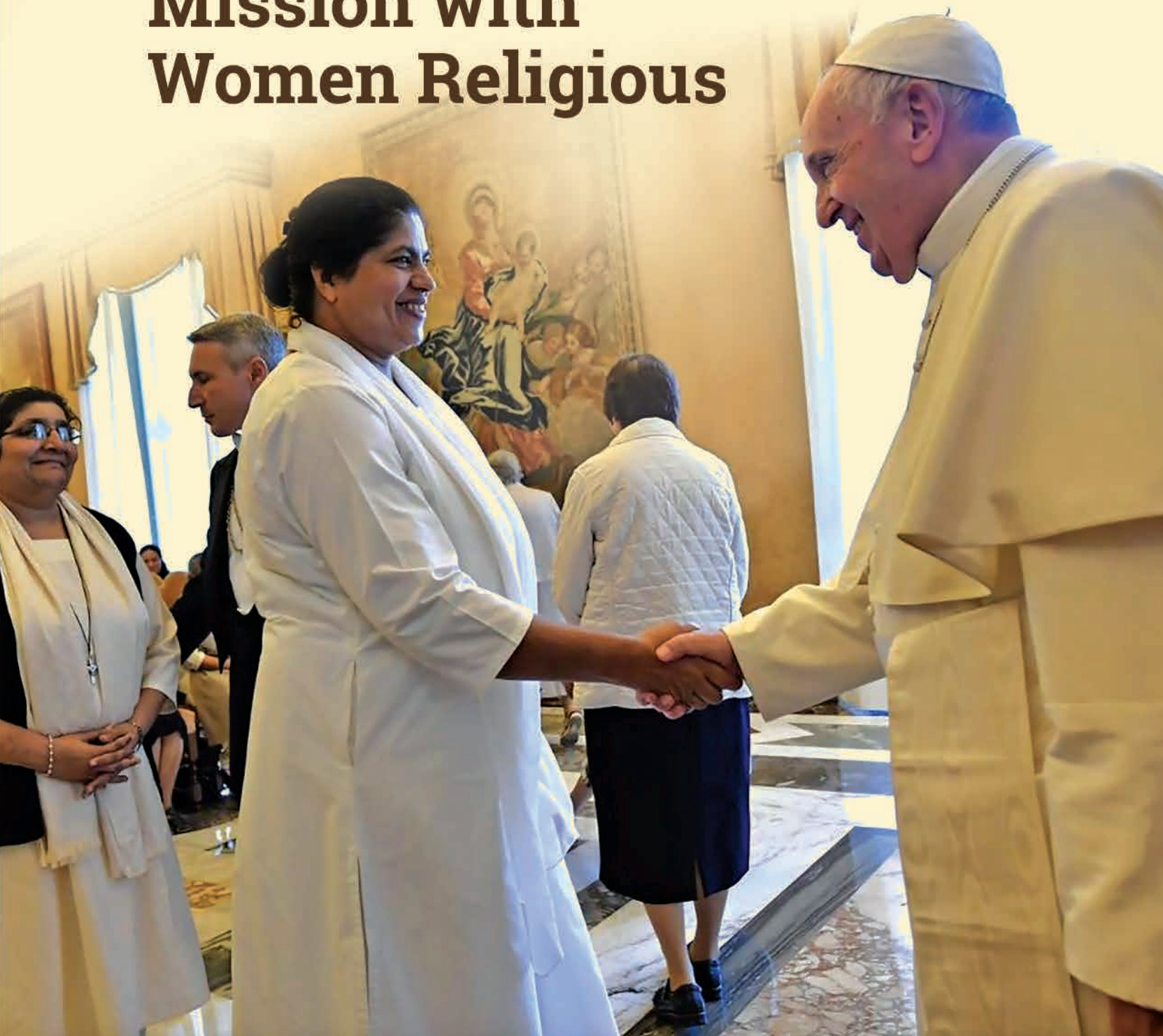


September 2020

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

Partnership in Mission with Women Religious



Feast on Silence

The chirp of the early bird awakens me
My soul is stirred to arise;
Squirrels scurry in my little garden
My soul rustles.

The nearby brook continuously babbles
My soul detects the missing beat;
The wind in the trees keep whispering
My soul knows their secrets.

The flowers dance in their best attire
My soul is hued like a rainbow;
Clouds bring a rainfall of messages
My soul reads each droplet precious.

The land is parched like a dry bone
My soul consoles the land with patience;
Dry bones with new sinews wrapped
My soul shimmers with new excitement.

Deeper and yet deeper still the soul hears
Eternity knocking at the door;
The unspoken voice of the Alpha
The sure tone of the Omega.

"Come in, I say,"
My soul has waited endlessly to open the door;
We shall Feast on Silence
I with Him, and He with me.

Kinley Tshering, SJ
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(The author is the in-charge of Bhutan Jesuit Mission and
Episcopal Vicar of Bhutan..)



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PUBLISHED AT
Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, P.B. No. 70,
St. Xavier's Road, Anand-388001,
Gujarat.

PRINTED AT
Anand Press, Gamdi, Anand-388001,
Gujarat.

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CIRCULATION
The Publisher, Gujarat Sahitya
Prakash,
P.B. No. 70, Anand-388001, Gujarat.
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E-mail : booksgsp@gmail.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES OF JIVAN

(Visit jivanmagazine.com for online subscription)



Jesuits:
₹1000 / yearly
Non-Jesuits:
₹750 / yearly
Foreign:
US \$25 (or ₹1500)
/ yearly
Online Edition:
₹700 / yearly

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In commemoration of the Feast of the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary on 8th September, JIVAN dedicates this issue to the Women Religious and their collaboration in Mission with the Jesuits. We thank Sr. Evelyn Monteiro, SCC for her editorial leadership in planning and soliciting the articles for this issue.

Cover Photo: Vatican News

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

JIVAN CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST (Essay) - 2020

We are happy to announce the Jivan Creative Writing Contest (Essay) - 2020. The cash prizes to the winners come from a generous grant offered in 1997 by the family of Fio Mascarenhas, SJ and his brother, Frazer Mascarenhas, SJ in memory of their beloved parents – Francis and Flora Mascarenhas. The essay contest invites all who love creativity and imagination - Jesuits, non-Jesuits, men, women, the youth, and senior citizens. The essay should be original, unpublished elsewhere, in English and with a limit of 1800 words. It must be set in contemporary Asian context; highlighting its people, events and ethos that offer us hope for the future.

There are three prizes:

The first prize:
Rs 4,000

The second prize:
Rs 2,500

The third prize:
Rs 1,000

Rules:

1. Send your entries to jivaneditor@gmail.com with the subject title 'Essay Contest'.
2. The entries should reach us by November 2020. The results will be announced in the February 2021 issue of Jivan.
3. All entries shall be the property of Jivan.

4. A person can register only one entry and, therefore, send only one essay in his or her name.
5. Only the first prize winning essay will be published in Jivan.
6. The decision of the Jury will be final.

- Editor

READER'S CREASE

Writer Brother!

Here is what I feel after going through what Br. Pravin Falcao wrote in Crucial Conversations. As a very perceptive editor you invited Br. Pravin to express his feelings about what he has gone through in his precious journey as a Jesuit Brother. In doing this you have come across an innovative, creative, authentic, and courageous writer. Pravin has written the article with authenticity, sense of humour, and creativity. As I began reading I was glued to his words. I had a gut level feeling that the editor by inviting Pravin to write about his personal life had discovered a person with tremendous capacity to write. His writing could surely inspire and animate many readers. Could you now perhaps ask him to write an autobiographical novel - original, authentic, humorous and courageous? If Pravin takes this suggestion seriously we would have a valuable piece of writing from a Jesuit Brother. Thank you, Fr. Vinayak and Br. Pravin, for enriching me through your article.

■ Andrew Silveira, SJ | Bharuch

Thought-provoking Write-up!

Pravin's write-up for Crucial Conversations has some very interesting points that need to be reflected on. Superiors and subjects make me reflect on what my personal attitude is towards persons I work with. Are they accountable to me or I to them? I learnt this from Pravin too: we need to have enough humility to tell them "you become you, not me." "Where genuineness emerges, uniqueness is preserved and leadership nurtured." Thanks Pravin.

■ Br. Noel Oliver, SJ | Cambodia

JESWITS

■ Robert Athickal, SJ | robertathickal@gmail.com



May I join the High School students' group to Malaysia and Singapore? This is part of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP#3) - journeying with youth!



I am going to get a harder racquet to keep our Parish Priest out of my school. He is a bigger menace than the malaria mosquitoes!



Of course, my confessions probably are not as spicy as those of your scholastics!



O God, please do not give us a Pope from South America, Africa or Asia! Give us a Pope from 21st century!



POSA Speaks

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ

Come, let us build another temple!

Is this a coincidence that exactly 120 years ago, on this very day, 5th August, (20th of Shravan, 1307 as per Bengali Calendar) Rabindranath Tagore wrote a poem “Deeno Daan”? It was also about a temple. It is a dialogue between the King who built a magnificent temple, and the saint who declared that there was no god in the temple. “Who could not provide shelter to his own homeless subjects, does he really fancy of giving me a home? Your mundane temple is as hollow. It’s just a bubble of wealth and pride.” Divinity concurred with the saint.

Today’s temple is being initiated on the debris of a mosque that was illegally destroyed (The Supreme Court); it is a temple that is being built in the midst of the pandemic that is infecting and killing lakhs of people across the country; it is a temple that is a symbol of ‘political’ victory rather than a genuine religious experience; it is a temple constructed in the face of the criminal political negligence and ill-treatment meted out to millions of migrants workers walking hundreds of kilometres on the national highways as unwanted citizens? One wonders, who is god? Whose god is he/she anyway?

The religious nationalism that is carefully crafted and successfully marketed in India goes against the very ethos of South Asia. South Asia is a geographical unity with varieties of peoples, multiplicity of religions, numerous languages and ancient traditions. Its fabric is richly multifaceted. The pandemic without borders poses unforeseen challenges and unique possibilities for South Asia. “Amidst our separate insularities, South Asians should take the pandemic as a wake-up call beyond public health, on ills ranging from plastic pollution to global warming, extinction of species, hijacking of the commons, dirty water, toxic air, a weakening of the welfare state, infrastructural exceptionalism - and the rapid conversion of our demographic diversity into the worldwide sameness of a suburban mall” (The Hindu, Pandemics without borders, South Asia’s evolution, Kanak Mani Dixit, May, 04, 2020).

Further, he suggests, “externally, the countries of South Asia must bring down the hyper-nationalist mind barriers to allow porous borders, thereby reviving historical synergies in economy, ecology and culture. This is essential for both social justice and economic growth, and cannot happen without a palpable reduction in military expenditures that will come with abandonment of the national security state.”

South Asian Regionalism could be the next Real Temple that we can build to “promote cooperation in natural and human-made disasters, and boost the economies of the geographical ‘periphery’ of each country” - symbol of South Asian god who is ‘tremendum et fascinans, ‘fascinating and marvellous’ with the rich and varied colours of 33 crore gods!



Editor’s Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

Our Way of Proceeding: The Runway that averts skidding

Jesuits are so because they are supposed to have a characteristic way of going about things traditionally known as “Our Way of Proceeding.” It is derived from the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus where “Our Way of Acting” appears no less than 16 times. The expression underpins the need for defining Jesuit Identity. Subsequent General Congregations, especially GC 32 and 34 (Decree 26) have contoured it according to the changing contexts. It mandates that nothing in the Society is done ‘my way’ or ‘your way’ but is done in a well discerned ‘our way.’ Even in the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius gives the exercitant the freedom to pray anywhere and anytime but not anyhow! The ‘manner of things’ for a Jesuit then is clearly not a matter of individual choice: be it praying, conversing, teaching, discerning, choosing, acting or evaluating. There is always a characteristic pathway for a Jesuit to tread upon. In fact, the Custom Book or “How to” guideline of every Province is called “Our Way of Proceeding.” Against the invasion of the virus of individualism today, this Ignatian remedy offers a roadmap for all vision-mission, goals, policies, strategies and action plans. It is the runway that helps all take-off or landing in the Life Mission of the Jesuits.

In these tempestuous times of cultural pluralism, poor visibility due to ideological relativism and winds against the spirit of Democracy, there is every risk of overshooting the runway and crash-landing into the valley of Voluntarism or Individualism. Perhaps the virus of individualism can even infect the immunity for community living. Invasion of eco-spirituality or social spirituality or inter-faith spirituality can divert us from the path of Ignatian spirituality.

Just as our spirituality - the relationship with God is moulded and shaped according to a specific way of proceeding, so is our way of conversation led by a specific understanding of God - the ‘labouring love’! The Holy Spirit becomes the third person of every dialogue we engage in. So, for a Jesuit there is nothing like dialogue: there is only ‘trialogue’.

The outcome of these discerning dialogues, instead of the habitual ‘intercepting monologues’, is evidently the ‘Will of God’. Discernment in common through the method of Spiritual Conversation is, therefore, the method of conversation for us. Unilateral decisions have no place in ‘Our Way of Proceeding.’

Consequently, our style of leadership will be unique too. There is no option to a spirit-guided leadership that encourages a variety of voices through the participation of all. A collegiality of leadership that enhances multiple leaderships is the corollary of ‘Our Way of Proceeding’.

Collaboration then is not a strategic substitution against a lack of vocations but imitation of the Creator who invites humankind to be co-creators in the ongoing process of creation. How else would collaboration sustain if not by networking with partners who share our vision and mission?

Succeeding General Congregations through several decrees have kept resurfacing this five-century-old runway built by Ignatius himself. Pedro Arrupe reinforced it in the modern times. It has fortunately weathered changing seasons down the centuries. Against the unfavourable storm of individualism and the lack of visibility of moral values today, we are cautioned to navigate “Our Way of Proceeding” carefully and land safely on the apostolic port of destination. Bon Voyage!



Rewriting the Jesuit Narrative on Women

This year marks a quarter of a century since the Society of Jesus issued the ground-breaking official document titled 'Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society'. The Jesuits committed themselves to worldwide solidarity with women and acknowledged having been part of a long tradition "that has offended against women."

GC 34 had approved 22 documents, key among them was the one seeking to establish a Jesuit partnership with the Catholic laity and to deepen links between faith and the fight for social justice. Explicit narratives on Jesuit-lay collaboration dates from 1983. Today more than ever before, the Jesuits have realized that a 'way of proceeding' all by themselves, either



in their institutions or their works, will not do justice to their motto: AMDG. Partnership in Mission with Women Religious, which is integral to their idea of Jesuit collaboration and charism, is the theme of this special Jivan issue.

Decree 14 – The Jesuit Narrative on Women

What follows are some cursory thoughts on Decree 14 based on my experience. My association with the Jesuits dates back to my childhood (parish), then adolescence (Xavier's College, Ahmedabad) and as a woman religious (Vidyajyoti, Delhi; Centre Sèvres, Facultés J suites de Paris and Professor of Theology, JDV, Pune). Diverse Jesuit 'ways' have impacted my thinking and choices, which helped me to realize the feminine wisdom of the Society of Jesus expressed in an honest language in Decree 14.

Decree 14 is a germane call to all Jesuits for systemic change, inclusive of respectful relationship and gender equality (No.6). The greatness of the Society lies in the fact that it acknowledges that it has been complicit of the long-standing civil and ecclesial exclusion of women, as if divinely willed, this being the first step towards the implementation of the decree. The note of contrite conversion to change "the regrettable situation" (no.9) and of commitment to regard "solidarity with women as integral to Jesuit mission" was a very positive way forward. Although the Ignatian legacy cannot claim to passionately stand for women's empowerment and equality, D. 14 will go a long way in reshaping Jesuit mission and theological thinking.

The Society of Jesus being essentially a clerical religious order did not always appreciate the rise of feminism and women's demands and struggle for their rights. D. 14 has changed that historical narrative which helped the Jesuits to realize how impoverished they have historically been on account of the absence of women from their institutions and projects. It is also a reminder that the past exclusion is not a vanished slice of time. There are lessons to learn from the past.

Women as Collaborators in Jesuit Works

"Collaboration remains a central call to all Jesuits and is a key part of your identity and the identity of your

apostolic works," says Fr. Arturo Sosa, the Jesuit Superior General. Women's involvement and wisdom in consultation and decision making in Jesuit ministries have become an almost sine qua non (no. 13.4-5). But ironically, when men defend women's rights and speak about the importance of women's inclusion they are held as visionaries. However, when women use the same language of empowerment, they are perceived as demanding and labelled as audacious feminists!

Fr. Arturo Sosa concedes that in the Church, "inclusion, which would bring the gifts of resilience and collaboration even more deeply into the Church, remains stymied on many fronts." And further adds, "But if we are honest, we acknowledge that the fullness of women's participation in the Church has not yet arrived" (Voices of Faith, March 8, 2017). Men are perhaps not yet ready to let go of their reins of hegemony, and they will not as long as they perceive themselves as rational, and represent women as emotional and vulnerable!

Clericalism and toxic masculinity are major blocks against an inclusive Church in India. They have become a systemic addiction that tends to demand compliance with its practice of exclusion and unjust hierarchies.

Dialogue Partners in Mission Collaboration

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot claim to be serious about dialogue and then pre-determine the outcome, reject the validity of the dialogue partner's insights and offer a series of rules to ground one's position. The true aim of dialogue, of genuine conversation between the mission partners, is the "discovery of Truth as manifestation" (David Tracy). Conversation is not a confrontation, not a debate; nor it is conformity, nor repetition. It is questioning itself. It is moving forward! True dialogue, therefore, presupposes genuine conversation partners who stand on equal footing, reserve the right of one's perspective and learn from others. Gender-inclusive dialogue in mission needs to "Be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible, be loving and if necessary, change" (Bernard Lonergan). Women religious and the clergy need to rediscover themselves as relational beings. Relational leadership is a matter of having confidence in the responsibilities of others and creating a bonding through healthy movement of roles.

Empowering Women

The Jesuit order stands out for its commitment to intellectual life, mission work and social justice for the poor. It has a reputation for intellectual rigour and for instilling concern for the underprivileged. Ignatian retreats, spirituality and education of women in Jesuit institutions have helped women to individually deepen their spiritual life, engage in critical inquiry and research and develop a social consciousness for the poor. As a stakeholder of the Jesuit ministry, I can vouch for this. But have the Jesuits empowered women to stand up in civil society and in the Church, encouraged them to engage with public life and trained them for leadership responsibilities?

In my view empowering women in these areas is the need of the hour in Jesuit run institutions/centres as part of the 'Universal Apostolic Preferences'. Moreover, attentiveness to women's distinct experiences, perspectives, insights and



Image Source: Gurjarvani

intuitions and the presence of women in the programmes of priestly formation (Veritatis Gaudium) will help correct the many prejudices and stereotypes men hold against women and avoid epistemic violence through discourse. Indian/Asian Feminist Theology has made a significant progress in that direction despite the many hurdles it encounters in the dominant patriarchal society and Church of India.

Inclusive and Communitarian Discernment

Discernment or decision making in apostolic works must necessarily be inclusive and collaborative. No collaboration will be possible if all the players do not participate in the discernment and decision making process. The wisdom and experiences of women and inclusion of their voices in the decision making process of apostolic works will enhance better partnership. If collaboration has not gone very far it is because collaborative discernment has not. Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them (D.14:12). Without listening to all voices one can hardly become a true leader or foster the sense of leadership in others. It only fosters officious priests and clericalism. The decree urges all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experiences and concerns of women and “to align themselves in solidarity” with them. There is no substitute for such listening. Listening with empathy and in a spirit of equality is the foundation for mutual partnership to reform unjust structures.

Affective Jesuits for Effective Mission

It is undeniable that the binary opposition of masculinity-femininity derives less from physiognomy than from socio-cultural stereotypes, interests and upbringing. Since the culture of toxic masculinity is characteristic of the patriarchal Indian context, it is also uncharacteristic of men to manifest their affective side and demonstrate empathy, gentleness and compassion. It is also generally not expected of men to consult or negotiate with those whom they think to be inferior – women, low castes, poor. Clerical or religious professionalism devoid of mature affectivity and sexuality often results in dysfunctional behaviour. Affective maturity will enable the clergy to maintain appropriate professional social distancing in their ministries and keep the virus of infecting ministerial relationships away. The capacity to collaborate on an equal footing with others, is a sign of affective maturity.

A classic example of an affectively conscious Jesuit is Pope Francis. His body language, his tone and manner of communicating to no matter who, reveal it all. He is caring, empathetic, warm, straightforward and daring. His openness

to learn from life experiences and situations – his personal and family life, as Rector and Provincial, his imposed seclusion by the Society, his pastoral experience formed him along with the Ignatian pedagogy into an affective human being, affective man and affective Jesuit. Another Jesuit - his gentle smile, affectionate look, silent words, quiet humour, this man of God, the late superior General, Adolfo Nicolas was affectivity personified. My encounter with him on a couple of occasions were always grace-filled. The Jesuit brand is professional excellence, rootedness in the Ignatian spirituality and a faithful son of Ignatius. But if all this is devoid of affectivity, something essential is missing in the mission life of a Jesuit.

Game Changers

Women cannot breathe, yet! How essential it is to recognize this dehumanizing reality that prevails in so many countries.

Jesuits have made efforts to reach out to women in difficult situations. They have been in the forefront to combat several social issues worldwide. The need of the hour is to empower women and women religious spiritually and socially and enable them to become the change they want to see in the Church and the world.

In this change of era, Jesuits can become examples of innovation in the predominantly clericalized patriarchal Church to eradicate the condescending binary of male-female relationship and the oppressive practices of servitude of women religious. “It is wrong to think that the commitment of the sisters in the Church is only functional,” Pope Francis boldly stated and added, “Women religious must not become the servants of the clerics. They must carry out their mission in the dimension of service, not servitude.” Jesuits can become trendsetters in encouraging and engaging other clergymen (diocesan and male religious) to cleanse the Church of

this evil. Women cannot battle this evil singlehandedly since it has been created by men and perpetuated by women in passive submission.

Besides denouncing the historical “unjust treatment and exploitation of women”, the decree also pledges to make “essential equality of women a lived reality.” Women do not want a reversal of gender order. We want an order of gender partnership in mission to bring equality home. We need a new model to look at women and of being women. Jesuits can become game-changers along with women religious to establish God’s reign of equity and build a liveable ‘common home.’

The author is Professor of Systematic Theology and Co-Founder of Ecclesia of Women in Asia, a Forum of Asian Women Theologians.

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Women do not want a reversal of gender order. We want an order of gender partnership in mission to bring equality home. We need a new model to look at women and of being women. Jesuits can become game-changers along with women religious to establish God's reign of equity and build a liveable 'common home.' ”

Indian Christians for Democracy

As Indian Christians we have always and continue to uphold the Constitutional Values of our country, as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic and Republic. We believe in, and practice, the Principles of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, enshrined in the Constitution. Christians as individuals and their institutions have been in the forefront in times of disasters and natural calamities.

As the Corona Virus struck India, the Christian community and its institutions collaborated with the local administration, people's groups, NGOs, and civil society in extending relief to the affected masses. They also were at the service of the migrant labourers returning home, providing food, water, shelter, space for quarantine. Many front-line volunteers risked their lives to stand in solidarity with the people.

As citizens of this country, we are troubled by the lack of empathy for the millions rendered jobless, many returning to villages they had left to find work in towns and cities to feed their hungry families. Government schemes do not always reach the poorest of the poor, hence we are concerned that a vast segment of the excluded, marginalized are made dependent, what would be their plight in this pandemic?

We are also aware of the fact that, the Dalits, Adivasis, Most Backward Castes, Poor and single mothers are the worst affected by the consequences of the pandemic, and the continuing lockdown. We know many of the vulnerable and high-risk persons and families are on the verge of starvation, some close to death.

The government says it is converting the crisis into an opportunity. The opportunity seems to benefit the same people from the skewed, unequal and exclusionary Indian socio-political, economic and cultural order, while the poor, the working class, women, rural masses, migrants contribute their lives and sweat to uphold the edifice of the country for the benefit of the privileged.

The number of citizens affected by the virus continues to grow by the day. Tens of thousands have already lost their lives. Medical and health care facilities are inadequate.

Adding to the crisis are floods in several regions of Bihar and North East, which also faced the fury of a cyclone.

This seems an odd time for governments at the Centre and some of the states to be involved in religious functions such as the Bhumi Pujan at Ayodhya.

On the other hand, we are greatly concerned that the emergency Covid-19 has created has been taken as an opportune moment to exacerbate cultural policing and mob lynching by self-styled protectors of the cow. The State's silencing of political dissent and even mild criticism of the regime on social media is deeply disturbing. Scores of students are being detained, refused bail, or targeted for their political opinion. Important laws with serious consequences for the environment, health and education have been pushed through without public interface.

In this situation, as Indian Christians,

- 1) We join with fellow citizens to uphold the values of the Indian Constitution.
- 2) We call upon government to provide food with dignity, and livelihood options to the poor, the vulnerable and high-risk persons and families.
- 3) We seek health care facilities for these people, both for existing ailments as also for Covid-19 related vulnerabilities.
- 4) We call for an immediate end to intimidation and arrest on false and unverified charges.
- 5) We encourage peaceful co-existence of all the citizens irrespective of caste, class, gender, religion, geography and orientations.
- 6) We call for ending all forms of exploitation, oppression, exclusion and marginalization at this time of crisis.
- 7) We demand strict implementation of existing laws to deal with and prevent violence to women which is increasing with impunity.
- 8) We call upon the central and state governments and the corporate sector to generate employment and empower students and youth, so they become sentient and involved citizens of our great country.
- 9) We stand in solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir for their Constitutional rights.
- 10) And in particular, we call upon the religious, social, academic and institutional leaders of our own community, and as well as our youth and students, to join civil society in the common struggle to achieve these goals.

This statement emanates from interactions and two large web-based national consultations in July 2020.

Jai Hind | Satyameva Jayate | Jai Bharat

Signed by 50 prominent Christian Citizens.



Thinking Out of the Gender Box:

Challenges to Jesuit Identity and Mission



Photo: Vijay Macwan

Moving into the 21st century, gender is a familiar expression in ordinary parlance besides becoming a tool of critical inquiry in key analytical questions. Though gender concerns are generally seen as synonym for women's concerns, the discourse on gender has shifted gears over the last few decades. Today, the designs on the gender canvas of any given society have moved beyond questions relating to male-female gender binary to include concerns of gender non-conforming persons and sexual minorities. Though gender fluidity is increasingly acknowledged in the present socio-cultural setting of India, it does not mean that gender imbalance in man-woman relationships is a resolved issue. The casting of women and men in gendered moulds has strong repercussions on their identity construction and growth processes. Besides, the lopsided power equations in gender relations between women and men in their access to resources and opportunities have very adverse consequences in the domestic and public space. For this reason, we examine the

implications of the gender question and the challenges they pose to Jesuit identity and mission.

Many projects on women's empowerment are undertaken without a proper understanding of the deeper intricacies underlying the question of gender. Once a Catholic college professor told me with great pride that he is all for promoting women and it should begin in the family. He used the analogy of a car to describe family life and likened women and men as its two wheels that should move together for the well-being of the family. On a deeper probing into his family life and the decision-making patterns there, his instant reply was that the car needs a driver and God has entrusted to him that responsibility since he is the head of the family. The sudden switch over in his position from the 'wheel' to the 'driver' signalled to me the deeper incongruities underlying many 'success' stories relating to women's empowerment within and outside of the ecclesiastical

establishment. Hence, a critical examination of the gender question in its complexity here.

Problematic of Gendered personal backpacks

The social fabric of the Indian setting has a gendered cultural base, which may vary in its tone and texture depending on the intersectionality of class, caste and religion with gender, made explicit through mediations of culture like language, social customs and traditions. Even a cursory look at one's own familial background would illustrate how the identities of women and men are gendered as per the prescriptions of one's particular community. Since all of us are born and brought up in a particular cultural location, we tend to imbibe the gender definitions of that cultural setting uncritically. This turns out to be an invisible backpack that we carry along as we move from one stage to another in life. Besides the early learning in the family, media, education, belief systems and practices all have a direct influence in the gender configuration of a person's character.

Gendered attitudes formed in childhood and early adolescence affect a person's holistic growth and attitudes towards sexuality in later adolescence and beyond. For boys, internalized gender stereotypes like association of masculinity with rationality, control, authority, autonomy, aggression, etc. lead to dominating behaviour and exercise of leadership in a power-over mode in adult life. They would expect women to be dependent, submissive, and obedient to their commands and demands. Such an outlook could lead to very unhealthy behaviours: on a benevolent note they tend to be over-protective of women whereas on the shadow side, they could engage in gender and sexual violence.

In a culture informed by patriarchy as in the Indian milieu, many people live blissfully ignorant or perhaps unmindful of the fact that 'gender' expresses socio-cultural definitions of how humans ought to be and behave in a given cultural setting. In this context, it is to be noted that candidates for Jesuit life also come along with these invisible gender backpacks, which may vary in size and contents depending on their particular socio-cultural locations. The challenge before Jesuit formation then would be to help Jesuits identify and unpack these backpacks so that they are freed of unhealthy gendered notions about themselves, which would come into play in their relationships particularly with girls and women.

Structural concerns relating to Gender in Jesuit life

The Society of Jesus is an established clerical religious Order within the Catholic Church and in the Catholic Church ecclesiastical structures are deeply embedded in patriarchy. Hence, there is the danger that the gender politics of Catholic faith

in its theology and praxis could have an impact also on Jesuit life and mission. Jesuits need not be immune to clericalism, which has crept into the Church like a deadly disease and is persistent in spite of Pope Francis denouncing it repeatedly. Clergymen who are affected by the virus of clericalism would consider themselves an elite class and superior to the laity, because of their powers as sacramental ministers. While clericalism affects both non-clerical women and men in the Church, women are more vulnerable to clerical abuse of power since they stand outside or at the lowest rungs of the gendered, hierarchical ecclesiastical leadership structures and in their role as the greatest consumers of religious products. Within this gendered framework, women religious stand more susceptible to the toxic

effects of clericalism since they are conditioned by the hegemonic codes of religion and find themselves powerless to resist abuse. Consequently, they become easy victims of clergy sexual abuse and other expressions of gender violence like exploitation in the work place as 'cheap labour force', where their intellectual, spiritual and theological agency get eclipsed and their contributions not recognized.

If Jesuits are serious about 'mutuality and equality between men and women' in the Church and in civil society as decreed in GC 34 twenty five years ago, more radical steps need to be taken in Jesuit formation and mission. This demands going beyond women's empowerment programmes

to taking a farsighted stand regarding gender-justice in theory and praxis. Since gender is an acquired identity that varies widely within and across cultural contexts, engaging in open, healthy and critical conversations on gender-related issues such as friendships, sexuality and power sharing are important at the initial and ongoing stages of Jesuit formation. This would help Jesuits to be freed of toxic masculinity in their character and engage in mission with greater freedom and humanness.

To conclude, confining one's identity and behaviour to 'gender box' prescriptions can become an impediment to a person attaining his/her full humanity since gendered behaviour patterns constrain a person's holistic growth. Jesuit initiatives to deconstruct the delimiting gender definitions at the personal and structural levels could facilitate liberative changes in the Church and in societal life. Prophetic Jesuit voices addressing clergy sexual abuse and its cover-up within ecclesiastical structures could help recover the integrity and credibility of the Church that is being gravely challenged in the present times. Jesuit commitment to gender equality would make possible a breakthrough of the gendered glass ceiling that obstructs the growth and contributions of women and other gender non-conforming persons, and help create a world order founded on justice, equality and greater freedom for all.



Prophetic Jesuit voices addressing clergy sexual abuse and its cover-up within ecclesiastical structures could help recover the integrity and credibility of the Church that is being gravely challenged in the present times. ”

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Jesuits and Gender Equality



Photo: Camillus Kishore, SJ

For thousands of years patriarchal attitudes persisted in human society wherein the male was considered the norm and the female as created to be at his service. Women were accorded an inferior position and were confined to domestic space. Public space was exclusively reserved for males. Biology was her destiny. She was considered inferior in her intellectual capacities and seen more as an emotional being. She was also seen as morally deficient since Eve was held responsible for bringing sin into the world. Most religions, including Christianity, barred her from the study of religious scriptures. She had no right to get educated or to take up any profession. Her main job was to give birth to children, nurture them, and take care of the household chores.

Consequently, women internalized their inferior status. The freedom given by God was denied to her. She was forced to live not by her will and choice but in obedience to male authority and control. She suffered discrimination, exploitation and oppression. This situation of women eventually gave birth to feminism which is a political theory and practice that struggles to free all women. It questions patriarchal values of competition, control and conquest, and promotes values of co-operation, interdependence and consensus.

During the first wave feminism (between 1830 and 1920), women began campaigns for enfranchisement and the extension of civil rights to them. The second wave (from 1960s onwards) was characterized by educational opportunities for women and, consequently, women entering the so called all-male professions. It was during this time that Vatican II in its Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* (Church in the Modern World) declared that “...forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design” (n. 29, 1965).

In this context of emerging feminist consciousness, Vidyajyoti began to admit women to do theology. That was their first step to promote gender equality. Over the past four decades or so, a sizable number of women have taken theological training; some have finished MTh and PhD from Vidyajyoti. The three years of my student life in Vidyajyoti from 1989 transformed me in many ways. I felt accepted, loved, nurtured and respected as a person. Besides developing a strong conviction regarding social justice and the need for contextual theologizing, my feminist consciousness too was awakened during that time.

Most of my Jesuit professors played an important role in that process of feminist awakening in me.

The Jesuits did not stop there. They wanted women to join the faculty and teach Theology. That's how they approached my Provincial to request her to ask me whether I would be willing to join the faculty. In the beginning I was not interested since I was more inclined towards direct ministry with the poor. But when my Provincial asked me to consider the contribution we as Presentation Sisters could make especially to the Church in North India, I felt challenged. Moreover, during my time of discernment, I felt that I needed to take up this ministry precisely being a woman I could play a great role in promoting gender awareness and gender equality among the students.

I joined the faculty soon after my MTh in 1999. If someone asks me what my experience of working closely with Jesuits - professors and students - during the past 21 years has been, it would be rather difficult for me to express my varied experiences. I have experienced both lights and shadows. However, the predominant feeling is that of being accepted by a vast majority of students and professors. There were times when people asked me how I felt being a woman all alone amidst men. Yes, all these years, I have remained the only woman faculty member of Vidyajyoti. The Jesuits never made me feel self conscious about my sex from the very beginning. I felt perfectly at home with them.

I remember the first time I was asked to present a paper by Bishop George Ninan of the Anglican Church. I was reluctant to accept because I felt that I was not capable of doing it. Then I consulted Fr. T.K. John my Guru and colleague at that time. He told me that by all means I must accept the request and present the paper. His words gave me the push I needed at that time. I never felt treated as an unequal just because I am a woman by any of the Jesuits I worked with. On the contrary, most of them treated me as their equal, nurtured me and helped me to grow.

I am also aware that Vidyajyoti was trying over the years to get more women as faculty members. They have approached many Provincials when they have come across promising women students capable of taking up the teaching ministry. But

Congregations have not been willing to release their sisters for one reason or another. I am very happy that at present we have one woman who is doing her MTh who will eventually join the faculty.

As I mentioned earlier, this is not the whole picture. Jesuits are also products of a patriarchal society and have internalized patriarchal value system. Some are more conscious of it and are more at ease with feminist thinking and attitudes. While most professors have an open mind towards women, the Jesuit scholastics do not manifest the same. For instance, the students of Vidyajyoti have so far never elected a woman as an academic representative of the class even when there

were women capable of taking up the responsibility. But women are often chosen to be the class beadle of the class whose role is more in line with providing service. Some of the male students find it difficult to accept women students who are assertive and can express their point of view.

There were also occasions when I felt excluded as a woman. I know many times it was not done deliberately; but when it happens it is really painful. For instance, on one diaconate day I felt really pained when the newly ordained deacon thanked all the fathers and left me out. At such moments it is a challenge to respond and not react. At other times it was difficult for me to understand on what grounds I was treated unequally. Often it was not only on gender lines; other factors like ethnicity, personal likes and dislikes, Jesuit-non-Jesuit categories, etc. were at work.

By and large, many Jesuits do not discriminate against women, and they work for women empowerment. They are able to see women as equal partners. However, due to socialization in a patriarchal society, they unconsciously carry anti-women prejudices and at times act out of these. There is need for greater awareness of one's habitual responses to situations where one works with and for women.



Jesuits are also products of a patriarchal society and have internalized patriarchal value system. Some are more conscious of it and are more at ease with feminist thinking and attitudes. While most professors have an open mind towards women, the Jesuit scholastics do not manifest the same. ”

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**Intention For
September
2020**

Respect for the Planet's Resources

We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**





Mission Partnership with Jesuits

Who calls the shots?



Image Source : Catholics India

I have been in partnership with Jesuits in the Social Development Ministry for many years. I can proudly say that I am a product of the Society of Jesus. My family share the values and the faith of the Jesuit missionaries who started the Petlad mission in Kheda District of Gujarat. Besides, many of my close friends are Jesuits. My brother, Fr. Ignas Canis, is also a Jesuit. My congregation, Missionaries of Christ Jesus, follows Ignatian spirituality.

The life and charism of St. Ignatius of Loyola has left an indelible mark on me. I owe my vision and faith to the Jesuits missionaries, the wisdom and insights of Jesuits have expanded my worldview with regard to social issues and developmental paradigms. I owe my initial intellectual formation to the Jesuit organisation Behavioural Science Centre. This led me to partnership with them in the social and developmental fields and gave me a strong and healthy base for my ministry.

I would like to share my experiences on 'Collaboration in Jesuit Mission'. Firstly, let me say I prefer to use the term partnership rather than collaboration. 'Collaboration' implies a primary person, who, in order to reach a particular goal, works in harmony with a secondary person. However, in my

case, I have taken the lead role, I am the primary person, and hence 'partnership' would be a more fitting terminology for me to use in sharing my experiences of working along with Jesuits. Partnership makes more sense because our shared mission entails equal responsibility and ownership. I say this to imply that no single person directs or dominates the operation or controls the resources; power is not centred on a single person or organisation. I must admit that this viewpoint is still an attempt, and at times there are difficulties and obstacles along the way in achieving the shared goals.

The issue of partnership depends on how we understand 'power' - the control of money, decision making, management of personnel, etc. But power is much more. If you are part of an institution that has its own property, status, reputation, contacts, alumni, influence, finance, successes and credit, and ultimately you are the owners, what sort of collaboration are you speaking about? We might be 'collaborating' but people will see me as a staff member working for you. This leaves me with a sense of inferiority.

Partnership is based on equality. It is based on the belief that two equal partners are coming together to work for a common

goal, and to achieve it in a spirit of mutuality. In partnership projects, will the Jesuits be willing to give up their key positions that they occupy and instead allot positions based on merit and not on their supposed gender superiority over women religious? For example, the highest decision-making bodies in an organization are the trustees. Now if the trustees are appointed by the Jesuits, the Board will be dominated by men who will have the authority, power, and leadership. There is a big power game at play, as no questions are asked, or no difference of opinion is permitted. Now this spills over into all spheres of work in the ministry. Unless this is changed, no ministry is possible on an equal footing. Jesuit culture in India continues to be male dominated and clerical; hence Jesuits need to be strongly gender sensitive. The Jesuit attitudes with regard to patriarchy and gender discrimination are major players in striving for partnership with women religious.

Again, I am of the opinion that Jesuits' intellectual preoccupations indirectly keep them away from meeting the concrete problems of the marginalized people. This makes them armchair intellectuals who fail to grasp the concrete reality of the lives of such people. This has in turn prevented them from coming up with creative programmes to cater to the actual needs of people. Absence of grass-root formation and experience in the actual field is a big lacuna in maintaining ongoing sustainability in the partnership of development.

We become what we are committed to but, unfortunately, I felt that at times some Jesuits were afraid to commit themselves and take a stand in support of the poor and marginalized, especially when it is a question of social justice. This didn't auger well with me who was interested in creating an impact and making a difference in the lives of the poor. At times, it led to a drift in our common vision.

There were other competing values, which would lead to frustration, disappointment and mediocrity. There were times when I felt that they got into a mould and were trapped in it, and this called for an attitude 'to let go' of old routines, and develop new habits, promote and cultivate change especially in the way they think.

Yet, from my experience of partnership with Jesuits, I somehow noticed a lack of clarity and commitment to the common vision and mission. This was an impediment to collaboration and partnership. When we are not on the same page in understanding the vision of the social ministry, it leads to unnecessary conflict situations. This was a hurdle for me in my efforts of serving passionately, with determination and

commitment in the ministry of social development. Inadequate clarity on role specification was a hindrance to collaboration and partnership in ministry. A common understanding of mission is, therefore, called for in future partnership.

Growth comes from partnership and commitment to a common mission. Failure to share authority, accountability, and responsibility was, occasionally, a hindrance and was due to a lack of necessary systemic changes in the current structure of the organization.



Sister says she doesn't want to be a priest. But if admitted as a coadjutor she promises to do the work of two Jesuits, at only half the cost --.

Cartoons: Myron Pereira, SJ

I am of the opinion that the mindset of Jesuits will have to undergo a radical transformation if in the future they are to engage in partnership with women religious in the field of social development and change. Any change starts first in one's mind. To change our lives, it is essential to change the way we think. Hence, it is necessary to be aware how we think. Our attitudes in life are shaped by our thoughts; the way we think determines the way we feel, and the way we feel influences the way we act.

If the Jesuits are in favour of collaboration with women, especially with women religious, it would have to be based on the principle of mutuality, equality and interdependence. In a team this would call for a change of mindset of the Jesuits from their traditional mode of collaboration with women to a new mode as equal partners. We would look to both partners sharing success or

failure, sharing name and credit.

What we need is courage - courage to stand by our commitment to partnership with women religious on equal footing and courage to actualize a changed mindset. This would also call for a systemic change in organization that could facilitate a new era of partnership in ministry. Both Jesuits and religious women will need to acquire this new mindset, a paradigm shift. This process can then instil a courage to form, re-form and transform our commitment to foster a new partnership with women religious for the sake of a common mission in the socio-developmental field.

Having said all this, I still want to acknowledge that I have been deeply influenced and touched by the courage, dynamism, and commitment of some Jesuits that I was privileged to work in partnership with.

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THOUSAND WORDS

In Commemoration of International
Day of Democracy, 15th September

चुप रहना ही हिंसा की शुरुआत है
कातिलों में गिने जाने की बात है

|| Vinay Mahajan and Charul Bharwada

Remaining silent is the
beginning of Violence.
It is a matter of being counted
among the killers.





“

Failing to speak up would have been a dereliction of duty, especially for an officer of the court like me.”

|| Prashant Bhushan



Women Religious and Ignatian Spirituality



Image Source: lovethedrivingforce.com

Ignatian spirituality is a significant source and motivation for many women religious Congregations as well as lay associations. Many Congregations include the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola with their particular practice of spirituality. In this article I have focused mainly on the relation of Ignatian spirituality with the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary (RJM), to which I belong. To include more voices and experiences I gathered feedback from some RJMs from India, Europe and USA.

Ignatian connections with the Congregation

Ignatian tradition, pedagogy and spirituality have influenced the Congregation right from its foundation in 1818. The Foundress, St. Claudine Thevenet (1774-1837), took the religious name Mary Saint Ignatius placing herself under the patronage of St. Ignatius of Loyola. She also gave her first companions the names of some of the pioneering Jesuits – Xavier, Borgia, Stanislaus and Gonzaga.

Claudine Thevenet was first introduced to Ignatian spirituality by her own mother, Marie Antoinette, whose

library contained manuals of piety and other spiritual works of the Jesuits. Growing up during the horrendous time of the French Revolution and witnessing people live and die without knowing God, Claudine involved herself in charitable activities with poor and abandoned children, especially young girls in the parish. Her encounter with Fr. André Coindre, the then newly appointed parish priest of St. Bruno, Lyons, in 1815 resulted in the establishment of a number of orphanages, called Providences in France. André Coindre, a gifted preacher and zealous Carthusian Missionary, encouraged Claudine and a few other committed women in the parish to form themselves into an association. Thus was formed the Association of the Sacred Heart on 31st July 1816 with Claudine Thevenet elected as the President and André Coindre as the Director. Every year on 31st July an extraordinary Assembly was held for the members with mostly Ignatian conferences.

André Coindre had a profound knowledge of Ignatian spirituality and as Father Founder of the Association he placed the Association under the patronage of St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Aloysius Gonzaga with the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He also gave them the Rule of Augustine and the Constitutions of St. Ignatius to structure their lives

and functioning. Two years later, on 31st July 1818, Fr. Coindre asked Claudine to form themselves into a community and live together. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary was thus founded by Claudine Thevenet on 6th October 1818 to impart Christian education to young girls, especially the poorest. Claudine continued to be the President of the Association till 1825, alongside directing the life and apostolate of the Congregation. On 25th February 1823 Claudine, as Sr. St. Ignatius, and four of her companions made their first profession taking the solemn vows of poverty, chastity, perpetual obedience and stability in the Congregation. On 26th February 1823, Claudine was elected Superioress General of the Congregation and from then on was called Mother St. Ignatius. In order to prevent being merged with the Congregation of the Religious of the Sacred Heart founded in 1816, the Congregation decided to take the name “Religious of Jesus and Mary” by which they could preserve their autonomy and remain faithful to the cause for which they were founded. After the beatification of Claudine on 4th October 1981, the Congregation feast was shifted from 31st July to 3rd February, her death anniversary, keeping her baptismal name. However, we continue to celebrate 31st July as the family feast in most Provinces.

Ignatian Practices

The apostolic spirituality of the Congregation, primarily Christocentric and Marian, is deeply rooted in Ignatian spirituality. The annual Ignatian retreat, the 30-day retreat at least twice in one’s life, monthly recollections, daily Examen or prayer of awareness, personal and communal discernment, personal prayer, contemplation, accompaniment and spiritual conversation form a significant part of our spiritual resources and practices. Ignatian spirituality is lived out and practiced in varied ways across the different Provinces of the Congregation. In some of the Provinces Sisters rely greatly on the Jesuits for spiritual direction and retreats. In the US and Europe there are adaptations with a number of Sisters trained in giving retreats and spiritual direction. In the 1990’s our American Sisters, Rosemary Mangan and Janice Farnham, offered “charism retreats” inviting Sisters to use the Spiritual Exercises as one way of recovering Claudine’s charism for our time, thereby bringing the Exercises into the history and spirituality of the Foundress. The Congregation’s latest Book of Formation approved at the General Chapter of 2013 includes Ignatian spirituality as one of the four core values of RJM formation and underscores its place in initial and ongoing formation.

Ignatian fruits and graces

The RJMs have been blessed to have many Jesuit contacts, mentors, spiritual directors, colleagues, and friends from whom they have learned much. Most have profited greatly from the insights and inputs of the Jesuits at conferences, Chapters, Assemblies, recollection days and retreats. Some of our Sisters have been introduced to Ignatian spirituality in their family, school, parish community and at all stages of religious formation. One of our Sisters shared: “I believe that our growing acquaintance and appreciation of the Exercises was one of the most transformative elements of our renewal period, and it has remained at the core of our spiritual tradition, formation, lifestyle, and decision-making”. Ignatian

spirituality and pedagogy has enabled the RJMs to recognize God’s presence daily, to seek and do God’s will and to discern wisely about their life and mission.

Ignatian relevance for Women Religious today

There are liberating possibilities as well as obstacles for women in Ignatian spirituality (cf. *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2001). Although women religious are indebted to Ignatius and the Jesuits for the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatian tradition and pedagogy, some consider the language, symbols and practices to be heavily masculine and exclusive of women’s experiences, contributions and struggles. There are also images and terms of warfare and royalty typical of Ignatius’s experiences, such as conquering, achieving, waging war against one’s body and kingship, that point to political sovereignty, dualism and rivalries. Since the texts were written in a patriarchal context,



St. Claudine Thevenet

Image Source: Alfa y Omega

Janet Ruffing and Theresa Moser (*The Way Supplement*, 1992) recommend a critical hermeneutic and adaptation of the texts to enhance women’s sense of self and their relationship with God. Kathleen Fischer includes the often-neglected bodily aspects and needs in her spiritual direction which can be helpful for women to use in discernment. These include listening to one’s deepest self, affirming one’s own and others’ needs, trusting the insights that come from one’s body, intuition, and feelings, becoming aware of the social and cultural forces influencing a situation and interpreting affective experiences in light of women’s social conditioning (Fischer 1988, 114-128).

There is a strong need for more trained women spiritual and retreat directors who can be sensitive to women’s issues and concerns and lessen the possibilities of sexual abuse by male directors who at times take advantage of women’s vulnerability. Collaborative joint ventures of the Jesuits with women can bring about renewal and revision in Ignatian spirituality, pedagogy and mission to cater to all types of people.

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Showing the Way to God

Spiritual accompaniment for and with women



Image Source: Companions on a Faith Journey - blogger

In her book, *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives in Spiritual Direction*, Kathleen Fisher writes, “It is often said of women’s spirituality that ‘we do not yet know what it looks like’.” The same could be said of spiritual accompaniment for and with women.

In my decades-long accompaniment of Jesuits and non-Jesuits in their life in the Spirit, my approach to those who do not belong to the Ignatian family has been slightly different from those who belong to Congregations inspired by the Ignatian spirituality. During the input sessions, concepts and terms peculiar to Ignatian spirituality have to be explained. While for tertians the purpose of “Election” will be to decide on their final commitment to the Lord in their Congregations, for Jubilarians it is renewal of religious life.

In this spiritual accompaniment I am fully aware that it is God who takes the initiative; it is God who wants to encounter God’s beloved children and offer them the grace God desires. Therefore the role of the guide is rather limited. It is merely to let God do in the retreatant what God wants. Our basic

disposition - both of the one who accompanies and the one who is accompanied - is to keep ourselves open, willing to be encountered by God. I have experienced this in every journey of the day-to-day spiritual accompaniment and of the 30-day retreats. I must confess, to my great surprise, that I have witnessed many times this initiative that comes from God.

Preparation

To create a collective spiritual consciousness, weeks before the retreat I get the list of the retreatants and pray for each one of them daily with the following Ignatian prayer: ‘Mary our Mother, kindly place Sr. X, Y, Z, etc. with your Son Jesus.’ I also familiarize myself with the life of the Foundress/er, as well as the charism and Constitutions of the Congregation, and its origins. At the same time, in order to help the retreatants prepare for the retreat, I request the Sisters-in-charge to provide them with courses on self-awareness, inner child healing, guidelines for spiritual discernment, daily practice of personal prayer, awareness of one’s grace-history, and courses on psycho-sexual integration.

Inspiration and Disposition

Among Ignatius' Letters to Women, the letter written from Venice on 18th June 1536, to Teresa Rejadell, a nun of the Santa Clara Benedictine Convent in Barcelona, is a great help for all those who would accompany women religious. In this letter Ignatius offers strategies to address enemies like false humility, fear of the absence of God, and suppression of holy desires, of the prophetic and charismatic. My personal inspiration comes from two Gospel narratives. The first is Jesus' accompaniment of the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4: 5-42), and the second is Jesus walking with the disciples to Emmaus (Lk. 24: 13-35).

Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman

Jesus meets the Samaritan woman who is full of passion, leads her to a vision of God and finally sends her on a mission. This has been a model for me in my ministry of accompaniment. I try my best to accompany the retreatant in her inner journey of being led from the false self to the authentic self, from the 'root' sin to the 'root' grace of realizing that "I am the beloved child of God".

Following Jesus, I accompany the retreatant in her journey of self-exploration and self-acceptance at the physical, sexual, intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual levels. I enable the retreatant to heal the wounds caused by her past life, including guilt, self-rejection, self-abuse, low self-image etc. As I journey with the retreatant, I am well aware of my interior movements. This accompaniment demands of me to have deep trust in the action of the Holy Spirit, unconditional trust in the retreatant, a compassionate, listening heart, freedom from prejudices and male-chauvinism. I ensure that I always respect professional boundaries and ask for God's grace to resist and fight any hint of physical attraction and temptation.

Jesus walks with the disciples to Emmaus

This episode has always inspired me to see the retreatant as a companion on a journey - to walk with her, and listen to her with deep respect and love. With the help of the Word of God, I have been helping retreatants in various methods of prayer. Most of the women religious find it easy to use the Ignatian method of contemplation as that touches the heart: "Were not our hearts burning within us...?" I encourage them to do the 'reviews' of their prayer experience through pictures, paintings, poems, intercessory prayers, etc.

Women Co-directors

Over the past two decades, directing the 30-day retreat with women co-directors is something I consider a very special

grace and God has been gracious in providing me with many opportunities to do so. In the process I have come to perceive how differently women think and feel compared with the way men do. I have discovered that, with a few exceptions, women religious in general find it easier to speak about their sexual life with women directors than with men. Initially I used to think that women in general find it difficult to be in touch with the inner movements of the spirit; later I gave up such presumptions. I was also open enough to correct my approach to them, like being over serious and too demanding.

It was my co-directors who taught me how to help the retreatant handle grief over the loss of a loved one, how to offer fantasy exercises, etc. We met every day to evaluate ourselves and share our experiences, without revealing the identity of the retreatant, and it was during these sharing sessions that we were able to discover our mistakes and learn from each other.

I should mention here that the Jesuit General Congregation 34 (d 14, no.10) itself has gladly acknowledged the contribution

women have made to guiding retreats. "Religious and laywomen have in recent years become expert in giving the Spiritual Exercises." Also it invites all Jesuits "to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women... Listening, in a spirit of partnership and equality..."

Conclusion

When we listen in this spirit, we can expect that the meaning and shape of spiritual direction for and with women will continue to evolve as it incorporates more of women's insights and experiences. To be a spiritual companion with women today is to be invited into a process that reaches out to every dimension

of reality, enriching us all with fresh gifts of the Spirit.

While I am grateful to God for all the graces that God has blessed me with in this ministry of accompaniment, I look forward to the day when many more religious women will come forward to accompany the Jesuits. Greater self-confidence on the part of women religious themselves and better encouragement on the part of their Superiors will make this possible. This would make them invite us men religious to team up with them in directing retreats. In this way both men and women, who are inspired and guided by St. Ignatius, could give their best "to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment." This is, incidentally, the very first of the 'Universal Apostolic Preferences' that guide Jesuits today.



Well, sister, I'm too old to be a martyr.
I'd rather die as a confessor - preferably
of a good convent of nuns!

Cartoons: Myron Pereira, SJ

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Go to the Frontier Mission



Photo Courtesy: Tony Andrade, SJ

It was in April 2017 my Provincial Fr. Sebastian Jeerakassery showed me a letter from Fr. George Pattery that Port Blair Diocese needs a Spiritual Director. He asked me whether I was ready to go for this frontier mission. After reading the letter, I told him that I had been discerning for quite some time about volunteering for some challenging frontier mission somewhere. He conveyed my willingness to Fr. Pattery that I was ready for this mission. The next day Fr. Pattery thanked me for volunteering. Bishop Alex Dias of Port Blair Diocese expressed his gratitude and welcomed me. That is when my journey of going to the peripheries started.

On 1st July, 2017, I landed at Port Blair airport, where Bishop Alex Dias and Fr. V. Selvaraj (Vicar General) were waiting for me. After a warm welcome and lunch at the Bishop's house, they drove me to the Stella Maris Cathedral community in Port Blair where I would be staying while doing my ministry. I was the only Jesuit among 4 diocesan priests in that community. The following day the Bishop introduced me as the future Spiritual Director of the Diocese to the faithful who were gathered for Mass. I received a warm welcome from them. Next

day the Bishop briefed me about my apostolate. Soon I started getting requests from various religious groups for recollection, confession, Triduum, retreat, staff and student programs for some schools, and counselling. I slowly started organizing myself to cater to their needs.

My first desire was to visit the entire Diocese and acquaint myself with the people of different parishes. I planned to visit North, Middle and South Andaman parishes. Travelling by road was the toughest since the roads were in pretty bad shape especially when going through dense forests. You get the scare of your life when the drivers manoeuvre their vehicles along those deadly curves. Priests, religious and laity gave me a warm welcome wherever I went. I spent time giving them recollections, hearing confessions and conducting programs for various parish groups, and counselling. The people are very warm and hospitable.

If you glance at the map of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it looks like tiny dots of many islands. Out of 550 islands only 55 are inhabited. Some are exclusively meant for aboriginal tribal

people: Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, and Sentinelese belong to the Negrito stock and are confined to the Andaman Islands. The Shompens and Nicobarese belong to the stock of Mongoloids and reside in the Nicobar Islands.

The Diocese of Port Blair stretches over 700 kms from North to South with 36 inhabited islands. The natural beauty of the islands and the sea that surrounds them is God's special gift! Each time I travelled through the dense forests I felt drawn closer to mother earth and experienced God's presence in nature. How great Thou art! Wonderful also is the composition of the Church here. It is a Church consisting mostly of Chotanagpur Adivasis, Tamilians, Malayalis, and some locals. Most of the Chotanagpur Adivasis don't own land here but have occupied the forest land, built their homes there and cultivated it. Port Blair Diocese which was constituted in 1984 has 16 parishes with many Mass centres. Bishop Alex Dias, SFX, retired after 34 years as Bishop. The Diocese has 24 diocesan priests, 25 religious priests, 3 regents, 142 religious women and nearly 41,000 Catholics. The Diocese has 23 local priests and 142 religious women vocations. There are eleven young men and twenty women in formation. It is heartening to know that the Daughters of St. Anne, Ranchi (DSA) have 55 local vocations and the Sisters of Charity of St. Anne (SchSA) have 38 local vocations!

The Ranchi Jesuits were the pioneers of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. At present the three parishes of Prothrapur, Diglipur and Ramnagar are managed by the Ranchi Jesuits. They have been doing wonderful work for many years and have a very good rapport with the people. They are planning to start a high school at Diglipur this year. Often I would visit the Jesuits of the nearby Prothrapur Parish to deepen my belongingness to the Jesuits. I used to visit the Nicobar Islands once a year during January or February when the sea was calm and favourable. It was a tedious journey of about 30 to 36 hours depending on how many stops the ship made. Sometimes

I had to wait at least two weeks to get the next ship to return to Port Blair, especially when the sea is rough. All through my three years stay I enjoyed good health being close to nature, breathing clean, unpolluted fresh air, enjoying varieties of fish, vegetables and fruits!

Besides my regular responsibilities, I enjoyed doing pastoral work at Port Blair Cathedral, Prothrapur Parish and Baratang Parish. It was a good opportunity for me to reach out to people. Never in my life have I heard so many confessions and seen people, both young and old, lining up to receive blessing after Mass! I was touched by their piety and devotion when I celebrated SCC Mass in their homes. I was really lucky to visit so many places of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where our Christians are located. In a short span of time I covered many islands and came to know so many people; it was really a blessing from God.

During my stay there I learnt how to live a simple life with minimum facilities, travel using local transport, face various challenges and difficulties, and discover what it means to belong to the Universal Society having opted for a frontier mission. For a true missionary life here is very challenging and tough. Since there is a lack of priests, the Diocese is looking for more religious who are interested in pastoral ministry and are committed to live a life without the normal conveniences. But one has to know fluent Hindi since the ministry and liturgy is in Hindi. At present, 6 Ranchi Jesuits are working in 3 parishes. I would suggest that this mission should be taken over by the Central and North Zone Provinces. Then many more Jesuits could come and help this mission. It would be a good contribution for the Church in Port Blair Diocese.

The author is currently the Spiritual Guide of Philosophy students at DNC, Pune. Earlier he served as the Spiritual Director in Port Blair Diocese.

Contact: tandradesj@gmail.com

NEW APPOINTMENTS



Fr. General has appointed **Fr. Soosai Mani**, born on 5th May 1968 as the new Provincial of Delhi. Currently the Superior of the Delhi Provincial Curia Community, Fr. Soosai has served as Province Coordinator for Formation, Province Consultor and Director of Shanti Sadan Retreat House. He brings along a diverse experience of Pastoral Ministry, School Management and Formation besides Counselling. JIVAN extends prayerful wishes to Fr. Soosai Mani for his new ministry as Provincial.



Fr. General has appointed **Fr. Dionysius Gerard Leonard Vaz (Dion)**, born on 27th August, 1963 as the new Provincial of Karnataka Province. Currently the Rector of St. Aloysius Institutions, Mangaluru, Fr. Dion has served as the Superior of Bijapur Mission from 2011-2016, Novice Director from 2004-2011, Province Consultor from 2004-2008 and Director of Pre-Novitiate from 1996-1999. He was also the delegate for Karnataka Province at GC 36. JIVAN extends prayerful wishes to Fr. Dionysius Gerard Leonard Vaz (Dion) for his new ministry as Provincial.



Fr. General has appointed **Fr. Keith Abranches** as Rector of the Collegio Internazionale del Gesu, Rome. JIVAN extends prayerful wishes to Fr. Keith Abranches for his new ministry as Rector.



Higher Education and National Education Policy 2020



Photo Courtesy: SkillOutlook.com

On July 29th the Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy 2020. It has not been presented in Parliament. To become an Act it needs the approval of the Parliament. The Minister of Education said that the NEP has been drawn up after extensive nationwide consultation. This policy is sweeping in its vision and seeks to address the entire gamut of education. It acknowledges that there is need for mobility, flexibility, alternate pathways to learning, and self-actualisation.

In a federal system any educational reform can be implemented only with the support of the States. The Union has to build consensus with the States before any policy becomes a law. NEP 2020 proposes a multi-disciplinary Higher Education framework with portable credits, and multiple exits with certificates, diplomas and degrees. A Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 50% is envisaged by 2035. The policy recognizes that implementing of the

spirit and intent of the policy will be the most critical matter.

Some aspects of the policy

Earlier policies gave broad framework leaving nuances to the States. States were free to choose the direction of their education. NEP is prescriptive and mandatory. The States will have to implement it. This contradicts the assertion that 'the policy would be flexible'. The policy introduces vocational education from school to the degree levels. Importance is given to technical, online, and digital education.

Changes in higher education

There will be three levels of institutions: Research-intensive Universities, Teaching-intensive Universities and Autonomous

degree-granting Colleges (ACs). The 'affiliating system will be phasing out through a system of graded autonomy.' Undergraduate degree will be either for 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options. If someone leaves after completing one year, he/she will be given a Certificate and if after two years, a Diploma in that discipline. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) will be created for every student with credit transfers.

National Research Foundation will explore possible areas of research. Each education institution will be governed by a Board of Governors - an independent body. Foreign Universities will be permitted to start institutions. Sanskrit and all Indian language institutes will be strengthened. Efforts will be made to preserve and promote all Indian languages including classical, tribal and endangered languages.

Assessment of the policy

General

More than seventy years after Independence India's crisis in education runs deep. The NEP recognizes the symptoms of the malaise and gives definitive prescriptions without analysis of why things went wrong or any diagnosis of what ails education in India. NEP ignores the economic, social and political contexts that have shaped education.

The policy states that 'by 2040, India will be a leader in higher education'. This target depends on how much India can invest in Higher Education. To develop institutions that can accommodate 5000 to 25,000 students will require huge investment. The highest amount spent on education is less than 4% of the GDP. At present, India's global ranking is 145/191.

By 2035, the Gross Enrolment Rate will be raised to 50%, according to the policy. The levels of education are different across States. Tamil Nadu has a GER of 49%. In the NIRF ranking, out of 100 top institutions, 36 are in Tamil Nadu. With such inequality, it is unwise to impose a common policy and a common curriculum. So far, all the education policies were in the nature of suggestive framework. The States modified the policies in keeping with their culture and educational attainment. The present policy is prescriptive and mandatory in its language and nature.

Socio-cultural issues

The policy has given a list of disciplines to make studies multidisciplinary. There are glaring omissions like gender studies, environmental studies and secularism, showing a limited social perspective. NEP 2020 encourages foreign universities to begin educational institutions. Only 2 to 3% of the Indians can afford their high fees and this would create a class distinction in the country. NEP is silent on caste-based reservation. This will deprive the marginalized communities from entering higher education. This will further lead to social exclusion. NEP is not an inclusive document.

Centralisation

Federal Structure: The 13-Judge Constitutional Bench held that the Federal character of the Constitution is the basic structure. A central regulatory authority to regulate the entire education alters the basic structure and the federal spirit of the Constitution.

It violates the rights given to the State Governments and State Legislatures.

National Testing Agency: One has to pass the National Testing Agency examination to enter Higher Education undermining the value of Secondary Education. This will encourage tuition centres as in NEET. This will further marginalise the poor from entering Higher Education.

Over regulation by the Union Government: NEP proposes a "light but tight" regulatory framework within a single institution - the Higher Education Commission of India with four separate verticals for regulation, accreditation, funding and standards. Such centralization is bound to make regulation "tight" rather than "light". The appointment of the Board of Governors, with full powers, will further reduce the autonomy of institutions which the policy promises.

Commercialisation

Lack of respect for the Constitution of India: Article 14 of the Constitution states that education is a human right. Articles 15, 16 and 17 of the Constitution talk about reservation. The policy is silent on reservation and emphasizes merit as the only criteria for admission to institutions and scholarships. It makes no mention of minorities and thus denies the Constitutional rights given to the minorities. The same regulations will be applicable to all the institutions.

Classification of Institutions: The previous draft policy expressed concern about what it called the "Fragmentation of Higher Education System". The reason identified was the presence of over 800 universities and 40,000 colleges spread across the country. The policy proposes to reduce them to 15,000 institutions. The socio-cultural diversity, decentralised autonomy of the universities, and the reach and scope of affiliated colleges catering to the rural poor are negated, with the label of "fragmentation." This will reduce access to education for the rural poor and vulnerable groups.

The affiliation system will be removed and the colleges will be given graded autonomy, based on their level of accreditation. This will encourage privatisation of education, leading to reduced enrolment as only the rich will be able to afford education.

Education, for what? By emphasising vocational education, NEP prepares students for the market. The vocational education envisaged is to prepare students for low level employment, while the affluent would proceed for Higher Education.

Technology is important in education. Over emphasis of the Fourth Estate, like disruptive technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3D/7D Virtual Reality, will reduce jobs and the poor will be left out. The multiple entry system can be disadvantageous to students of the lower socio-economic strata. The job market demands employees with full, preferably continuous pursuit of education. Due to poor economic condition, a student might be tempted to drop out either with a certificate or diploma and seek to take up low paying jobs. He may not have the inclination later to come back.

Unrealistic plan: In 2013-2014 spending on education was 0.71% of the GDP; it was 0.54% in 2018-2019. Where will the finances come



The Jesuit colleges would lose their identity as institutions catering to the poor and standing for social justice. They have to compete with the corporates to keep their institutions running. This is in itself a huge task and our institutions are in for hard times. 🙏

from for an ambitious target of public spending at 6% of GDP? Given the current tax-to-GDP ratio and competing claims on the national exchequer, this may not be a reality but a dream.

Casteism

The policy ignores that India is an unequal society. Groups have been oppressed for several centuries. By this policy there will be undue advantage for the privileged groups in education and in employment. The policy seems to advocate a Varnashrama Dharma.

Communalisation

Glorification of the past: NEP states that Higher Education should be 'India Centred'. There is reference to the ancient system of education. The policy glorifies the past. There is no reference to education systems or institutions that have excelled in modern education. The contribution of Muslims and Christians to education is ignored. 'Indian' traditions are given privileged status while showing no commitment to the constitutional values of secularism, social justice, democracy and federalism.

Importance given to Sanskrit: India has 22 official languages recognised by the Constitution. In 2019-2020 Rs.510 million were allotted only for Sanskrit. Those colleges and universities who introduce Sanskrit will be given Rs.50 million as incentive, and

teachers will be appointed with salary by the Union government. Out of a population of 1.3 billion only 24,861 (2011 Census) use Sanskrit. In the last three years the Union Government has spent more than Rs. 6 billion for the development of Sanskrit while only Rs.100 million was spent for Tamil which is spoken by 70 million people.

Insistence on Indian Culture: The dangers of revivalism are apparent in its call to study Indian culture. The majoritarian culture would emerge as the Indian culture at the cost of other cultures. There is a sense of cultural nationalism in NEP.

Implication for the Minorities

There is a danger that most of the Christian institutions in rural areas will have to close down as the total number of students will not exceed 2000. The missionaries democratised modern education and opened education up for the poor and the marginalised. This lifted them out of poverty and oppression. NEP seeks to destroy this and bring in Hindutva ideology. The poor, the Dalits, and the Tribals should be made aware how this policy, if implemented, will negate their development.

The Government is shirking its responsibility by handing over education to the corporates. This will escalate the cost of education, which the poor, to whom the minority institutions are

committed, can hardly afford. The Minority institutions have to work at the State level. If the NEP goes through Parliament, given the majority they enjoy, it is important to put pressure on the State Governments to reject this policy, by pointing out how they will lose their right, though they contribute a major share of the resources towards education.

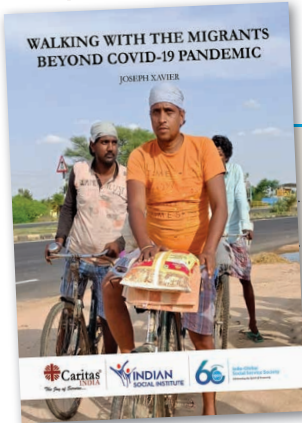
Jesuits who are involved in education are at crossroads. The Jesuit colleges would lose their identity as institutions catering to the poor and standing for social justice. They have to compete with the corporates to keep their institutions running. This is in itself a huge task and our institutions are in for hard times.

Conclusion

The idea of "One Nation, one culture, one language and one religion" seems to have been the backdrop of this policy. The policy should be revisited by eminent educationists and an alternate policy which is all embracing should be developed in the interest of the future of the Nation and of its poor who form the majority of the population.

The author is the Executive Director of St. Joseph's Institute of Management, St. Joseph's College, Trichy.

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TITLE: Walking with the Migrants beyond Covid-19 Pandemic

AUTHOR: Joseph Xavier, SJ

PUBLISHER: Indian Social Institute, Bengaluru

PAGES: 84

Every society has defining moments that mark changes in its history. India is going through one at present, and life after this pandemic won't be the same. Joseph Xavier's new book is essential reading for those working with various types of migrants.

The sudden and cruel lockdown brought the economy to a standstill almost, and pushed the daily-wage workers in the informal sector into a desperate struggle for survival. Thousands of migrants walking thousands of kilometres home, made visible the fate of migrant workers who were hitherto invisible. This shocked the conscience of the nation.

Alternative futures for India

The book sets the context for the discussion with an extensive review of the recent literature listing some of the official schemes to uplift the poor and vulnerable. The underlying inadequacies of the same is confirmed by data collected from a survey sample of 700 interviews in 47 Districts of over 11 States, and 118 stakeholders. The analysis nuances and gives credibility to the findings in elaborate tables.

The big narrative is the need for the welfare State, which was dismantled by a neoliberal free market economy that is now in an acute crisis, even before it was raved by the pandemic. This disaster gives an opportunity to restructure our priorities and our society. With a depressed economy and a raging pandemic likely to be with us for an uncertain period, our present response will define our future. Will we upgrade our health system, turn to ecological sensitivity, prioritise sharing in society, and become truly egalitarian, fraternal, free and democratic? Or by fault and default become a polarised and prejudiced society in an authoritarian-majoritarian State?

Read the report: https://isibangalore.com/images/researchPdfs/Walking_with_the_Migrants_Beyond_Covid-19_Pandemic.pdf

| Courtesy: Rudolf C. Heredia, SJ

A Worthy Tribute to KK

Prof. Dr. Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ, is a versatile personality: a committed Professor of theology, creative thinker, prolific writer, gentle mentor and compassionate guide to many people. As a Professor of Theology he has been the pioneer to introduce and implement the vision of Vatican II to the Indian Church. As a thinker, he has contributed significantly to an Indian theology that is both contextual and relevant. As a writer, he has founded Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies and edited Asian Journal for Religious Studies, besides his own numerous books. As a mentor, he has been inspiring countless students in their academic and affective progress. As a guide, he has been accompanying people in their intellectual and spiritual journey. In short, he has been a critical, creative and gentle personality who has touched the lives of many people respectfully and reverentially! He cherished freedom, affirmed the dignity and accepted others as they are and rejoiced in the happiness of others!

In this volume, 34 colleagues and admirers of Prof. Kurien have come together to study his understanding of the Church and of human beings. He pleads for a community of disciples who are liberated and compassionate; and at the same time committed to the nation and rooted in the Church.

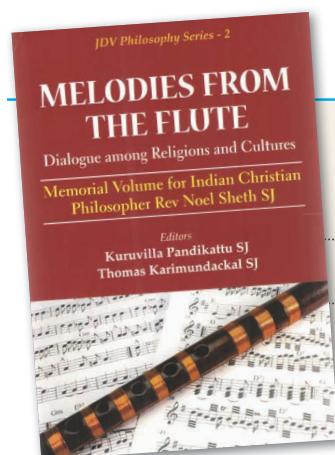
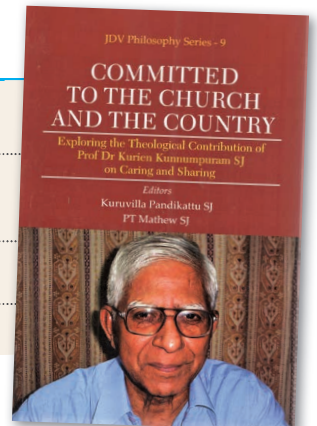
| Courtesy: Biju Joseph, SJ

TITLE: Committed to the Church and the Country

EDITORS: Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ & P T Mathew, SJ

PUBLISHER: Christian World Imprints, New Delhi

PAGES: 448 | **PRICE:** ₹ 1500



TITLE: Melodies from the Flute: Dialogue among Religions and Cultures (Memorial Volume for Indian Christian Philosopher Rev Noel Sheth)

EDITORS: Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ & Thomas Karimundackal, SJ

PUBLISHER: Christian World Imprints, New Delhi

PAGES: 339 | **PRICE:** ₹ 1450

"To Sir, with Love"

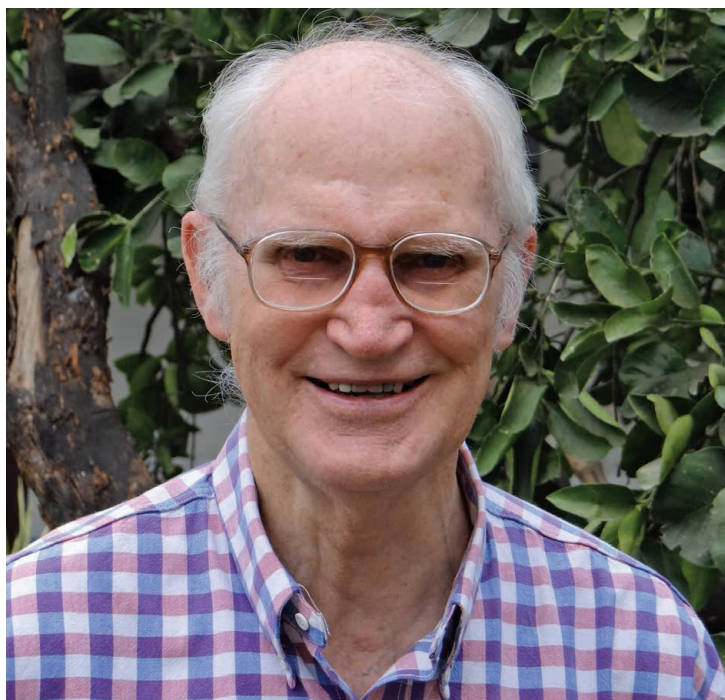
This is a memorial volume for Prof. Noel Kantilal Sheth, SJ - a man of ahimsa, compassion and dialogue. Calm and sober in his attitude, he reached out to others respectfully and reverentially. His meticulous and methodological nature and analytic-synthetic mind made him a humble servant, erudite scholar, efficient teacher and responsible administrator. Twenty scholars have contributed in this volume on topics like Creative Dialogue, Practical Compassion, Innovative Inclusiveness, Living Diversity, Collective Search for Wisdom, Commitment to Indian Traditions and Religion for Peace.

This book is about encountering other traditions, building friendly bridges with them, affirming others compassionately, enabling them and appreciating their diversity and differences, through dialogue, interaction and cooperation.

| Courtesy: Biju Joseph, SJ

Paul Jackson, SJ

A Person of Patience, Perseverance and Prayer



Fr. Paul Frederick Joseph Jackson, SJ, a well-known scholar of Sufism, passed away at Kurji Holy Family Hospital, Patna, on 5th July, 2020. He had turned four scores and three years on 6th June, a few days before he had a fall in his room that led to his hospitalization.

Fr. Jackson served as President of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA) and was the editor of *Salaam* for several years.

On hearing of Fr. Jackson's passing away, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, former Head of the Department of Islamic Studies at New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia (who knew Fr. Jackson well), expressed his feeling with an Islamic expression: *Inna lillāhewainnailayhirajī'un* ('Verily we belong to God, and verily to Him do we return'), a phrase that is mentioned in the Qur'an (Q. 2:156). Later, in his column in a widely-circulated Urdu language daily, Prof. Wasey described Fr. Jackson as a 'Catholic Sufi'.

Young Paul Jackson entered the Society of Jesus in 1956 and travelled to India in 1960. After studies in Theology (1965-69), he was ordained a priest and was missioned to teach in Jesuit high schools. As a Jesuit priest, Fr. Jackson discerned his personal vocation on listening to a lecture by Fr. Joseph Putz, SJ, at St. Xavier's College. Jackson wrote later:

It was there that I heard Fr. Putz, a theological expert at Vatican II, say that Pope John XXIII had said that the Church, after the Council of Trent, was like a fortress on a hilltop defending itself. He said the Church should open all its doors and windows and reach out to all groups of people. I reflected that no one in Hazaribag was reaching out to Muslims as such and said to myself: "Let me try to do something."

Fr. Jackson resolved to do something for Muslims in the course of the months that followed. Recognizing one's personal vocation is not discovering what one wants to do, but discovering the very essence of one's being, what is unique and unrepeatable about oneself. Fr. Jackson recognized 'doing something for Muslims' as his personal vocation.

Following his dream, he moved to Delhi to study History at the Jamia Millia Islamia. While he was a student there, he happened to attend an international conference on the Sufi saint Baba Farid. He concluded in his heart that Sufis bring people together and thus he would study a Sufi as a way of entering into the lives of the Muslims of Bihar. He studied Persian in Shiraz (1974-75) and wrote a thesis on the Sufi saint Sharafuddin Maneri, for which the Patna University awarded him with a PhD (1976-80). Over the years, Fr. Jackson translated and commented upon the spiritual letters of Sharafuddin Maneri.

Fr. Jackson's patience and perseverance were iconic, as can be discerned from these words of his:

For thirty-three years, five days a week, initially for about eight hours a day, and subsequently for about two hours a day, any of the mainly Muslim readers in the reading room of the [Khuda Baksh] library would see me seated with a Persian manuscript on a stand, with a copy of Steingass's Persian-English dictionary propped up beside it, and a notebook on the table in front of me in which to write my translation. They could not miss me, as I was normally the only foreigner sitting in the reading room.

For a dozen years or so, they would have seen Askari Saheb seated beside me, and would have noticed that we occasionally spoke to each other. Curiosity made them want to find out who I was, and what I was doing, but politeness dictated that they enquire from someone else and not disturb me... As long as Askari Saheb was still alive we had an almost daily interaction. I treasured these moments. A deep bond of respect and affection grew up between us. Many knew that he was my guide and friend, and were happy to see this relationship.

Prof. Akhtarul Wasey calling Fr. Jackson a 'Catholic Sufi' is very significant. Readers familiar with Islamic mysticism know that a Sufi is a Muslim mystic whose goal in life is to attain the union of love with God. A person who is purified by the Beloved is a Sufi. A Sufi is one who is completely absorbed in the Divine Beloved. Prof. Wasey affirms Jackson's deep prayer life by calling him a 'Catholic Sufi'.

Fr. Christian W Troll, SJ, a long-time colleague and friend of Fr. Jackson and a fellow scholar in Islamic Studies confirms Fr. Jackson's unwavering faith. Fr. Troll writes in eulogy addressing Fr. Jackson:

The Qur'an names such faith *yaqīn* (certainty), and its fruit *imān* (inner peace and stability). I remember Prof. Hasan Askari, your revered friend and guide, telling me, when we spoke one day in Patna about you, how much he was impressed by your strength of faith. This quality of faith was also the fruit of your regular practice of liturgical and personal prayer and meditation. No one meeting you could remain unimpressed by the depth of your prayer life. No surprise that in your writings about Sharafuddin Maneri and the Sufis in general, the depth of the prayer life of so many Muslims finds regular mention.

Is it possible to be both Christian and Sufi? Fr. Paul Jackson was a beautiful model as a Christian Sufi. One might remember that the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (d. 1984) famously said that the Christian of the future "will be a mystic or will not exist".

What a life! What a legacy! Fr. Paul Jackson continues to inspire both Christians and Muslims to carry forward the work of Christian-Muslim dialogue in South Asia and beyond.

| Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ



Fr. Xavier Irudayaraj, SJ (MDU)

Fr. Xavier Irudayaraj joined the Society in 1958. His formation was fast-tracked and he was ordained a priest in 1968. This resulted in a happy coincidence years later in 2018 when he was the only one of his batch to celebrate both his Diamond Jubilee in religious life and the Golden Jubilee in priestly life. With Licentiates in Philosophy and Theology, he was sent to Paris for his PhD in Theology in 1971 and, after his return, he was appointed as Professor of Theology at St. Paul's Seminary, Tiruchi, (1974-1984) and Arul Kadal, Chennai (1974-1992).

He made significant contributions to MITS (Madras Inter-Theologate Sharing) regularly organised at the initiative of Arul Kadal RTC in collaboration with Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Madras Bible College and Seminary, Department of Christian Studies, and Gurukul Theological Centre. During the visit of Pope St. John Paul II to Chennai in 1986, he organized a grand Interreligious Dialogue Meet at Gandhi Mandapam.

He served the Church in various capacities as the Asst. Director of NBCLC, Bangalore (1992-1994), the Secretary

of the Interreligious Dialogue Commissions of the CBCI and TNBC (2001-2005) and as the Director of the Laity Centre of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore (2005-2006). His did the pioneering work of launching Marai Aruvi - the Tamil Theological Quarterly and Andrada Arul Vakku - the reflections on the daily Mass readings as a joint venture with the laity, the religious and the clergy.

During the past few months Fr. X. Irudayaraj was talking to all insistently about his imminent death which came on 16th June. Fr. Devadoss mentioned this in his funeral homily. Singing Asatoma Sadgamaya, Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya, Mrityorma amritam-gamaya that Fr. Irudayaraj had taught him at Shembaganur in 1969, he said that Fr. Irudayaraj has been praying God persistently to lead him from death to immortality. Bishop Emeritus Jude Paulraj in his message highly commended him for having completed his PhD very successfully (PHD - Preparation for a Happy Death).

L. Michael Doss, SJ



Fr. Alphonse Susai Asirvadam, SJ (AND)

Fr. S.A. Alphonse, born in a pious Catholic family on 13th Sept. 1951, did his schooling in Pithapuram, Andhra Pradesh. He joined the Society of Jesus on 16th June 1969, in Beschi College, Dindigul.

He was an honest, simple and energetic priest who was committed to the poor. He was highly philosophical in thinking and practical in understanding the Society at large. He could relate to intellectuals and to simple people. He was approachable, humble, kind and lovable. He picked up Accounts on his own and became very proficient in Tally.

During the last ten years or so he was engaged in counselling and retreats direction. He was a good counsellor. People from all walks of life flocked to him for counselling. His knowledge of persons and their personalities was remarkable. Those who discovered their true selves through his help were pleasantly surprised at his insights.

His faith was Theo-centric and not 'ritualistic' or religion-centric. His experience of God was beyond religion and made him more human and humane. He loved his friends, and people who were honest and hard working. He stood by those who committed themselves to the cause of the poor and the downtrodden. Many a beneficiary of his knowledge and wisdom fondly called him 'Guru Ji', and he continues to live in their hearts.

Having suffered from the lung cancer for a year, he breathed his last on 10th June, 2020. He was laid to rest in Loyola Academy, Secunderabad the following day. May his soul rest in peace.

N. Bhaskara Rao, SJ



Fr. Marcus Murmu, SJ (DUM)

Fr. Marcus Murmu was born in Lotbarua village in Dumka District of Santal Parganas on 25th April 1957. After completing his secondary schooling he joined the Santal Region of the Society of Jesus at Jisu Jaher, Dudhani on 4th July 1982. He completed his BA from Loyola College, Chennai, did his philosophy studies from JDV, Pune and his theological studies at Tarunoday, and Vidya Jyoti, Delhi. Fr. Marcus was ordained as priest in St. Paul's Cathedral, Dudhani, Dumka, on 15th April 1997.

Fr. Marcus loved his Santal brothers and sisters very much and he never tired of working for their integral upliftment. Honest in character, committed, responsible and prayerful, he was open, available, and caring towards those entrusted to his care. He was a good listener, kind hearted, detached and calm. He was a man of depth in his work and a man for others in his outlook. No wonder he gained the esteem of those who came in contact with him. Right after his ordination, his Superiors appointed to life-

long pastoral ministry. He served as assistant pastor at Mariampahar. From 2000 onwards, he was parish-priest or father-in-charge of the Parishes of Tinpahar, Jibonpur, Mariampahar and, finally, Chilimpur. He was also Superior at Mariampahar and Chilimpur. For a number of years, Fr. Marcus served as Provincial Consulor and Province Coordinator of the Pastoral Ministry.

Towards the end of December 2019, Fr. Marcus was diagnosed with cancer and underwent chemotherapy which left him quite weak. On 14th June, Fr. Marcus was brought to Dumka and placed in St. Ursula's Clinic for convalescence. On 18th June, his strength began to wane perceptibly and Fr. Provincial, Varghese Palli administered the sacrament of the sick. Fr. Marcus breathed his last quietly at 12:45 pm on 20th June. May the Lord grant him His beatific Vision!

Paul Aquilina, SJ



Dexter Gray, SJ

"I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion," said Alexander the Great. The quote provides insight as to why leadership is so crucial in the Society of Jesus for effective ministry and affective maturity; the person at the top usually is the difference between the Society being

so vibrant or becoming irrelevant.

Most of us have encountered natural leaders - people who instinctively do the right thing and effortlessly make average people into exceptional performers. However, for the majority of us, leadership is something we have to work on. The question is this: Can leadership really be learned? In my experience, the answer is unequivocally YES. With that in mind, here are some lessons I learnt and have found to be invaluable in my journey as a Provincial:

Be decisive: A reality for any leader is that many people need discerned decisions from you, and if you cannot make them, you are going to suffer. Do not agonize, over-analyze or second-guess yourself. Many times, no decision is worse than a wrong decision because inaction paralyzes the members, prevents progress and destroys morale.

Be inspirational: When the going gets tough, people need to feel that everything is going to be okay. They inevitably look to their leaders for motivation and encouragement. Leaders need to project hope and positivity while keeping the members focused by combating weakness, negativity and mediocrity. Trust your talent, be bold and people will line up behind you.

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Leaders can be introverts, extroverts, funny or serious, but to truly win respect you have to be authentic. Never waste time trying to be someone that you are not, because it is a recipe for failure.”

Be empathetic: When I deal with a difficult conversation or negotiation, I try to place myself in the shoes of the other person. Having empathy is crucial to leaders, because we are constantly dealing with people management and communication. When you are able to see things as the other person does, you are much likelier to come up with a solution

that the other person is invested in.

Be persuasive: Martin Luther King Jr. said, "A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but moulder of consensus." Effective leaders aggressively sell their vision, and win over naysayers with substance and character. Remember, your job is not to please everyone - it is to get the job done right, even if that ruffles some feathers.

Be authentic: As time goes on, some leaders develop an artificial public persona, which they believe is more 'leader-like.' This is a huge mistake. Leaders can be introverts, extroverts, funny or serious, but to truly win respect you have to be authentic. Never waste time trying to be someone that you are not, because it is a recipe for failure.

Control your emotions: If I get an email that makes me angry, I will type up a draft response that may be aggressive and sharply worded. However, I do not send it. I sleep on it, and the next day I usually find my response was driven by negative emotion and was not appropriate. Your mood has a huge impact on your judgment and, as a leader, it is your responsibility to manage your emotions mindfully.

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Godfrey D'Lima, SJ

In the 21st Century, long after Jesus said: Call no one your father; you are all brothers/sisters we, Jesuits, cling to the term 'Superior'. We apply it to one of us who is team-leader or coordinator or director.

By opting to call someone with group or institutional responsibility 'Superior' we are doing that person a double harm. She or he may not have any superior qualities or spiritual stature.

The second quandary is worse. If a person begins to believe she or he is really superior and finds that the 'subject' or 'subjected' has more to offer by way of handling responsibilities or taking the apostolic mission ahead how difficult that makes the status of 'Superior.'

Superiors to be called so would need inferiors around them. And that may be difficult to establish. In any human grouping one might be distinguished in one aspect of leadership. One might be a good accountant or eloquent or perceptive. But to be an all round Superior is near impossible.

Superiors are unnecessarily burdened with having to possess the best perspectives to take proper decisions. A group forum seems more appropriate to formulate policy and prescribe action. Groups can be unanimous. Or differences settled by majority consent. This has perils of majoritarianism, as we see in national affairs. However, the group may decide to aver to the decision of one or the other by common consent. That person need not be Superior.

In the past it was held that a Superior cannot resign. Fortunately this practice is not rigidly adhered to. The Jesuit world director oddly named "Superior General" - combining infinite powers and capacities of virtue and militaristic submission - has been seen to resign at the appropriate time when he and his team accept that his energies do not match the task demanded.

Resignation of a Superior can also be thought of when he finds that his leadership or function is not compatible with the policies of the group or the authorities that mandated his task. This too is a helpful practice instead of being in constant conflict either with the group (community) or the hierarchy. In fact it enables the group and the hierarchy to pursue their line of thinking and acting undisturbed.

Much servility in an institution, be it the Church or civil society, comes from exaggerations of office. Kowtowing to Excellencies, Lordships, Holinesses, Most Reverends, Eminences, etc. result in such persons exercising prerogatives beyond their capabilities, imagining they embody superior virtue, authority or divine influence. The Indian 'Sahib' culture is a good example of this. If the Gospel wisdom of addressing persons democratically is followed, a functional, fruitful leadership will emerge. No Superior, please.

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In any human grouping one might be distinguished in one aspect of leadership. One might be a good accountant or eloquent or perceptive. But to be an all round Superior is near impossible.”

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'Lockdown' student cultivation



Image Source: TBI

Teacher Saritha Vijaykumar found Covid-19 lockdown a perfect opportunity to explore ways to engage children in more creative and healthy pursuits than just sitting at home and getting bored! "When the lockdown was implemented, children were left idle; unable to even go out and play with friends. I realised that this is the best time for children to explore new skills. Farming is something that can come in handy anytime," shares Saritha. She has been an avid backyard farmer most of her life, enjoying fresh vegetables from her home garden. She thought of teaching this life skill to her students.

A senior Hindi teacher at a Public School in Kerala, Saritha created a WhatsApp group with 35 of her 9th class students to give them farming lessons for free. She encouraged them to cultivate their gardens by providing them with tips and tricks. Children shared daily photos and videos, and she provided the necessary advice.

"As most students lived in apartments, I suggested grow-bags and terrace cultivation... It was amazing to see the growing interest in farming among children. Each day they updated me with the growth of their plants. They told me

about the natural fertilisers they used and enquired about where to place the plants for adequate sunlight."

For ten years Saritha had cultivated a variety of vegetables, herbs and fruits in the school compound with students. "The school had set aside one class per week for students of the 8th and 9th standards. They were taught cultivation methods, grafting techniques and a general understanding of how to take care of plants."

At home Saritha has been farming with her husband and daughter for over two decades. She cultivates green chillies, tapioca, spinach and tomatoes in just 35 cents of land around her house. She often shares her farming experience with the students and gives them tips and techniques on developing natural fertilisers and composts.

"As a teacher, I'm trying to fill the gaps in our curriculum through online farming classes, and I am glad to see that today's generation is showing interest in such skills," she concludes.

Adapted from TBI

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Salute to the Sindhudurg girl of Sahyadri Mountains

Corona crisis has ushered in a new culture - the "online culture". The educational system has adopted to this culture in a big way. Swapnali Sutar, a young girl of Dariste village from Sindhudurg District, is taking online lessons from a hut specially built for the purpose on a forest hill.

Swapnali had passed all her classes with a high percentage. She wanted to become a doctor but, due to the poor economic condition at home, her father told her to study in the village itself. The determined girl, with 88% in 12th science, enrolled in a veterinary college in Mumbai. It was possible only because her brothers were working in Mumbai.

However, it was difficult to stay in Mumbai due to the corona virus. So, Swapnali returned to her village just eight days before the lockdown began. What next?

Meanwhile, the online courses in Veterinary started. Dariste is a remote village with non-accessibility of internet and sometime even electricity. She did not have a mobile either. She took her brother's Android mobile and started wandering in the forest in search of internet connectivity. Luckily, she located a place in the mountains about two kms from her house with good connectivity.

But her parents were not ready to send her alone into the mountains to study. She convinced them of the importance of her studies. Initially, she studied under a tree. When the rains started she switched over to sitting under an umbrella. But the lashing rains in the Konkan made it impossible. Her brothers noticed her zeal and her



struggles. They built a small hut on the hill where Swapnali could study all day long.

Her difficulties, however, were not over. The hut in the mountains had no facility for charging her mobile. Determined as she was, she talked to her teacher about the difficulty and the latter gave her a power bank.

Swapnali now has set herself a routine. She leaves home at 7 am with a lunch box and a water bottle, and returns at 6 pm. Her only support in those mountains is the curious neighbours grazing their cattle around, and the beloved trees she grew up with!

Swapnali says, "With a positive outlook, we can always turn challenges into golden opportunities."