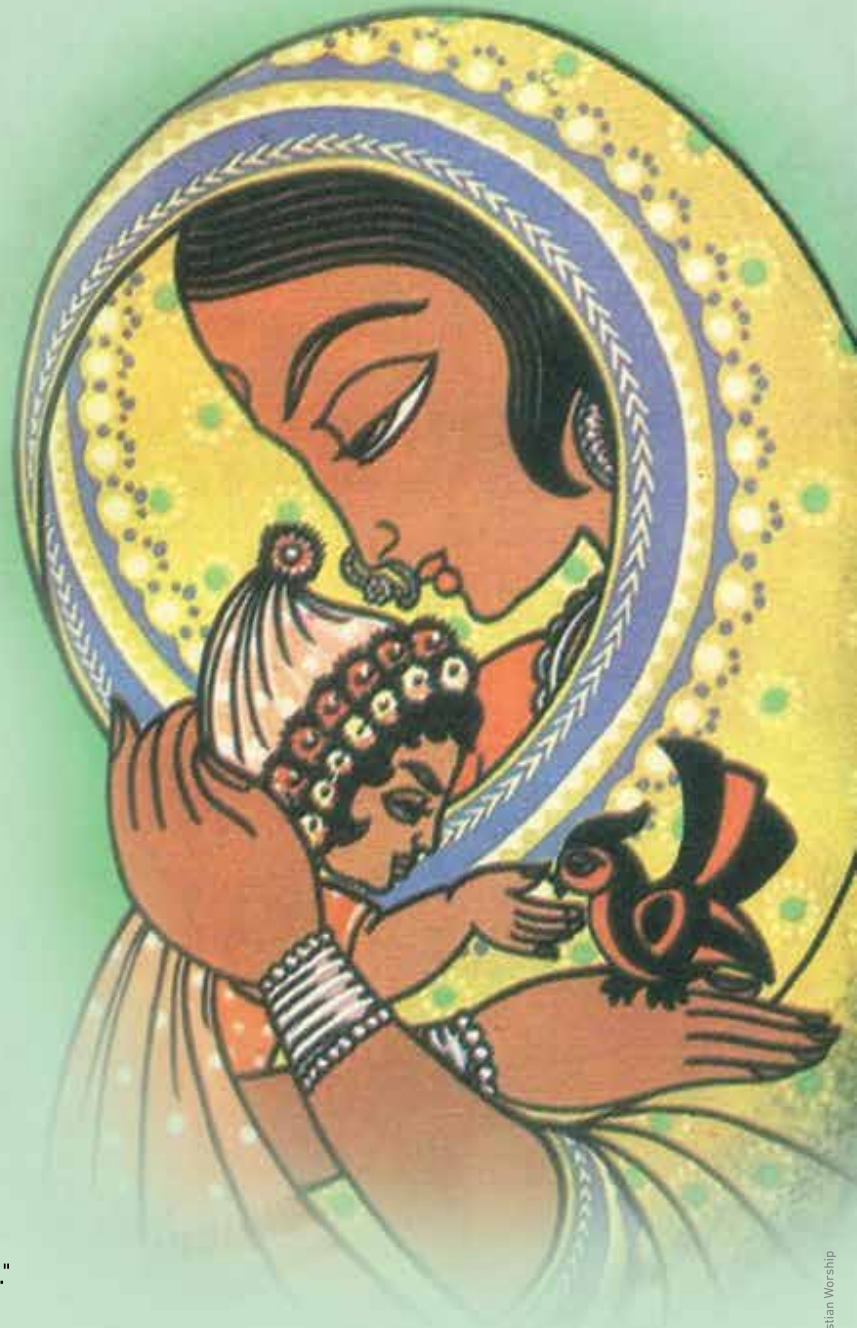
The Peace you seek will never be found in acts of Conformism
But only in determined resistance and deeds of daring Activism
That expose manufactured Lies and speak Truth to Power
Which invites their wrath, unleashing despicable acts of terror.

The abiding Peace I give comes not without a Price,
You will be hauled up before Prelates and Princes,
And done in for your Faith in the God of Compassion and Justice.
You will then find the Peace you seek, in the Mission accomplished."

Anthony Dias, SJ

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Cover: The portrayal of Mary on a Lotus was envisaged and initiated by Jesuit historian Fr. Henry Heras, SJ and Angelo da Fonseca in the 1940s, in their endeavour to promote Indo-Christian Art. The draft design was formulated and fashioned in the bronze image in Madurai. Presented in Nataraja style, Mary is placed on a pedestal, holding Jesus with a rosary. The euphoric and exuberant expressions of the mother and child manifest the joy of God's loving presence, which is also symbolized in the halo or the circle of divinity. The Parikar surrounding the image denotes wisdom and enlightenment.
Courtesy: Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.



READER'S CREASE

IR marriages are a sign of the times

As I read Michael Amaladoss' four approaches that characterised the changing face of inter-religious (IR) dialogue, I thought to myself, "What's new? This is the woof and warp of inter-religious families!" For those who are keen to hold the strands of their relationship together, and weave a fabric coloured by diverse faiths, developing an inclusive spirituality for themselves and their children is essential. Like the pioneers of IR dialogue, these Catholics too probably start off by proclaiming Christ with the hidden hope of conversion, prodded on by the subtle, and not so subtle, pressure of parish priests, bishops and faith communities. As they enter into a dialogue of life with their spouse and children however, like the ashramites Amaladoss mentions, the hope of converting anyone slowly disappears, and the focus shifts to integrating their spouse's religion into their family's way of life: religious festivals are reinvented and take on fresh possibilities; and propelled by the desire for unity, intellectual discussions surface at regular intervals, beginning with curiosity for the unknown, and ending with introspection, freedom, and shifting paradigms. Contentious issues like Hindu nationalism, however, don't stay political, but become personal, disturbing, challenging.

Unfortunately, Catholics in IR marriages have neither the expertise that theologians enjoy, nor the pastoral care that is their due. Instead, assuming they remain practicing Catholics, their lives are circumscribed by the question, "Are your children baptised?" and the caution against syncretism. What they do have, however, is a love that is not afraid to cross 'man-made' boundaries. It's time the Church stopped undervaluing

this love and recognised that IR marriages are a sign of the times. Time too that the Church helped these families to discern the voice of the Spirit in their unique circumstances. Who knows, if it accompanied them with an open mind, the Church may hear that voice too.

| Astrid Lobo Gajiwala | Mumbai

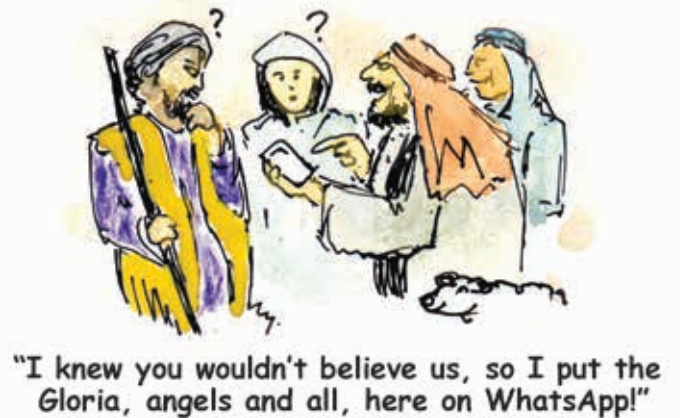
What about the bright stars among the so called second rate schools?

The last issue of Jivan (August, 2019) highlighted the lives of a number of bright stars from among Jesuit Alumni. It enumerated extraordinary achievements of some of the brightest alumni stars, a sort of extended Jesuit family. Who does not raise his head with certain amount of pride when a family member is placed among the celebrities? I congratulate you for giving us an opportunity to feel proud of our Jesuit alumni. Some years back, Mr. Karunanidhi, the then chief minister of Tamilnadu, was presiding over a function in a Jesuit College. After a number of speeches by the VIPs praising the bright alumni of the institution, Mr. Karunanidhi said: "I studied in one of the poorest government high schools of our State. How did I become the chief executive of Tamilnadu?" In other words, among the alumni of the so called second rate schools there can be bright stars, and from among the so called first rate schools one may have second rate alumni. All the same, the August issue of Jivan gave me a lot of joy. Besides, the variety of topics you choose makes Jivan excitingly readable.

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JESWITS





POSA Speaks

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ

Secular Society and the Religious World: A Dilemma of our Times?

Harvey Cox in *Secular Society* (1965) seemed to have predicted the disappearance of religion with the arrival of secularism. This did not happen. He has since nuanced his position, as religions are returning to the centre stage in the midst of growing secularism.

In the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes* (Vat II) one could say that secularism is a sign of the times through which the Spirit is speaking to us. Explaining the first Universal Apostolic Preference (to show the way to God through the Special Exercises and Discernment), Fr. Arturo Sosa reiterates the same.

'Secularism' is understood differently in the West and in the East. In the former, secularism in its extreme form denies any role for religion and, in its moderate form, is critical of religion in socio-political life. In the Asian context, secularism in its moderate sense means giving equal status to all religions, and, in its extreme forms, could mean a denial of religion.

What does secularism as a sign of the times mean to us? Fr. Arturo provides two signposts of secularism: i) a mature secularized society (MSS) opens up the space for multidimensional freedoms, including religious freedom; ii) MSS offers conditions for religious processes wherein citizens are allowed to raise profound questions related to life and existence, independent of social or ethnic pressures.

To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and Discernment means fostering growth in genuine freedom, both personal and communal. Belief in God implies growing in true freedom, choosing to believe in the God that one holds dear, and demanding the right to believe according to one's conviction. The state must concede this to its citizens, and citizens in their turn must respect each other's faith. This is true secularism.

A mature secularized society also provides the space for religious processes to grow and develop. Implied here is that citizens have the right to question notions of God, the role of religions, and the functions of various social, ethnic and cultural groups in relation to religions. Often ethnic, caste, national and racial identities stifle the religious growth of persons and communities. The growth in the right image of God and in the proper understanding of religion is enabled through the Special Exercises. Hence, the intent of the first UAP is not limited to giving Special Exercises, but extends to raising people's critical religious consciousness by asking the right questions. The celebrated phrase 'God Alone' implies seeing everything from the perspective of the Absolute, and dethroning other absolutes, be it the state, an ideology, a religion or a person. MSS enables religions to discover the true image of God and the proper role of religion.



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

Indigenous Languages: A legacy of love

The International year of Indigenous Languages will come to a close on 17th December, 2019. Jesuit commitment to Indigenous cultures, to their languages in particular, is historically known since the Paraguay Reductions. In the early seventeenth century, Jesuit Fr. Antonio Ruiz De Montoya compiled three volumes of the grammar and vocabulary of the Guarani Language of the Amazonian Indians; in the late seventeenth century, Fr. Fremin's work on Mohawk verb conjugations became an essential reference for the Mohawks (a North American tribe); Fr. Hoffman's legendary fifteen volumes of 'The Encyclopedia Mundarica' in eastern India, and the tribal grammars in Gamit, Dangi, Vasavi and Chodhari by Fr. Raymond Chauhan in recent years are all just a glimpse of the Jesuit legacy of erudite scholarship in indigenous languages.

The commitment of the Society of Jesus to the indigenous and their culture is reiterated in the GC 34: Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, isolated and relegated to marginal social roles, see their identity, cultural legacy and natural world threatened...The General Congregation call on the whole Society to renew its long-standing commitment to such peoples. (Decree 3 no. 63) According to UNESCO's website, there are at least 2680 indigenous languages that are on the verge of disappearance today. Any restoration of languages is actually a preservation of the peoples and their social identity. So also, the Jesuit works on indigenous languages are a legacy of their love because have been a means of empowerment, education and reconciliation to the indigenous.

Means of empowerment: Language is a gateway to power and privileges (Ref. 'Things Fall Apart' by Chinua Achebe). The Tower of Babel was a shattered dream because of the sheer confusion created by languages. The disappearance of languages may not be a natural phenomenon or an accident. It is a power politics against the marginalized and what they represent. The subordination inherent in calling these languages 'dialects' is just one of the many means of exploitation. The revitalization of indigenous languages is necessary for resuscitating indigenous identities.

Means of education: Education is liberation, and languages, in their role as means of education, are effective tools of this liberation. Native languages are denied their role in education by the over emphasis on learning in a foreign medium. For the indigenous, studying in English helps in the process of becoming, "aliens in their own land", and education (imposed in a non-native idiom) is thus more enslavement than emancipation.

Means of reconciliation: History has grossly violated indigenous sensibilities and has been unjust to them. The restoration of indigenous languages can also function as a symbolic tribute, though it can never make up for the violence done to them. The affirmation of indigenous languages enhances the indigenous self-understanding, and these languages are also a meeting ground of the ethos of diverse tribes. If recognized as a system of grammar, phonetics and vocabulary like the rest, these languages are not just a means of communication, but also reconciliation. The common ground they share with other languages makes them a bridge across languages. The beauty of the tribal society and the glory of their linguistic intelligence (ref. multiple intelligence) are revealed in the codification of indigenous languages. The indigenous proverbs and idioms share in, and in turn enrich, the wealth of human wisdom.

Among some African tribes, when one wants to eliminate the other, they curse them saying "May you forget your mother tongue." Shall we bless our beloved indigenous tribes by saying "May no one ever forget your mother tongue?"

Jivan thanks Fr. Job Kozhamthadam, SJ and Ms. Susan George for their editorial assistance in this issue on Indigenous languages.



The Synod of the Amazon



Image Source: Reuters

misguided policies and huge predatory economic projects which only aim for immediate profits for a few.

Obviously, this does not mean that we should be satisfied. The accomplishment of the synod is a milestone, but it is far from the point of arrival of the mission we have to carry out for the Amazon. On the contrary, the synod ended with the presentation of a series of proposals, delivered to the Pope, who can then resume them in the form of Apostolic Exhortation so that we can all guide ourselves for years to come. For, since its preparation, the synod has represented a time to see and judge the ecclesial and social action and the environmental reality of the Pan-Amazon region. Now is the time, enlightened by this, to take action that leads to new paths for the Church in the Amazon, and to an integral ecology that guarantees the life and care of our 'common house', the world we inhabit.

I believe that the biggest result achieved so far (important in itself) is that Pope Francis drew worldwide attention to what is happening in the Amazon in relation to the aggression against its biodiversity and its original and traditional peoples. He was not the only pope to worry about it: in fact, in 1972, Pope Paul VI affirmed to the bishops of the region that "Christ points to the Amazon." Also, Pope John Paul II, on his visit to Brazil in 1991, made a point of meeting with indigenous leaders of the Amazon, telling them: "the Church, dear Indian brothers, has been and will continue to be always by his side, to defend the dignity of human beings, to defend the right to have a peaceful and self-contained life, respecting the positive values of their traditions, customs and cultures". However, no Pope had written an encyclical specifically dealing with the theme of Integral Ecology, as Francis did with *Laudato Si*, in which he warns humanity: "there are places that require particular care for their enormous importance to the world ecosystem, or that constitute significant water reserves thus ensuring other life forms". The Pope specifically draws our gaze to the Amazon region, which is of particular concern, when he writes: "Let us mention, for example, the planet's lungs full of biodiversity, which are the Amazon and the Congo River basin, or the large water tables and glaciers. The

importance of these places for the whole planet and for the future of humanity cannot be ignored. Tropical forest ecosystems have a biodiversity of enormous complexity, almost impossible to know completely, but when these forests are burned or cut down to grow crops, in a few years many species are lost, or such areas become arid deserts" (*Laudato Si*, numbers 37 and 38).

Unfortunately, the recent events in the Pan-Amazon region this year show that the Pope's concerns, reinforced by the testimonies of the indigenous and ecclesial leaders present at the synod, are fully well founded and call us all to respond. Suffice it to recall that in the Brazilian Amazon alone, at least 125,000 hectares of forest (the equivalent of 172,000 football fields) have been cleared since early 2019 and then burned. The murders of indigenous leaders seeking to defend their lands from invaders and illegal loggers and minerals continue unchecked. The current Brazilian government has been unable to prevent this, leaving the forest and its people increasingly defenseless.

In fact, the final document approved by the synod Fathers and delivered to Pope Francis emphatically denounces this sad reality, stating:

"The Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of pain and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences for peoples' lives. This unique socio-environmental crisis was reflected in the presynodal listening that pointed to the following threats to life: appropriation and privatization of natural assets, such as water itself; legal timber concessions and illegal logging; hunting and predatory fishing; unsustainable mega-projects (hydropower, forest concessions, massive logging, monocultures, roads, waterways, railways, and mining and oil projects); pollution caused by extractive industry and urban dumps; and, above all, climate change. These are real threats with serious social consequences: pollution-related diseases, drug trafficking, illegal armed groups, alcoholism, violence against women, sexual exploitation, human trafficking and smuggling, organ sales, sex tourism, loss of original culture and identity (language, spiritual practices and customs), criminalization and murder of

Personally, I believe that for those who are born or live in the Amazon, the Pan-Amazon Synod was a time of *kairos*, for all our communities to see how much the Church, led by Pope Francis, is interested in listening to us and knowing more about our reality, to better serve God's people here. I have no doubt that it was the Holy Spirit that inspired the idea of calling a synod to reflect on the urgent need to save the Amazon biome, and by extension the entire planet, from the threats of destruction that come from



The Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of pain and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences for peoples' lives.”

territory leaders and defenders. Behind all this are the economic and political interests of the dominant sectors, with the complicity of some rulers and some indigenous authorities. The victims are the most vulnerable sectors, children, youth, women and the sister of mother earth” (Final document, 10).

The scientists invited to the synod also warned of serious changes caused by aggression to the Amazon, which the final document also mentions: “The scientific community, in turn, warns of the risks of deforestation, which so far represents almost 17% of the total Amazon forest, and threatens the survival of the entire ecosystem, threatening biodiversity and changing the life cycle of water to the survival of the rainforest. In addition, the Amazon also plays a key role as a buffer for climate change and provides invaluable fundamental life support systems related to air, water, soils, forests and biomass. At the same time, experts recall that by using advanced bioeconomy and technology for an innovative bioeconomy of standing forests and flowing rivers, it is possible to help save the rainforest, protect Amazonian ecosystems and indigenous and traditional peoples, and at the same time at the same time provide sustainable economic activities” (11).

Faced with this worrying scenario, the synod Fathers call for a serious integral conversion, which includes “ecological conversion” and the abandonment of “ecological sins”, which is all that hurts or kills God’s creation, which wants life in abundance for all.

The synod served also as a reminder that we must all be guardians of God’s work. However, the protagonists of the care, protection and defense of peoples’ rights and the rights of nature in this region are primarily the Amazonian communities themselves. They must be the agents of their own destiny, of their own mission. Our role as Church here is that of an ally: indigenous peoples have clearly expressed that they want the Church to walk with them, without imposing on them a particular way of being, a specific mode of development that has little to do with their cultures, traditions and spiritualities. For they know how to care for the Amazon, how to love and protect it; what they need is for the church to support them.

From the most ecclesial point of view, a striking feature of this special synod was the experience of “synodality” lived in those twenty-one days, the experience of walking together as a Church united in its diversity, but always united around the person of the Pope, who was always present in every session (called congregations). The synod was quite a diverse group: indigenous leaders, Roman Curia cardinals, theologians, religious, scientists, missionaries, bishops, etc., but there was always a climate of great respect for each participant’s opinion and the sincere search for a consensus that would express what God was asking for at this synod.

Since the synod’s convocation, the Pope has insisted that our mission was to seek new ways for the Church and not to repeat what it has been doing in the

Amazon. I believe that the Holy Spirit drew us strongly towards a pastoral presence that would further strengthen the leadership of the laity in general and of women in particular. This is already happening in many places in the interior that lack the presence of priests. The synodal priests recognize that these leaders must be given greater empowerment so that they can, in fact, represent the Church institutionally and ministerially.

Post the synod is the time to act; to this end, we have 120 points approved by the synod Fathers constituting the final document delivered to the Pope. The Pope himself has promised to write his apostolic exhortation on the themes dealt with therein by the end of the year. Let us wait, then, for the guidance that Francis will give to all Catholics, which will surely be well used by other churches, religions, governments and people of goodwill in general. From a more internal and ecclesial point of view, it is hoped that this initiative (the synod) will lead to a strengthening of the creation of a Church with an increasingly Amazonian face.

The author is a Brazilian Jesuit and the current director of the San Pietro Favre Center for the formation of formators. He is also a professor at the Institute of Spirituality, Gregorian University, Rome.

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JCSA STATEMENT ON THE EMERGING SITUATION IN JHARKHAND

The recent developments in the state of Jharkhand are a cause of concern for every citizen of India. The democratic institutions and rule of law have collapsed in Jharkhand, resulting in efforts to amend Chotanagpur/Santal Pargana Tenancy (CNT/SPT) Acts meant to protect tribal land, initiation of laws which alienate tribals from their natural and other resources, causing ecological damage, continual deprivation of tribal communities of their religious code, infringement of the rights of minorities by promulgating anti-conversion law, threat to the life and property of civil society groups, mob lynchings, vandalization of educational institutions, and criminals with political patronage acting with impunity.

In recent years, Jharkhand has become a laboratory for the promotion of majoritarian hegemonic rule, with the toxic mix of Politics-Religion-Corporate World, Media, vitiating the social fabric. There is a systematic attempt to target minorities and their institutions and malign the educational, health and social services as attempts at conversion of people to Christianity. Any attempt to empower tribals with rights and entitlements enshrined in the Constitution of India and various socially-relevant legislations is branded as seditious or criminal activity. As a result, false cases with fabricated evidence are foisted against tribals, minorities and other vulnerable groups. Christian institutions are coming under increasing scrutiny as a means of harassment. The Jesuits and others, who have worked for nation building for years in Jharkhand, serving all strata of society, are called to respond to this crisis keeping in mind their mission of justice, reconciliation and peace. This response is proposed as follows:

1. There is a need to involve all stakeholders, Government and non-Government, to develop a new narrative for Jharkhand that celebrates its rich cultural diversity, and multiple ethnic and religious communities.
2. In the context of the assertion of identities by different ethnic and religious groups, efforts are needed to promote inter-religious dialogue, social harmony and peace among different communities living in Jharkhand.
3. There is a need to engage with the process of policy making at every level of governance to ensure that a sustainable model of development – which is equitable, people-centric, eco-friendly and financially viable – is evolved to the benefit of all sections of society.
4. There is a need to lead a process of political socialization based on the Preamble of the Constitution of India, testing every Government legislation, policy or initiative to its relevance in making the Preamble a lived reality for every citizen of the country. In this regard, efforts must be made to ensure that tribals of Jharkhand enjoy the rights of Scheduled Tribes as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the subsequent legislations, such as Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) 1996, Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006, and SC/ST Atrocities Act, 1989.

Jesuits and their collaborators called to be active workers of peace and reconciliation, resolve to stand by the persecuted and vulnerable sections of society in the state of Jharkhand. In particular, the Jesuit Conference of South Asia, expresses its solidarity with tribals, dalits, minorities, and other victims of various forms of violence, including Jesuits and those who have been implicated in false cases on account of their committed service to them in Jharkhand.

28th Oct, 2019, RANCHI

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ
President, Jesuit Conference of South Asia



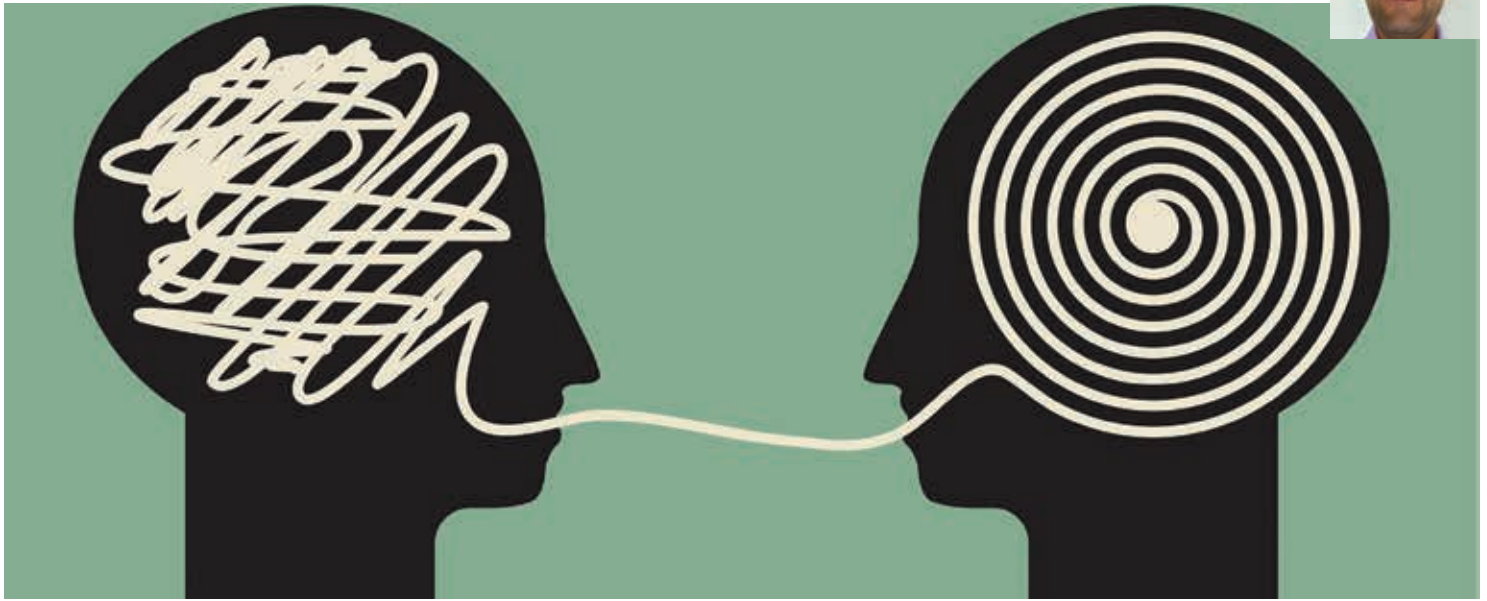


Image Source: Carleton University

Expressive Club

Philosophical Implication of Language

“With globalization, the so called less important traditions, cultures, languages, and even species,” said Mrs. Sofie as introduction to the gathering of the Expressive Club in a building she owned. Her husband, a social activist who died in an accident a few years back, had been a Rajput who inherited property, which she now managed. “An inability to express one’s thoughts in properly and in the proper place is the cause of chaos in society,” he used to tell her. His social activities made people interact. He would arrange for interactions among the same categories of people at first, and with different categories later. People with white and blue collar jobs coming together to express their thoughts in a friendly manner was a sight to behold. In memory of her husband, Mrs. Sofie established the Expressive Club, a home for the aged, and an orphanage. The club gathered once a week. Many topics flowed naturally, so no one was hurt because of the nature of the discussion. Their relationship was stronger because of the way they chose to be club members, thinking critically, and using self-evaluation. The club met in the evening every weekend.

A moment’s pause followed Mrs. Sofie’s introductory remark. A slow murmur started to clarify the impact of the remark which summarized the marking of the year as the international year of indigenous languages.

“Friends, shall we give attention to languages this evening?” Cosmy, an Anglo-Indian lady, said. A CEO of a multinational company, she had a deep love for interpersonal relationships.

“I think we need to discuss a little more deeply on this topic,” said Darshan, a retired IAS officer. “The discussion is needed because a language is not merely a means of communication but reflects culture and philosophy, a way of life; in a word, it is an individual just like a person.”

“Culture and way of life seem far-fetched,” said Charvak, the retired professor of Humanities. A bachelor with a cheerful personality, he was easygoing, spending most of his time in taking care of the home for the aged. “Words, like culture, are only concepts without solid objects,” he said.

“You are right,” said Darshan, smiling. “These concepts reveal what kind of life people lead. For example, proverbs reflect the way of life of a people speaking a particular language.”

“Are not proverbs of different languages the same?” queried the lecturer.

“If you compare Indian languages, yes. Most Indian languages have some similarity among the proverbs. But if you compare with European languages like English, you find the differences.”

“Perhaps because of the proverbial similarity in the Indian languages, the Indian psyche is also similar,” mused a psychoanalyst.

“It is on these grounds that Brahmabandhav Upadhyay declared that all Indians have the same psyche. He says, ‘We are Hindus so far as our physical and mental Constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholics.’ The term ‘Hindu’ is synonymous with ‘Indian’ for him. Our psyche is built on the language we speak,” said a young man interested in inter-faith dialogue.

“Looks like language is not mere conceptual! Can you tell me how the proverbs differ, revealing the psyche of people?” Charvak asked.

Darshan answered, “Well, take for example the repaying of debt. In Telugu there is a proverb: the creditor pinches the nose of the debtor to collect his money; but in English, it is the debtor ‘who pays through his nose!’”

“There are similar proverbs in other Indian languages which say that the creditor has to work hard to get his money back,” said another member.

Someone said, “There’s spirituality in this saying. That is, the creditor is attached to money and its interest. For this attachment, he suffers.”

“Wow, what an interpretation! Have you come across any proverb that is directly connected spirituality?”

Darshan responded, “I don’t know how to differentiate spirituality and life. Some proverbs reflect our way life, which can be called spirituality or philosophy.”

“Yeah, it is something to do with the way of life,” the member replied.

Darshan continued, “This particular proverb tells us that however high you go your bottom faces downwards!”

There was a moment’s pause followed by loud laughter. They were still giggling when Cosmy said, “Hey, that reminds me of the English proverb, ‘the higher you go, the clearer will be your bottom’.”

Darshan added another aspect to language using Tennyson (West) and Basho (East). He quoted Tennyson first:

Flower in the crannied wall

I pluck you out of the crannies

Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,

Little flower – if I could but understand

What you are, root and all, and all in all,

I should know what God and man is.

It tells us that humans are great and the plant, a little thing that can be ‘plucked’ and examined! Scientific knowing is dissecting and, consequently, killing!

Then he quoted Basho, a Zen mystic:

When I look carefully,

I see the nazunia blooming

By the hedge!

Nazunia is a grass-flower. The exclamatory mark in the poem indicates wonder at the creation. Both poems try to understand the mystery of the universe, but their ways are different, which is reflected in the languages.

Cosmy thought this may lead to considering one linguistic tradition, ‘high’ and said, “Differences are good as

on the subject. Does something strike you with regard to poetry and way of life?”

The hall was silent as everyone looked at Darshan expectantly. He smiled, “Friends, it’s not easy to divide the way of life of different linguistic groups into water-tight compartments. My observation is that there are two ‘psyches’, West and East. The Western psyche is one of haste, industriousness. We can see it in Robert Frost’s, ‘The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep’. These words represent the entire Western way of life. The Eastern way is that of leisure. Take Rabindranath Tagore for example. In Gitanjali he writes, ‘I ask for a moment’s indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards’. Both psyches have their positives and negatives. The

Western psyche tries to achieve goals and, in the bargain, there is a danger of restlessness, leading to depression, whereas, the Eastern psyche is oriented towards peace, calm and quietness. There is the danger of lethargy, scientific and technological degradation. I think I have done justice in clarifying two different kinds of psyches influenced by language.”

There was loud applause. Sofie addressed the gathering, “It is great that we’ve gathered here and discussed the way of life and the contribution of linguistic traditions. It’s good to have one language to communicate that brings people together. At the same time, each language contributes to the uniqueness of culture and philosophy. Therefore, it is good that the children be taught their language at the elementary level. And, as they grow, a common language for communication can be learnt.”

All nodded their heads in agreement. An aroma of food rose, and Cosmy said, “I think dinner is ready.”

The discussion ended and the members got up to help with the arrangements.



Image Source: learn English abroad

Gandhiji remarked about the beauty of India as a bouquet with various flowers. It is beautiful to have differences in thinking and expression.”

Sofie, who had been following the discussion, said, “The gathering seems fruitful. Shall we take a break for some refreshments? Today, I had two helpers in preparing snacks, just like with our discussion.”

There was applause as two club members entered with refreshments. After everybody had served themselves, Sofie continued, “From a simple discussion on indigenous languages we have gone on to philosophy, which is an expression of a way of life in a particular language. Poets are philosophers who portray this. Darshan, you seem to have vast knowledge

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A Language that could not be Written

The Story of Hrusso Aka



Such acts of scholarship were no mere accidents or optional undertakings, but were at the heart of our way of proceeding: of recognising, respecting and affirming divine beauty in all cultures. The story that follows is inspired by this great heritage.

Hrusso Aka – an Endangered Language

A 57 mile journey north on national Highway 15 from the historical town of Tezpur, Assam, leads one to a small town called Bhalukpong. The plains of Assam end here and the Himalayan foothills rise abruptly, as if to hide the mysteries of the mountainous realm beyond from the rest of the world. This realm is the frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh, home to 90 languages according to the 2011 Linguistic Survey of India, and around a 100 tribes and sub-tribes.

Bhalukpong marks the beginning of the territory of a small indigenous tribe called Hrusso Aka, or simply Aka, who speak a language of the same name. Numbering about seven thousand, the Akas live in twenty-eight small villages and two towns in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Though numerically small, the Akas appear repeatedly in the colonial records for two reasons: because of their determined resistance to British rule under the leadership of their chief Täge Raja (Tagze in Aka) in the nineteenth century; and because of their language, which was thought to belong to the Tibeto-Burman family but was found to be puzzlingly different from its neighbours. In 1909, G.A. Grierson, the then in charge of the Linguistic Survey of India, remarked that Hrusso Aka was a little-understood language with very complex fricative sounds. Aka has a fascinating phonetic structure with complex consonant sequences and whispery vowels; its words sometimes sound as though many consonants are crammed together without vowels. The Aka word for ginger, for example, sounds like tkhrñ, for tiger, htsh, and the word for a neighbouring clan which others call Yame, sounds like khtskshñ.

A Foundational Grace

The desire to learn, promote and empower languages is a foundational grace that the Society of Jesus has enjoyed from its very inception. Throughout the history of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits have engaged in writing grammars and have contributed to the survival and growth of languages.

The Palizi Mission

The Jesuit mission among the Hrusso Akas started in 1998, when the people of Palizi village invited us to open a school among them. Inspired by our linguistic tradition, the pioneers of the Mission, Paul Coelho and Thomas Matthew, took a keen interest in the language straightaway. Thomas started staying

Photo Courtesy: Vijay A. D'Souza, SJ

with a family – utterly surprising everyone in the village that these highly educated people would bother to learn their language. I arrived in Palizi in April 1999. The Kohima Jesuit Region, blessed with two-hundred languages in the seven states under its care, had a policy that every scholastic learn a local language before his ordination, and I was tasked with learning Aka.

I anticipated some difficulty due to the complexity of the language, but nothing had prepared me for the challenges I actually encountered. First of all, Hrusso Aka was unscripted. This meant that I had to find ways to learn it without the usual linguistic tools of grammar, dictionary, or other forms of printed materials. Secondly, what really surprised me was the fact that there was widespread pessimism about the future of the language among the native speakers themselves. “What is the use of teaching our language to the children? It won’t earn them a living” was a recurring answer to the question as to why they were teaching their children Hindi instead of Hrusso Aka. I began wondering about the future of this language whose native speakers themselves were nonchalantly resigned to its extinction.

A Language that could not be Written

It did not take the Palizi Jesuits long to recognize the urgency of finding a way to write Hrusso Aka. This privileged task eventually fell to me, and led to my creation of an orthography (alphabet) for the language based on the Latin script. I was entrusted with preparing the first printed book in Aka – a collection of prayers designed for children, published in June 1999.

The Akas believed at that time that their language could not be written. Their mythology tells them that the primeval ancestor, Busulu Awu, gave them their alphabet on a piece of buffalo skin which they roasted and ate since they were hungry. This is why, they believed, that while their neighbours (the Assamese and the Tibetans) have their scripts, the Akas do not. When we published the first book therefore, there was excitement all around. Subsequently some of our catechists, and other ordinary village folk transcending the boundaries of different faiths, readily volunteered to spend days, weeks and months translating prayers, narrating stories, and writing songs. The foundation was thus laid for a collaborative endeavour and from then on there was no looking back.

Small Beginnings

Strongly encouraged by the Kohima Jesuits and the Akas, my collaborators and I were able to regularly produce elementary literature. The first school textbook ‘Ako Na Kako’ (Little Children’s Book, 2005) was an instant success, and so was the collection of prayers and two hundred hymns, Nugu Dziiwsa (Beautiful Songs, 2012). This has been the most important work so far in terms of its reach and impact. The book is being extensively used, and was even reprinted this year, a truly happy event considering how recently the alphabet was introduced. Last year a children’s storybook, Ako Na Shipyow, and this year the first alphabet chart, Gusso Gitrü were published, both with coloured illustrations drawn entirely by local artists.



The author with some of the literature team members

Photo Courtesy: Vijay A. D'Souza, SJ

Bhalukpong marks the beginning of the territory of a small indigenous tribe called Hrusso Aka, or simply Aka, who speak a language of the same name. Numbering about seven thousand, the Akas live in twenty-eight small villages and two towns in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. ”

Technology can be useful in helping young people rediscover their language. To encourage language use among young people, we have released a mobile ‘talking dictionary’ android app, a language-promotion website, and a mobile keyboard. An AI-supported mobile keyboard for predictive texting in collaboration with Microsoft’s Swiftkey is being tested and will be released soon.

An important milestone for Hrusso Aka was when I was awarded the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) scholarship in 2015 which enabled me to document, again with unwavering support from my Aka collaborators, a hundred hours of Hrusso Aka as it is spoken today. The digital recordings resulting from this project will be archived in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, as a permanent online record of the language and an important resource for future generations.

Signs of Hope

Has all this work over the last twenty years made a difference for Hrusso Aka? It is too early to say, but there are clear signs of hope. Among the children who excitedly urge us for more every time we experiment with our new teaching materials, among the village women who are teaching themselves how to read their language, and among the Churches where songs from Nuġu Dzüwsa are sung week after week, the Aka language is slowly but surely coming to life again.

(Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Rob Marsh, SJ and Yervant Kuchukian, Campion Hall, Oxford, for their comments and suggestions)

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Krista Purana

Thomas Stephens' Contribution to Indigenous Language

Four hundred years ago, during the time of inquisition, of forced conversions and of zealous Romanization, a Jesuit practiced enculturation. His contribution to the religious language of Goa is noteworthy and commendable.

Life and Work

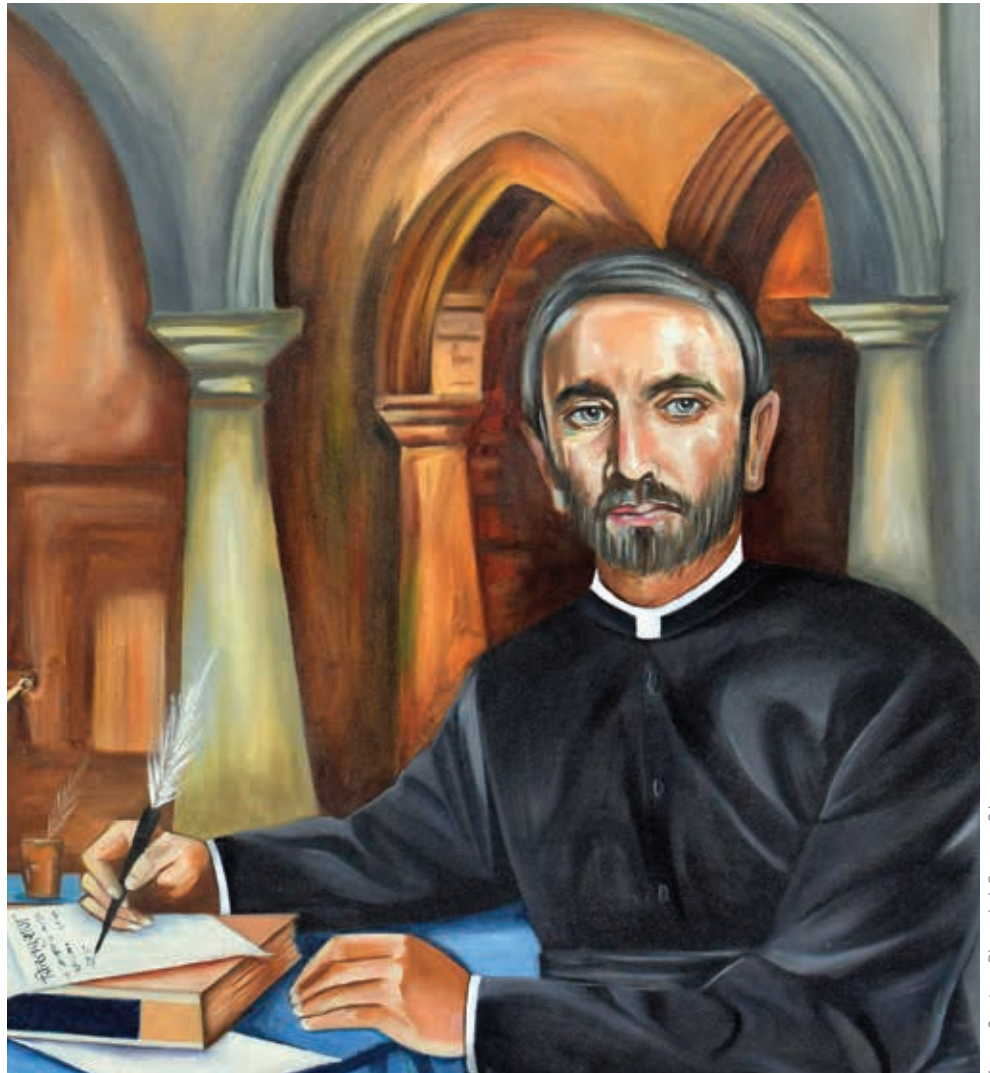
Thomas Stephens (1549-1619) was the first British Jesuit to land in Goa (24 October 1574).

He wrote *Arte de lingua Canarin* (1640), the first grammar of Konkani for Portuguese missionaries who came to Goa. He also wrote a Konkani catechism *Doutrina Christi en lingua Bramana-Canarin* (1622). He is known for his master piece, *Krist Puran* (1616, 1649 and 1654).

Appropriate Medium

Stephens took pains to master the local language, culture and the Marathi literary language which was the medium of religious communication. He created *Krista Purana*, the magnificent epic, for the natives of Sashti or Salcete, South Goa. This *magnus opus* has 10641 strophes in the Marathi ovi meter, which could be recited or sung in the temple or church. He composed it for religious instruction to converts from Hinduism whose former spiritual life was nurtured by famous Marathi spiritual classics like *Jnaneshwari* and *Eknathi Bhagavat*. The Marathi literature of that time was mainly spiritual and religious, created by the saint-poets of Bhagavat sect. Their spirituality was based on the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and the Puranas.

Stephens' ingenuity and originality are truly laudable: he composed the *Krista Purana* to illustrate his theology through the Biblical history of salvation. His genius consists in his own unique approach: entering the Hindu world through imbibing



Official painting of Fr. Thomas Stephens, SJ (1549-1619) released by University of Bombay on the occasion of his fourth death centenary.

its traditions, spiritual theology, and culture, and using poetic language as a medium of instruction, thus bring the Hindu world into Christianity and enabling amicable dialogue between these two great religions. Stephens created new words, phrases, theological terms and concepts to elucidate the Tridentine theology of salvation, influencing both the Hindu and Christian cultures of Goa through *Krista Purana*. This pioneering venture enriched religious language and literary expressions.

Though *Krista Purana* was written for theological instruction, its quality compels even non-Christian Marathi scholars to acclaim it as a classical master piece in Marathi literature: it was prescribed as a text for postgraduate studies in Marathi by the University of Pune, evidence of its scholarly and linguistic standard.

The Choice of Marathi

Stephens composed *Krista Purana* in literary religious Marathi because it was the standard medium of religious instruction, and though Konkani was the language of the people, it could not adequately convey religious and theological concepts. Also, Stephens had mastered Marathi well and was competent enough to create and use Indian terms efficiently to expose and express Christian theology. To make it still more interesting and appealing, the epic is composed as a sincere dialogue between an ardent Brahmin seeker of salvation and the padre guru, the competent teacher and guide to spiritual liberation.

Linguistic Contribution

In the beginning of the *Krista Purana*, Stephens praises the linguistic capacity of Marathi for expressing Christian theology to the Brahmin audience: it is like the jasmine among the fragrant flowers and the peacock among beautiful birds. He expanded Catholic doctrine and explained it not in the pedantic prose of scholars and theologians, but using the vividly expressive poetic language of the saint-poets. His poetry uplifts the seeker's heart, and his use of beautiful similes and other figures of speech communicates ever deeper nuances of religious experiences and mysticism.

The structure of *Krista Purana* follows the model of other Puranas: it begins with respectful salutation of the Blessed Trinity and seeks blessings from Jesus Christ (vishva bharita) who pervades the universe, and God the Father (Deo bapa), the Almighty (Sarva Samartha), the one True God (Satya parameshwar), and the Creator of heaven and earth (svarga prithvicha rachanara). Though these concepts are typically Christian, the specific terms and words used belong to Hindu religious literature. Goa, like the rest of India, has a plurality of deities, beliefs and religious traditions. Aware of this, Stephens gently advises the new Christians to refrain from the worship of false gods, exhorting them to worship the One True God. This is how he teaches them the first of the Ten Commandments, doing it without negative and destructive criticism of their gods and beliefs.

Excellent Poetry

Stephens' descriptions of life in the Garden of Eden, and the narration of the Crucifixion of Jesus are excellent, rich in a lovely play of images and imagination, and metaphors that capture the mind and touch the heart. His description of Jesus is thoroughly Indian, portraying Him as the Lord of the blissful heaven-vaikunthnath. (Vaikuntha is the Vaishnavite term for the abode of god Vishnu.) He describes the body of the Risen Jesus as a soul in the Bhagavad Gita: fire cannot burn it; water cannot wet it; the wind cannot dry; it suffers no pain, thirst, hunger, weariness nor sleeps.

Specific Ways

Instead of Latin or Portuguese terms, Stephens' use of Marathi religious equivalents transmits Christian spirituality effectively. This proved to be interesting, captivating, and acceptable to his audience. Using Hindu contexts, religious terms and Indian imagery, Stephens created a harmonious expression of Christian spirituality: vaikuntha for heaven, narak for hell, paapa for sin, punya for merit, yajna for sacrifice, naivadya for food offering to God, samarpana for offering, deva puja for worship, are some examples. He makes it clear that moksha is not merely the liberation from rebirths, but the ultimate deliverance or salvation. He explains that Purushartha is much more than Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, the four goals of human life for Hindus; it is, instead, the ultimate goal of life for which humans are created.

Stephens carefully omitted or consistently avoided certain Hindu terms like Shruti, Veda, avatar, punarjanma and Karma that are strongly associated with deliverance from the cycle of rebirths; he accepted and adapted terms like Smriti, Puja, Deva puja, Homa, Arpan, Samarpan, Shastra, Purana, Shabda, re-interpreting them in the Catholic way. He created new terms to elucidate Christian meanings: swamiya smriti is Biblical revelation, adipurushache karma is the Sin of the First Parents or Original sin, papakarma is sin, devakatha is the story of salvation, param shastra is the Holy Bible, swarga and moksha dwara are the gates of heaven, Vaikunth-swaami is Jesus the Lord, Jnaanasnaana is the Sacrament of Baptism.

An Example of Enculturation and of Enrichment

Stephens' innovative presentation of Christ to an audience with a Hindu background is specifically commendable, as is his choice to use the most meaningful Hindu names for Jesus the Saviour: Swaami, Taaraku, Sarva-samarthu, Vishwataaraku, Vishwaacha visaavaa, Jagadguru, Vishwa-guru, Dayanidhi, Amrita sagaru, Kripanidhi, Sadguru, Vishwajanaachaa aadhaaru, Jagaacha manorathu, Mrityulokaachaa dinakaru, Patitaancha Uddhaaraku, Sarvabhutim karunaakaru, Samsaara-doshaanchaa nivaaraku, Bhavasaagariche taaru, Mokshapadaacha daataa, Sarva krupechaa varshaava, Aanandanidhi, Nitichaa surya, Jnaanidhi, Sarvajna, Gosaavi, Vaikunthasabhechi kanti, Nijagopaal, Vaidya, Anaatha naathu, Sudhaa, Moksharaaj, Sharanaagatanachaa kaivaaru, Sakal bhaktaancha aadhaaru, Krupaa saagaru, Shriguru, Swargsrishchaa swasthkaru, Vishwaachi dipti, Nishkalank vishwatej, Paramgatichaa raajaa, Daataaru, Parameshwaru etc.

Through his pastoral life and literary endeavours, Stephens contributed much to the indigenous language. His unique ways of enculturation enriched the religious and multi-cultural environments of Goa at different levels, enhancing the understanding of both the religions and of God's ways for human salvation.

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A 'Labour of Love' in Indigenous Languages



Photo: Dharmesh Barot



Fr. Raymond Chauhan, SJ

The UN General Assembly's declaration of 2019 as the 'International Year of Indigenous Languages' echoed joyfully in the tribal heartland of Gujarat on 21 February 2019, when the Hon. Governor of Gujarat, Shri O. P. Kohli, released the book *Chodhari Bhasha*. It is the last of the four volumes painstakingly researched by Fr. Raymond Chauhan SJ, author of similar work in Gamit, Dangi and Vasavi languages of the tribals of South Gujarat. Fully developed grammars of these languages, these volumes also contain analyses of several socio-cultural aspects of the tribes of South Gujarat. One may thus say that Chauhan embodies the spirit of the UN's declaration, a spirit that draws attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and strives to preserve, revitalize, and promote them at national and international levels. The state-wide accolades he received after the publication of the fourth consecutive grammar book were much-warranted recognition for tribal people, and their cultures and languages that are on the brink of extinction.

Fr. Chauhan's vernacular background and Jesuit vocation paved the way for his life-long fascination with South Gujarat's

tribals. After his ordination, he was sent to a remote parish in South Gujarat to work among the Vasava and Chaudhari tribals. Despite his good command of Gujarati, the unfamiliar tribal languages reminded him that the best way to share the Word of God with the Adivasis was in their own idiom. Fr. Chauhan embraced the challenge, learning both Vasavi and Chodhari proficiently. Little did he know that a few years later his initial pastoral fascination would evolve into a life-long mission of protecting and preserving tribal cultures and languages through documentation and publication. He spent the next two decades in South Gujarat immersed in a rigorous study that produced twelve books on various aspects of tribal life—marriage rites, songs, fables, myths, festivals, and beliefs—supplying the substratum to his labour of love on tribal languages.

The first among his voluminous works is *Gamit Bhasha nu Vyakarn* (The Grammar of the Gamit Language), published in 1997. Divided into four sections and thirty-one sub-sections, it displays the grandeur of Gamit grammar, and exudes a genuine love and admiration for the people. While part I convincingly

argues that adopting the Gujarati script for Gamit does in no way diminish the unique richness of the sweet dialect, rather affirming it; part III of the book is worthy of special mention for its presentation of the nuanced ways with which parts of speech, tenses, degrees, and modal auxiliaries are used by the Gamits. Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, former Superior General and an erudite linguist, succinctly express his praise, saying, “I know what a work a volume of this nature involves and how much serious intellectual discipline it has meant. You can be legitimately proud of this original research and scholarly work, which is very much in the spirit and tradition of the Society of Jesus.”

The second grammar book *Dangi Bhasha nu Vyakaran* (The Grammar of the Dangi Language), published in 2011, is a testament of Fr. Chauhan’s command of Dangi. Spanning over five-hundred pages, the book features Dangi proverbs, sayings, and riddles which represent the innate Dangi sense of awe and wonder for Mother Earth. The third grammar book *Vasavi Bhasha nu Vyakaran* (The Grammar of the Vasavi Language), published in 2016, though following the structural pattern of the previous grammars, uniquely features the cultural characteristics of the Vasavi community through experiences and anecdotes, and is ably supported by dozens of photographs portraying the Vasavi lifestyle.

Chodhari Bhasha (the Chaudhari Language), the fourth and the latest of Fr. Raymund Chauhan’s works on indigenous languages, was published, fittingly enough, this year on International Mother-tongue Day. A tribute to the true mother—the beloved adivasis! Chodhari Bhasha was published by the Chaudhari people themselves who bore the entire cost, owning both its publicity and sale, making its release a celebration of tribal identity and culture. The Chaudhari were only expressing their gratitude and joy for a precious gift to their community—a book treasuring their language that is on way to extinction!

Fr. Chauhan’s sociolinguistic research is an invaluable work of preservation and promotion of an endangered culture, a recognition of a people far from the mainstream. The language of politics does not allow us to understand the politics of languages, but Fr. Chauhan’s solitary effort has transcended grammars to venture into literature on tribal marriages, music, and fables, etc. The milestone of the author’s journey in tribal literature is the translation of Tagore’s Nobel-winner *Geetanjali* into not one but two tribal languages: Gamit and Dangi. The lyrics of the songs in Gamit and Dangi hymns are yet another offering to the divine indigenous languages. Their melodious compositions are the language of tribal music.

The Gujarat Sahitya Academy Award for ‘best researched book’ for *Gamit Bhasha nu Vyakaran* in 1997 is more a recognition of the tribal languages than the author. The literary masterpiece, *Gamit Dantkathao* (Gamit Fables), introduced as a text in the Master’s Programme of Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat, is yet another recognition of indigenous languages. On the occasion of the international year of indigenous languages, Fr. Chauhan’s interviews on tribal culture and languages on television and radio, together with talks at tribal seminars, are nothing but acknowledgments of the literary and cultural value of tribal languages and literature in the 21st century.

When a language dies, a culture dies, says sociolinguistics. Inversely, when a language survives, a unique way of looking at the world survives. Keeping a language alive is yet another way to unite with the divine. Can there be a better way of ‘finding God in all things’ than ‘finding God in all languages’, especially the endangered indigenous ones? If only we are tribals at heart!

“ Keeping a language alive is yet another way to unite with the divine. Can there be a better way of ‘finding God in all things’ than ‘finding God in all languages’, especially the endangered indigenous ones? ”

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Intention For
December
2019

The Future of the Very Young

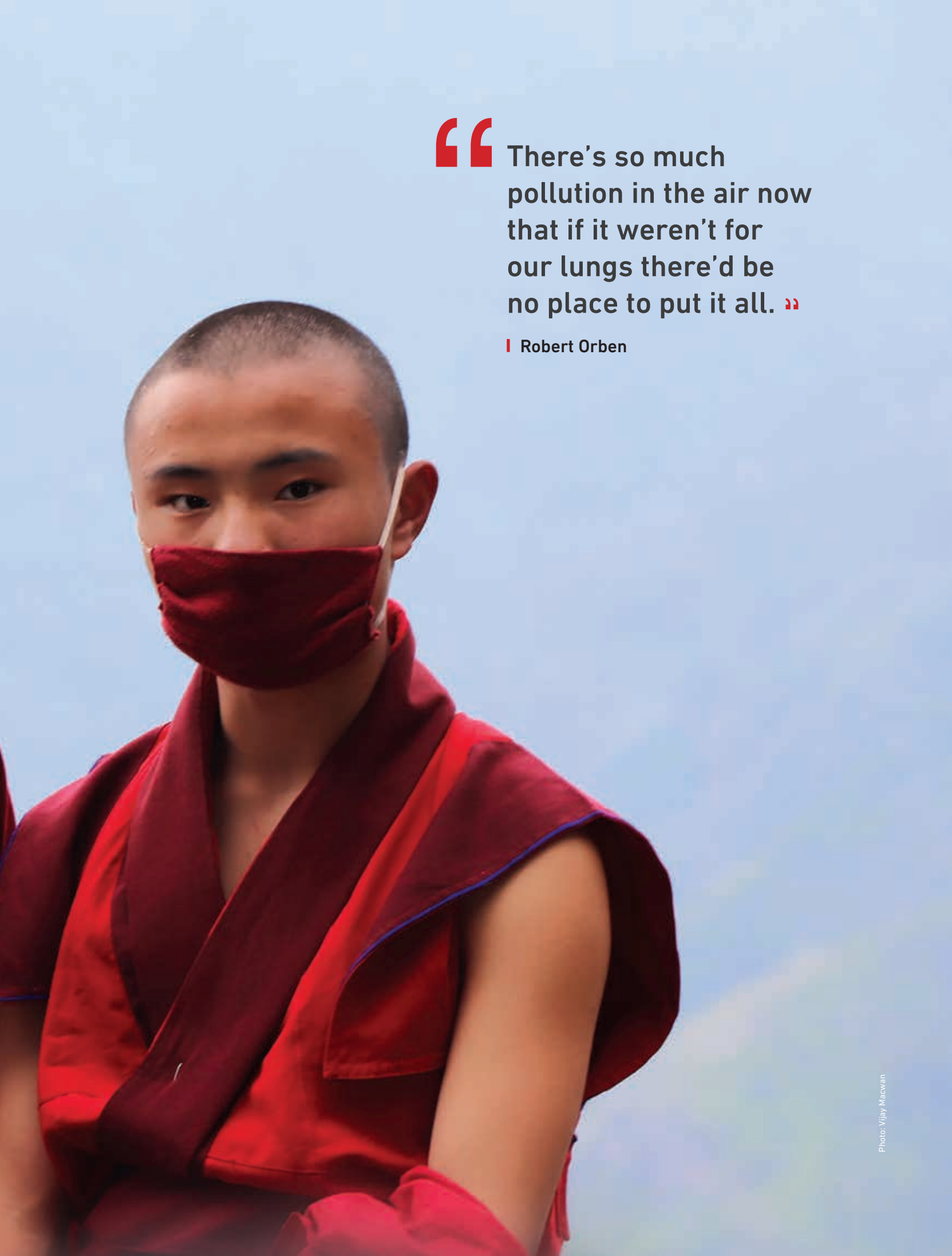
That every country determine to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority.

POPE’S
WORLDWIDE
PRAYER
NETWORK

THOUSAND WORDS

In commemoration of the National
Pollution Control Day - 2nd December





“ There’s so much pollution in the air now that if it weren’t for our lungs there’d be no place to put it all. ”

| Robert Orben



God's Presence, God's Present

For some years now I have received Christmas cards from some friends that have no reference to Jesus. On the outer page you see a bouquet of flowers, or a tree covered with buntings; on the inside are some good wishes for the season! Christmas is becoming one more item for people to make money on, one more day for some special drinks and eats, one more occasion to display our latest dress, one more chance to make a special collection. For many of us, Christmas is a birthday celebration. Like many other celebrations, it has been effectively co-opted by the consumer market. We need to rediscover the religious meaning of Christmas. Explaining Jesus' birth from a virgin, Matthew quotes Isaiah: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel—which means, God with us" (Mt 1:23; Is 7:14).

God's Saving Presence

The Old Testament reveals to us a God who is moved with compassion by the tragic situation of His people. They are the victims of all kinds of oppression and violence in Egypt. He tells Moses to go rescue them. For Moses, this is not easy: he knows that the Jews are difficult to deal with; he has already been challenged by one of them (Ex 2:14). He tries to evade the mission God is entrusting to him (3:11). God assures him of his presence with him, by revealing his name to him. "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you'" (v. 14). The expression 'I am' can have three meanings: first, God is with us right now; second, God was with our ancestors—Abraham and his descendants, and third, God will be with our descendants too. The God whom Moses is called upon to represent is the faithful God. He walks with us in our life, through all



Image Source: Global Christian Worship

our ups and downs. He is our saviour God. Moses had learnt by painful experience that the Israelites were a difficult people, and so God encouraged him: "My presence will go with you" (33.14). After the Israelites had found a permanent home, they constructed the temple at Jerusalem. God's loving presence, earlier symbolized by the tent of meeting, now gets a permanent symbolic expression in the temple (2 Chron 7.1-3).

The New Testament gives us a different picture. Matthew shows Jesus being carried by Mary and Joseph to Egypt (2.14). In Jesus, God comes to be with us. This is the meaning of Christmas. A person who really loves always participates in the tragedy of his beloved. In Jesus God makes His own our hunger and thirst, our loneliness and death. With us, He undergoes the pain and humiliation of being exploited and oppressed, sharing in our exile. Thus, the life of Jesus is a faint reflection of the compassion of God, a God who is faithful love. Jesus is the 'becoming-visible' of the mysterious divine self-emptying, whereby God comes to be with us in our tragic world. He is the effective sacrament of the compassion of God, because in him we personally experience the God of compassion. Thus, all the symbols of the Old Testament that mediated God's presence for the Israelites are now fully realized in the person of Jesus. He is God, saving his people, by being with them.

Christmas is above all a feast of joy. But this joy would be superficial without the realization of our need of salvation. It is also a humble joy: salvation is totally God's gift, completely beyond man's thinking, being the fruitfulness of a virgin womb: a paradox. Mary is the symbol of this joy, this humility, this total openness to God's creative love.

God's Unmediated Presence

Before the temple in Jerusalem was constructed, only Aaron and his sons could enter the tent of meeting, and that after donning special clothing, else that would die (Ex 28.42-43). Only the Levites could carry the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 10.8), the highest symbol of God's presence. When it was transported to the city of David, Uzzah who touched the Ark to prevent it from falling, fell dead there and then (2 Sam 6.6). After the temple was constructed, the Ark was placed in the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. Only one person, the High Priest, could enter here and that too only once a year: the Day of Atonement. He could do so only after protecting himself by putting on very special vestments, and after having observed continence from the previous sunset (Heb 9.7). In the Old Testament, God's presence was mediated by some particular place, person or symbol, evoking the idea of the separation between the ordinary and the sacred.



Christmas is not a romantic occasion, but a disturbing experience, a profound challenge. Like my God, am I really prepared to share in some way in the poverty, the suffering, the insecurity and the shame of my people? "

We see something of this mentality already in the first encounter of the Israelites with their God. Moses is directed by Yahweh to prepare the people for the coming theophany, and he is to tell them: "Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death; no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot" (Ex 19:12). Similarly, Moses pitched the tent where he met God outside the residential area of the Israelites. This meant that to meet God he had to go away from his people, and the people would stand at a distance and watch (Ex 33.7-8). In Jesus, God himself is right in our midst. "The Word became flesh and pitched his tent (skn) among us" (Jn 1.14). There is a Copernican revolution in the New Testament. The distinction between the sacred and the profane is abolished. Now we do not need any mediators before God, except Jesus, our one and only mediator (1 Tim 2.5). The New Testament writers were aware of this unmediated presence of God (Jn 4.20-24; 1 John 1.1-2).

God's Vulnerable Presence

In his ministry, Jesus acts out God's unmediated presence. He teaches us to call God 'Abba' (Lk 11.1), something no Old Testament writer would dare to do. He touches lepers and heals them; He forgives sins. Nowhere does Jesus ask anybody to approach the temple priests for any strictly ritual service. Jesus stands with those who were despised by others: the poor, lepers, tax-collectors, prostitutes, etc, annoying the self-proclaimed religious people who work to eliminate him. Taking up for the oppressed is risky.

It has been estimated that the official Church in India belongs to that top fifteen percent of this land's population who have all the comforts of life. On the other hand, the majority of our Catholics, particularly in the North, belong to the poorer section of our country. Thus, for me, Christmas is not a romantic occasion, but a disturbing experience, a profound challenge. Like my God, am I really prepared to share in some way in the poverty, the suffering, the insecurity and the shame of my people? What pains me very much is the complaint I hear from some local Christians: "The outside missionaries were much closer to us than our own priests and religious." May we not only be for but also be with our people? Then they will have a personal experience of Immanuel.

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The Dawn of a New Life



Image Source: Reddit

A spiritual journey is a unique experience. Christmas inherently promotes spiritual growth and development, and is a time for spiritual rebirth and the dawn of a new Life.

Jesus was born, and His birth was proclaimed far and wide as the son of God. Depending on where you are in your spiritual journey, you may take each word of the Christmas story faithfully. On Christmas Day we celebrate the birth of a man who wandered the earth reaching out to the lonely, the sick, the distressed, and the broken and tried to teach them how to live in the light.

Jesus was born at a time of a lack of knowledge, of false notions, insatiability, hatred, greediness and insincerity. The rulers of the Jews were self-centered and corrupt in power and wealth. The people were greedy, lethargic and self-seeking. Moral values were neglected, and Mammon, rather than God, adored.

Jesus worked a transformation in the lives of people, giving them a new and spiritual turn. Thus, dawned a new era for the

world; a spiritual awakening had taken place, and a new life of spiritual desire, purity and devotion, and the Christ-spirit was reborn within the human heart.

The real Christmas is when the Divine element expresses itself in the heart of man, and light begins to shine where earlier there was darkness; ignorance gives place to the beginning of wisdom; impurity is replaced by purity; hatred ceases and love begins to blossom in the human heart. People begin to live a new life of purity, love, humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Living a life of complete faith and dependence upon God, people think of God, talk of Him and live for Him, and so helping others becomes a real joy, as we become living witnesses of the Divine. All life's activities flow towards God.

Jesus was born in the darkness at the uncertain hour of midnight, with no one about, except a few blessed people. Spiritual awakening comes to those who look for God, who are humble, meek and poor in spirit.

This is the birth into a Divine Life. It was this mystery that Lord Jesus explained to Nicodemus two thousand years ago. Nicodemus did not quite understand what Jesus meant when He said that a man must be born again if he is to attain the Kingdom of God.

“How can this be?” He asked. Christ explained that this birth is inward, not of the body, but of the Spirit, essential if the creator is, ultimately, to be attained and for experiencing true bliss. Rejoicing takes place only when Jesus is born in our heart.

This is a challenge for today's times: we need to wake up to this significant message of Christmas. May the true implication of the Divine Jesus Personality dawn upon our hearts. Recognize that as long as the thirst for Mammon and the selfishness of power corrupt the nature of man, the Christ-spirit of peace, holiness and true happiness will not enter into our life.

When Divinity is to be manifested, we need to welcome it with open arms. Do not be so engaged in the world and refuse a place to the Lord. We need to be courageous. Welcome the fall of the Light of Grace within.

The writer is a media person and former editor of 'Jesuit Parivar' (Bombay Province).

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Jesus: A name St. Ignatius Carried in His Heart

The titular feast of the Society of Jesus, celebrated on 3rd January, is one of three solemnities in the Society; the other two are the feasts of St Ignatius and St Joseph. The importance the first fathers gave to the name of Jesus is clear from the words of St Francis Xavier, who wrote in a letter from Goa, “If I were ever to forget you, O Society of the name of Jesus, let my right hand be forgotten.”

Jesus (Yeshua) is a name that echoed in the streets of Palestine, and a name still alive on the lips and in the hearts of people around the world. St Ignatius, our founder, had a deep love for the person of Jesus, which he shared with us throughout the Spiritual Exercises. A Jesuit prayer book ‘Jesuits at Prayer’ by Ignacio Echaniz, SJ offers forty-nine names of Jesus culled out from St Ignatius’ writings. By naming the spiritual fraternity the ‘Company of Jesus’, Ignatius places Him at the centre of Jesuit life and spirituality.

It is worthwhile to cite an important text of Polanco about the origin of the name ‘Compañía de Jesús’ (the Company of Jesus): “Discussing among themselves what name they should choose, they began to pray over it and consider what name would be the most appropriate, and it seemed to them that since they had no leader among themselves nor any superior other than Jesus Christ, whom alone they desired to serve they should take his name and call themselves the Company of Jesus”. This was the origin of the name, at a time when Ignatius and his companions had not yet decided upon the foundation of a new religious order. The name ‘Company of Jesus’ received decisive conformation in the vision of La Storta. In the vision Jesus tells Ignatius, “It is my will that you serve us.”

In those days, the term ‘company’ was commonly used for organization or charitable institutions. For the first companions the focus was on the name Jesus rather than ‘company’. The word company is derived from the Latin ‘cum-pane’, which means ‘with bread’, sitting cordially together for meals.

The 1540 Bull of Paul III Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae approving the new order translated the title in Latin as Societas Jesus.

As we know, Ignatius faced much opposition while he was trying to get the name Jesus for the young Society, an adversity that did not end with acquiring approval for the Society. Many bishops and clergy felt that the appropriation of the name ‘Jesus’ for a particular order was too presumptuous. It was also denounced as blasphemous, and petitions were sent to kings, civil, and ecclesiastical tribunals to have it changed.

In 1540, 50 years after the approbations of the Society, Pope Sixtus V ordered General Acquaviva to change the name. He obediently sent to the Vatican a draft of a letter informing Jesuits to abstain from using the title Society of Jesus. The Pope was pleased with this act of submission and said he would reconsider the matter. A few days later, Pope Sixtus V died, and the issue of the name change rested for good. To this day, we are blessed by our Lord Jesus to bear his name.

From the beginning of the Church, Christians have experienced the power of the name of Jesus. Once Peter the apostle, filled with Holy Spirit, said about the name: “There is salvation in no one else: for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” (Acts. 4:12).

In the 14th century, the Desert Fathers began a Christian form of contemplation called Jesus prayer. Called monologia, it was the repetition of one word: Jesus. This was not just a devotional

exercise, but one is thus led to an affective inter-personal relation with Jesus. As Fr Sebastin Painadath SJ says in an article ‘Jesus Prayer and Jesuit Spirituality’: “The purpose of Jesus prayer is not only to develop a devotion to Jesus, but also to experience the inner power and the abiding presence of Christ within the heart.” (Ignis 2015/1, p.25).

Ignatius had this experience of the abiding presence of Christ within the heart. This devotion urged Ignatius to get the name of Jesus for his company.

In the beginning Ignatius and the First companions were called the Parisian masters, the pilgrim priests, the reformed priests, and even the Inguistas, i.e. the followers of Ignatius—all names that Ignatius disliked, preferring that they be called the company of Jesus.

In the 21st century, the Society of Jesus is a well-established religious order in the Catholic Church. Their early struggles to remain named after Jesus are no more. But to rise up to the standards of Jesus is still a challenge that every Jesuit experiences in everyday life as a companion of Jesus. For this, we must have the experience of the abiding presence of Jesus Christ within our hearts like St Ignatius and Fr Arrupe who says “fall in love with Jesus”.



Image Source: Google

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The Encyclopaedia Mundarica of Fr. John Hoffman, SJ

Encyclopaedia Mundarica, is the work of Fr. John Hoffmann, SJ (1857 – 1928) assisted by Fr Arthur Van Emelen, SJ. Other Jesuits working in Chotanagpur have also helped Fr. Hoffmann in this great venture. Fr. Hoffmann lived and worked among the Mundas (1895 – 1915), especially in Sarwada, the heartland of the tribe which is renowned for the life of the Mundas here that is unaffected by outsiders, and the purity of their language (Mundari). In fact, before the publication of the Encyclopaedia, he had already published a Mundari Grammar in 1903. Speaking about Mundari, Hoffmann says: “It’s very characteristic structure points to a hoary antiquity, and it offers unmistakable affinities with other unexplored dialects or branches.” (Volume 1, Preface, p. ii). He was afraid that such a treasure would be lost if it is not preserved in the written form, and therefore painstakingly studied it as much as his pastoral responsibilities permitted. His love for the people urged him to also study meticulously their social, religious, political, and land systems.



Fr. John Hoffman, SJ

Image Source: Google

to transmit to posterity a faithful picture of them was the driving force for his tireless work. As a result, the Encyclopaedia was published soon after his death. It is a masterpiece, comprising 16 volumes, and is a comprehensive, if not exhaustive, study of the Mundas by a non-Munda, German Jesuit priest. It is a wonder how, given his poor health and the short time duration, he managed to collect and systematically arrange the materials.

Sarat Chandra Roy’s *The Mundas and Their Country* was published just before this monumental work. Both Hoffmann and Roy have contributed immensely to understanding of the life of the Mundas, but the difference lies in the fact that while Roy

was an anthropologist, Hoffmann was a missionary scholar who not only mastered the language, but also was fully immersed in the very life of the people. It is no wonder then that Hoffmann brought out their social and value systems, religious belief, and their worldviews which were little known earlier.

Though he was often confined to Calcutta due to poor health, his heart was with the Mundas. In 1915, he was expelled from the British ruled area and repatriated to Germany. Though much saddened, he kept in touch his colleagues in Chotanagpur, namely Fr. Arthur Van Emelen S.J., Fr. Louis Cardon, S.J., Fr. Peter Hipp, SJ & Fr. Hugo Aman, SJ, whom he commends in his acknowledgements saying, “... most of the really useful features of this publication are due to the missionaries I have just enumerated.” (Vol. I, Preface, p. xv). At the end of the preface, Hoffman specially acknowledged the following Mundas, “both on account of the value of their information and on account of the readiness with which they were given, frequently at the cost of much time and trouble to themselves: Mennas Orea of Buruma, Rufus Horo of Murhu; Sahadeo Chutia Purti of Otongora, Daniel and his brother Joseph Horo of Lonkata. To all of them Rev. Fr. A. Van Emelen S. J. and myself shall ever remain very grateful.” (p. xv).

Hoffmann was convinced that preserving the Mundari language was important also from the point of view of philology, though he also says that much of the Encyclopaedia is the result of his “sentimental hobby” which comes from his conviction that Aryans are responsible for the impending extinction of the Munda race. “It is therefore a duty incumbent on our race, that some member of it should try to give as faithful a picture of that civilization as possible, and thereby keep alive at least the memory of that, which has been so ruthlessly and so senselessly destroyed. For that reason I have resolved to incorporate into this work all that I have learnt from the Mundas about their economic, social, moral and religious life as fully as I am able.” (Preface ix-xa). Although something was already known about the Mundas, his sincere love for the tribe and his eagerness

The cover page of the Encyclopaedia succinctly summarises its contents: “The Encyclopaedia Mundarica records all the pure Mundari words and those borrowed from neighbouring languages and presents the etymology, different shades of meaning in usage, syntactical and grammatical peculiarities of those words and their relation to various cultural and religious concepts. It also contains lists and descriptions of flora, especially edible, medicinal and poisonous plants and their properties, with their Mundari names. Well written articles on the economic, social, moral and religious life of the Mundas is another salient feature of this work.” Volume 16 consists of pictorial plates of various weapons, bird traps, fish traps, nets, agricultural implements, domestic implements, furniture, musical instruments, etc., which do not have generic names but specific ones, unlike in many other Indo-Germanic languages. One may consider this volume as an appendix. However, in order to understand the idea expressed in words, these pictorial plates are of immense help.

For a perceptive reader what comes through the 16 erudite volumes of this labour of love is that Fr. John Hoffman, a true Jesuit, saw God in all things, particularly in the simple life and activities of the Mundas, a community whom he loved deeply, whose life and practices he studied carefully, appreciated sincerely, taking immense pain to share them with the rest of the world generously and skilfully.

The author is at Tarunoday, Regional Theologate, Ranchi. The Study of Mundari culture and religion has been his hobby.

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Responding to REGAE II and Looking at the Future

To,
All Jesuits of the Conference of South Asia

POSA Circular 2019/06
15 Nov, 2019

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Greetings of Peace! This circular brings you the responses of JCSA to the long process of REGAE II.

1. GRATITUDE FOR THE JOURNEY TRAVELLED

JCSA said in 2014 at Phesama: "We call upon every member of the South Asian Assistancy to enter upon a process of Ignatian discernment to take up frontier missions with 'commitment, competency and collaboration'. We want to launch structural planning, at the Province and the Conference levels, keeping in mind the need to optimize our human and material resources. ... We are impelled to let go 'even successful models, structures and attachments' (personal and institutional) which block us from searching the magis of more interior freedom for greater and more universal availability..."

(Phesama Statement, 2014)

We are grateful to the Lord who has guided us through this long journey. The spirit of Phesama Statement led us to spiritual animation process (SAP) where more than two thirds of our men engaged their 'hearts' to recognize their attachments and imbibe more universal perspectives. On the basis of the Interim Report submitted to JCSA at Jabalpur in 2017, following the advice of Fr. General, a second phase was launched; this time renamed as '**Re-orientation for Greater Apostolic Effectiveness**' (REGAEII). In sixty one Zonal Programmes, 2468 Jesuits were engaged in a process of discernment, through spiritual conversation. The outcome of their discernment was further discerned by a group of forty-seven delegates chosen from the Provinces/Regions, at a special workshop in Bangalore (August, 2019). They felt: "Re-drawing of boundaries in our hearts has begun. A critical mass of Jesuits has now been prepared. ... The Lord is confirming the REGAEII process, take it forward; the Assistancy is praying for you, with you"

2. RESPONDING TO REGAE II

At JCSA-Ranchi (October 2019), the outcome of REGAE II was discussed and discerned by the Major Superiors, in an atmosphere of prayer and spiritual conversation. We were much consoled in confirming and advancing the statements of REGAE II. We appreciate and are grateful to all those who have contributed to the success of this programme

Trusting the 'special grace' that we received at JCSA-Phesama, we launched the restructuring process. We were affirmed by the Spirit in REGAEII process who led us through the rediscovery of the 'spiritual conversation' as a significant spiritual tool; we propose to implement the following findings of REGAE II:

2.1. THE CONFERENCE APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES

a. Foster Peace and Reconciliation

- To work towards peace and reconciliation at all levels of the society.
- To expose endemic violence and hatred propagated by vested interests.
- To rediscover strategies for non-violent conflict resolution.

b. Ensure Quality Education in accordance with the Jesuit Tradition

- To ensure quality education, especially for the poor and marginalized.

- To cultivate qualities of justice, peace and concern for the other, especially for culturally, socially different others and good governance at all levels.

- To protect and promote the dignity of every person and community, irrespective of caste or creed.

c. Promote Ecology and Justice

- To care for the earth, our common home;

- To protect the environment from pollution and disasters;

- To evolve and live a model of development that is sustainable.

d. Encourage Ignatian Spirituality

- To live the Ignatian charism of finding God in all things;

- To articulate Ignatian dynamics of a laboring God in our cultures and traditions;

- To promote Ignatian indifference and magis in response to a culture of consumerism.

e. Accompany Youth

- To walk with the youth in their search for truth and meaning;

- To be with the youth in their struggles and joys;

- To learn from the youth of their aspirations and hope.

2.2. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF JCSA

JCSA will exercise ‘collective responsibility’ in the following roles:

- Inter-provincial, inter-zonal networking and collaboration and sharing of resources.

- Ensure provincials make men available for common works of the Society.

- Strategize and implement UAPs and Conference Preferences at all levels and Common Missions.

2.3. RESTRUCTURING OF SECRETARIATS

JCSA has agreed to restructure the Secretariats as follows:

- There will be four Secretariats related to the apostolic sectors of the Conference; they will be called Conference Apostolic Secretariats.

- There will be two Administrative Secretariats.

- The Province Apostolic Commissions should mirror the four Conference Secretariats with flexibility. Provinces and Regions, based on their local context, will have flexibility to implement this process of restructuring.

- Other Conference Apostolic Secretariats will function as “desks” under a Conference Apostolic Secretariat.

- In consultation with the future Secretaries and other experienced persons the roles and responsibilities of the Apostolic Secretaries and the “Desks” will be further elaborated.

2.4. ZONAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES

The four Zonal Conferences agreed that the following will become Zonal Apostolic Preferences.

Migration and Displacement

Lay Collaboration

2.5. REDRAWING OF PROVINCE BOUNDARIES

The Zonal Chairs will initiate discussions with the Zonal Provincial teams to make proposals for their zones.

SECRETARIAT STRUCTURE

APOSTOLIC SECRETARIATS					
SERVICE OF FAITH		ECOLOGY AND JUSTICE		EDUCATION- PRIMARY & SECONDARY	HIGHER EDUCATION & INTELLECTUAL APOSTOLATE
JEPASA PWPN JIGSA JSD		JESA JEMAI JYMSA		JHEASA JESCOM	
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIATS					
FORMATION			FINANCE		
ACF Bros (It will be finalized after consulting them.)			COJET ADO		
FORUMS					
Jesuit Artists	Jesuit Psychologists	Jesuit Alumni/ae	JFFSA Jesuit Faculty Forum South Asia	JERES Jesuits in Religious Studies	
NETWORKS					
SANKALP		JESUITEC		LOKMANCH	

2.6. RESTRUCTURING PROVINCE WORKS (APOSTOLATES)

• Restructuring of Province Works, undertaken by the Major Superiors, should be preceded by an audit of these works, using the criteria given by Fr Adolfo Nicholas (2011/16, 27th September).

3. LOOKING FORWARD

JCSA reflected also on the need to foster Apostolic Planning and take forward the fruits of REGAE II. The emphasis was on the process of Apostolic Planning at the Province/Region level. The following decisions were taken.

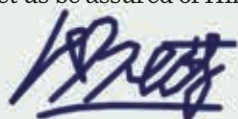
- By August 2020, all Provinces/Regions will have Apostolic Plans aligned to UAPs.
- A person should be appointed to be in-charge of Apostolic Planning in the Province/Region.
- The Major Superiors will be responsible to coordinate and align the Province plans with that of the Conference Apostolic Preferences.
- At the Zonal level, collaboration with Secretariats and on emerging issues will continue as before.

CONCLUSION

With this letter we are bringing to a closure the long REGAE process that was initiated in October 2014, at Phesama. Among others, I believe, there are THREE main fruits of REGAE;

- i) The practice of Spiritual Conversation is beginning to be a game-changer among us. Our community meetings and apostolic board meetings are experiencing new energy and zeal.
- ii) The Zonal structures are acquiring more significance and relevance; they are invited to discuss and advance the issues of Province/Region boundaries and more apostolic collaboration.
- iii) The sense of the Conference as a Body is growing and finding a resonance among us.

A closure is NOT the end, but bringing to a point of a new departure. After REGAE, we might say that Jesuits of South Asia are different. With intentional speaking and active listening, we are a little more at home with each other as companions; we are gradually prepared to cross the boundaries when needed. I am sure that The Lord will bring to fruition what He began with us: Let us be assured of Him walking with us.



GEORGE PATTERY, SJ
President, Jesuit Conference of South Asia





Everyone has a Story

Imaginative writing – poetry, plays, novels and short stories – the writing of fiction, in other words, is one of the best ways we have of understanding ourselves. As novelist Henry James put it, “The purpose of the novel has ever been to help the human heart come to know itself.”

This may be said of the short story too. The scholar Walter Benjamin calls the short story “a micro narrative” and says that in our hectic age, this form speaks to us precisely because it is short, uncluttered, and packs a punch – or conceals a twist.

Fr. Myron’s thirty stories, distributed across two volumes, are varied, but are, broadly speaking, of two kinds: historical and contemporary.

The ‘historical’ ones are reconstructions of biblical narratives, where the writer gives psychological depth and meaning to an event or character of the past. Thus “Thomas, my

Brother” looks at the apostle through the eyes of his twin sister; “Lydia, Merchant of Purple” describes the first church in Europe – Philippi – and how Paul and Luke handled this completely new experience. “Ana of Najera” is an unusual take on the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola.

In the contemporary stories, several are about priests. The Catholic priest has always been an enigmatic figure, largely because of his celibacy, and the recent scandals in the Church have made him a tragic figure as well, often irredeemably flawed. Does priesthood have a future? If it does, perhaps not in its present form.

All in all, a valuable collection, and an excellent gift for Christmas. Reading it through, Fr. Myron’s words continue to tease: “Each of us has a story, and it is not insignificant.” Time to ask the reader, have you found yours?

| Courtesy: Joanne Rodrigues



TITLE: The Girl from Calangute

AUTHOR: Myron Pereira, SJ

PUBLISHER: Notion Press, Chennai

PAGES: 241 | PRICE: ₹ 350

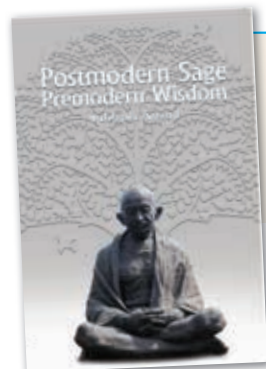
TITLE: Speaking to Sushila

AUTHOR: Myron Pereira, SJ

PUBLISHER: Notion Press, Chennai

PAGES: 214 | PRICE: ₹ 300

The Post-mordern relevance of Gandhi



TITLE: Postmodern Sage Premodern Wisdom

AUTHOR: Subhash Anand

PUBLISHER: Media House, Delhi

PAGES: 314 | PRICE: ₹ 450

This volume brings together articles that have been published elsewhere before. Chapter one explores Satyagraha as the journeying towards authenticity; the next that Satya is the truth of existence, as it acquires an existential dimension in our

struggle to be human. These ideas lead to the understanding that as an interpersonal process, satyagraha is the appeal of humanity visible in some to the humanity latent in all. The satyagrahi sees satya present in all, and hence respects all. The quest for authentic humanity

is unthinkable without ahimsa, non-violence. Ahimsa demands self-purification, discipline and a spirit of service.

Chapter three deals with Gandhi’s discomfort with the disparity within our society: to him, discrimination and injustice were a denial of satya. Hence, any programme for social development must aim at sarvodaya, the upliftment of all. The next chapter focuses upon the importance of Kshama, forgiveness, through a practical lens: development requires an atmosphere of peace; religion has become a major source of violence; Gandhi advocates samabhava, treating all religions as equal. There are bound to be some tensions and violence in a pluralistic society; only kshama can heal these wounds.

Gandhi is indeed a postmodern thinker, challenging religions, making clear his doubts about scriptures, questioning the claims we make about God, rejecting the pretensions underlying the primacy given to foundational events and meta-narratives, and advocating freedom. Yet, he is very ancient: the wisdom he offers us is as old as humanity; it is humanity itself. In one sense, it is only manava-dharma, the religion of humanity, that can save the human family and the whole of creation.

Daily prayers by laity and religious alike

Fio Mascarenhas has beautifully woven together various scriptures to share deep insights into the love and power of the Triune God. Lucidly explaining some of the most dynamic Scripture texts, his reflections here are supplemented by well-chosen personal and cultural material, to make the book alive and attractive to those interested in a more profound comprehension of the Christian faith.

The thirty chapters, distributed over four parts, are intended to be used for daily prayer by laity and religious alike. The first part deals with how God is our ‘Abba’ Father; the importance of this daily awareness is stressed throughout. In the second section, Jesus’ Death on the Cross and His life-giving Resurrection are treated with fresh insight so as to enable Jesus’ co-heirs to joyfully embrace their own crosses in a spirit of “divine-human partnership.” A rich and inspiring treatment of the Holy Spirit, one much influenced by John Paul II’s

TITLE: Contemplating God’s Word

AUTHOR: Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ, D.Min

PUBLISHER: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand

PAGES: 115 | PRICE: ₹ 120



encyclical Dominum et vivificantem forms the third part; and the last section offers substantial scriptural teaching on the Church and its mission, the Eucharist, the Bible, Marian devotion, and our Christian “marathon pilgrimage” of life.

50th Anniversary of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES)



The 50th anniversary of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) was celebrated at the SJES Congress on 4-8 November, 2019, in Rome. The event witnessed the attendance of 210 delegates from 62 countries, including Jesuits, lay collaborators, experts and activists, at the Aula Magna of the General Curia in Rome to deliberate on the theme “A Journey of Justice and Reconciliation: 50 years and beyond”.

The SJES Congress began with a warm welcome extended to all delegates by Fr. Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ, the Secretary of SJES. In his keynote address, Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, lauded the contribution of Jesuits in the promotion of the Catholic Social Teaching articulated by encyclicals of Popes for over a century. In his address to the SJES Congress, Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, under-secretary for Migrants and Refugees, stressed on the need for Jesuits to reach out to the most vulnerable people in the world, particularly migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, minorities and discriminated sections of society. In his inaugural address, Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, recalled the initiative of his predecessor, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, who initiated the establishment of the Secretariat in 1969, and the price the Society of Jesus had to pay for its social commitment in the shape of 57 Jesuit martyrs across the globe during the last five decades. He challenged the Jesuits with ten points: (1) deepening the spiritual dimension of the commitment to social justice and integral ecology, (2) the role of personal and group discernment in life-mission, (3) collaboration among Jesuits, lay men and women, other persons and institutions, (4) the place of women in our social institutions and priorities, (5) Networking among Jesuits and with other institutions, (6) closeness with the poor, (7) intellectual depth, (8) strengthening leadership

of the poor and the excluded, (9) local and global advocacy to change structures of exclusion and produce the greater and more universal good, and (10) commitment to eradicate abuse within and outside the Church.

At the SJES Congress, lectures by experts were interspersed with testimonies of Jesuits and lay collaborators, group sharing sessions and guided prayer sessions. One of the expert speakers was Ms. Sunita Narain, Director of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) based in New Delhi, who stressed on the need to respond effectively to the ecological crisis and climate change that will transform the way we live in the future.

A special moment of grace was the Private Audience with Pope Francis at Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace on 7th November. While addressing the delegates of the SJES Congress, the Jesuit Pontiff encouraged Jesuits and their collaborators to continue their creative commitment in the service of the poorest and refugees, defending human rights and providing social services in many fields. The South Asian delegation comprising of 29 members, including 24 Jesuits and 5 lay collaborators, provided the SJES Congress with a taste of South Asian traditions during prayer and mass celebrated on 6th November. During the session on ‘Networking and Collaboration: A New Way of Proceeding in the Social Apostolate’, the Lok Manch programme was showcased as a model of collaboration in a mission of justice and reconciliation. The SJES Congress concluded with a call to work with renewed enthusiasm for the mission of justice and reconciliation in the spirit of the UAPs.

| Denzil Fernandes SJ | New Delhi

National Seminar in Honour of Fr. Sebastian Kappen, SJ



Renowned academician and social activist Prof. Dr. Shiv Visvanathan inaugurating the National Seminar

A two-day National Seminar was organized on 11-12 October 2019 at Ernakulam to mark the 25th death anniversary of Fr Sebastian Kappen (1924-1993). The theme of the seminar was *The Emergence of Fascist Tendencies in India: The Relevance of Kappen's Counter-Cultural Perspectives*. Prominent academicians, cultural leaders and researchers participated and presented scholarly papers. Fr Kappen had been a significant presence on the intellectual landscape of the country for a few decades, and he lived in close contact with social activists and young seekers. His writings dealt with a variety of topics like Marxian Humanism, Liberation Theology, Hindu Nationalism, Ecology and Culture. The nearly two dozen books and hundreds of scholarly articles that he authored are proof of his incisively critical mind and his prophetic insights. Dissecting the alienating factors of contemporary culture, he opened the vast horizons of a counter-cultural vision. The seminar found Kappen's insights equally relevant today, especially as we face grave threats to Indian democracy and ecological harmony.

The seminar was inaugurated by Prof. M.K. Sanu and presided over by Fr Dr E.P. Mathew, SJ, the Provincial of Kerala Jesuit Province. Prof Sanu highlighted the growing fascist tendencies that affect our everyday life, and cautioned about the unhealthy nexus between the

bureaucracy, politicians and religious leaders which degrade democracy and lead to the violation of our fundamental rights. Prof. Shiv Visvanathan of Jindal Global University, Haryana, who delivered the keynote address, exposed Hindutva as a myth being created, bypassing all democratic processes and constitutional principles. New cult figures and symbols are invoked to ratify violence, and the media are often forced to toe the line of those in power. Such a dangerous scenario can be dealt with only by moral principles and relying on the values of the Constitution, he affirmed. Those who addressed the gathering include Dayabai, the renowned social activist, Rev Dr Paul Thelakkattu, editor of the weekly *Light of Truth*, Dr K. Babu Joseph, former Vice Chancellor of Cochin University of Science and Technology, Prof. Sarah Joseph, well-known writer and activist, Mr Binoy Viswam, MP and former Minister of environment, Prof. Michael Tharakan, Chairman, Kerala Council for Historical Research, and others.

Ms Mercy Kappen, Director, Visthar Academy of Justice and Peace, Banglaore, shared her personal reflections on S. Kappen, and explained how he transcended the dichotomies of the personal and the political, the private and the public. Speaking on *Challenges to Democracy*, Mr. Civic Chandran, writer and social critic, reminded the gathering that democracy must be at

work in every sphere of life including the religious. Dr Sunil P Ilayidom, Professor, Sree Sankaracharya Sanskrit University, Kalady, explained the complex relationship between religion and spirituality, and proposed a re-reading of Kappen in order to explore the essence of authentic spirituality for our times. Prof. John Chathanattu, SJ, former Principal of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, made a presentation on Kappen in *Search of a New Theological Methodology* and called upon liberating religion/theology by encountering real life experiences and interpreting them in the light of faith.

The two-day seminar was a perspective building process, the quality of which was enhanced by the presentations by eminent resource persons and the participation of a sublime audience. As a follow up, it is planned to publish the proceedings and also to bring out Kappen's collected works in a single volume. The seminar was jointly organized by Loyola Institute of Peace and International Relations (LIPI), Kochi, Arnos Padiri Academy, Velur-Trissur, Sameeksha Research Centre, Kalady and *Ezhuthu Magazine*, with the support of Kerala Jesuit Province. Fr (Dr) Binoy Pichalakkatu, SJ, Director of LIPI, was the Coordinator of the seminar.

| Binoy, SJ | Kochi

Magis for Darjeeling Youth



A memorable Magis for the Darjeeling youth was held in Chopra from October 8th to 11th, with Fr Brian D'Souza, National Coordinator of JYMSA, and his team from Bombay, as resource persons. In all, 101 youth from different parishes and colleges of Darjeeling Province participated, with the aim of promoting the spirit of Magis in a way that helps people become better in and through love.

'Magis', simply put, means 'more'. In the context of love, when a person loves deeply s/he is 'more' than what they were. Ignatius experienced this in his conversion process during his convalescence after the Pamplona battle. After reading the lives of Christ and the Saints, he was determined to love Christ more and to do greater things for Him, give greater glory to God. Magis doesn't mean striving to be the best, but to be better than who we are today in loving. It's a divine

energy that propels a person, through love, into action.

In the inaugural Mass On 8th October, Fr John Kennedy, the main organizer, traced the origin of Magis and emphasized the importance of its spirit for the youth. On 9th, Fr Wilfred Lobo, Provincial, addressed the youth, stressing on their potential, exhorting them to embrace Magis, hope and courage.

The program focused on the youth's spiritual growth, mental maturity, developing leadership capabilities (for oneself and the community), and understanding social and personal issues. A session on UAP and youth involvement put the program in a right perspective, giving them the hope of a better tomorrow as well as realizing the need to experience more of Magis in daily life. The prayer, worship and adorations brought healing to the youth and they had a deep spiritual experience. The 'Magis circle' – the spiritual conversation – enabled them to understand each other and experience unity.

Magis never ends; the members resolved to carry out the action plans worked out during the program, deciding to impart this spirit in their respective parishes and colleges by conducting mini magis programs, translating the experience into community activities and daily lives.

|| John Kennedy, SJ | Darjeeling

Jesuits and Higher Education

Commemorating Jesuit Initiatives in Higher Education in South Asia, in a Seminar at St Xavier's College, Mumbai

This year St Xavier's College, Mumbai, celebrates 150 years of being a seat of wisdom and the cause of joy to many in Mumbai and beyond who have had the benefit of an education here. As part of these year-long celebrations, it was thought appropriate that a research seminar be held on the theme 'Jesuit Initiatives in Higher Education in South Asia.' Held on the college premises on the 20th and 21st November, the seminar was attended by, among others, 21 eager-eyed trainee Jesuits from the Juniorate in Vinayalaya, Mumbai. More than ten speakers presented papers on specific areas that highlighted the creative genius of the Jesuits in imparting quality training at the highest levels, tracing a pattern that was historical, critical and forward looking in approach. Most papers also emphasised how Jesuit higher education was always characterised by typically Ignatian principles: excellence, a discernment of the needs of the times, humanistic formation, and most importantly, drawing people to love and serve God, especially in those most needy.

Fr Ignacimuthu of the Madurai province delivered the keynote address, providing a broad overview of the astounding work the Jesuits have done in South Asia in furthering higher education. Fr Job Kozhamthadam spoke passionately on Jesuits and their immense contribution to scientific advancement, pleading that



we never lose this Society-specific scientific temper. Frs Roy Pereira and Savio Abreu dwelt on the sterling contribution the Jesuits have made at Xavier's College, Mumbai. There were other excellent papers too, covering Jesuit education at St Paul's College, Goa, the Bengal Jesuit mission, higher education in Karnataka & Kerala, Jesuit contribution to the Social Sciences & Media Education, Jesuit Engineering Colleges, and more recent trends in higher education. Every paper induced a rich discussion, which meant stimulation and provocation for the assembled audience.

St Xavier's has always placed great emphasis on value-based learning, socially relevant academic rigour, integral growth, and inclusivity. More than anything, it bears the Jesuit stamp of excellence - and all this so that God be praised. This seminar was aimed at being a sort of 'collective inspiration' for all present, to delve deeper into our Ignatian waters and connect with the great drive and dynamism that characterised our early Jesuits. Our thanks to the organising team who did a very good job: Fr (Dr) Keith D'Souza, SJ, Dr Joan Dias and Fr (Dr) Savio Abreu, SJ.

|| Learoy Rodrigues, SJ | Mumbai



Fr. Romuald D'Souza, SJ (GOA)

Padma Shri Awardee (for Education) and former Provincial of the Goa Province, Fr. Romuald D'Souza, returned to his Creator on 1 November 2019, after decades of dedicated service to society. A trained clinical psychologist and a visionary educationist, he blazed new trails in promoting social concern and in forming men and women for others, committed to a more just and equitable society.

Born in Aldona, Goa, on 20 December 1925, Fr Romuald joined the Society of Jesus, on 1 July 1945. His ecclesial studies took him to various countries. He was a patient listener, inviting the confidence of everyone, showing great leadership qualities, and it was no surprise when, in 1973, he was appointed Provincial of the then Goa-Pune Province.

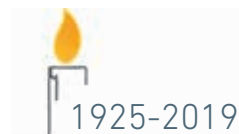
Fr. Romuald's crowning achievements during the last four decades were the educational institutes he founded and directed; he was always a builder, not just of campuses, but of the people within them. Fr. Romauld had served as Principal of St Vincent's High School, Pune, and, in 1982,

rose to the challenge of leading XLRI Jamshedpur through difficult waters. He not only turned it around but raised it to rank among the nation's top management institutes. Much impressed, the Orissa government persuaded him to start XIM Bhubaneswar (1987), where he remained as Founder-Director until 1993.

He taught that age is, to a large extent, a quality of the mind; that one is only old when one has left one's dreams. Returning to Goa at the age of 70, he planted a seed which today towers in the field of management education: the Goa Institute of Management.

Thank you Fr. Romuald, for all that you were to us, helping us to dream big, to have vision, to work with passion to accomplish our mission of a better and more educated society.

|| Lawry Trinidad, SJ



Fr. Edward Jeganathan, SJ (MDU)

Fr. Edward Jeganathan was born in a traditional Catholic family in Kodaikanal. Two of his sisters opted for religious life and his younger brother Fr. Amalraj entered the Society of Jesus in Gujarat Province.

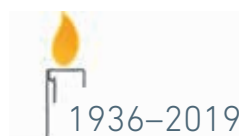
As a formed Jesuit, he worked in Mauritius, an island nation with a mixed population of about 10 lakhs, 62% of whom were Hindus, the rest were Creoles, Chinese, Muslims and Europeans. Edward lived in Mauritius from 1971 to 1993, and was the pastor of a parish from 1986.

Edward's next missionary assignment was in Seychelles (1993 to 2006). Noting that life here was too comfortable materially, without adequate returns in spiritual fruits, he returned to Madurai Province. Whenever he spoke of his missionary endeavors, he always spoke of Mauritius and would repeat the oft-quoted saying: "Mauritius was made first and then heaven; and heaven was copied after Mauritius." Edward was a committed missionary, and

for 34 years he worked tirelessly, cherishing the many moments of bringing people together in their differences as well as bringing them closer to God.

Back in India and based at Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur, Kodaikanal, Edward devoted himself to spiritual ministry, readily accepting assignments like celebrating the Eucharist, hearing confessions, and giving recollections and retreats. He helped many poor people and enthusiastically supported the social action ministry of PEAK (People's Education for Action in Kodaikanal). Working in the Madurai Province archives at Shembaganur was a labour of love for him. Edward helped numerous people, Jesuits as well as non-Jesuits, with their research. His was a life so well lived that the joy that emanated from him radiated all around.

|| Patrick Ravichandran, SJ



Br. Joseph Paschal (Pascoal) De Souza, SJ (GOA)

Br. Paschal was one who was never content with the mediocrities of people, whether in work or in conduct. He was born in Walkeshwar, Bombay, on 12th October 1936 of parents of Goan origin, and did his schooling in Goa. During this time he became acquainted with the Jesuits at Mapusa and desired to enter the Society.

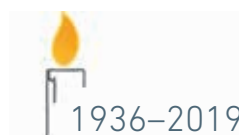
After his Novitiate at Vinayalaya, Andheri (Bombay), Paschal did two years of Juniorate studies at the same place. During this time, in the company of a large group of Brothers of various Provinces, he was able to pick up quite a few skills like cooking, baking, tailoring, wine-making, and caring for a well-kept sacristy and chapel.

After Tertianship in Bangalore in 1970 he was appointed Minister at St. Britto High School, Mapusa, where he exhibited his talent for keeping the community and hostel boys happy with his delectable preparations. As Director

of St. Paul's High School hostel for poor boys (Gnanamata Bal Bhavan) he supervised the boys and looked after two kitchens for fourteen years.

Subsequently, he was sent to render service as Minister to a number of Jesuit Communities: Xavier Training College, Desur, Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Porvorim, again to St. Paul's H. School, Belgaum, Bom Jesus Basilica Old Goa, the Pedro Arrupe Institute at Raia, and finally back to where he had begun, St Britto's H. School, Mapusa. Wherever he was sent Paschal made his -distinctive contribution to the Jesuit Brother's work and accomplishments. Regular prayer had been his strength in every assignment and kept him joyful in his vocation as a Jesuit Brother.

|| Bro Thomas D'Souza





Jerome Stanislaus D'Souza, SJ

When I look at the Province, God has been generous with me: our men and ministries are doing well. Despite defections, there has been a rise in the number of Jesuits, vocations and ordinations. Our men, who work inside and outside the province, undertake their mission with a certain creativity

and commitment. Not to be left behind, our senior Jesuits, despite their age and related issues, make significant contribution.

What worked for me? I ensured regular life in the spirit and a strong life in common, constant conversations and consultations, frequent training and formation programmes.

Off and on, I told my men that we are religious men and that we need to be spiritual leaders. Hence, I asked the superiors to safeguard the regular celebration of the daily Eucharist, evening prayer, and monthly recollections with frequent faith sharing sessions. In this context, I also introduced a practice called 'drinking from our wells', an input session on our heritage.

As part of cura personalis, I religiously met our men for spiritual conversation and introduced regular training programmes for the superiors, DoWs, spiritual directors, probable leaders, young priests, and initiated small sabbaticals to refresh and renew, and build houses and provided better facilities for our senior Jesuits.

I also emphasized a strong life in common; an important contribution I made in this line is a concept called 'community owns the mission': the community becomes the centre of discernment and of the decision-making process. I insisted on the regular community, registered society and house consult meetings become fora to share information and discern pathways to serve God. It worked because I practised what I preached: shared all information and ushered in regular province-level consultations before any decision-making.

Later, I introduced another concept, twinning: I made the urban communities and apostolates adopt rural communities and apostolates. It has made possible the visits not only of Jesuits but also of their staff and students, even of parents and old students, to our missions. In fact, many of our college staff conduct their research on issues related to our rural apostolate.

As a policy, I appointed young people as heads of communities and apostolates, unleashing creativity.

Were there no problems and snags? Yes, there were many. I had to handle litigations regarding our men and properties. But, in general, my men have been good to me. There were many excellent Jesuits, who taught me much about Jesuit life in mission. One, when I had started the conversation on the transfer replied saying, "When should I go?" Of course, there were a few 'difficult Jesuits' who generally think that they are just and are unjustly treated. These have indeed challenged me.

On the whole, it was a good experience. As I tell my men, I have indeed grown as a better Jesuit.

The author is the Provincial of Karnataka
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Melwin Pinto, SJ

I see governance in the Society of Jesus becoming progressively caring, rather than 'controlling'. Fortunately, most of the local and provincial superiors I have had, with some significant exceptions, have been tough, yet caring,

avuncular men, ready to listen and understand while being genuinely human. I have heard it said, "When you obey your superiors, you instruct your inferiors." The experience of being governed is actually a handing over of a tradition and, in turn, it has taught me how to govern.

We have been witnessing a culture that is largely at war with authority. Individual freedom is considered to be of equal importance to the exercise of authority. In the Society of Jesus, we are all confronted with these values. My own reaction to an unpleasant or unacceptable directive springs from my perception of it as a threat to my right to choose. The religious vow of obedience that I have so solemnly professed is temporarily forgotten, I become a victim of my prejudices, and my emotions rule. But, I always lose. I lose sleep (as a good Jesuit I don't lose my appetite!) and my peace of mind as I keep licking my wounds, looking for sympathy and support.

But Praise God for the gift of the Consciousness Examen! I begin to see things in new light. I still have the opportunity to represent matters, my right to self-expression. This is where discernment and dialogue find a place. The eventual acceptance of the will of God, in my experience, brings profound peace and ultimately, does a lot of good.

However, I don't hesitate to say that discernment has been a much overused and abused word. I shudder when I find a Superior, or for that matter even a subject, use the word at will, without really meaning it. It can neither be utilised to conquer an individual's obedience nor can it be used to defy an order.

The almost jargon-like 'dialogue-obedience' can also be a trap. Ideally, a Superior ought to consult subjects, offer reasons and clarifications for directives, lend an ear to their views and aspirations and thereby perceive the Holy Spirit operating in them. But the danger lies in making these processes obligatory in such a way, that subjects believe that if they are not consulted, not given reasons, or if they don't agree with the reasons given, there is no need to obey!

I obey the directive not because I have intellectually and emotionally accepted it, but rather because the Superior expresses the will of God for me. Moreover, if obedience is made dependent upon consultation and explanations, a Superior would spend so much time justifying what he is doing that he wouldn't have the time to do what he justifies. Frankly, stepping into the shoes of a Superior and looking at things from his perspective has helped me.

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Expanding Eco Education Network



Image Courtesy: Reppai Poothakaran, SJ

God's Creation is a web: everything in Creation is linked. It is this Creation Web that sustains the Universe.

Last month, GJEM (Gujarat Jesuit Ecology Mission) began creating a web of Eco Education across JCSA, starting with Hazaribagh Province. Their PCE, Fr. P J James, organized GJEM's 'Green Teachers Program' at Sitagarha, from 31 Oct-2 Nov, 2019, which saw the participation of 51 people (principals, teachers and Jesuits, including two from Jamshedpur) from 22 schools.

The workshop was designed and conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Jothi Xavier and Ms. Trupti. Innovation, insights, and giving the participants first-hand experience of meaningful activities was at the core of the Environmental Education. Theory and Praxis, demonstration of action-based activities, a nature walk and field trips in the Sitagarha Bio Reserve, Eco-Spirituality programs such as Eco Eucharist, cosmic walk and a nature prayer, presentations on creative pedagogy for Environmental Education, inputs on environmental campaigns, a film screening and an action plan for the next year were some of the salient features of the workshop.

The teachers and principals participated enthusiastically, finding the activities creative and simple enough to could conduct back in their schools. The simplicity and the eagerness to learn made it a highly effective event.

SUMMARY OF ACTION PLAN:

- Introduce Eco Club and Eco assembly in schools.
- Awareness raising in schools and villages through environmental programs, campaigns, exposure programs and nature walks.
- Introduce the benefits of organic manure and organic pesticide to students and villagers for their kitchen gardens and agriculture.
- Promote alternate Energy, rainwater harvesting system and leaf plates/cups instead of plastic and thermocol.
- Conduct a Green Audit of the schools every year.
- Students to learn the names of different trees on the campus, and label them.
- Science exhibition with environmental models to be held, but without any plastic and thermocol models.
- Awareness about the ill-effects of junk food, and to promote a balanced diet in schools.
- Explain about waste segregation, and install dustbins for different types of waste in schools, and teach them how to make manure from bio-degradable waste.

Some schools have already prepared and started implementing the action plan.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Begged Life



Image Source: thehindu.com

In 1992, he had just failed his class 10 examinations, and had decided to take his life. Twenty-seven years later, Murugan runs an organisation that takes care of the homeless and provides them with meals every week.

Once he came to know that he had failed, he left Chennai and reached Sirumugai town near Coimbatore, about 500 km away, with the aim of committing suicide. But, the beggars at the bus stand, who found out, changed his life. Speaking about this, he says, "An elderly beggar asked me why I was there. I told him about my intention of committing suicide. He persuaded me to give up the idea, and helped me realise the meaning of life. All the beggars at the Sirumugai bus stop collected money for me to go back to Chennai, which inspired me and I realised that if even the beggars could live a meaningful life, I could also do so. So I returned the money, and decided to stay there, and devote my life to the homeless." Murugan went on to work, earning money to buy rice, vegetables and dal to cook meals for the beggars and homeless every day. Gradually, others started pitching in. Today, the organisation provides home-cooked sambar-rice for more than 1,300 people every Sunday. What started as one man's mission has more than 50 volunteers today. The homeless woman he married takes active part in this mission.



Murugan receiving an award.

Image Source: thebetterindia.com

The man who wanted to die gives life today to the homeless. He has received the President's Award for his inspiring life.