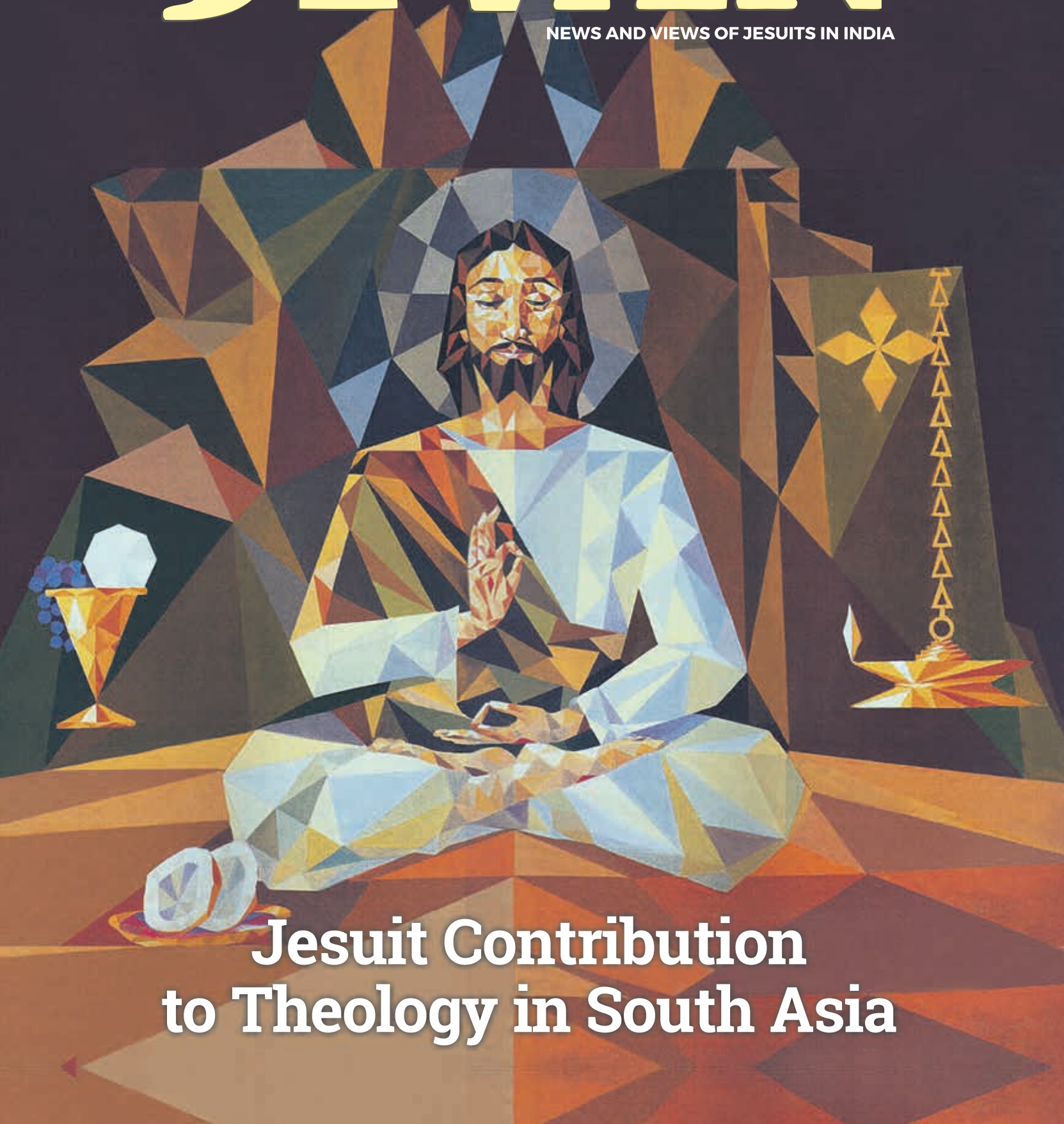


March 2021

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**Jesuit Contribution
to Theology in South Asia**

CONVERSION

It's the poor who change their religion:
The rich don't care anyway;
At most they tune their perspectives,
To suit the mood of the day.

It's the poor who need new beginnings;
The wealthy just grab a fresh start:
They control the means and the endings,
They're masters of science and art.

It's the poor who look for some betterment;
The affluent rise anyhow:
They dictate the rules of our politics,
They can profit from peace or the row.

It's the poor who may one day reach heaven,
As the parable said long ago.
Till then, be content with your karma,
The high-born of races won't slow.

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in non-formal educational programmes.)



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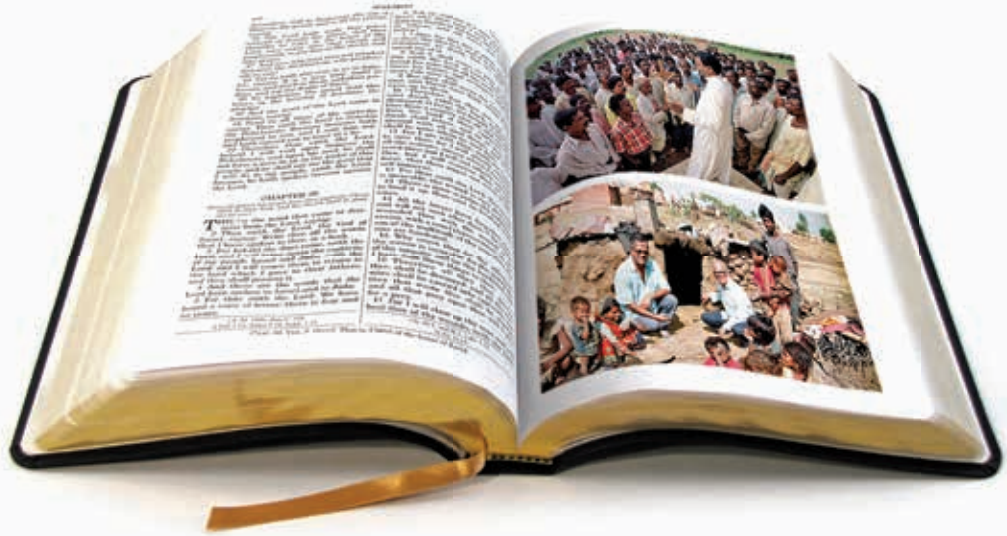
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JIVAN thanks **Fr. Francis Gonsalves, SJ** for planning and procuring the articles for this special issue on Jesuit Contribution to Theology in South Asia.

As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Assistency, 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.

A Crucial Conversation indeed

I would like to express my honest appreciation for JIVAN. I have been a regular reader of the magazine. I am always impressed by the admirable quality of both the articles and the layout.

Especially, the 'Crucial Conversations' section has always been my favourite. It is inspiring and challenging to read how humbly and honestly our Provincials/Regional Superiors express themselves, their struggles, joys, and their point of view in and through this section. I honestly say that the spirit of St. Ignatius of Loyola keeps sparkling in this section.

I encourage Jesuits, young and old, to never miss this golden section.

Sch. Peter Phiamphu, SJ | Mumbai

The Rohingyas are human like us

I was deeply taken up by the article on Rohingya refugees in the JIVAN issue of October 2020. It made me conscious of the inhuman treatment faced by our Rohingya sisters and brothers. The article also mentioned the initiatives that the Jesuit Refugee Service has been taking since the beginning. It was very thought-provoking and inspiring.

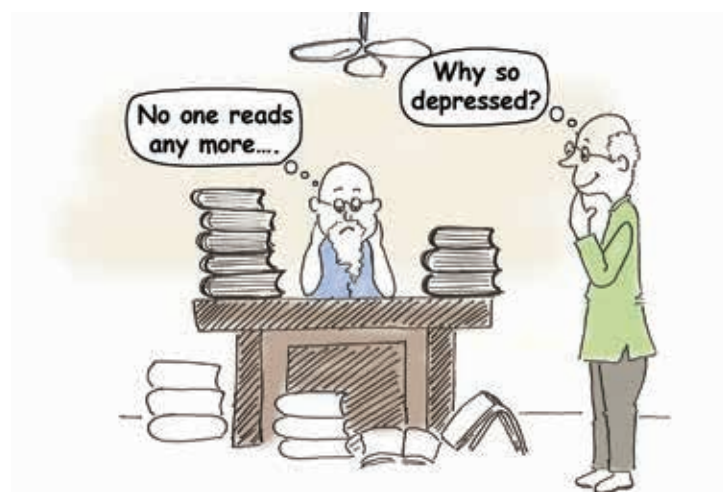
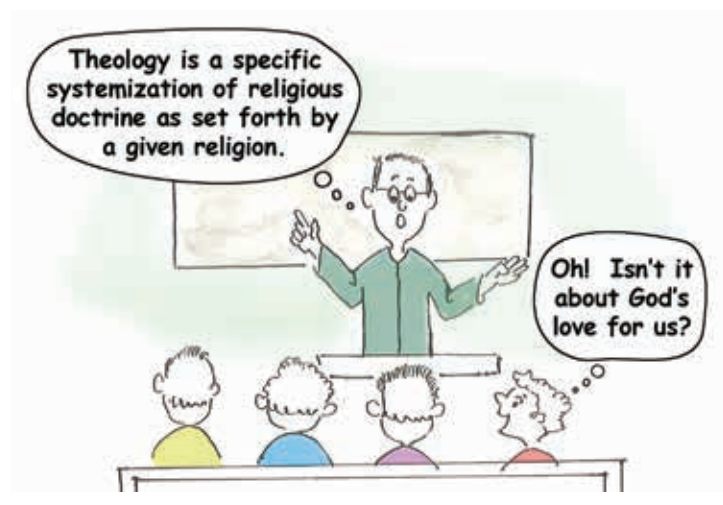
In the Asian context, there is diversity on the basis of a wide variety of ethnic groups. The anti-social elements from society try to take advantage of this diversity for political gains. The Rohingyas are humans like us, yet their human dignity is denied. Unfortunately a large number of people are not even aware of the inhuman treatment given to our own sisters and brothers on the basis of their race. Many more such articles on human crises, will help many Jesuits and others to realize the ruthless treatment that they are facing.

Therefore, I recommend the JIVAN team and its readers to promote more articles on the theme of human crises and the initiatives taken to combat them. It would be inspiring for young Jesuit minds.

Sch. Vishal Waghmare, SJ | Mumbai

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POSA Speaks

STANY D' SOUZA, SJ

Solidarity with Women is our mission

I am sure you have read the article, 'Don't Stem their Progress', published in the newspaper, The Hindu. Basing herself on the women Nobel laureates in Physics, Chemistry, Medicine and Economics, since its inception in 1901, unfortunately only 25 women have won a Nobel Prize in these subjects. The author, Fanny von Heland, argues that we need to fight against the gender disparity in science and technology, and inspire more girls to aspire for careers in science and technology, as the distressing difference is the direct result of deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, biases and male-dominated cultures.

How to fight this deep-rooted menace? Fanny contends that we need a transformative agenda that influences and changes norms and the structures, and the cooperation of all — families, educational institutions, companies and governments to arrest this menace. Finally, she states that if we take up this task of strengthening the women's and girls' rights, representation and resources, the issue of gender inequality will become a thing of the past.

This short article reminded me of the famous Decree 14 of GC 34 (1995): Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Society. The Society of Jesus, candidly acknowledging the discrimination against women in all spheres and our conscious and unconscious lapses, discerned and decided to make gender equality a central concern of her contemporary mission.

In response, while asking God for the grace of conversion, to accept our lapses and our tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem, the decree suggested some concrete pathways: Jesuits listen to the experience of women; as individuals and through institutions, align themselves in solidarity with women; teach the essential equality of women and men in Jesuit ministries; support liberation movements which oppose the exploitation of women; insist on appropriate presence of women in Jesuit ministries and institutions; involve women in consultation and decision making in Jesuit ministries; show respectful cooperation with female colleagues in shared projects; use inclusive language in speech and official documents; and promote the education of women.

In and through the decree, the Society formally committed herself to regard the solidarity with women as integral to her mission. Incidentally, 2020 was the silver jubilee of Decree 14. Shall we resolve to create a conducive atmosphere for women to grow? Fr General has already taken the first step. He has initiated a process to form a global task force on the role and responsibilities of women in the Society for the next three years (2021-23). Shall we walk his path? By the way, March 8th is the International Women's Day. It is the best day to read and reflect on Decree 14 and to walk with women on their journey of empowerment.



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

A Spiritual Toolkit for a post-pandemic Lent

The world has spent an intense and anxious time the past one year seething in the fever of a pandemic. We struggled and suffered without a clue and without cure. The earth kept losing human lives as more than ten million were infected by the disease, and nearly two and a half million succumbed to it - perhaps the highest ever in any pandemic history.

Lent is a good time for moral recovery from the aftermath of the pandemic. We have found ways not just of coping but enhancing our immunity against the deadly virus, the last of them being the vaccine. Lent is a vaccine itself that boosts our interior life and its immunity. It is indeed a recuperating time after an illness, a springtime after a fall, an oasis in the desert of the pandemic.

The human soul is a flower. Conscience is its beauty and consolation its fragrance. Tragedies of life take a toll on the garden of life withering and rupturing it into ugly desolation. Taking time out to sit in prayer and extra prayer during Lent, is like watering and manuring the garden into its original freshness and beauty. Isaiah's imagery inspires us: "You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never runs dry." (Is 58.11b) Lent is a time to let the Lord blossom within us and His life bloom ever thereafter.

If the pandemic was a time of intense diagnosis, Lent is the time for soul searching. A prolonged period of passive lockdown or a continued quarantine should have enhanced our habit of introspection. Lent offers yet another opportunity to interiorize. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." It is the time to paint the 'Sketches of God' both revealed and hidden during the pandemic and to treasure them in the art gallery of our soul.

We lived a natural abstinence and unwarranted penance during the pandemic, managing even without the necessary commodities. We made do with innumerable discomforts and inconveniences. Lent further awakens us to these vanities of life in a spirit of total dependence on God. The post-pandemic Lent makes us realize that fast, abstinence and penance are permanent ways of life more than some stray activities for forty days. It teaches us that when we have little, we actually have more than little!

The Corona warriors revealed to us without much fanfare, the power of GIVING. The spirit of sharing so naturally witnessed during the pandemic is the very spirit of life, not just during Lent. Having realized our dependence on God and the vanity of the perceived necessities, the invitation of Lent is loud and clear, like the song of St. Francis of Assisi: In giving to all, we receive. The grace of giving is precisely the humble acknowledgement that we always receive more than we ever give. The Corona warriors have taught us the meaning of Lent: Charity is the natural way of being, more than the effort of doing!

A spiritual toolkit for the post-pandemic Lenten campaign must add a reflection on our response to the social context.

The post-pandemic times leave us with far greater economic challenges and the role we may be called to play. Lent in the spirit of Isaiah invites us to "a kind of fasting that removes the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice" (Is 58.6). Post-pandemic Lent invites us to engage even more dynamically in the campaigns around us oriented towards the uplift of the marginalized. Socio-political immersion with all its risks is perhaps the new obligation to be added in the list of Lenten observances. Lent culminates in the spirit of Good Friday: paying the price with one's own life.

May Lent usher in a spring in the garden of our post-pandemic life!

From Desk-Bound to *Deshi* Theology:

Assessing the South Asian Jesuit Role in Theologizing

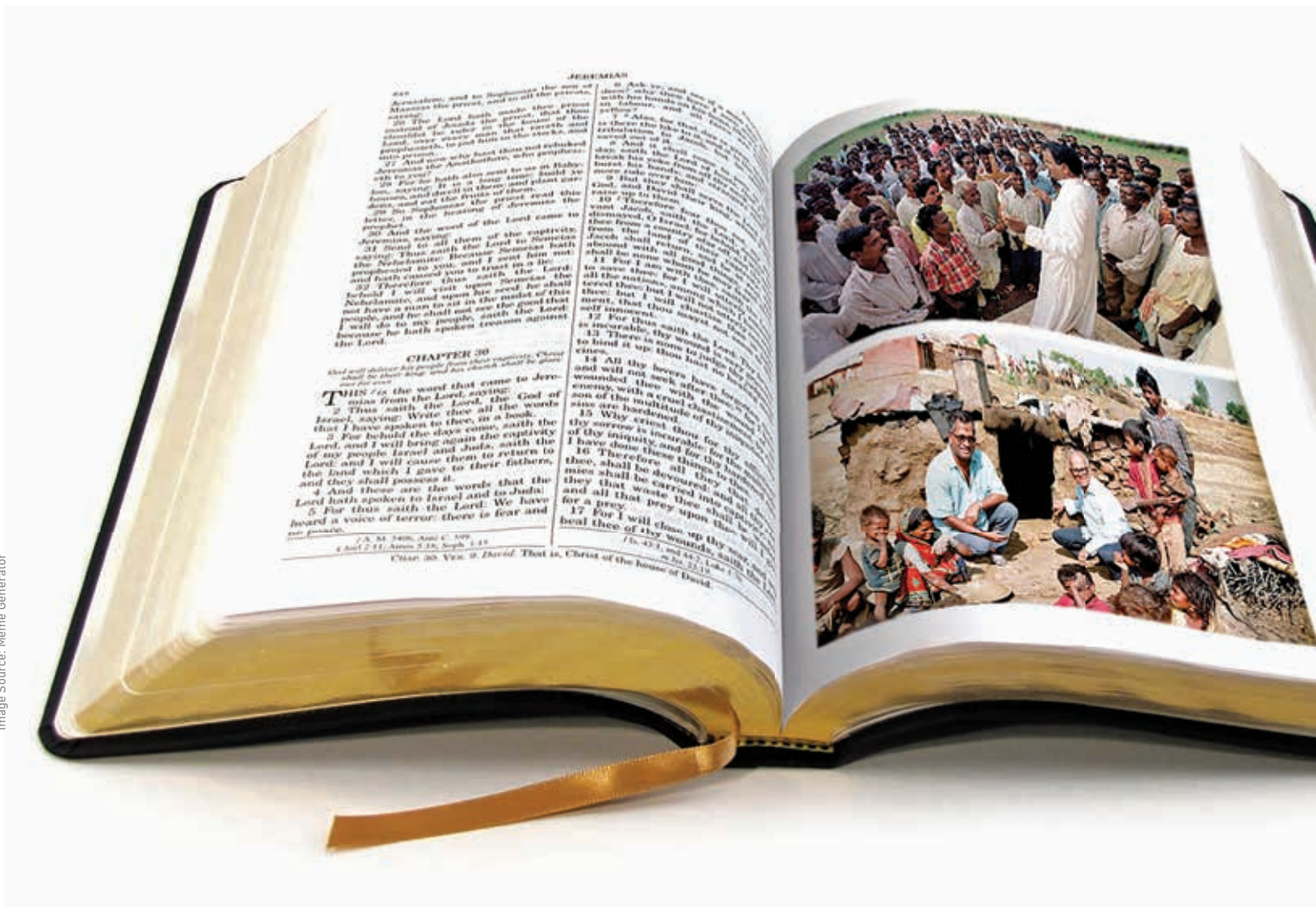


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Sab-Jannewalla—Hindi, meaning, know-all—is an epithet jokingly used for Jesuits. Overstated though the label be, there’s some truth about Jesuit wisdom in the intellectual arena, theology being part of it. So, I’ll highlight some milestones of the South Asian [SA] Jesuit theological journey in three timeframes: (I) Reformation up to the Suppression of the SJ; (II) Restoration up to Vatican Council II [VC II]; and

(III) Post-VC II up to Pope Francis.

As prologue, rather than describe theology as ‘faith seeking understanding’, I endorse Pope Francis’ theological vision in *Evangelii Gaudium*, n.133: “A theology which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important The Church and theology exist to evangelize, and not be



content with a desk-bound theology.” Note that Pope Francis sees human experiences, dialogue and evangelization as cornerstones of theology.

(I) Reformation up to the Suppression of the Society:

The Society of Jesus was confronted with two theological tasks at its inception: (a) apologetic, to defend church doctrine against Luther and the Reformers, and (b) adaptative, to break free from Eurocentrism for evangelization in new cultural milieus. While Ribera [1537-91] and Bellarmino [1542-1621] refuted reformist views, pioneers Roberto de Nobili [1577-1656] and Constanzo Beschi [1680-1747] shed their European identity for rebirth into SA soil.

De Nobili began developing basic theological terminology in Tamil like kovil for church, arul for grace, guru for teacher, poosai for the Mass and Vedam for the Bible. Mastering Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil and dressing like a Brahmin-sanyasi, he composed Catechisms, apologetic works and philosophic-theological discourses, leading Max Müller to attest: “He is the first European Sanskrit scholar.”

Beschi or ‘Veeramamunivar’ wrote the first Tamil-Latin dictionary, grammatical treatises and translated Thirukkural—a moral treatise of Thiruvalluvar—into Latin, thereby showcasing the beauty of the Tamil language. His catechetical-theological treasures include guide-books for catechists, didactic works for instructing Catholics, and Thembavani: a 3,615-stanza epic on salvation history. Beschi also contested theological viewpoints of Lutheran missionaries.

Michael Amaladoss opines: “Starting with de Nobili, we have contributed to mission in its three-fold dimension of inculturation, interreligious dialogue and liberation, not narrowly focusing only on ‘conversions.’” More circumspect in assessing missions before the Suppression [1773], historian WV Bangert writes: “At the end of this era of immense expenditure of energy and heroic dedication, very few stable, vigorous, self-supporting churches had been created. The Church had failed. And the Society shared in that failure.”

‘Failure’ is too strong a word for these pathbreaking pursuits; rather, I consider them ‘processes of dying’; for many Jesuits—like JB Buttari [1707-57] who lived as a pandarasami and JV Bouchet [1655-1732] who strove to

dialogue with Hindus—suffered daily martyrdoms like grains of wheat dying to reap future harvests (Jn.12:24).

(II) Restoration up to VC II:

Post-Suppression, in 1838, the Jesuits bounced back with their ‘Second Spring’ missions in Madurai [1838], Bombay [1858],

2nd Bengal [1859], Calicut-Mangalore [1878], Goa [1890] and Patna [1919]. I highlight two pre-VC II streams of theological thought: (i) a Bengal stream; and, (ii) a Madurai stream.

Influenced by the Bengal Renaissance, Pierre Johanns [1882-1955], George Dandoy [1882-1962], Pierre Fallon [1912-85] and Robert Antoine [1914-81] were pioneers in dialoguing with Hinduism. Their ‘Light of the East’ publications begun in 1922 spawned a movement of ideas renowned as ‘The Calcutta School’. Johanns’ lectures on ‘Christ through Vedanta’ so touched the then-Apostolic-Delegate, Mons. Lépicier, that he told Johanns: “What the pioneers of the faith did in their times, Justin for Rome, Irenaeus for Gaul, Augustine for Africa, Cyril and Clement for Egypt, you do it today for India.” Dandoy dabbled in comparative theology, explaining Catholicism to the uninformed, while establishing points of convergence and divergence between Hinduism and Catholicism.

Fallon and Antoine established ‘Shanti Bhavan’ in 1950: a vibrant centre of interfaith dialogue. Fallon was not only successful in St Xavier’s College but also at the University of Calcutta, where he became a member of the Senate. His biblical translations for worship in Bengali, ‘Glossary of Bengali Religious Terms’ and other writings earned him the title: ‘Apostle of Interreligious Dialogue’. Similarly, Antoine was fulltime Sanskrit teacher; and from 1956, Lecturer in the Department of Comparative Literature of Jadavpur University. He composed exquisite pieces of Indian music, published Sanskrit textbooks, a hymnbook, a grammar and authored ‘Where We All Meet’ on interfaith dialogue. Fallon and Antoine spearheaded the entry of Jesuits into ‘secular spaces’ where youth stirrings and people’s movements thrive.

The Madurai situation differed from that of Bengal. First, Rome imposed restrictions on the ‘adaptations’ initiated by de Nobili and Beschi. Second, the cancer of caste threatened interactions among converts to Christianity. Third, while theological contributions were minimal, much social work was being done, which could deductively be deemed the fruit of theological thinking.

Madurai’s ‘social services’ included a literacy drive, medical services, care of the handicapped, temperance societies, famine relief, orphanages and workers’ welfare, while ‘social concern’ birthed developmental projects, campaigns against casteism, upliftment of the downtrodden, battles for social justice, reform of criminals, prison apostolate, tribal welfare and the liberation of women. Prophetic figures like JB Trincal [1815-91] slogged to uplift Dalits, orphans, prisoners, tribals and women. Their foresight is admirable, their contribution, commendable.

Besides praiseworthy theological ventures in the Missions, desk-bound theology was brewing in: (i) Ceylon’s ‘Kandy Pontifical Seminary’ or ‘Papal Seminary’ founded in 1893, renamed ‘Pontifical Athenaeum’ in 1940, shifted to Pune in 1955, and rechristened ‘Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth’ [JD] in 1972; and (ii) St Mary’s College, founded as a seminary in 1879 in Asansol, then moved to Kurseong in 1889 and reincarnated in Delhi as ‘Vidyajyoti College’ [VJ] in January 1972.

VJ and JD were transplanted into Delhi and Pune to be

nourished by: (i) common folk, particularly the poor; and, (ii) Delhi and Pune Universities, distinguished centres of learning. It was hoped that ‘contextual theology’ would emerge through staff-students’ experiences with the poor, dialogue with religions, interdisciplinarity and socio-pastoral involvement.

(III) Post-VC II up to Pope Francis:

VC II was trailblazing in its: (i) openness to dialogue with religions and disciplines; and (ii) resolve to serve people, especially the poor. Impelled by the 1969 All-India Seminar at NBCLC, Bangalore, convoked by the CBCI, many Jesuits actively contributed in the 1970s and 1980s, to what can be called an ‘interfaith dialogic wave’.

Ignatius Puthiadam, Hans Staffner, Ishanand, Amaladoss, Gispert-Sauch, Francis D’Sa, Noel Sheth and Sebastian Painadath, among others, built bridges across religions. They studied others’ scriptures, wrote about them, opened dialogue centres and organized seminars to unearth the riches of Indic religions, especially Hinduism. Christian Troll and Paul Jackson dialogued with Islam. Sri Lankan Aloysius Pieris won accolades for his scholarship on Buddhism; and Ama Samy, as Zen Master. By marrying East and West, Anthony de Mello gained global acclaim, his sagacious stories and meditations stirring people’s consciousness, freeing many from their neuroses and legalism.

Accompanying the ‘interfaith dialogic wave’ was a ‘liberationist wave’ accelerated by Arrupe’s charismatic leadership. Latin American liberationist theology and GC 32’s decree 4, which plaited faith-and-justice as equally essential for evangelization, inspired SA theologians to take the ‘option for the poor’ seriously. Sebastian Kappen’s writings were animated by Marxism, while George Soares-Prabhu creatively wedded scriptural text and context. Dalit and Tribal theologies were sprouting up from South India and Chotanagpur, respectively. Many Jesuits actively contributed to the Indian Theological Association (ITA), too.

In the 1980s, catchwords like contextualization, regionalization and indigenization fired SA Jesuit imagination, catalysing the birth of Regional Theological Centres (RTCs) initially in Gujarat, Patna and Madurai Provinces. Professors like Amaladoss, TK John and Sam Rayan were crafting the contextual method of theologizing at VJ for students to ‘do theology’.

Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi—alumnus of VJ and professor of ecumenism—opines: “The greatest contribution of the SA Jesuits to theologizing has been to bring the larger issues of life such as social justice, freedom, human dignity and ecology on the agenda of theology, thus necessitating an interdisciplinary approach, emphasizing the essential dimensions of theological reflection such as ecumenism and interreligious dialogue—consonant with the renewal initiated by VC II and in fidelity to the Gospel.”

Sadly, in the 1990s and into the 2000s, while many theologians sailed smoothly through the ‘interfaith dialogic’ and ‘liberationist’ waves, two tsunamis—globalisation and Hindutva—rocked the boat like never before. Personally, as a Gujarat RTC-VJ alumnus, ordained in Gujarat a fortnight after

the Babri Masjid was demolished on December 6, 1992, I was shocked at rising violence in Ayodhya (UP), north India, and in the ‘laboratory of Hindutva’, Gujarat. My two-year pastoral honeymoon among South Gujarat Adivasis and regular immersion in this context, thereafter worsened my fears.

Undoubtedly, globalisation (neoliberalism) and Hindutva (religious nationalism) have changed our world inalterably. In the new millennium, cyberspace is the new site of dialogue, and many SA Jesuit dialogic-philosophic-theological centres are slowly losing their cutting-edge quality. Though we witnessed Gujarat’s Dangi-Adivasi persecutions (1998), Muslim Genocide (2002), Kandhamal massacres (2008), attacks on our Constitution and moves to dump democracy for theocracy, our intellectual contributions seem trite to combat current crises.

Theology Tomorrow: *Yeh Dil Maange More**

SA Jesuits have undoubtedly contributed much to theology. However, I often wonder: are we settling for little less than more: magis? Why aren’t we in the public sphere, writing, speaking, and catalysing society’s secular spaces? During the Covid-19 lockdown, the ‘unholy trinity’ of politicians, corporates and Hindutva nationalists were busy pushing bills, peddling their own agenda: farm bills, CAA (citizenship), NEP (education), EIA (environment), FCRA restrictions and new rules for social work involvement (to stop all social work), imprisonment of intellectuals and activists like Stan Swamy, and stifling farmers’ protests.

Experiences of almost twenty-five years at VJ and JD theologates, and in Gujarat, make me think that Jesuit thinkers must unearth the diabolic designs of the ‘unholy trinity’. When some were doing this, many sab-jannewallas smirked: “You theologians are creating storms in a tea-cup!” If only we’d predict how tea-cups could become prime matter to Modify the Constitution, stifle democracy, and gift India to ‘Jio aur jeene do’ corporates, things would’ve been different.

Besides combating the unholy trinity, let’s heed Pope Francis, Jesuit-theologian par excellence. His theological agenda: Go forth! experience, discern, option for/with the poor, synodality, collegiality, dialogue, interdisciplinarity, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Veritatis Gaudium*! All these call for research, reflection, networking online, collaborating offline—all with God’s Spirit.

Painadath advises, “Pay greater attention to the option for the poor, the plight of migrants, religious pluralism, religious fundamentalism, and the central Christological question: in what sense can we claim that Jesus is the only Saviour?” If our Society bears His name, then, amidst tempests in these pandemic times, let’s recall the March 27, 2020, words of Pope Francis: “With Jesus on board there will be no shipwreck.” We must row on; and, prophetically, roar too.

* The heart wants more

The author is currently the President of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, and the National Executive Secretary of the CCBI Commission for Theology and Doctrine.

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Jesuit Response to Feminist Concerns in South Asia



Image Source: Jesuits Global

South Asia remains a global hotspot where women are still considered second-class citizens: educationally backward, culturally suppressed, economically dependent and politically powerless. Discrimination against girls and women results in a high rate of female foeticide, infanticide, dowry deaths, honour killings, low rates in literacy and high rates of malnutrition and mortality. Crimes against women, especially violence against women in the form of rape, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking and kidnapping are rampant.

Within the church, women account for more than half of the worshipping congregation and recipients of sacraments. They devotedly listen to the Word of God interpreted to them exclusively through the experiences of celibate priests, and till recently had no access to theological education. Women religious depended mostly on priests for the formation, spiritual accompaniment and counselling of their younger members.

In this context, there's need to assess the contribution of South Asian Jesuits in enhancing feminist consciousness not only among women but also among themselves and among people in general. Through their varied ministries, Jesuits directly or indirectly contribute towards women empowerment. Thousands of girls and young women get their education through the many Jesuit-run institutions throughout South Asia. Self Help Groups (SHGs) for women organized through the Social Action apostolate is a definite step towards women empowerment; women's agency is restored, even if in small measure. Imparting skills training to girls and women is another way of making them economically empowered. Many Jesuits working at the grassroots are still engaged in these activities.

Vatican Council II was a defining moment for the Catholic Church. Historically it coincided with the second wave of feminism in the secular world. Responding to the call of VC II and imbibing its spirit of renewal, South Asian Jesuits began admitting women for theological education. At the initial stage, a number of women religious completed their basic graduate studies in theology, and some even obtained the Masters' degree. These women in turn are

servicing their Congregations as formators and leaders ushering in change in all areas of Religious life. Through theological education, Jesuits continue to empower a number of Religious women.

The emphasis on contextual theologizing led to an emphasis on the subaltern groups in South Asia, namely Tribals/Adivasis, Dalits and Women, who are oppressed and marginalized. Initially these groups received special mention and study as part of the introductory course, namely, Introduction to Theology and Socio-cultural Analysis. At Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, Fr T. K. John along with Fr Paul Gueriviere raised issues of the subaltern groups into the classroom inputs, while they helped the students with socio-cultural analysis. Besides, some of the Jesuits like Samuel Rayan played an important role through his teaching and writing in raising feminist consciousness among his students and others.

In the late 1990's, Subaltern Theology became part of the syllabus in the Jesuit Faculties. Courses on Feminist Theology, Feminist Questions, Feminist Spirituality, The Challenge of Feminist Theology and Themes in Feminist Theology are being conducted. Exploring Feminist perspectives on various theological topics in classrooms has become a norm today.

Recruiting women in their theological faculties was another step that Jesuits took, showing their commitment to women empowerment both at Vidyajyoti, Delhi and Jnana Deepa, Pune. Today, more Religious and lay women are theologically trained through the Distance Education Programme in Theology (DEPTH) organized by Vidyajyoti College. It offers a two-year Diploma course in Theology where one of the topics offered is Feminist Theology. The Centre for Women's Studies (CWS) at Jnana Deepa, Pune, has also been established to reflect upon and respond to women's concerns. All these ventures augur well for the future.

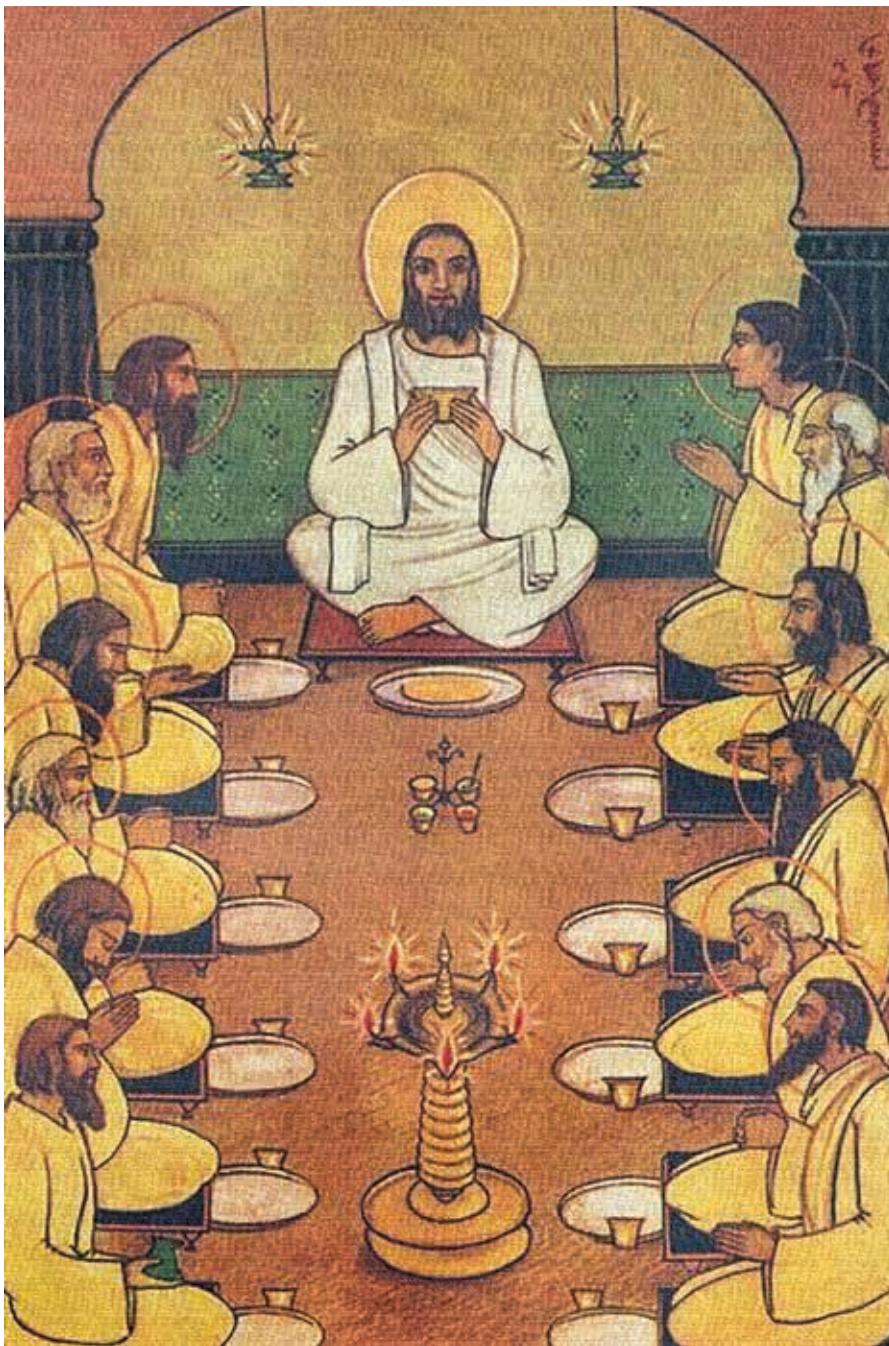
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Theology Emerging from Below:

South Asian Jesuit Contribution to Contextual Methodology



I. First Stirrings of Indigenization:

After Vatican Council II, especially after the emergence of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in 1974, the topic of indigenization began gaining ground. The Bishops spoke about dialogue of the Gospel with the many poor, the rich cultures and living religions of Asia. But the attempt at indigenization in India goes back to Brahmabandab Upadhyaya. Frs Antoine and Fallon in Kolkata followed in this tradition and founded an urban ashram. Their focus was not on spirituality, but on dialogue with people in the context of higher education.

Around the same time, Fr Sebastian Kappen was animating the workers, and was dialoguing with Marxists, giving rise to an Indian liberation theology. Fr Samuel Rayan was busy animating the college youth in Kerala and was theologizing in that context. Their theological reflection was based on their pastoral experience. An interest in Indian Christian experience led myself and Frs T.K. John and Tom Nallail to visit Hindu and Christian ashrams across north India in 1967. All three of us became professional theologians later and promoted an Indian theology. In Sri Lanka, Fr Aloysius Pieris founded his Tulana Research Centre, animating young people and workers, and developing an Asian theology in dialogue with Buddhism.

In this context we had the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, which described the Jesuit mission as the promotion of faith and justice. GC 32 also had a short decree on inculturation. Inspired by this, the Conference of Jesuit Provincials in India launched an 'Inculturation Commission' with Frs Herbert Alphonso, A.M. Varaprasadam and T.K. John as members. The Commission's work was preceded and followed by an All India Congress of Jesuits. Fr Pedro Arrupe participated in both the Congresses and encouraged our projects of inculturation.

An important initiative of this movement towards inculturation was the foundation of the Regional Theology Centres (RTCs), pioneered by Gujarat. Later, RTCs began in Chennai, Patna, Ranchi, Kerala and Kolkata. Teaching in some of these RTCs was done in local languages. The RTC students would do a year or two in their respective regions and then go to the national centres for a year. Thus, there was give-and-take between the local and national theologates. This had its impact, first of all, on the methodology of doing theology and, secondly, on the content of theological reflection.

Obviously, this has led to theological publications also in various Indian languages, by way of reflection, writing and teaching. They may also have had an impact on the regional seminaries with regard to method, medium (language) and content, especially because the Jesuit professors of the regional centres sometimes went as guest lecturers to the regional seminaries. We must stress the service of Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection and Jnana Deepa Journal, as well as Jesuits writing in other journals like Jeevadhara, Bible Bhasyam, etc. Jesuits are usually the leading participants in various theological conferences. In a short article, it is impossible to give a list of theologians and their publications. So I shall limit myself to some general comments on methodology as also the content.

II. Contextual Methodology: Arising from Lived Experience

The methodology of doing contextual theology has been inspired by Latin American theologians. Theology used to be defined as 'faith seeking understanding'. Faith was expressed in the creeds. The understanding, in the context of the early Church, was done in terms of Greek philosophy, which evolved into Scholastic philosophy later. The lectures were academic. Treatises were written on important themes like the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Church, the Sacraments, Revelation and Salvation, spelt out in the dogmas of the Church in the various Councils of the Church. Of course, the scriptural books were also commented upon from this viewpoint. The medium of instruction was Latin. Some of the texts used may have been written centuries ago. St Thomas Aquinas was the master and the model. For example, during my philosophical studies, in Latin, I used to read a chapter of St Thomas every day!

Contextual theology starts from below, from our living experience of the world, with its suffering, injustice, inequalities and oppressions, but also successes and joys. To understand this experience, in view of transforming it in the name of the Gospel, we have to analyze it in terms of causes and effects. For this we employ today the various human and social sciences like economics, political science, sociology, psychology and anthropology.



Contextual theology starts from below, from our living experience of the world, with its suffering, injustice, inequalities and oppressions, but also successes and joys. To understand this experience, in view of transforming it in the name of the Gospel, we have to analyze it in terms of causes and effects. ”

Such a social analysis leads us to the second stage when we ask the question: 'Why?' This leads us to discover the causes. At the third stage we look at it from the perspective of our faith which urges us to build a community of equality and justice, in which we love and share with each other. We reflect on what we have to change and how. Here we dialogue with our scriptures evoking the example of the life and teachings of Jesus. If we are part of an interreligious community, we will have to take into account also the beliefs of the others and dialogue with them. This is the stage of theological reflection.

In a multi-religious country like India, our theological reflection has to be both Christian and interreligious. This involves interreligious dialogue, which demands not only an understanding of the faith perspectives of the others, but also how we can collaborate in changing

our life in community and the world in which we live, including its economic and socio-political dimensions.

Our own faith perspectives too, may change in the context of such a practical dialogue. Then, in the next stage, we have to ask ourselves, both as Christians and as an interreligious community: what have we to do to change our vision and way of life in view of changing the world? Also, how can we collaborate with others? In the process, our theological reflection becomes both Christian and interreligious. It is wise to keep these two dimensions distinct. Such a reflection is followed by a choice of what we have to do as Christians and as members of an interreligious community, at the religious, socio-economic and political levels. Then we try to live our options. The cycle starts as the world keeps changing.

III. Kingdom-Oriented South Asian Theology

In the past, the goal of our mission was to make others Christians. Today we welcome people if they wish to become followers of Christ. But our aim is to build a human community of freedom, fellowship and justice. We call this the Kingdom of God. The goal of our mission, then, is no longer the Church, but the Kingdom of God. We are co-pilgrims, with the members of other religions, towards the Kingdom. The Church has no monopoly over Christ. He reaches out to every one as the Word of God, through the Spirit, in ways known and unknown to us. At the same time Jesus was an Asian. The Church is at the service of humanity – a servant. Its way is one of dialogue and collaboration. Its witness to Christ must be more by its way of life than by words. Its witness can be real and effective only if it is rooted in every culture and people.

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Image Source: Institute of Development Studies

Building Bridges across Religions

South Asian Jesuit Pioneers in Interfaith Dialogue

Dialogue is an indispensable ingredient of Asian Theology. Hence, I present a glimpse of South Asian Jesuit engagement with Hinduism and Islam, briefly discussing contributions of Jesuits who excelled in the same.

I. Dialogue with Hindus

Jesuits such as Thomas Stephens [d. 1619], Roberto de Nobili [d. 1656], Jean Venance Bouchet [d. 1732], Constantine Beschi [d. 1747], Jean Calmette [d. 1740] and Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux [d. 1777] studied Hinduism in depth with a keen eye on the differences from and similarities to Christianity. These scholars believed that the Catholic response to the religious cultures

of India was best grounded on detailed knowledge of Indian religions and cultures.

Jesuit Father Francis Clooney points out that: “Their deep commitment to solid learning fetched them evermore comprehensive and precise knowledge of Indian religions. Consequently, their new learning raised several questions about their certitude and plausibility that their knowledge would hopefully uncover the flaws of Hinduism and make clear the truth of Christianity. They did not miss the inherent tension between their scholarship and missionary motivation. However, they remained committed to an honest interfaith encounter.”

Vatican Council II and the General Congregation of the Jesuits [GC 34], decree 5 “Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue” have changed many perspectives on mission in the last decades of the 20th century. In the light of the Conciliar and post-Conciliar teachings, George Gispert-Sauch, Ignatius Puthiadam and Sebastian Painadath, committed themselves to study Hinduism in order to enter into dialogue with Hindus with a deep belief that learning would benefit both.

Gispert-Sauch is admired for his knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures. He impressed his listeners with his fidelity to the Christian faith and appreciation of Hinduism. For him, Christian faith is not merely a matter of relation to the Divine, but also to a specific understanding of the Divine manifested in history. He stressed that in Christianity, with faith in the Incarnation, the rootedness in history is important and deeply influences the faith commitment.

“If the faith commitment with its historical content is perceived as absolute, does it leave space for the other, for dialogue, for interaction with other committed people?” he asked himself and others in learned conversations. He recognized that faith is open to growth. He believed that the sense of Mystery involved in most forms of faith, opens up the space and makes dialogue possible. He affirmed: “I may be convinced of the truth of my faith, but I can never possess the infinite Mystery: this is always beyond, even if we get glimpses of it. There is place within faith for the constant inquiry, the brahmajijnasa, the desire to know the ineffable Mystery. Dialogue feeds that desire.”

Sebastian Painadath and Ignatius Puthiadam reflect on the mystery of Christ, that shapes their lives and commitments, in the context of diversity of religions. Painadath holds that diversity of religions is not merely a historical fact but an integral aspect of the divine presence in the world. Further he affirms the essential unity of spirituality in the existential diversity of religions. He believes that unity in the light of diversity can be discovered only in a process of interreligious dialogue. Puthiadam affirms the greatness of Christianity is that it allows wide exchange that emerges from varied thoughts and ways of life. In diversity, however, Puthiadam points out that for Christians, the fundamental center of unity lies in the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Puthiadam stresses that God’s Spirit leads all people into truth, unifies all humanity in Christ and hands over everything to the Father at the end of time. He believes that fraternal exchange, dialogue and mutual help to growth, is what our faith in Jesus Christ demands of us.

These Jesuits have demonstrated ‘creative fidelity’ in their dialogical relations with people of other faiths.

II. Dialogue with Muslims

The story of Jesuits’ interaction with Muslims began with Jesuit missions to the courts of the Great Mughal emperors, Akbar and Jahangir. The first mission consisted of Rudolf Acquaviva, Antony Monserrate and Francis Henriques. Acquaviva and his companions reached Fatehpur Sikri in 1580. Edward Leitao, Christopher de Vega and Brother Stephen Ribero were members of the second mission that arrived in Lahore in 1591. In the third mission, Jerome Xavier was accompanied by Manuel Pinheiro and Benito de Goes. They arrived in Lahore in 1595. The Jesuits’ main concern at the Mughal court was to prove Christianity as

a superior religion to Akbar. To achieve this end, they sought to demonstrate the articles of Christian faith through reason. Their conversation often ended in polemics.

However, a Portuguese artist who accompanied them to the Mughal court in 1597, initiated religious conversation around his paintings. He produced scores of small oil paintings of Christ, and made copies of the emperor’s extensive collection of European Renaissance religious pictures. The Jesuits often used the paintings to illustrate their arguments. G. A. Bailey, an art historian, hails the efforts of this Portuguese artist as “an episode from one of the most remarkable cultural exchanges in the history of East-West relations”.

A new dawn appeared as the 20th century unfolded. Victor Courtois broke new grounds in Christian-Muslim relations. He insisted that the study of Islam should lead to greater love and better appreciation of Muslims. He dedicated his life to promote mutual understanding and brotherly love between Christians and Muslims. He published a journal, Notes on Islam, to foster better understanding between Christians and Muslims. Following Courtois, Christian W. Troll and Paul Jackson strengthened and deepened the Courtois Model in Christian-Muslim relations in India. They distanced themselves from polemics, began studying Islamic texts with respect and reached out to Muslims with love.

While Courtois anticipated the open attitude of Vatican II in the light of *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humane*, Troll and Jackson ventured to build bridges between Christians and Muslims, without ever losing their identity as Christians. Their lives were challenged and shaped by both their own faith and that of Muslims. The significance of their life and work emerges from the high level of integration they attained in living as Christian friends among Muslims.

Troll and Jackson contributed to Christian-Muslim dialogue in the area of theology and spirituality respectively. Troll’s work on the Muslim reformer Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan remains as a standard academic work. Jackson’s translation and commentary on the medieval Sufi texts highlighted the spiritual treasures of mystical Islam. While they wrote weighty theological essays in journals, they contributed articles in magazines for average Christian readers to learn to appreciate the Church’s teaching on interreligious dialogue. The Islamic Studies Association that they had established with their Christian friends in dialogue with Muslims, continues to serve the Indian Church as a vanguard in encouraging dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

It is indubitable that these creative efforts in dialogue at the very heart of Catholicism are prompted by the Spirit who reveals herself through the signs of the times. We must conclude in the spirit of GC 34 [decree 5] that these Jesuits remind us that: “Our heritage of creative response to the call of the Spirit in concrete situations of life, is an incentive to develop a culture of dialogue in our approach to believers of other religions.”

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Echoing the Cries of the Cosmos:

South Asian Jesuit Influences in Tribal Theology



Mother Mary in Tribal art at Zankhvav, Gujarat.

Tribal theology is contextual and incarnational by nature—born out of the experience of various forms of injustice and exploitation of tribal peoples and their worldview (God-nature-human relationship) in dialogue with Christian faith, life and theology. In this article I highlight some pathbreaking works by Jesuits, which are the building blocks of tribal theology. Part I will mention significant works by Jesuits from their arrival in Chotanagpur up to Vatican Council II (hereinafter VC II); while part II will deal with post-VC II works. Finally, I will mention few other significant contributions.

I. From 1869 to VC II (1962-65)

Christian faith and theology made their home among the tribes—Munda, Ho, Uraon, Kharia and Santal - of Chotanagpur, with the arrival of the first Jesuit, Fr Augustus Stockman from Belgium, in 1868-69. Not many accepted the Christian faith at the start. Later there were Baptisms among the Munda and Ho tribes. Jesuits experienced situations where tribals suffered exploitation and oppression by the local Hindu ‘landlords’ under the protection of British colonialists. While the landlords robbed tribals of their finest lands and engaged them in forced labour, the British imposed their own legal systems and land laws upon them. From being owners of their lands—Khutkhati/Bhuinhar and original inhabitants—tribals became tenants to landlords.

Three forces sowed the seeds for tribal theology: first, shaped by core Ignatian principles of ‘Finding God in all things’ and Spirit-driven by Magis – the greater glory of God, the Jesuits passionately preached the Gospel in word and deed, by living out the greatest commandment of “loving God and one’s neighbour” (Mt 22:34-40); second, the Jesuits made sincere efforts to save tribals from situations of injustice and exploitation and their fears of evil spirits; third, Jesuits heard the ‘cry’ of the tribals resounding over hills and valleys - singing, dancing, beating of drums, rhythms of seasons, celebrating life. Fascinated, they began learning tribal languages, worldviews, cultures, customs, laws, symbols, beliefs and wisdom.

Pioneering Jesuits were one in people’s joys and sorrows. Singing and praying in tribal languages, they introduced them to the joy of the Kingdom of God - Jesus! They preserved tribal identity, dignity and history by recording in Roman script peoples’ myths, customs, history as narrated to them by the elders. They also produced valuable writings in ethnography, anthropology and linguistics from the perspectives of the tribals.

Linguist Fr John Baptist Hoffmann wrote the *Encyclopaedia Mundarica* (16 volumes), *Mundari Grammar* (1903), *A Mundari Grammar with Exercises* (2 volumes: 1905-09) and the *Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908*, an instrument for the protection of tribal land. Fr A. Grignard authored an *Uraon-English Dictionary* with notes on Kudukh beliefs and Fr P. Dehon wrote an article, “Religion and Customs of the Uraons,” in “Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal”. These pioneering works are treasure troves for researchers in theology.

Fr Constant Lievens demonstrated how ‘to do theology in context’ by harmonizing faith-and-service. He was a precursor of Chotanagpur contextual ‘liberation theology’. The fruit of these approaches birthed a vibrant tribal Church and Christian faith inculturated upon tribal soil. Christian life, theology and religious practices somehow reflected elements of tribal culture.

II. Post-VC II Period

Tribal theology proper gained momentum after VC II, which redefined Church as ‘People of God’ – “sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and all humankind. She is also an instrument for the achievement of such unity” (LG 1). It stated: “To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.” (GS 4). This impacted the tribal Church of Chotanagpur and increased the momentum in fashioning tribal theology. The following Jesuit initiatives are significant:

First and foremost, Jesuits began translating the Bible into the languages of the people. Fr Martin Topno was a pioneer with his translation of the New Testament and other liturgical texts into Mundari. Fr Camil Bulcke translated the whole Bible into Hindi. Later, Frs John Lakra and Paulus Kullu translated the New Testament into Kurukh (Oraon) and Kharia languages, respectively. Moreover, Fr John Deeney and Mr Dhanur Singh Purty translated the New Testament and Psalms into the Ho language. The lay faithful were elated to read the Bible in their own languages. Translations of other liturgical books also followed. All these works greatly assisted students of tribal theology to understand scriptures and liturgy in a deeper way. An excellent resource for theologizing in the tribal context, indeed!

Second, post-VC II, many Jesuits used social sciences to understand the tribals in changing contexts of tribal socio-economic-political life. Through his writings about newness in the fields of culture, language and liturgical inculturation, Fr Philip Ekka, later Bishop, contributed a lot, along with Frs Jos De Cuyper, Peter-Paul Van Nuffel, John Lakra and Lalit Peter Tigga. Frs Boniface Tirkey and J. Troisi published *Oraon Symbols and Religion of Santals*, respectively, that have boosted tribal theology. Presently many Jesuits—Agapit Tirkey, Alex

Ekka, Joseph Marianus Kujur, Ranjit Toppo, Joachim Dungdung and Lawrence Tirkey, among others—have produced valuable resources for doing tribal theology from an interdisciplinary perspective. Moreover, committed Jesuits like Stan Swamy, have shown how theology should animate people’s movements. He is unjustly imprisoned because of his bold initiatives.

Third, important Jesuit contributions in tribal theology emerge from two theologates: (a) St Albert’s College, Ranchi, started in 1907 at Kandy, Sri Lanka, and (b) Tarunoday, Regional Theology Centre (RTC), Ranchi (attached to Vidyaajyoti, Delhi) in 1983. Apart from training personnel for priestly ministry at St Albert’s College, Jesuits began publishing *Sevartham*, an annual research journal from 1976. *Sevartham* has been publishing many research articles on tribal theology. Fr Francis Pereira’s ‘The Faith Tradition of the Kurunkhar’ (Uraons), a doctoral thesis of the College, is an excellent resource for theology.

Fourth, Jesuits are imparting ‘contextual tribal theology’ to its students at Ranchi’s Tarunoday RTC. The first staff-members— Frs Antony Parapulil, Albert van Exem and Paulus Kullu—and the present ones, have published many works in contextual tribal theology. Senior Frs John Lakra and Agapit Tirkey, and, later, Frs Sudhir Kujur, Amrit Tirkey, Francis Minj and I, have published various branches of theology: reflecting the typical tribal worldview, centrality of land, holistic, communitarian life, common good, and destiny, liberative, hermeneutic and critical features of theology in dialogue with Catholic theology and the contemporary situation. In short, tribal theology is a ‘collective dance’ - God is the ‘drummer’ and human beings are God’s co-drummers.

III. Other Contributions to Tribal Theology

Talking of dance and drums, Gujarat Jesuit Francis Gonsalves’ book ‘God of Our Soil: Towards Subaltern Trinitarian Theology’ uses the naach/naachnu or

akhara [tribal dance] to symbolize Trinitarian perichoresis. He argues in an article that: “Triune God is Tribe”. Other Jesuits like Walter Fernandes and Alphonsus B. D’Souza from the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, have done pathbreaking interdisciplinary work in tribal theology, besides conducting seminars, bringing together theologians from all over India to reflect upon and develop tribal theology.

While much has been done by many Jesuits, beginning with prophetic pioneers from abroad, we can do much ‘more’ in the spirit of the Jesuit Magis. May God lead us on!



Tribal icon of Jesus at Bardipada, Gujarat.

Photo Courtesy: Andrew D’Abreo, SJ

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THOUSAND WORDS

In Commemoration of International
Women's Day- 8th March



An aware and assertive citizenry, in contradistinction with an indifferent or docile citizenry, is indisputably a sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy.

– Judgement by Hon. Judge of the Patiala House District Court, Delhi that granted bail to Climate Activist Disha Ravi.





Wrestling with Indian Casteism:

Jesuit Contribution to Dalit Theologies

The Jesuit contribution to Dalit Theologies must be seen against the backdrop of their wrestling with Indian casteism. The endless struggles of one-fifth of the Indian population reduced to be untouchables, who named themselves ‘Dalits’, are as old as the outbreak of the caste system. This system of graded inequality built upon constructs of ‘permanent purity-permanent pollution’ has been privileging the elite powers and condemning the cursed lots. When Jesuits began bringing Good-news to India, their mission strategies birthed parallel systems of Brahmin Sanyasis and Pandaraswamis.

With limited historical consciousness, foreign missionaries initially had a naïve understanding of the caste system. Their missiological approach was very much along the lines of a trickle-down process rather than the bottom-up model. Moreover, the native clergy with internalized caste values seemed to have played safe without confronting the crux of the caste system. In interactions between the caste-perpetuating people and caste-breaking Dalits, we encounter intermediary players like Jesuits who have been unwilling, hesitating, willing or daring to empower the Dalits in varying degrees.

The wide spectrum of Jesuit response—both of foreign missionaries and native clergy—towards the Dalits could be portrayed as follows: (a) Tolerance to Casteism and Intolerance to Dalits’ Demonization]; (b) Fear of Casteism and Distancing from Dalits [Relegation]; (c) Embrace of Casteism and Rejection of the Dalits [Dehumanization]; (d) Rejection of Casteism and Embrace of the Dalits [Humanization].

Despite many Jesuit attempts to reach out to the Dalits through charity, development and empowerment with varying degrees of readiness and resistance, a minority of Jesuits seek to encounter casteism with the insights of Mahatma Phule, Ambedkar and

Periyar. With the intervention of such Jesuits, the sensitivity of the universal Society of Jesus towards the Dalits in GC 34, decree 3, was expressed as follows: “Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, isolated and relegated to marginal social roles, see their identity, cultural legacy, and natural world threatened. Other social groups—an example would be the Dalits, considered ‘untouchables’ in some parts of South Asia—suffer severe social discrimination in civil and even ecclesial society. The General Congregation calls on the whole Society to



Dalit victims of Una Atrocity incident in Gujarat.

renew its long-standing commitment to such peoples.”

While condemning the practice of casteism and untouchability in the Indian Church, Pope John Paul II shook the Indian Bishops as follows: “Unfortunately, even those who have been ordained to service can at times fall victim to unhealthy cultural or societal trends which undermine their credibility and seriously hamper their mission. As men of faith, priests

must not let the temptation of power or material gain, distract them from their vocations, nor can they permit ethnic or caste difference to detract from their fundamental charge to spread the Gospel.”

Jesuit Interpretation of Christian Resources through Dalit Eyes

The pioneering Indian effort, undertaken by the Centre of Dalit/Subaltern Studies (CDS), Delhi, was to publish the Dalit Bible Commentary Series of the entire Bible. The one-volume NT Commentary with 571 pages (2009) and the one-volume OT Commentary with 960 pages (2015) are edited by James Massey and introduced by Fr T.K. John of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. The monumental task was meticulously edited by an ecumenical team of organic scripture scholars from various churches, with the major share of editorial expertise of Fr Maria Arul Raja.

Eminent Jesuit theologian Fr Gispert-Sauch commended the Dalit Bible Commentary Series, saying: “The CDS project is different in that it intends a complete commentary on the Bible from the perspective of and addressed to Dalits. The authors are not peasants or villagers, but trained scholars representative of the community. The aim is to provide materials for the emergence of a common ideology or theology for the various Dalit communities in the country.” The rationale behind the project is to bring out a Commentary in which the primary focus is on Dalits. Exploring the myriad themes like faith, revelation, inspiration, authority, word of God, incarnation, etc., the Dalit Bible Commentary seeks to enable Dalit sensibility to enter into dialogue with the biblical word/text, making the Scripture more meaningful to their lives.

Mention must be made of the contributions of the following professor-theologians from Arul Kadal Regional Theology Centre (RTC), Chennai: Frs A. Lourdasamy, Nalavadi Arockiadass, Alangaram Arokiam, Raj Irudaya and Maria Arul Raja. The Dalit Quest authored by Fr Dionysius Rasquinha compiled many insights of Dalit Theology. These have been encouraging Jesuit scholastics to articulate the Dalit vision of the salvation of all through the salvation of the ‘least’, through their lectures and publications. Significant contributions of Frs Maria Arul Raja, Joe Xavier, Francis P. Xavier and John Bosco animated the publishing of the CBCI Policy of Dalit Empowerment-2016: a major milestone in the history of Church’s open acknowledgement of her responsibilities towards Dalits.

In the light of Biblical interpretations from the Dalit location, the Jesuits could incorporate the following orientations for deepening their commitment of moving from half-hearted works for the Dalits towards wholehearted solidarity with them: (a) The Biblical ethical orientations are attuned to the interior movements of the Dalits – neither enslave others nor become slaves to others; (b) The discriminatory hierarchical system of casteism is a sin, and the abominable practice of untouchability is immoral before the eyes of the Creator God who has created all human beings equal with innate human dignity; (c) The salvation of the God of eternal compassion is the gift to all, irrespective of one’s creed, code, cult, colour, or culture. But this is realized only through the salvation of the most excluded people, i.e., the salvation of all through the salvation of the least; (d) The conflict-ridden situations are created by asymmetry of power due to discriminatory hierarchy, and the flow of violence is initiated and perpetuated by the arrogance of the powerful sectors against the defenceless victims. But the God of faithful justice reaches out to the disowned people as God’s own people, with a deep sense of belonging, in view of alleviating their suffering and annihilating the evil; (e) The necessity of creating the culture of reconciliation falls upon the frail shoulders of the Dalits who are hungering and thirsting for getting emancipated from the burden of imposed slavery; (f) Dalits are ever energetic in projecting the new heaven and new earth for creating a caste-free society and for becoming co-humans with all other human beings. For them, to be human is ultimately to become co-human with others. To claim oneself to be a Dalit now, is ultimately to cease to be a Dalit, and grow together as co-humans with others, with God-given dignity; (g) Dalits seek to collaborate with all victims repressed by economic globalization, religious fundamentalism, linguistic oppression, patriarchal hegemony, ethnic cleansing, brute majoritarianism, colour prejudices, planned genocide or racist domination.

In the large analysis, the Dalits do not want to enact the role-exchange between the caste-perpetuating people and the caste-breaking people. Even though the Dalits have the desire for role-exchange and anti-Dalits have the fear of role-exchange, the Dalit ideology which is ever inclusive, looks forward to the total transformation of all, from top to bottom—both the victims and the oppressors. The wrestling goes on.

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(signed) Antony Pitchai Vedamuthu, SJ



Image Source: Bankura

Jesuit Mission in the field of **Ethnophilosophy**

In the context of post-colonialism, the concept of 'ethno'/ 'ethnic' is becoming popular. Especially in 'third' world countries, researches are done on 'ethno-medicine', 'ethno-chemistry', 'ethno-botany', 'ethno-history', 'ethno-economics' and so on. But unfortunately, 'ethno-philosophy' is an enigmatic word to academic philosophers. Neither in the West nor East, is it done. Only in Africa, a certain group of philosophers are doing ethnophilosophy.

Similarly, a lot of researches are done in folklore. For example, folk music, folk drama, folk dances and so on. But unfortunately, folk philosophy is unheard. Ethnophilosophy is in a way folk philosophy, because in both philosophy of a particular ethnic group or a particular folk, is taken for research.

Ethnophilosophy in Africa

Ethnophilosophy is one among the four trends in the contemporary African philosophy. The term ethnophilosophy

was coined by francophone African philosophers. African philosophy is found in wise-sayings, proverbs, stories, mythology, religion and the like of African people. It is being culled out nowadays by academic philosophers. Akan, Azande, Bokis, Igbo, Luo and Yoruba philosophies are some of the traditional African Ethnophilosophies. In short, it is an African worldview.

Ethnophilosophy is considered a property of a community rather than an activity of an individual. It is an open denial as Odera Oruka puts it, of "Plato's maxim that the multitude cannot be philosophic". The founding text of ethnophilosophy is *La philosophie bantoue*, a book in which the Belgian missionary, Father Placide Tempels, sought to characterize the essential features of the thought of Bantu-speaking peoples of Central and Southern Africa. The chief proponents of this approach are: John S Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu (Theologians), Marcel Griaule, Alexis Kagamé, Robin Horton (Anthropologists) and Kwame Anthony Appiah, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu, Oshita O Oshita, and Peter Bodunrin (Philosophers).

Ethnophilosophy in India?

So far ethnophilosophy as conceived by African philosophers, is NOT attempted in Asia and specially in India, even though there is a lot of scope for it, as our country is blessed with thousands of ethnic groups. A little attempt is made with regard to tribal theology and folk theology. Though the attempts made in Dalit philosophy are outstanding contributions to subaltern philosophy, they only deal with the philosophies of individual thinkers like Dr. Ambedkar, Jyothidasar, etc. Although they are the most articulate representatives of Dalit community while constructing their identity, differences i.e. Dalit sub-castes are ignored.

Folk Philosophy: A Philosophy of the Periphery

Philosophizing is part and parcel of human nature. Antonio Gramsci writes, "All men are 'philosophers', by defining the limits and characteristics of 'spontaneous philosophy', which is proper to everybody". Karl Jaspers rightly says, "Man cannot avoid philosophizing". There is no part of the world where humans never reflect on basic philosophical questions about the human person, cosmos and God. In this, Indian folk cannot be an exception. Generally, 'great' systems of philosophy are only studied, be it Western or Indian (Sanskrit) or Tamil (Saiva Siddhanta). (In India, some of these ethnic people are grouped now as Economically Weaker Sections [EWS]. Ridiculous!)

The so-called 'little' traditions (of SC, ST and OBC) are ignored. The ordinary people do not express their philosophy in a written form, but they convey their philosophy orally through proverbs, myths, celebrations, rituals, worship and so on. Kancha Ilaiah says, "For the Brahmanical writers, literature means tales of war and love but not of productivity, creativity and science. The Madiga (Dalit) life still remains in orators but not in literatures." As India is rich with plurality of cultures and folklores, folk philosophies should be unearthed, especially in the context of subaltern studies. Thus this can become the philosophy of the periphery.

Methodological Tools to Study Ethnography

Participant observation, oral literature, informal interview method and in-depth interview method are some of the important tools used in anthropology, folklore and ethnography to study the culture of people. Ethnography found in folk ballads, novels and modern poems about an ethnic group, can also be a wonderful source. The ethnographic notes by European missionaries and colonial officials, can also be used, but they must be critically evaluated.

From Ethnography to Ethnophilosophy

This ethnographic data is then interpreted philosophically to arrive at ethnophilosophy. Ethnophilosophy could now be excavated from the myths, proverbs, worships, rituals, historical awareness, professional consciousness and identity construction of the ethnic group. The different philosophical tools such as Marxist, Post-Marxist, Phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Post-Colonialism, Post-

Structuralism and Postmodernism could be employed to study the 'collective consciousness' of an ethnic or folk group. Consciousness is understood as 'social consciousness' or 'culture-consciousness'. Therefore, here consciousness is not approached in a traditional way i.e. consciousness as resulted from embodied soul or Self (Jiva). Consciousness is understood as socially and culturally 'constructed'.

Significance and Relevance of this Research

A total of 57,401 identities were discovered (though 4635 communities studied) in the recent "People of India" report by Anthropological Survey of India including around 1,300 communities of Scheduled Castes, around 700 communities of Scheduled Tribes and 1536 OBCs. The philosophies of these different tribals, Dalit sub-castes, nomads, fisher-folks, dhobis and so on, can be studied. This research then becomes a significant step towards the study of philosophy of the subaltern. This widely opens the door of study of such philosophies of peripheries and margins. Another salient feature of this research is that this is not only inter-disciplinary in nature but also multi-disciplinary.

Jesuit Mission with Culture to Philosophy

The decree on "Our Mission and Culture" of GC 34 says, "Throughout the world, Jesuits are working with great numbers of ethnic groups, tribes and countries with traditional cultures. There is a wonderful patrimony of culture, religion and ancient wisdom that has moulded their people's identities" (Dec.4:11). It further says, "Among the indigenous people there has been a resurgence of consciousness of their distinctive cultures, and they must be supported with the liberating power of the Gospel" (5.4). The same decree gives us nine guidelines, and the first one goes like this, "Our option for the poor should reach out also to their cultures and values, often based on a rich and fruitful tradition" (28.1). Jesuit missionaries in the past were interested in the anthropology of the people "...to express a profound respect for indigenous cultures" (10). Hence they wrote about their culture and customs. They were the "... pioneering studies of the people among whom they worked and whom they tried to understand" (10).

Therefore, it is high time now that we, Jesuits, must move from anthropology to philosophy of the subaltern and periphery. As we closely work with the oppressed and have the basic skill of philosophizing, it is easy to cull out their philosophy from their myths, proverbs, rituals, worships and identity construction. The intellectual dimension is part of all our ministries (Cf. GC 34, D 16). Our former General Adolfo Nicholas also urges us all to renew our intellectual apostolate, particularly in the field of research in his special letter on 24th May, 2014. Therefore, we can start philosophizing from the culture (ethnography) of the people. Walking with the excluded, especially with the outcastes (UAP-2), calls upon us to make a deeper study and research of their culture and philosophy.

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St. Joseph: model of faith, hope and love



Image Source: Holyart

St. Joseph is one of the very few Saints who has two feast days to honour him. The scriptures don't say much about this silent saint. In fact, St. Joseph does not speak in the scriptures. This is to be expected because St. Joseph was a man of action more than words.

Inspiration from St. Joseph: As we celebrate a year dedicated to St. Joseph we can draw inspiration from him in our own lives.

1) Attentive listening: Matthew is the only one of the four Evangelists who places Joseph on the centre stage in his Infancy Narrative. The angel appears to Joseph in a dream on four separate occasions. (Mt 1:20-21; 2:13; 2:19-21; 2:22).

Before (Mt 1:18-19) the first of these dreams (1:20-21) Joseph had already made up his mind to follow the law because he was righteous. He became aware of the pregnancy of Mary - to whom he was engaged - and possibly suspected her of adultery. The only logical explanation of the pregnancy was that Mary was guilty of adultery. Joseph had the choice to pursue a legal trial for adultery (Deut 22:23-27) or draw up a bill of divorce. Joseph chose the latter option because he did not want to publicly shame Mary and it would attract less attention.

Hearing with our ears and seeing with our eyes is only one way of hearing and seeing. True hearing and seeing require that we hear and see also with the ears and eyes of our hearts.

2) Trusting God's word: The angel explains that the child conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20) and Joseph must take his pregnant betrothed as his wife. Not only is he to do that, he will also not have the privilege as the foster father, to name this child. This name has already been chosen by God, as communicated by the angel (1:21). His trust in God's word shows in his action.

When things go the way we want, it is easy to believe and trust God's word. However, when God's word calls us to act differently, it is not easy to accept and follow.

3) Action more than words: Joseph's trust in God's word does not end with his acceptance of Mary and Jesus as his wife and son respectively. In the three dreams that follow the first (2:13; 2:19-20 and 2:22), he is asked to perform actions which are extremely difficult. However, since it is God's plan and God's hand at work, Joseph acts in obedience.

In the first of these dreams, Joseph is asked to go to Egypt hastily. He obeys. In the second, when the family is in Egypt, he is asked to go to Israel (2:19-20). Once again, he obeys. The choice of Nazareth and not Judea in Israel as the place of residence of the family, is also attributed to Joseph's obedience (2:22-23).

We sometimes look for God only in miracles or extraordinary events. Yet, God keeps revealing God's power, might and love in the ordinary events of our lives. Like Joseph we must open our hearts wide to see.

4) Acting without expectation: In most of our relationships with others, including members of our families, we act with some or other expectation. Sometimes, we expect those to whom we have been generous and kind to also be generous and kind to us in return. At others times, we expect a word of gratitude and even praise for reaching out. At still other times, we expect that those to whom we have reached out will not be ungrateful. With Joseph, there were no expectations whatsoever. He did what had to be done.

Each of us is also called by God to be God's instrument of love and peace. God does not expect that we do extraordinary things to reveal this love. If like Joseph we can reach out to others even in small ways, we will have done well.

5) Model for workers and the sanctity of work: The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph was a carpenter (13:55). He does not state whether Jesus followed his foster father in this trade. In his Gospel, he refers to Jesus as "the carpenter's son" (13:55). The Gospel of Mark, however, informs us that Jesus did follow Joseph in this trade. When Jesus goes back to his hometown, the townsfolk identify him as "the carpenter" (Mk 6:3).

The celebration of St Joseph-the-worker's feast on 1st May - when Workers' Day or Labour Day is celebrated in many countries of the world - is a celebration of the saint and his work ethic, but also of the participation of humans in God's work of creation. In this, Joseph becomes an inspiration and model to workers, of the meaning of hard work and earning one's living through the sweat of one's brow.

6) Model of discernment and faith: Obedience to God's word required a lot of discernment and faith from Joseph. He was aware that he would not have been able to recognise immediately whether he was indeed doing God's will. The dreams could have been the result of his own imagination. It required discernment to know that they were not. All decisions that he had to take - the hastening to Egypt, remaining in Egypt when the threat to the child was still alive, and the return to Nazareth - were life-changing decisions. They would affect not

only his life, but also the life of Mary and Jesus. This is why he had to be convinced that his actions were in accord with what God wanted him to do.

One important rule of good discernment is that we do not make decisions when we are upset or even elated. This is because these decisions will be based only on emotion and not discernment. We have to be at equanimity before we make important decisions, and in this regard, Joseph is a model to be imitated.

7) Protector of the family and of the world: In his role as foster father of Jesus, Joseph was protector of his family. The safety of his family was of prime importance to Joseph. He placed their needs and safety above his own.

This quality of Joseph can be extended to include his protection of the whole world. As he kept the interests of his family uppermost, so he keeps the interests of the world uppermost in his intercession for the world.

When we are tempted to live self-centered and selfish lives, Joseph's selflessness comes as a breath of fresh air, inviting us to be other-centered and to make a difference to the lives of others.

In the play Hamlet, there is a scene in which Hamlet says to his friend Horatio "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (Hamlet 1.5). One understanding is, that while there are many things that the human person does know, there are possibly more things we do not yet know.

One such happening is the Covid-19 pandemic. While theories abound about the origin of the virus and how best to respond to it, the fact is that we are still groping in the dark. This is why like St. Joseph, we are called to listen attentively.

We live in times where many of us would prefer to see before we believe. If we are of this mind, there is no need for faith. St. Joseph teaches us to believe even without seeing. He also teaches us to believe even when we cannot see. This is because like him, we too must realise that God's will for the world will always be better than what we want for ourselves. We must learn from St. Joseph how to make our will subservient to God's.

Our actions in most cases, even the seemingly altruistic ones, are often with our eye on the reward. St Joseph teaches us that we must learn to find the reward in the doing of the action.

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Intention For March 2021

Intention for Evangelization - Sacrament of Reconciliation

Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.





New Education Policy - 2020 (NEP) Opportunities and Challenges



Image Source: Hippocampus.in

“If we teach students today as we taught yesterday, we rob them of tomorrow.”

-John Dewey

In India today, we Jesuits are chiefly engaged in the apostolate of Education. The New Education Policy 2020 (NEP) has been released in a summary form of about 68 pages. For the last four years, the various drafts of the NEP were looming over us like the ‘Sword of Damocles’. The present government, under the pretext of Covid 19, was shrewd in passing it without any debate in either house of Parliament, just as the CAA, NRC, Article 370, the Triple Talaq, Labour and the Farm Laws, FCRA and the NEP were passed. The writing is on the wall. The majority rule. The minority remain voiceless.

NEP 2020 has many flaws. It has technical, legal, structural and pedagogical misgivings too. Rather than scrutinizing the NEP 2020 in detail, I would rather take this as an opportunity and

a challenge to dwell on positive measures it can give rise to, in our institutions. I consider NEP 2020 a blessing in disguise.

Technology / Networking is a Blessing

“Every disruption in human history has led to new ways of thinking. And let me predict now, that the pandemic will enhance the quality of education by combining the best of online with offline.” Vineet Jain – Chancellor (Bennett University.)

I am sure that most of our institutions are technologically equipped. The NEP 2020 speaks of the use of technology to enhance our teaching methodology. This is also mentioned

in the NEP. (Technology Use and Integration: NEP, 2020, Pg. 57, No.23ff) Our youth and the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) can also assist us in this endeavor.

a. Youth Power - Computer Savvy: One of the four UAPs of the Society of Jesus speaks of accompaniment of the youth. Our educational institutions are a wonderful opportunity for us in this endeavor. Along with the actual teaching learning process, we could involve youth in the use of technology and computers. Thus the youth could share our Jesuit legacy and become valuable lay collaborators. This could open up new possibilities.

b. IPP Methodology is Implicit in the NEP: The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm is Experience – Reflection and Action - based pedagogy. The NEP emphasizes the values found in the IPP. In the introduction of the NEP, it states, “Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.” - (NEP: pg.4) The Characteristics of Jesuit Education (CJE) and (IPP), stress respect and compassionate care of each student uniquely as a gift of God. Thus we prepare our students not for examinations alone, but for life. We also have an opportunity to emphasise the values of the Gospel, simultaneously with the teaching-learning process. (Experiential learning, NEP 2020: pg.13, 4.6) “Experience” is one of the chief elements of IPP.

c. Tap Khan Academy & Other Google Accessories: We have lots of teaching material available on the internet. Google spearheads them. Besides, there are many voluntary organisations, which upload teaching material for the teachers and students. This is easily accessible, increases our access to information, and enables us to go beyond the prescribed texts and reference books.

Publication

Cultural, religious and language bias is experienced in the newly prescribed text books. What is our response to this? The deleted syllabi include insufficient and incorrect content on federalism, citizenship, nationalism, secularism and democratic rights. Here are some suggestions:

a. School Calendars / College Prospectus: The school/college calendar and prospectus is vital for our clientele, parents, teachers, students and all our stake holders. It is here we need to articulate our Jesuit legacy forcefully: our mission, vision and the need for our presence in the education apostolate. Besides, we can also print the Preamble of the Constitutions of India, as it also includes Gospel values. This will easily enable stake holders to familiarize themselves with Christian values.

b. Value Education and Orientations for our youth: I feel we could publish books and introduce the values of the Constitution and the Gospel class-wise. We can even have a separate manual for our youth. It can be offered on a monthly basis, or in the form of seminars and workshops. These books can offer open-ended suggestions to the teacher. These orientations can be offered in our curriculum. It is our minority right. We need the courage and ardent desire to implement all this.

Teachers’ Training Programs

“Teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process.” (NEP 2020: pg. 6 – ‘Key Principles’)

We can empower teachers and lay collaborators with knowledge of their rights. NEP speaks of improving the quality of teachers. I feel we should prioritize B.Ed colleges to form quality teachers and resource persons. During the proposed four years of training, we can equip the teachers with Constitutional values. We have an opportunity to design good syllabi according to the requirements of the 21st century. Given our experience as educators, we could also influence the National Research Foundation (NRF) and Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC). This will create goodwill with the government.

Medium of instruction (mother tongue) / English proficiency our goal

I feel this is a golden opportunity for us to emphasize the mother tongue of instructions in the early years of the students’ formation. We are aware that the child has the ability to assimilate many languages with ease in this stage. At the same time, we can also lay equal stress on the English language. This is possible. The rural poor students can benefit immensely. In the State of Maharashtra many schools have bilingual medium of instructions, so also in some other States of India.

Sharing School complexes

In chapter 7 of NEP 2020, in 7.6 it states, “This Policy strongly endorses the idea of the school complex/cluster, wherever possible. The aim of the school complex/cluster will be greater resource efficiency and more effective functioning, coordination, leadership, governance, and management of schools in the cluster.”

Most of our Jesuit and Christian institutions are strategically built, and have a basic infrastructure. We can and must be generous. Many government schools do not have these basic amenities. It is in this context, that I feel the above suggestion to share our resources and school complexes are encouraging. It can enhance collaboration with our neighbouring institutions. Ultimately our assets are meant for educational purposes. We should be open towards this venture. We need to take this risk. We could engage in ‘spiritual conversations’ in our school communities and with our lay collaborators. It will allow the ‘Spirit’ of God to permeate our hearts as we attempt this ‘possible dream’.

In conclusion, I would say that NEP 2020 is the guideline offered to us by the Government of India. It appears to be defective and threatening, and yet with our commitment and goodwill, the above-mentioned suggestions are possible to work on. This can be our ‘Agni Pariksha’. Let us pray that through the intercession of St. Ignatius, we shall ‘journey’ towards the ‘impossible dream and the unreachable star.’

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Transforming Ashes into Fire

Age old symbols and practices characterise the season of Lent. Among the symbols ash, desert and fire stand out and the triad of practices drawn from the Gospels that the church recommends are prayer, penance-fasting and alms giving. This is a reflection on these key aspects of the Lenten season.

The season of Lent begins with the imposition of ashes as a sign of repentance. The journey of Lent ends with the lighting of the new fire in the Easter vigil. Ashes come after fire, in the human order. In the divine logic, the order is reversed. God alone is capable of transforming the ashes into fire, light that dispels darkness.

Currently, several conditions come to mind when we think of ashes as a symbol: the worldwide suffering caused by the pandemic, the protesting farmers and their ordeal in India and the efforts of the ruling dispensation to demonise them, and the degradation of democracies across the world – especially in India, through the manipulation of the pillars of democracy. Scores of rights activists are the most affected victims of this last phenomenon. Among them is our own Fr. Stan Swamy whose suffering causes us much despair.

Between the ashes and fire, there lies a desert that one needs to traverse. As for the people of Israel, so for us, it is a spiritual space of solitude ripe with struggles, both internal and external. It is very easy to get lost in a desert and one might have to wander directionless like the Israelites. I had an opportunity to travel through the Israeli desert in a bus and looking through the window at the vastness of the arid and monotonous desert I was saying to myself, “no wonder they kept getting lost”.

The counsels of Fr Adolfo Nicolas might be worth considering in order to grapple with the demons of the desert, especially the internal ones. I am referring here to the letter he had intended to send to the whole Society that has been circulated widely after he passed away. He was asking why the Religious at large today fail in being leaven in the dough: “What have we lost? ... Are we aimless?” He identifies distraction as the root cause of our inefficacy. The distracted Israelites found focus, centring in YHWH, “who went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light” (Ex 13: 21). Fr Adolfo’s deep insights certainly enlighten our journey through the desert of distractions. The title of his letter is, From Distraction to Dedication: An Invitation to the Centre. He lists a variety of interrelated distractions and offers remedies to the malaise of distraction, taking a cue from the gems of wisdom found in the XVI c. Classics of Christian Spirituality.

Privileged practices that could come to our aid in order to persevere in the pilgrimage through the desert and transform our ashes into fire are prayer, penance-fasting and alms giving. Some years ago, at



Image Source: Republican Herald

the beginning of the season of Lent, a young gentleman came to our house looking for a quiet place to pray. He was aware that we had several chapels in the community. My fellow community member who attended to him narrated to me his story. The gentleman came to pray on the working days throughout that Lent during his lunch break. He skipped his lunch and the money that he saved on lunch he gave in charity. He had found a simple but creative way of journeying through the Lent. He prayed, fasted and gave alms, all through consecrating an hour of his day to the Lord. I presume that it helped him in the process of centring himself in the Lord. Reflecting on how all our attitudes and actions should spring forth from being rooted in Christ, Fr Adolfo writes in the mentioned letter, “We did not always understand that a preferential option for the poor was an option out of love, from the heart, from within, as when Jesus felt compassion for the poor crowds”.

How can we be creatively faithful to this threefold practice?

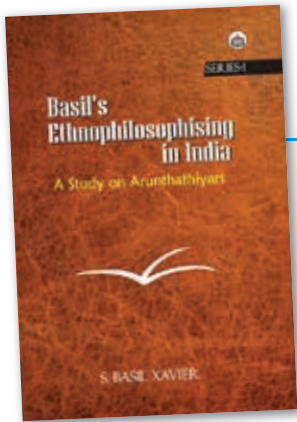
The life of Fr Stan Swamy in the adverse conditions of the prison inspires us. Though his imprisonment is not justified, he is showing no resentment. He who is in need of compassion is himself offering his solidarity to the poor undertrials who do not even know what charges have been put on them. To those outside the prison he offers hope writing, “A caged bird can still sing”. As long as there are voices that stand for truth, no matter how faint, God knows how to transform our ashes into flames.

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Learning Little Traditions



TITLE: Basil's Ethnophilosophising in India: A Study on Arunthathiyars (Series I)
 AUTHOR: Xavier, S. Basil
 PUBLISHER: Authors Press, New Delhi
 PAGES: 376 | PRICE: ₹ 1400 | \$ 70

This book is the outcome of the author's strenuous research conducted on ethnophilosophy of Arunthathiyars. Ethnophilosophy consists of shared beliefs, values and traditional wisdom of an ethnic group. Arunthathiyars also called Chakkiliyars are mostly scavengers and cobblers, the 'dalits of the dalits' in Tamil Nadu. Their counterparts in the other parts of India may be Madhigas, Mangs, Bhangis, Chamars, Mochis and others.

The first part of the book deals with the ethnographic data of Arunthathiyars. The third and fourth chapters especially present the ethnography based on works already done by Indians and Foreigners (p.350) and on the author's own field work in five districts of Tamil Nadu. The second part deals with ethnophilosophy which is culled out from their

mythical, religious, ritual, historical, professional and identity consciousness. This is the study of their 'collective consciousness'. Hence it is a research on "folk" philosophy, philosophy of 'little tradition' and philosophy of the 'periphery' or 'margin'.

The author shows successfully that the cult and worships turn out to be the "weapons of the weak" (p.350). It also talks of "boundary situation" and how boundaries are crossed (p.353). In this book the false history of Arunthathiyars is deconstructed. The author proves conclusively that they fought against the colonial powers, a fact largely ignored by the historians of the freedom struggle (p.355). The author also argues that in the past, Arunthathiyars were leather artisans who enjoyed high social status (p.352). They were the "subaltern scientists" since their technological knowledge and craftsmanship were "outstanding and excellent" (p.356). The book succeeds in a new kind of "identity construction" for the Arunthathiyars.

On the whole, we can say that this critical book is a significant step towards the study of subaltern philosophy. It is highly recommended for students and scholars of philosophy, theology, history, sociology, anthropology, ethnography and folklore.

| Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ

Founding Theology in the Contemporary World

Vatican II arose from the realization that the neo-Thomist philosophy and theology promoted by the Church for protecting itself from the onslaught of modern culture had failed. From this realization arose the quest for aggiornamento (updating). But the Church did not have any blueprint for carrying out this task. Scientism (the idea that science is the sole source of human knowledge) was the ruling philosophy of the times. But a Church that believed in revealed knowledge could not accept that doctrine.

Together they led to two developments. One was the influx of empirical sciences into theological formation. Disciplines like psychology, sociology and science of religions (also called Comparative Religion and History of Religions) were expected to do the role played by philosophy earlier. But there was a problem. Philosophy and theology provided a comprehensive vision for life; sciences specialized in more limited domains. Without a comprehensive vision not only did philosophical and theological formation in the Church get fragmented, but also were at the mercy of changing cultural currents (e.g. shift from modern to postmodern). This realization, and the Church's commitment to divine revelation, led many Christian intellectuals to visualize a discipline called Fundamental Theology that would provide foundations for Christian theology in the contemporary world. However, this new discipline – as distinct from dogmatic theology – could hardly find its feet, for various reasons. But its need remained.

TITLE: Faith, Reason, and Culture: An Essay in Fundamental Theology
 AUTHOR: George Karuvellil, SJ
 PUBLISHER: Palgrave Macmillan
 PAGES: 402 | PRICE: € 93,59



This book attempts to meet this need. It carries forward the mission and the heritage of the Church, without relying excessively on Plato and Aristotle. In their place, insights from contemporary philosophy and culture are adopted. It takes the postmodern critiques of modernity seriously, without succumbing to postmodern licentiousness. Since its primary addressee is not professional philosophers, technical philosophical vocabulary is kept to a minimum, and they are explained in non-technical language. Though situated in Western discussions, this book has learned much from the Indian traditions. It provides a comprehensive vision of life that is firmly rooted in Christian faith, and provides an intellectual framework for interreligious dialogue

| George Karuvellil, SJ

Islamic Studies Association Celebrates Human Fraternity Day



Dr. Craig Considine

On 4th February, 2021, the Islamic Studies Association, Delhi, organized a webinar on “The Humanity of Prophet Muhammad” to celebrate “International Day of Human Fraternity”. Dr. Craig Considine, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Rice University, USA, was the speaker for the evening.

Dr. Considine pointed out that the media have been feeding people around the world a steady diet of Islamophobia since the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. This Islamophobic propaganda insists that Islam is incompatible with Western values that are founded on the Judeo-Christian worldview. Accordingly, the Muslim ‘other’ is projected as a threat to the

Judeo-Christian way of life.

Dr. Considine contended that critical scholarship must counteract this view and turn back the tide of Islamophobia. Through his scholarship, Dr. Considine articulates the view that there is, in fact, a Judeo-Christian-Muslim theological tradition. By analyzing Prophet Muhammad’s life, he presented before his listeners, the view that Prophet Muhammad was egalitarian, that he was an advocate of religious pluralism, and that he was deeply committed to the creation of just societies, devoid of racism and ethnocentrism.

Dr. Abdur Raheem Kidwai, Professor of English and the Director of the UGC Human Resource Development Centre at Aligarh Muslim University, who introduced Dr. Considine to the audience, noted that the views of Dr. Considine provide an antidote to Islamophobia. “Dr. Considine, by

his scholarship, builds relationships and invites others to do likewise”, said a Muslim participant. Another Muslim participant noted that interreligious dialogue is one of the most effective means to build trust among people of different faiths and ways of life. A Christian participant pointed out, that in times of growing polarization, interreligious dialogue unlocks the hearts and minds of people, and motivates them towards actions that build peace.

| Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ | Delhi

NEW APPOINTMENT

Indian Jesuit appointed to a Pontifical Dicastery



Pope Francis has appointed Fr Bryan Lobo, SJ, as a member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Fr Bryan (51) belongs to the Mumbai Province of the Society of Jesus, and is presently Dean of the Faculty of Missiology at the Gregorian University Rome. Earlier, he had earned his Licentiate and Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology from the same University.

Fr. Bryan is also a consulting member of the Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Diocese of Rome. He has organized

various international conferences on interreligious, intercultural, and missiological themes. The proceedings of two of those conferences have been published with him as the Editor: Enlightenment and Tantra: Hindus and Christians in Dialogue (2018); Maximum Illud: La missione tra storia e attualità, (2020). He has also published various articles in various Journals and is now co-authoring a book in Italian on the Theology of Religions which will be published by the end of this year.

By JIVAN Staff

CELEBRATING A LIFE WELL-LIVED

Valuable lessons from a 99 years young Jesuit Brother

“A grateful heart is a contented heart. A contented heart is a simple heart. And a simple heart leads to a simplified life. Gratitude opens the door to simplicity.” This was so true of Br. Dias. Every Jesuit who has lived with him will remember how many times he said Thank you to all who were with him.

If one has come into St. Britto’s High School premises in Mapusa, Goa and not bumped into the short statured Br. Dias, one has surely missed meeting a tall personality. Such was this man who lived a glorious 99 years. He is gone too soon because he was just a month short of his centenary birthday. I have lived with Br. Dias for the past 8 years consecutively and few before my theological studies. So now I’d like to share with you some of the valuable lessons that have stuck with me the most.

Life is a gift: Many of us take for granted that we’ll wake up healthy in the morning until we have a reason to believe otherwise. It can seem like such a cliché to say that life is a gift, but no moment beyond this one is ever guaranteed. We can lament the challenges we face in life, or remember we’re fortunate we’re here, right now, capable of growing through them. Br. Dias showed us how to enjoy this gift of life by living life according to God’s will.

Happiness is appreciating what you have: Br. Dias didn’t require lots of money, a big room or the nicest clothes to keep him happy. All he needed was the company of the community members, the helpers in the residence, the daily Mass parishioners, the teachers in the school and of course the kids coming into the school. He had a connect with the young and old alike. He would bless the children coming into school, joke with the teachers and also give them words of wisdom and always play a gracious host to visitors to our residence. He knew happiness isn’t about wanting more. It’s about truly enjoying what you have especially the people who touched his life.

Always Grateful: He was happy and grateful at all times. He was appreciative of little things. Every single day without fail after every meal, he would totter to the kitchen to thank the cooks Peter and Leo: Dev borem korum tumka. He would thank the Jesuits who would say Mass each day. We could see the joy on his face after attending Mass. He would cheer up anyone who even looked a little sad and not smiling. As he advanced in years, he demonstrated through his life, how to live one day at a time and in that span of 24 hours, to be seen as being immensely grateful.

A heart for others: He really had a heart for others and felt the suffering of people around him. The pandemic and its resultant woes deeply moved him and he would loudly wonder how people would be managing. Nevertheless, when he himself faced pains and struggles, the only mantra that kept him going he said was: Santa

Patentia- Holy patience - the way to live life peacefully. Life was not a bed of roses for him in his early days when his family moved here from Burma, his education in Belgaum and his life and works as a Jesuit. Even in his old age we hardly heard him grumbling about food, ill health etc. He appreciated all that life had offered to him with his deep faith.

Trusting and relying on God at all times: He trusted and relied totally on God. Even to simple questions such as, “How are you”? his reply would be “I’m fine by the grace of God”. He was approaching his 100th birthday and was asked whether he would celebrate it, he would just say “God will decide”. Surely God has decided that Br Dias deserved a heavenly centenary birthday for him.

Music: The life of Br Dias cannot be summarized if a mention is not made of his violin. The violin and Bro Dias are two sides of the same coin. It was his life. Almost every evening from 5-6pm, the strains of familiar music would be heard from his room except when his violin went for repairs. He brought joy to all visitors at the residence with his music and warm company.

Laughter/ Humour: The late Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ stated that one of the criteria for joining the Jesuits is that we should learn to laugh with others and at times laugh at ourselves. Bro. Dias lived this advice completely. Always quoting Latin phrases to support his banter with anyone he met. There have been times when he saw me a little serious and he would immediately ask, “What happened to you? Why are you not smiling?” Teasing

each other was a very accepted norm between Bro Dias and myself. His sense of humour endeared him to everyone. Having him at St. Britto’s in his old age was never a problem to us. In fact, he would bring cheer and laughter among us.

Farewell: He had seen many generations of Britto boys and staff members. He would regale us with anecdotes and instances of incidents from the yester years. Many generations of Jesuits who have completed their Novitiate at Xavier Training College, Desur, Belgaum will definitely remember and lift him up in their prayers.

The Jesuits have lost their oldest member in the South Asian Assistency.

His violin has fallen silent but not the melodies which still resound in the Mapusa Jesuit residence, elsewhere and in our hearts. He has left an indelible mark wherever he has been and in whatever he has done. Indeed Bro. Dias has been a jolly good fellow. May he rest in peace.



Bro. Epiphania Dias, SJ (1921-2020)

| Anand D’souza, SJ



Santosh Minj, SJ

Four years back when I took up the leadership role of Hazaribag Province, I heard comments like; “With responsibility, Grace comes”, “You are not doing your work, you are doing God’s work, God will help you” etc. Yes, this is what St. Ignatius said in the Formula of

the Institute number [134]: God will guide the Society. I found these comments very helpful.

I trust in God and on Jesuits in the mission, and on this deposited trust, God is guiding me. God’s light and direction I experience in the meetings of local superiors, commissions, directors of works and province consultation, because they are platforms to listen to God’s Spirit coming through them. Of course meetings are helpful, but it is not easy for me to decide and discern on important issues when you are aware of the limitations and flaws of the men and the institutions as well. For me, governance in the Society is a challenging and tough job. It is an activity of conversation, listening and, to have a mutual, fundamental and unshakeable faith between the superior and the subject. It is an

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I journey with them. I care and pray for them. I know it very well that if I cared for the Jesuits, I cared for the ministries. It is the men in the mission who take the Province forward.”

on-going process of learning from one another. In the process of leadership, we are continually and reciprocally inspiring, and being inspired by one another.

Availability is one of the traits of a Jesuit on a mission. I feel myself fitting very well, making myself available for the mission and men. I journey with them. I care and pray for them. I know it

very well that if I cared for the Jesuits, I cared for the ministries. It is the men in the mission who take the Province forward.

Spending quality and sufficient time in all the mission stations, speaks volumes. Quite often, just listening informally to their challenges, expectations, needs, problems and stories, is much relief for them. On the other hand I am aware that I won’t be able to fulfil everything they ask for and expect of me. In that sense my presence means a lot to them. Both parties are affected, and what energizes and encourages me and them is our companionship...our journey together in mission. Amidst them, I’m a Jesuit companion.

Being a leader is not a crown given to me but a responsibility for oneself and others that I have undertaken. I realized that today’s challenge is that the role a person assumes is growing faster than the person. Whether you like it or not, you go through the ups and downs in the journey in this role which are part and parcel of it. Achievements and flaws are stepping stones in the journey of leadership. I have learnt to go slow and be patient. Each and every Jesuit in the Province is unique, and his contribution in the growth of the province is commendable. I feel indebted to my companions for their support and understanding.

The author is the Provincial Superior of Hazaribag Province.

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Patrick Pradhan, SJ

Thirty five years have gone by since I joined the Society and looking into myself I see myself carrying tons of experiences. I gratefully take this opportunity to thank all who contributed in scripting those experiences, especially thank my superiors who guided me and governed me all through these years.

My generation of Jesuits saw Darjeeling Region becoming Darjeeling Province, lived through the experience of transition from the Canadian Jesuits to the Indian Jesuits, read, discussed and participated in three GCs and met and interacted with three Superior Generals. I must say that we have seen many changes in the Society, though it may not be at the same pace as we see in the world. There was a time when the values and preferences the Society discerned, were seen in flesh and blood before seeing them in black and white. There was more life in communities than community life. There was more prayer and few prayer books, less slogans and more slugging and struggling and there were statements from the visionaries than vision statements.

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Often their desire to be prophetic is swallowed up by the duty of being prudent. Their desire to form men is set aside to fix them. In my thirty-five years Jesuit life, I have felt this shift in dealing with superiors.”

The changed reality within the Society and the world at large, has made the mission of Jesuit superiors difficult and even dangerous. Often their desire to be prophetic is swallowed up by the duty of being prudent. Their desire to form men is set aside to fix them. In my thirty-five years Jesuit life, I have felt this shift in dealing with superiors. In the past I found superiors more relaxed, more compassionate, more human and of course, more prayerful. I always felt heard, understood and guided, even though many of them were not highly qualified or great leaders. They dared to be seen as human and humble enough to acknowledge their human frailties. Their genuineness, their love for the Society, their love for their vocation, their commitment to the mission inspired me and often felt deep down in my heart, a wish that I could become like them.

We rarely feel the same today, and it is not because superiors are bad but perhaps, it is because they are expected to perform more than profess. They are more urgently called to be equipped with managerial skills than the Ignatian tools. We do witness times when the attitude of “I know all” or “I can fix it or him” among superiors, leaving one unheard or misunderstood.

The glorious history of our Society tells us about discoveries, inventions and missions that changed the map of the world or even created maps. This seems to be a distant past and it may not sound like the history of the same Society we are in, if we continue catching up with the world. I think many of the solutions to the problems we face today in the Society are embedded in the Ignatian sources. Maybe we need to return to our own well.

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Smashing Gender Norms

Kerala Woman Climbs Coconut Trees to Support Her Family



The lockdown forced Sreedevi Gopalan, 25, a final year B.Ed student to return home in Malappuram, Kerala. Her father has been a coconut tree climber all his life. She realised that the family was struggling to make ends meet. She wanted to do something to support the family financially.

“A few months ago, I overheard my father saying that if they had a son, we wouldn’t have to struggle so much during this lockdown,” shares Sreedevi. She desperately wanted to help out.

Within two months of the lockdown, Sreedevi mastered the art of climbing a coconut tree. But facing the criticism from society, was the hardest part for her. She holds a Master’s degree in History and is pursuing B.Ed.

“I presented a plan to my parents. They did not like it, but I wasn’t backing down. I ordered a device to climb, and started practising on my own. In weeks, I could do it like a professional,” she asserts.

“One day, Father asked me to go with him to the job, and soon we were climbing 8-9 coconut trees in our locality. My father taught me how to distinguish ripe from raw coconuts, tips on how to stay steady on the tree” says



Image Source: TBI

Sreedevi. She now proudly joins her father as a breadwinner for the family.

But on seeing her perseverance to provide for the family, he knew that there was no reason as to why he should hold her back. For the past two months, Sreedevi’s mother, had to face a lot of questions from their neighbours and relatives about her daughter and the dignity of the job.

Sreedevi hasn’t given up on her teaching dreams. She has taken on new paths to follow for the time-being. Sreedevi has not just been a provider for her family, but has also been shattering gender stereotypes and shaking up society’s rigid mind-set.

Adapted from TBI

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Man of Letters



Image Source: TBI

In the world of social networking, there is a postman still delivering posts to the poor people who live in inaccessible terrains. Plantation workers who live in difficult terrains in the Nilgiri Hills do not have even telephone connections, leave alone Internet. D. Sivan (66), a postman from Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, has braved thick forests, tough terrains, and attacks from wild animals for the last 30 years to deliver letters to them. He is the only connection to the world for the people in remote places. On some days, even if he had only one letter to deliver, he would still make the 15 kilometre journey, traversing through steep hills, risky railway crossings, and pitch-black tunnels.

In 1985, Sivan joined the Indian Postal Service as a stamp collector in Wellington, a town located near Coonoor, TN, and in 2010, he was made a Gram Dak Sevak (mail deliverer). He retired from his post on 7th March 2020 and his story was brought to light by a group of filmmakers through a docu-movie named Thabalkaran.

During the time of his service, Sivan never took a day off, because he knew how important each letter, money order, and pension was for the villagers. During one such trek, he encountered a herd of elephants, and the mother elephant charged at him. A truck driver nearby honked at the animal and saved Sivan's life. Now, the animals, including wild gaurs, are familiar with Sivan, and some even share a friendly nod when they encounter him.

When asked what made him to do this, he says, "the lives of these plantation workers depend on pensions, and it is my responsibility to make sure they get them on time — I am an ordinary man, but my job helps to make life easier for people living in the difficult conditions, and I take that seriously. More than what I am paid, the sense of fulfilment I get by doing this service, is what has sustained me all these years. Not a single day have I failed to reach people".