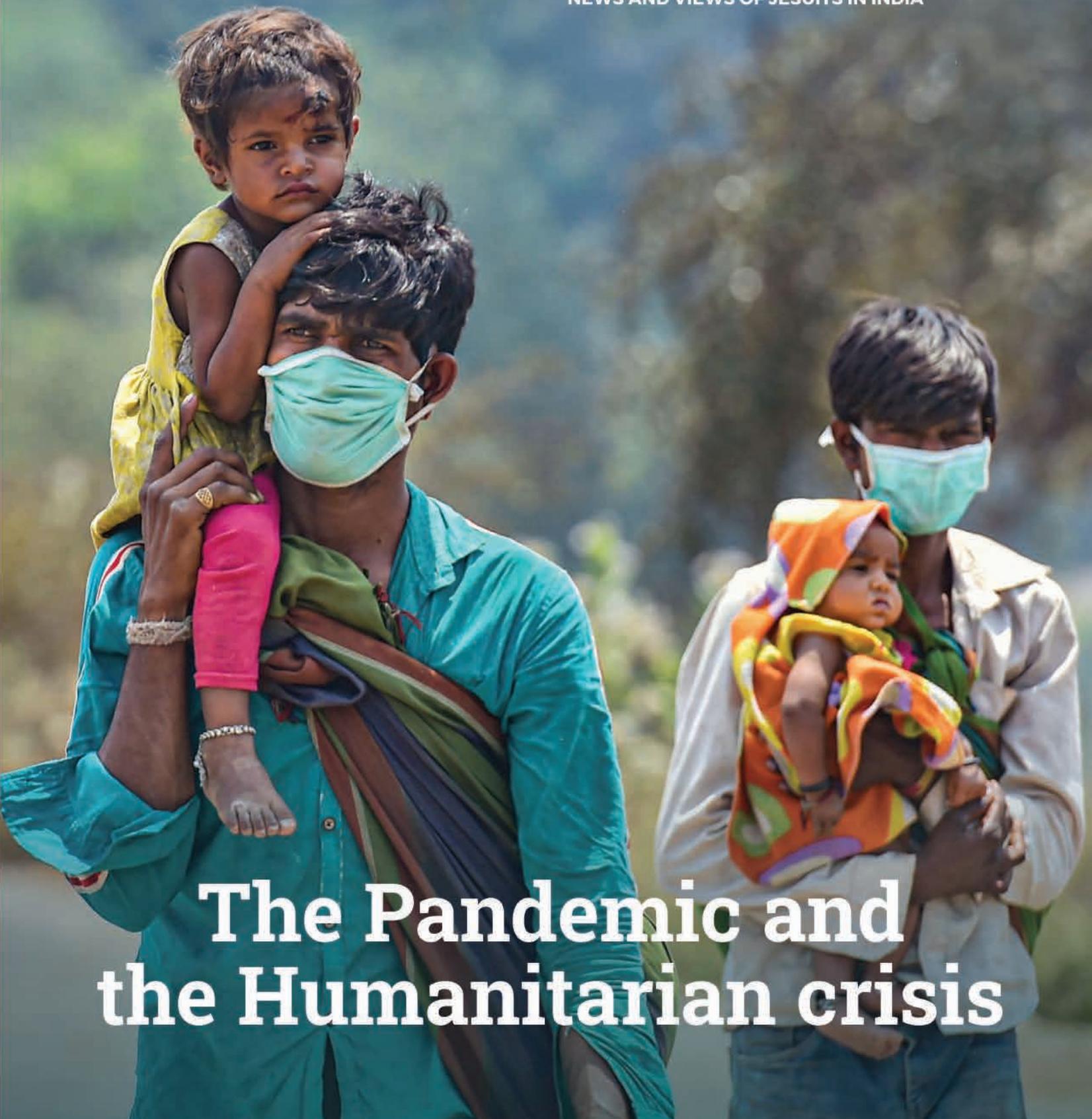


July 2020

# JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**The Pandemic and  
the Humanitarian crisis**

# TAKE HEART

Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis together

Take heart my friend the shadows  
Are there but not to stay;  
It's true it's dark and scary  
But then will dawn the day;  
When heavy clouds get scattered  
And glimmers of new light  
Will start to shine so brightly  
Chasing away the night.

Let not your heart feel gloomy  
Cooped up in loneliness;  
The One who made you loves you  
Just feel his warm caress;  
He's with you and your loved ones  
Who're far but in heart near  
With them drive out all fear  
And dry up every tear.

**Bernard Mallia, SJ**  
[ben.vic.mal@gmail.com](mailto:ben.vic.mal@gmail.com)

(The author is a Maltese Jesuit belonging to the Eastern Africa Province and helping in the formation of novices in Arusha, Tanzania. )

We know we are all in it  
A thought let us extend;  
A prayer for those stricken  
For those who give a hand;  
To succour them not counting  
The toil and the expense  
Coming to their defense  
With loving care intense.

Let's raise heads and hearts together  
Join hands and stand with all;  
For wrapped up in ourselves  
We only come to fall;  
Let's bravely smile keep hoping  
That in the end all's well  
That winter gone we'll smell  
The spring that joy will tell.



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**PUBLISHED AT**

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

**PRINTED AT**

Anand Press, Gamdi, Anand-388001,  
Gujarat.

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E-mail : booksgsp@gmail.com

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES OF JIVAN**

(Visit [jivanmagazine.com](http://jivanmagazine.com) for online subscription)



Jesuits:  
₹1000 / yearly

Non-Jesuits:  
₹750 / yearly

Foreign:  
US \$25 (0r ₹1500)  
/ yearly

Online Edition:  
₹700 / yearly

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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.

## Discerning Discernment

The practice of 'discernment in common' or 'community discernment' would be taken much more seriously than it is nowadays, if the results of such discernments were always evaluated, at regular intervals, on the basis of a criterion given by St. Ignatius himself in the Spiritual Exercises. In the 'Rules for the Discernment of Spirits' # 333, he says, "We must carefully observe the whole course of our thoughts. If the beginning and middle and end of the course of thoughts are wholly good and directed to what is entirely right, it is a sign that they are from the good angel. But the course of thoughts suggested to us may terminate in something evil, or distracting, or less good than the soul had formerly proposed to do. Again, it may end in with what weakens the soul, or disquiets it; or by destroying the peace, tranquillity, and quiet which it had before, it may cause disturbance to the soul. These things are a clear sign that the thoughts are proceeding from the evil spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal salvation." In 'community discernment', the word 'soul' must be replaced by the word 'group' or 'community'.

In the light of the above rule we could prayerfully examine the decisions arrived at after our 'so-called' discernments from time to time, and see whether they have brought the community peace and tranquillity or left it disturbed, restless and confused. As the Gospels would say quite plainly, "By their fruits (over a period of time) you shall know them (the discerned decisions)."

| Joseph M. Dias, SJ | Mumbai

## A multi-proffering issue

The JIVAN May-June issue was interesting and timely. It proffered spiritual, social, educational and healthcare solutions to a world traumatised with fear and uncertainty unleashed by the ongoing pandemic.

The articles were cautious, yet aware and optimistic. While they pointed to the old problem of 'us vs them' of human divisions, they also talked of conversion and collaboration, and seized the opportunity to make readers introspect during the lockdown.

As pointed out by the authors, Covid has not differentiated humanity on the basis of caste, creed or color. It made us realise that our faith in our mental constructs, whether religious, social, political, economic or intellectual, is shaken by a tiny, invisible virus. Now we realise that all that we know is just a little of all that is yet to be known. We know nothing of God and Nature. Post-covid therefore, we need to demolish our old psychological prisons and egos, change from 'us' to 'our', and move from competition to true and rich collaboration to build a better world.

| Dr. Kalpesh Gajiwala | Mumbai

## JESWITS

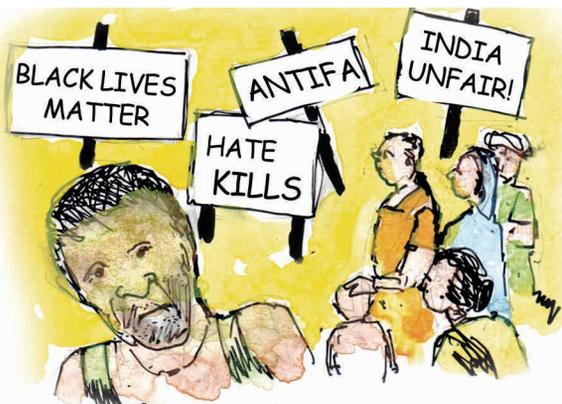
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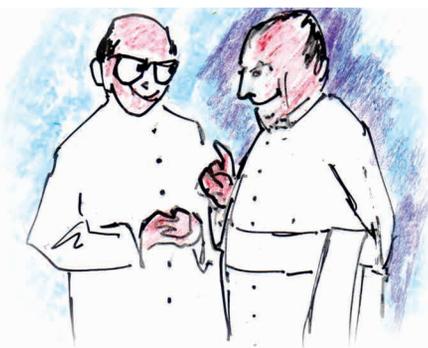
Naturally - for online religious services, an online collection is a must - PayPal, RuPay or NEFT?"



Yet another mask for COVID? Isn't our niqaab enough?"



Aren't we Dalits black enough?"



You've heard, I suppose, we've got a new POSA..." "Is that a new apostolic preference --- or just another governmental necessity?"



## POSA Speaks

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ

### Untold Stories, Life-giving Narratives

“There are no migrants walking on the road”, Solicitor General (Govt. of India) Tushar Mehta submitted in the Supreme Court. Apparently the Supreme Court was satisfied with the submission! It seems that lies, contradictions and conjectures form part of the Indian Jurisprudence, especially in recent times. Fortunately with the insistence of many eminent lawyers, the Supreme Court took up the issue of migrants (suo motu) and gave strict orders to the Union Government and State Governments to provide for the migrant labourers (recognizing some lapses). But there were no strictures for the Solicitor General who misled the court in such a blatant manner!

Covid-19 is with us, and will stay for a while. Even as we struggle with the corona virus, there are stories of fortitude and courage emerging from among us. Many NGOs and concerned citizens have come out in support of the migrant workers - #V4MIGRANTS being one of them.

The lockdown provided me with time to watch John Abraham’s Amma Ariyan (Report to Mother) – a 1987 black and white movie in Malayalam. It is the story about a group of friends travelling from Wayanad in North Kerala to Kochi in the South to inform a mother of the death of her Naxalite son. Purushan (the main character – if there is one!) says:

*You know me, Mother, don’t you.*

*You know everything about me.*

*I will keep you informed about everything that I come across,  
until the end of the journey.*

*Just see for yourself*

*my paths; the sights that have been awaiting me on my way...*

*Lives have been sacrificed all through this deserted path of mine.*

In a sense the film is about ‘walking’ and John Abraham turns ‘walking’ into an action that has political ramifications. The harrowing scenes of thousands of migrants, walking hundreds of miles on foot for days on end, shape the most potent political narrative of the pandemic. It laid bare our country’s deep-seated problems of hunger, social inequalities, racial disparities, religious discrimination and hatred. It unmasked our blindness in celebrating the wrong heroes.

Indeed Mother Earth has heard the cry of the migrants; it is recorded; it will resurrect in a thousand images for a new India/world. Someone someday will remove the tombstones from their lives and enable them to ‘walk with dignity’. They are the ones who truly matter – the farmers, daily labourers – not just for the economy but for the fact that they are flesh and blood ‘persons’. Their walking has many stories; many narratives. Let us capture them as Life-giving narratives and thus immortalise them as true stories of the real heroes of a new world!



## Editor’s Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

### ‘Labouring love’ for labourers

July is the month of our Founder Father Ignatius of Loyola. In one of the most profound spiritual insights, he summed up for us in the Spiritual Exercises who God ultimately is. God is Love that is constantly labouring in the universe to liberate reality from a lower to a higher form. A Gujarati poet has written inspiringly: “I love all that is beautiful in the universe. And all that remains not beautiful, I render beautiful by loving and loving.” The situation of the labourers in South Asia is critical and demanding a love that labours towards their liberation.

We are barely able to overcome the horrific scenes of the labourers (shramiks) walking endlessly on the highways from the cities to their native homes. They were cold-bloodedly abandoned on the roads in the sweltering summer to fend for themselves. More than the COVID patients, theirs was a tragic tale that left us shaken. Recent amendments in the labour laws by many States (especially U.P.) have not gone in their favour either. The ‘orphaned’ labour sector of the country is our immediate apostolic task during and after the corona days. The draconian labour ordinances severely compromise with the fundamental rights assured by the Constitution of India and the International Labour Organization (ILO) treatise. For us they also seriously violate the prophetic social teachings of Rerum Novarum (no. 42), Quadragesimo Anno (no.58), Gaudium et Spes (no.68), Laborem Exercens (no.20) and Caritas in Veritate (no.25). Trade Unions, that were once a hope they fell back on, are now rendered ‘impotent’. Their rights - to wages, hours of labour, health, occupational safety, association and collective bargaining - are practically non-existent. Mt. 25 beckons us with a new evangelical call: When I was labouring in captivity, you liberated me. The labourers do not seem to be on the radar of the present political ideology and their policies and projects.

Indeed a mammoth task ahead! A journey of a thousand miles begins with small steps. The pathways of the labourers do not pass through the national highways alone but through every alley that surrounds us. Our daily lives are full of labourers - cooks, peons, gardeners, sanitary workers, construction labourers, coolies, vegetable vendors, farmhands, drivers and watchmen - without whom we would be paralyzed. Do we pay them ‘living and liveable’ daily wages? What about regularising their pay-scales? A generation of catechists (our privileged ‘right hands’) died underpaid by us. Labour crisis precipitated by the corona virus invites us to distinguish service from servitude. Do we have different standards of hospitality for labourers vis-à-vis the affluent and the influential? The pandemic has brought us a grace of penitence with regard to our attitude towards labourers, and a renewed sense of commitment to social justice for them.

What space do they occupy in our annual budgets? Is there any personal expenditure that can be done away with in order to be just to them? To a complaint of ‘no resources’ to take care of the old and the infirm in the Society, according to Pedro de Ribadeneira, St. Ignatius is said to have quipped: Sell the chalices but take care of them! Can we revisit our Ignatian spirit in the light of the current plight of the labourers and become the co-labouring (collaborating) love that liberates them?

JIVAN thanks Fr. Anthony Dias, SJ for planning and procuring the articles for this special issue on Migrant Labourers.



# The Pandemic and the Humanitarian crisis: Fixing Responsibility, Finding Solutions



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The COVID-19 pandemic has put governance of nations and international institutions to the test. Nations that have been able to contain the spread of the corona virus have only revealed the foresightedness of their leaders and the efficiency of their institutions of governance. Some nations have displayed high levels of preparedness and resolve to protect their people from the fast spreading virus and reducing the deaths caused it. However, many advanced nations have failed to deal with the pandemic effectively resulting in higher number of deaths.



### The Pandemic and Humanitarian crisis

India experienced the onset of the virus on 30th January 2020, when the first case of the corona virus was detected in Kerala from among students returning from Wuhan, China. Kerala, with a well developed healthcare system, was able to successfully contain the spread of the virus in the State. However, India did not take the onset of the pandemic seriously and allowed international flights to continue till 23rd March, in spite of knowing the possibility of infected people arriving in India from February 2020. After realising the gravity of the pandemic, the Prime Minister announced a ‘Janata curfew’ on 22nd March followed by a complete nationwide lockdown on 24th March giving the people of the country only a 4 hour notice à la demonetisation style. On 24th March there were only 564 infected cases reported from 175 out of the 739 districts in India. Since a majority of the districts were not affected by the virus, the necessity of a nationwide lockdown needs to be questioned.

All of a sudden millions of people were stranded as all modes of transport were suspended. At the stroke of midnight, millions of migrant workers, daily wagers, and informal workers lost their jobs, livelihoods, sources of income and shelter. Sensing that the Mahabharat analogy of defeating corona virus in 21 days will fail, thousands of migrant workers rushed to bus stations and sought ways to return home at the earliest. The foolhardiness of those who consider themselves ‘wise’ leaders was further exposed when they insensitively sealed the borders brutalising people walking home and decided to feed them in relief camps. This policy decision undoubtedly resulted in a humanitarian crisis that unravelled as an estimated 50 million migrant workers defied lockdown rules of the ruling elite and began risking their lives to reach home: trekking, walking on roads or railway tracks, cycling, getting on to cargo trucks, and any available means of transport. This was undoubtedly the largest exodus of people the world had ever witnessed in its history going beyond even the exodus due to the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

Heartrending scenes and stories of migrants travelling hungry and thirsty shook the conscience of the people of the nation. News of migrants dying of exhaustion, hunger, being run over by trains on the tracks or vehicles on the roads made many citizens hang their heads in shame and remorse at the



treatment meted out to migrant workers who once built and ran our cities. As the lockdown kept getting extended even into May 2020, the wisdom of the poor triumphed when the Government was compelled to arrange thousands of buses and trains as late as the first week of May to ferry millions of stranded migrants back home.

This late realisation of the need to reach millions of people home during a pandemic has only increased the spread of the virus as infected migrants are spreading the virus in the hinterland. As a result, the sudden national lockdown has turned out to be a big failure as even after over two months of lockdown, the economy of the country has been flattened but the rate of spread of the virus has not flattened but increased. In a desperate attempt to salvage the economy, the Government has resigned to opening up of the economy and all modes of travel from June regardless of the further spread of the virus and increase in the death toll.

The pandemic and the humanitarian crisis has been an eye opener on the type of citizenry, leadership, and governance in the country.

## Citizenry

This pandemic and the policy induced humanitarian crisis that unfolded revealed four types of citizenry: 1) those who are opportunistic as they use the adversity and vulnerability of people to exploit them to their advantage. House owners who evicted migrant workers for being unable to pay rent for their accommodation, truck drivers who collected Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 4,000 to ferry migrant workers to their destinations, and middlemen who demanded money for railway tickets

on Shramik trains are some illustrations of such citizens; 2) the large majority of people who remained at home trying to protect themselves from getting infected by the virus. Many of these are apathetic to the plight of the suffering masses and are more concerned about protecting themselves. Some are so paranoid of being infected that they ostracize and even engage in violence against medical personnel, and the dead; 3) those who faithfully remained at home but used the lockdown to engage in creative activities. Such citizens composed music, recorded songs, wrote insightful articles and reports, organised online programmes and engaged in creative ways of work and life within the confines of their home; 4) those known as 'corona warriors' who are at the forefront risking their lives trying to help people infected or affected by the pandemic.

The heroic witness of doctors, nurses, hospital staff, police, government officials, socially sensitive media personnel, social workers and members of non-governmental organisations engaged in relief work bears testimony to the better side of our citizenry. In this regard, Church personnel from many Dioceses, including Jesuits from across the length and breadth of India, reached out to the poor, especially stranded migrants, providing them food, financial assistance and other necessary materials for their survival.

## Leadership

The global crisis caused by the pandemic brought to the forefront three types of leaders depending on their responses to the crisis: 1) One who has rhetoric but no substance. Such a leader makes tall promises that cannot be fulfilled. He likes to announce big economic packages that will actually amount to a trickle in terms of relief for the affected, engage in symbolism



The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the hidden contribution (up to 10% of the GDP) of the estimated 175 million 'invisible people' called migrant workers. Since they largely work in the informal sector, they do not have employment security, income security or social security.”

Image Source: Free Press Journal

like invoking mythologies, lighting lamps, showering petals from Air Force jets, or the banging of pots and pans. Such measures neither contain the spread of the virus nor provide succour to stranded migrants. They only boost the image of the populist leader and his popularity ratings. Such leaders are more concerned about using adversity to get political mileage since in a crisis situation people normally tend to support an embattled leader to lead them out. They use the lockdown to consolidate their authority, target political opponents and weaken federal democratic structures and institutions. 2) Those that care more about the economy than the spread of the virus. Such leaders are against a complete lockdown. They prefer to live with the virus and keep normal life and business going, with certain precautionary measures, as the economy gets a priority. 3) Those who are concerned about both the economy and the health of the people. Such leaders act promptly by restricting international and domestic travel early, focus on testing, contact tracing, isolating infected people and treating them till they recover. They also ensure adequate protective equipment for health workers and the general public so that life can return to normal at the earliest. They also ensure that those who are vulnerable are adequately taken care of.

## Governance

Governance matters in times of crisis. The type of governance is reflected in the ability to contain the spread of the virus and care for people. There are three types of governance that has been witnessed in this time of crisis: 1) bad governance, where decisions taken are ill timed, ill advised and often without scientific or medical basis. In such a case, there is little attention given to priority issues such as increasing testing, adequate protective equipment to healthcare workers,

adequate and timely transport for those stranded and want to go back home, restricting travel, imposing restrictions only in areas where there are infected people, taking care of vulnerable populations, etc. 2) Moderately good governance, where the State is initially ill prepared to deal with the crisis but gradually gets its act together with timely measures that ensure the containment of the spread of the virus and care of the vulnerable. 3) Good governance, manifested in timely interventions to prevent the virus from spreading in communities, ensuring the economy is up and running, and the vulnerable are taken care of. For example, Kerala referred to the migrants as 'guest workers' and organised 15,541 relief camps for them. Community kitchens were functioning at the Panchayat levels to ensure that no migrant worker went hungry. Kerala also provided them with shelters, healthcare benefits, educational allowances for children, and financial support to transport the mortal remains in case of natural death.

## Search for Solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the hidden contribution (up to 10% of the GDP) of the estimated 175 million 'invisible people' called migrant workers. Since they largely work in the informal sector, they do not have employment security, income security or social security.

Solutions, therefore, lie in greater investment in the labour force in India.

1. There should be a robust social protection mechanism, where every worker is registered with digital registration cards having inter-State portability to access benefits in any part of India. It should provide food security, health insurance, free education for children, access to financial institutions, access to skill programmes, house rent allowance, unemployment benefits, etc.
2. All labour laws must be inclusive to include all formal and informal workers, and should adhere to the decent work standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
3. There is a need for an Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme along the lines of MGNREGA to cater to the urban poor.
4. There should be publicly funded low cost housing for the poor in urban areas in the place of unauthorised colonies and slums.
5. Greater emphasis on sustainable agriculture and rural development is the need of the hour so that there is no distress migration to urban centres.

Let us hope that the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic and the humanitarian crisis that followed, are taken seriously and efforts are made to make India more caring of its vulnerable population, especially the migrant and unorganised workforce.

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# Adieu Adolfo



Photo Source: 1 IKA-HKM

In the days since Father Nicolás's death, I have thought often about him. Even though I said goodbye to him when he left the Curia after GC 36 and said further goodbye in letters and emails, I did not realize how much I continue to miss him until news of his death came. Now, on different days and in different ways, diverse memories remind me of many facets of his wonderful humanity. Like each person God has made, Father Nicolás was unique and never-to-be-repeated. I am so grateful to have known him.

A flood of memories has blessed me since I first heard of Father Nicolás's death. His humility and humour immediately came to mind ([https://jcsaweb.org/jcsa\\_storage/2020/05/Testimony-3-James-Grummer-EN.pdf](https://jcsaweb.org/jcsa_storage/2020/05/Testimony-3-James-Grummer-EN.pdf)), and I have remembered so many warm and wonderful moments that I experienced with him. Sorting through the images and stories is rather overwhelming, so I would like to mention just three facets of his life and personality that stand out for me as I think about him at this particular moment. Today as I think about him, his dedication to discernment, generosity, and intellectual

inquisitiveness are memorable gifts he brought to his service as Superior General, for which we can all be grateful.

Jesuits sometimes joke that discernment is fruitless since a Superior will ultimately decide no matter what I might happen to discern. Unfortunately, I think we say this because we often think of discernment as what an individual Jesuit does by himself in the quiet of his own prayer and reflection. However, discernment is really a process that involves a Superior and a spiritual director, to say nothing of friends, companions, and of course, the Lord himself. It is not an individual's personal action. Perhaps we so easily confuse discernment and decision-making because we rarely demonstrate the discipline needed to make available the time, energy, freedom, and self-donation that are necessary for a genuine discernment. Whatever the difficulties, Father Nicolás was so committed to discernment that he insisted on doing it well. Even when the various interested parties clamoured for a decision or when a course of action was obvious, he insisted on the importance of providing the necessary conditions for discernment. For example, he

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never announced who a new Provincial would be, even if the decision were clear. Only after he reviewed all the information and discussion in prayer about the matter did he act.

He made clear his thoughts about discernment not long after his election, while he was reviewing the statutes of the various Conferences as GC 35 had mandated. He contrasted his experience of discernment as President of the Asia Pacific Conference with how the statutes of each Conference arranged for decisions based on a majority of votes. He suggested that voting helped people move through an agenda efficiently and quickly, but that discernment was different. It was usually slower and perhaps even awkward because of the time it took for those involved to listen, hear, and respond to the Spirit speaking in their midst. He suggested that the necessity of voting could be a sign that a course of action was not yet ready. I know from personal experience that he certainly had no difficulty making decisions, but I noticed again and again that he disciplined himself to wait until a discernment was ripe and mature lest anyone feel ignored, left behind, or unduly pressured by a dominant voice. He had learned to wait for the revelation of the Spirit to all those involved in a discernment rather than insisting on conformity to a predetermined timetable. Watching his patience, restraint, and respect for both the participants and the process in a discernment showed me how the Spirit often works through points of view that might otherwise be overlooked, ignored, or discounted. His way of proceeding was confirmed time after time, by the ease of peaceful implementation of discerned choices that resulted after taking time to listen to others and to seek the Spirit at a deeper level.

Father Nicolás was extraordinarily generous. Whenever visitors brought him gifts, he brought them to meetings so that all of us could enjoy the bounty. Carefully wrapped packages containing traditional Japanese sweets, beautiful boxes of Lebanese baklava, and all shapes and forms of chocolate from just about anywhere are only a few of the treats he wanted all of us to enjoy, even more than he enjoyed them himself. He delighted in watching us appreciate what he had received even more than the gifts themselves; and he was always thankful for what others had given him. Beside his computer screen, he always had a dish of cashews, almonds, candy, or something similar so that a colloquy could begin with some informal conviviality. He seemed on the lookout for ways to thank his collaborators who helped him in his work. However, sharing things as he did was only a surface manifestation of a much deeper generosity of spirit. He always welcomed and included those who met him by entering into their reality, striving to see and understand from their own points of view. He found each person he met interesting, never making a distinction based on rank or honour, for he firmly believed he had much to learn from everyone and their perspectives. No one was unworthy of his time or attention. Thus, he never worried about moving on to something or someone that others might consider more

important. The person he was with at a particular moment was the one who was important; there was never a rush to move elsewhere. During my weekly colloquy with him, I knew he gave me his complete and undivided attention, so I eventually let go of my preoccupations about ticking off all the points of my agenda in the thirty minutes allotted me. I learned to let the clock run its course and to wait until whoever was next in line knocked on his door for admittance. For me, his generous way of proceeding with all those he met seemed to embody #22 of the Spiritual Exercises.

I clearly remember that a pile of the books he was reading always perched on a corner of his desk. Volumes by John of the Cross, Bernard Lonergan, and the wisdom of the Sufis might be there one week; Teresa of Avila, Rahner, and something that looked Japanese would follow a week or two later. Erudite tomes in at least four languages (usually concentrating on theology, spirituality, and philosophy) cycled on and off that part of his desk as he devoted himself to serious study of a broad range of topics. Besides reading books from the library, he periodically gave me lists of volumes to load onto his Kindle, which fed his interests in varied topics such as brain research, contemporary culture, and background about places he planned to visit. A further dimension of his own “ongoing formation” was a monthly meeting with a group of professors to discuss diverse topics to help expand his understanding of the world in which Jesuits work. Paradoxically, breadth and depth went together for him, providing a perspective that led him more deeply into the heart of the matter and his own love for God’s creation. Yet, in spite of all this input, the details never overwhelmed for he had a gift of easily identifying the simplicity that lies on the other side of complexity. He once held spellbound the members of Santa Clara University’s Board of



A further dimension of his own “ongoing formation” was a monthly meeting with a group of professors to discuss diverse topics to help expand his understanding of the world in which Jesuits work. ”

Directors at an early morning breakfast meeting. He made a few observations at a rather unconscionable hour of the morning, but the impact was electric. I will never forget overhearing the awed voice of one of the leaders of a large tech company who said, “He’s the real deal.” His natural curiosity and assorted interests led him ever more deeply into ever more profound spaces.

Father Nicolás was “the real deal.” He gave himself to the ideals of Ignatian Spirituality with a generous and undivided heart that always sought the greater honour and glory of God with humility and good humour. We would all do well to imitate his example, though as he might stress, each in his own unique way. May he rest in peace!

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# Jesuit Resource and Response Hub (JRH)



Image Courtesy: Siji Chacko, SJ

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented waves of devastation across the globe. Apart from being a threat to lives, the lockdown that followed brought misery and despair to millions of people, especially the poor. Migrant workers in the unorganised sector and daily wage earners lost their livelihood and homes. Hunger, starvation and homelessness became a bitter reality for millions. Jesuits across South Asia have been actively involved in reaching out to the affected people by way of food support, shelter, financial aid, distribution of masks, psycho-social support, etc. While Jesuit Provinces and communities have been reaching out independently and collectively, the global nature of the pandemic has emphasised the need to set up a crisis response mechanism at the JCSA level. The nature of the crisis is such that interventions at multiple levels - micro and macro - are required to tackle the impact. A macro level problem requires macro level interventions to be addressed effectively. Towards this purpose, on 13th April 2020, the President of South Asia announced the setting up of JRH with the Conference Development Office as leader in

collaboration with the Core and Advisory Committees that includes ISI-Delhi, JESA, JAAI and others.

The purpose of JRH is not to duplicate the initiatives of the Provinces but to act as a resource and response hub that would support the Provinces and communities in, “Reaching out to the Unreached”. JRH is currently engaged in consolidating all the relief measures happening across JCSA. It also strives to mobilise resources to support the relief measures, although this is not one of the major mandates.

JRH galvanizes support to the Provinces by creating certain network linkages, offering media and communication support, and also offering technical support in terms of proposal formulation, etc. It also functions as a repository of resources and undertakes the responsibility of data gathering, consolidation, and sharing. Another crucial function of JRH is to provide a common platform for Jesuits, partners and collaborators to facilitate collective action which is steadily evolving.

The Jesuits of South Asia have been proactively responding to the crisis and reaching out to the people in distress. The role of JRH in this context has been to consolidate all the relief work that had been undertaken across the Conference. This was also a response to the mandate from the Fr. General to gather information on Jesuit initiatives and relief works in the Covid-19 context. This crucial role of JRH has helped to present the cumulative efforts of the Jesuits across the Conference at the national and international platforms. This has given a South Asian/Regional identity to the work done in the global Jesuit context.

The responses of the Provinces, Common Houses/Works, JAAI and others have been impressive and substantial. When put together there is greater visibility and impact. The latest consolidated data from the Provinces will give a picture of the JCSA response to the crisis.

## JRH and the Campaign for Migrants - #V4MIGRANTS

The online Campaign for Migrants titled #V4MIGRANTS has been the highlight of the JRH initiatives since its inception. The campaign was initiated in response to the distressing situations the nation witnessed as the lockdown was imposed and lakhs of homeless and jobless migrants started travelling back to their home States defying the Government's orders - walking, cycling and stuffed in crowded trucks - hundreds and thousands of kilometres to reach the safety and dignity of their homes. The media has been full of news about migrant workers dying on their way home due to hunger, thirst, sheer exhaustion, meeting with accidents, etc.

The distressing exodus of migrant workers was the result of the insensitive policies of the Government that failed to consider them in its decision making to combat the pandemic. Therefore, while immediate relief measures were undertaken at the ground level, JRH undertook a series of initiatives targeted to reach out to the migrants through network and collaboration at multiple levels. The campaign decided to focus primarily on macro level intervention advocating for policy changes that would address the rights of the migrant workers.

A series of webinars on migrant issues were organised by JRH. These brought together social activists and academics to discuss the issues pertinent to the migrants in the context of the national lockdown. Eminent academics and social activists such as Harsh Mander, Nikhil Dey, Jean Dreze and academicians such as Shyam Sundar of XLRI came together to discuss themes on 'Migrants as the Battered Citizens', the

'Big Question' about their future in cities and their home States, and the impact of the draconian measures of various States to suspend labour laws and sacrifice labour welfare to boost the economy. The webinar series has proved to be a powerful medium to bring the distress of the migrants to a global audience, with a reach of more than 1000 people for each series. The YouTube videos related to the migrant campaign have been subscribed to by 4794 persons and groups.

Pressure tactics were also used by initiating mass appeal letters to the Karnataka Chief Minister to persuade him to permit special trains for migrants from Karnataka.

To support the Jesuits and others involved in reaching out to the migrants, JRH relayed a series of information on relief measures of the Central and State Government, Help-

lines, details of other organisations involved in relief work, details of special trains, etc. It has also initiated an online publication space called "The Muse" with the tagline 'Be Absorbed'.

Other than supporting in project development, fund raising efforts for migrants are also initiated through appeal letters, migrant campaign, etc. The online campaign for migrants has a direct reach of about 18000 persons across 31 countries. JRH has also been providing handholding support

to the Migrant Helpdesk initiative at Bagaicha Social Centre, Ranchi.

## JRH – Way Ahead

JRH initiated as a response to the Covid-19 crisis has been envisaged as the Disaster/Crisis Response Mechanism of JCSA at the Conference level towards any such future crisis. To this end, JRH will be involved in the formulation of JCSA level crisis response, including Covid-19, to any such national and global level disaster/crisis. JRH is in its evolutionary phase and a plan at the JCSA level would be emerging through consultations with Jesuits and collaborators. So far, the concern for the migrant labourers in distress has been the heart of JRH. In the days to come JRH envisages to reflect further on the learning so far, and strategise for a systematic and impactful way ahead with discernment, collaboration and networking as key components

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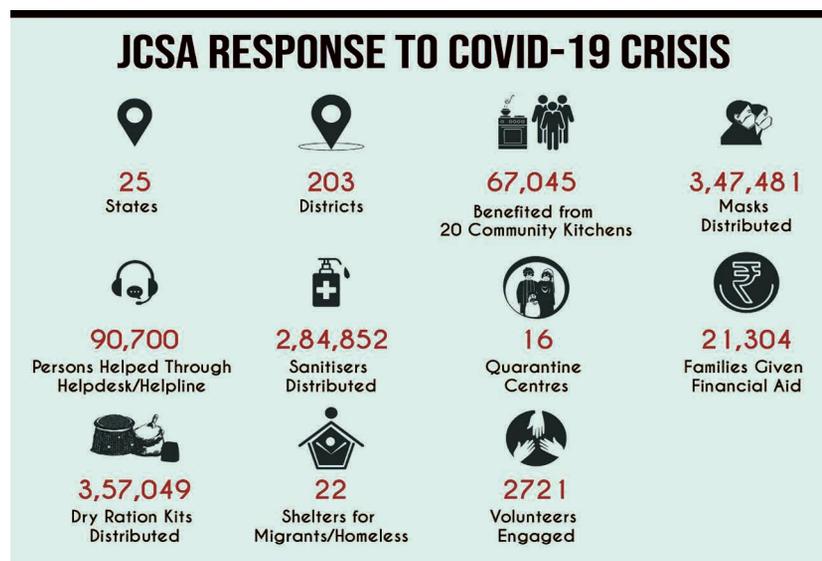


Image Courtesy: Siji Chacko, SJ



# The SWAN Girls: Prophetic Witness of the Youth



Image Source : Twitter

*Then the LORD said, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people... I have heard their cries of distress... Yes, I am aware of their suffering.” (Ex. 3:7)*

These words that set Moses on fire to play a prophetic role in the liberation of the Israelite slaves on the Exodus journey to the Promised Land readily come to mind as the migrant labourers in the urban areas of India are confronted with the spectre of an exodus back to their rural homes.

COVID-19 has ravaged our country, and the neighbouring ones, with an unstoppable force sparing no one in its wake. Lives have been lost, livelihoods destroyed and dignity compromised. The sudden lockdown caused more problems than the disease itself. It has engendered a humanitarian crisis of gigantic proportions revealing the gross inequality and brutal injustice of the grim scenario of “Shining India”. The ‘haves’ have access to resources and means to stay healthy and thrive in an emergency slowdown while the major part of our population, the ‘have-nots’, have had to face an immense struggle just to stay alive. Our migrant workers, the backbone of our economy, are left stranded, ignored and abandoned like throwaway objects of a technocratic, consumer culture.

Of the many organisations that responded to the cry of the migrants, there is one that stands out: the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN). Bhakti G., who was part of the pioneering group of volunteers from the ‘Right to Food’ and ‘Right to Work’ campaigns, invited Zil Gala and Riya Sawant to join. These three valiant Xavierites have been working tirelessly with other youth volunteers to listen, comfort and support as many stranded migrant families as they can across the nation. They heard the cries of distress and responded magnanimously. Eminent JNU economist Jayati Ghosh, who appeared in a webinar along with the SWAN team, repeatedly expressed her joy and hope in seeing the enthusiasm, courage and commitment of these youth.

SWAN has been actively conducting relief work across the country since March 27, 2020. The volunteers have been answering distress phone calls, liaising and networking with the local Governments across States and non-governmental agencies to provide dry ration, meal packets and daily

essentials to the stranded migrant workers. They have also been supporting the families to travel back to their villages. They were in touch with Church personnel and some Jesuits and linked up with broad alliances like the NAPM (National Alliance of People's Movements) in order to be more effective in their outreach.

Apart from much needed services like informal counselling and relief, SWAN volunteers are regularly documenting their work and sharing it through articles published online. These reports are challenging existing norms of care provision to the forgotten part of our social fabric. The hard facts and statistics provided are being used by prominent social activists, such as Harsh Mander, Anjali Bhardwaj and lawyers, who petitioned the Supreme Court, to advocate for the rights and dignity of our migrant sisters and brothers. SWAN has thus been playing an important role in being a voice for the unheard.

After interviewing hundreds of migrants, SWAN has published two seminal reports – “21 Days and Counting...” and “32 Days and Counting...” which describe vividly the trauma and hopelessness experienced by abandoned migrants. These reports, which the world has taken note of, are so thorough that eminent scholar, psephologist and founder of the Swaraj Party, Shri Yogendra Yadav, has said that “they will become critical reading for future historians”. They have called out the oppressors, denounced evil, questioned the mighty State about its duty and responsibility with respect to food security, right to life and human dignity. This is prophetic witnessing-in-action.

The three SWAN girls (Bhakti, Zil and Riya), who were members of the Core Committee of the Department of Interreligious Studies (DIRS) in 1918-19, are grateful for the Jesuit ethos they imbibed at Xavier's College, Mumbai. They have shared that what has impacted them most during their time at Xavier's has been their close association with the DIRS and its Director, Fr. Prashant Olalekar, who has compassionately accompanied them as friend, philosopher and guide. His passion for the “Magis” interpreted as excelling in Karuna (Compassion), in word and deed, was contagious. Freeing them from the stressful competitive pressure of striving to become toppers in academics and extracurricular activities, they were skilfully exposed to the harsh reality of those at the bottom rungs of society.

Depth - both spiritual and intellectual - was promoted, which is how Fr. Arturo Sosa, the present General of the Society of Jesus, defines a ‘genuine intellectual’. More than the superficial responses of charity, social service or welfare activity the depth experience of kinship with the marginalised was fostered so that they could be formed as voices for the unheard. The students were challenged to excel in compassion in relation to the excluded through the Ignatian pedagogy of the oppressed that encompasses action, reflection, and contemplation in an integral, spiral process.

One of the creative projects launched by DIRS, in association with Xavier Institute of Social Research (XISR), was Samanvaya (Networking for Harmony) which was a platform for several secular groups to network for Social Harmony. This experience of collaborating and networking was an ideal launching pad to prepare for involvement with SWAN. Samanvaya, which

literally means walking together and inclusivity, motivated them to join other volunteers to accompany those stranded on the physical, psychological and spiritual journey all the way home.

One wonders whether collaborators like Swan girls, adept at collaboration and networking, can be called Jesuitesses. Like many of the Samanvayites they are not Jesuits, not male, not Christian. Can they be considered as possible “interreligious vocations” in the post COVID-19 era? Will all Jesuits get actively involved in this type of vocation promotion in whatever ministry they are involved in? Such collaborators are deeply attuned to the voice of the Spirit and are responding compassionately, creatively and courageously to the cry of the Earth and that of the Poor. They seem to have grasped the thrust of the Universal Apostolic Priorities (UAPs) and the mission mandate of GC 36 and are committed to implementing them. Is the corona crisis not awakening in us the dire need of Karuna leading to radically new and prophetic ways of thinking and acting?

## The SWANs among us

They are the breath and the life-line  
Of stranded migrants  
They have become the toast of the nation  
These SWAN girls and boys.

They reached out before the mighty State even woke up  
Outran many organizations and hallowed institutions  
To offer those waiting - thirsty, hungry, and weary  
Life-giving water, the bread of life and the scent of hope.

They arrived in large numbers as if from nowhere  
Converging on ground zero and almost everywhere  
And as they soothed their pangs, they got to know them well  
And lost no time in making common cause with all of them.

The stories they heard were troubling and heart-breaking  
Making their resolve to seek justice bigger and stronger  
The voice from within prompts them not to rest any longer  
Until every heart-rending story is told - even to a stranger.

And to all the nations and the world beyond their frontier  
They ask questions - about food security and human dignity  
About the rights of men, women and children, far and near  
Demanding from the State, and its apparatus, full accountability.

— Anthony Dias, SJ

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# THOUSAND WORDS

In Commemoration of World Day for  
International Justice - 17th July

JIVAN condemns custodial deaths of a  
father and his son, Mr. P. Jayaraj and  
J. Fenix in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu and  
every police brutality that violates  
justice and human rights.







# The Rights of Stateless Citizens



Image Source: The Hindu

The plight of migrant workers walking thousands of kilometres to their homes carrying their children on the shoulders and their meagre possession on their back, braving heat and hunger will haunt us for many years. Pathos, the identity of the vulnerable communities, hitherto unnoticed, unidentified and unrecognised, exploded shaking the conscience of citizens. Throughout the lockdown period, not a single day passed without heart breaking narratives of migrants. Thanks to the fourth pillar of democracy - media and independent journalists who continue to project the plight of the migrants in the headlines. However, it took long time to crack the conscience of the primary three pillars of the State – legislature, bureaucracy and judiciary. COVID-19, India story has been marred with hunger, pain and bloodstains of migrant workers and insensitivity of those who govern.

## Need new categorisation of migrant workers

The title, Rights of Stateless Citizens, is clearly a contradiction

in terms. Migrants are faceless without an identity, denied Fundamental Rights and entitlements prescribed in the Directive Principles in the Constitution of India. The experiences of the migrant workers show that the phenomena of migration in the post COVID era cannot be contained in established definitions. It has challenged the academic understanding of push-pull factors.

Some argue that the situation of migrant workers resembled that of bonded labourers. Arguably, despite denial of freedom under Article 19 of the Constitution, the bonded labourers, in many cases, had food, shelter and some wages. In contrast, the migrant workers had 'freedom' but were denied food, shelter and wages. That the starvation virus is worse than the corona virus was an indication of a yearning for survival.

The Central Government enacted the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. Chapter V clearly mandates payment of minimum wages (Sec. 13), displacement allowance (Sec. 14), journey allowance (Sec. 15) and other facilities such as

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residential accommodation, medical facilities free of charge, protective clothing (Sec. 16), holidays, hours of work and other conditions (Sec 1, 3). However, violation of these provisions has been the norm as the States colluded with companies.

The Act also makes explicit provisions for registration of establishments and subsequently registration of employees. In Karnataka, for example, only 30 per cent of establishments are registered. When establishments are not registered, how could one expect registration of workers? More than 90% of migrant workers are in the informal sector and they are unregistered. They do not even know their principal employers. They are governed by layers of sub-contractors who not only take big cuts in wages but also curb their cries so that they are not heard in public.

There is also a phenomenal increase in the number of intra-state and inter-district migration. As per the 2011 Census the number was 121 million. These groups generally move from one place to another with the entire family. Their contribution to the economy and their plight, especially of children and women has rarely been a matter of public discourse. Enactment of Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act in 2008 did not usher in substantial changes in the lives of domestic workers, street vendors and home-based workers. The protective measures proposed by the Working Group on Migration in 2015 were not acted upon. The identity, visibility, contribution and concerns of migrants are at stake. There is an urgent need to develop new ways of conceptualising the phenomenon of migrant workers, their wages and working conditions adhering to core labour standards.

## Rights and Economic revival are interconnected

It is a fact that the economy is in shambles and a number of factories and establishments are closed or on the verge of drastically reducing its production, employees, and cut salaries. Every organisation - corporate or non-profit - is struggling to maintain and support its employees. It is time to look for alternate ways to revive the economy from a bottom-up approach. Protection of the rights of migrant workers must go hand in hand with recovery and restoration of the economy, not just in urban conglomerates but in rural sector as well. If the economy is not revived in a reasonable time period, it will lead to incredible oppression, suppression and violence; and the worst affected will be migrant workers and other vulnerable communities.

## Responsible State and responsive market

Neo-liberal paradigm has failed us. The welfare state must assume greater responsibility for the protection and development of its workers, and it cannot pass the buck totally to market forces. On 3 April 2020, the British-based Financial Times widely read by the richest and the most powerful players in global politics published an editorial titled – Radical reforms are required to forge a society that will work for all. “Radical reforms - reversing the prevailing policy direction of the last four decades - will need to be put on the table. Governments will have to accept a more active role in the economy. They must see public services as investments rather than liabilities and look for ways to make labour markets less insecure.

Redistribution will again be on the agenda; the privileges of the elderly and wealthy in question. Policies until recently considered eccentric, such as basic income and wealth taxes, will have to be in the mix.” This quote, in a way lays down the roadmap for the future.

## Need for proactive enhancing and protective measures

Concrete measures must be worked out to ensure socio-economic and citizenship rights of the migrant workers by the Central and State Governments in the spirit of cooperative federalism. A number of recommendations are already in the public domain. The need of the hour is the political will to make the right choices in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitutions, devoid of narrow electoral and political agenda.

Primarily the State must recognise that migrant and informal workers are major contributors to economy and must take all steps to strengthen the agency of the migrants.

**Enhancing measures:** Ensure that no one is deprived of food, basic healthcare or shelter. Increase the purchasing power of the poor by direct cash transfer. Revival of rural economy is non-negotiable. Invest in MGNREGS, agriculture, animal husbandry and employability skills of the youth. Encourage rural micro entrepreneurs with subsidised loans with minimum interest and without collateral security. Strengthen social security measures such as pension, maternity benefit and nutritious food for children. At the policy level, enact laws to ensure universal basic minimum income to all poor households.

**Protective measures:** Minimum protection is a constitutional duty. All migrant workers must be registered through a simple registration process and digitization of records. Sending States must be proactive. Digitization must be linked to facilitating inter-state portability of benefits, including delinking individuals from households as the context warrants. Presence for a period of 6 months in a State must be considered as proof of residence in the place of work to enable the migrants to access social and food security, educational, health benefits and voting rights. Establish social security welfare boards in all the major cities. Set up mechanisms to improve collective bargaining of the workers with due stakes and shares in establishments/companies.

Self-reliant India needs sensitivity to the pains of the migrant workers. When concrete assistance is the need of the hour, we hear lectures on Atmanirbhar Bharat - one size fits all campaign. What does this mean to migrant workers who cannot put food on the table and are looking for ways to survive? The State must act and the collective conscience of the citizens must continue to monitor the State. Jesuits and collaborators must explore opportunities to inhale the emerging voices of the migrant workers as their lifeline.

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# Pandemic: A call to Indigenous way of life



Image Source: 1 Times of India

“We don’t want sympathy, we want dignity; we work hard to earn our living, and we don’t beg, borrow or steal. We may be poor but we are also citizens of this country with equal rights granted to us.” These statements, made by a worker from Bihar, express the sentiments and aspirations of the whole class of migrant workers. Forced by situation, and discriminated by humans, most migrant workers chose to return to their villages braving all odds along the way.

## The grim reality

The London-based Financial Times (May 1, 2020) estimated that India has 170 million workers who have migrated for work; 140 million lost their jobs in the wake of the pandemic outbreak. As a result of migrant workers returning to their villages, several problems have emerged. In Jharkhand, seven workers from returning from Goa had to wait angry and distressed for seven days under a tree until their families figured out which quarantine centre would take them. In Bihar, seven migrant

workers killed themselves after returning when they faced stigma and lack of acceptance by the family. One attempted self-immolation and another hanged himself. Many died in different quarantine centres. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Limited economic opportunities in the home States had driven the workers to look for livelihood elsewhere. The immediate impact of the returning migrant workers has resulted in massive unemployment. According to the Economic think-tank, CMIE, the unemployment in Bihar in two months (March-April, 2020) has spiked from 15.4% to 46.6%, in Jharkhand from 8.2% to 47.1%, in Tamil Nadu from 6.4% to 49.8%, to mention but a few. According to the Times of India (May 25, 2020), Jharkhand received 300,000 migrant workers and was expecting 400,000 more. Bihar received 650,000 and about 2,000,000 more had registered. Uttar Pradesh expected about 10,000,000 but received 25,000,000. Bengal said 250,000 workers had registered but the Centre said 30,000,000 migrant workers

were waiting. However, this is again a small fraction of the huge crisis in the making. Among these the total number of indigenous peoples is not known.

## Some rays of hope

Every crisis comes with some opportunity. It depends on us humans to recognize that and to recognise it. COVID-19 came signalling unprecedented crisis but brought with it some signs of hope in disguise. Let me explain.

The pandemic forced both the powerful and the powerless alike to stay at home and reflect on the outcome of human follies which we called development, modernity, progress, and change. It forced us to open our eyes, mind and heart. The pandemic has touched people awakening them to social consciousness about the misery - most often cause by other humans. It has shown us the ugliest side of human apathy as well as the best of human care and concern.

The pandemic has helped people to realize the immense willpower and courage which spontaneously came out in the open when migrant workers decided to walk back home covering thousands of kilometres, daring all odds of life and situations. On the way several died more due to human apathy than corona virus. Human beings treated fellow humans as sub-human.

Let us honestly reflect on what the pandemic is calling us to do. Forced migration of the poor and tribals indicates problems both in the place of origin and the place of destination. Migration and displacement is not only alienation from habitats but also deprivation from common property resources like land, water, fodder and forest. Migration is the by-product of a flawed concept of development.

## Pandemics, epidemics and indigenous people

Epidemics are not new to indigenous people. Many communities have spontaneously responded to COVID-19 through customary practices and methods. In the past they have faced cholera, smallpox, chicken pox, influenza, bird flu, etc. When human power runs out, they have recourse to the invisible power. They recognize that invisible power in the form of a huge Rock or Big Mountain, Dense Forest, Trees, the Sun, the Moon, the Sea, etc. They name them according to their proximity and experience, such as Niyam Raja in the Niyamgiri Hill regions in Odisha, Nandaraja in the Nandraj forest regions of Bailadila in Chhattisgarh, Marang Buru in the regions of Rajmahal Hill and Santal Parganas, etc. The Chenchus of Nallamala forest in Andhra Pradesh worship Malamma Van Devatha and Garelamai Sama, who is the goddess of the forest. They take pride in describing themselves as children of the Nallamala forest and enjoy a symbiotic relationship with it. To propitiate



Before the news of the pandemic spread far and wide, the indigenous communities in rural India had already barricaded their villages and territories. The dynamic cultures of indigenous communities with their social and political resilience have tactfully interwoven land, nature, spiritual traditions, community care, self-determination and creativity combating the pandemic.”

such invisible powers and to invoke other spirits they offer sacrifices with a hope that they will protect them from all harm, epidemics, sicknesses and famine. Such is the co-existence of the indigenous peoples with Nature.

## Indigenous way of dealing with the pandemic

Many indigenous communities, living on the margins of society without access to water, healthcare, or basic forms of subsistence became completely vulnerable. But as they heard of a pandemic, they followed local instructions to keep physical distance. If we understand infectious pandemic as community problems - as challenges for public containment more than individualized medicine - then we need to look no further than the indigenous peoples for models of community care where community-wide self-isolation is not new. Indigenous communities across the world practice temporary self-isolation as a way to protect their members during a crisis or after a tragedy. Some communities practice self-isolation “for the community to cleanse, heal and recover spiritually and emotionally” during epidemics.

During community isolation, people are not allowed to meet others. But they allow individuals access to nearby natural resources. Access to natural resources - hills, forests, rivers, water reservoirs - provide healing and freshness of life to those in isolation. Fear, stress and loneliness disappear and the individuals get inner strength and healing. When human company is absent, the company of nature sustains them emotionally and psychologically.

The virus does not have prejudices or discriminations but its impact does. Indigenous peoples, by their belief and practices, swiftly protect their communities even when some individual freedom is curtailed. Before the news of the pandemic spread far and wide, the indigenous communities in rural India had already barricaded their villages and territories. The dynamic cultures of indigenous communities with their social and political resilience have tactfully interwoven land, nature, spiritual traditions, community care, self-determination and creativity combating the pandemic. These communities have the resources to show the world what true leadership is even in pandemic times. Thus the need of the hour is a mix of awakened intelligence, deep religiosity and profound sensibility. Here, indigenous peoples and their way of life can contribute immensely to humanity and the world at large.

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# Migrant Solidarity Centre, Bagaicha



Campaigning against change in Labour Laws

Soon after the sudden and shocking announcement of the Slockdown, and in the absence of Government help, worried and frustrated migrants began to leave for their distant homes. Images of thousands of men, women and children walking, struggling, jostling were relayed on television and social media. These were indeed troubling images of a mass exodus. The invisible suddenly became visible! The big question is: are the migrants leaving due to the fear of catching the virus or of dying of hunger? The images continued to haunt and question us, jolting us out of our inertia and complacency to plunge into action.

A short meeting, and with some knowledge of the social media we at Bagaicha, with Fr Sebastian Lakra from MP joining us, got going. Bagaicha is a social centre of the Central Zone (CZ) consisting of five Jesuit Provinces with a tribal majority. The centre has stood solidly with tribals raising their issues, and accompanying them. Networking with other people's movements and advocacy with Governments were the major activities. Building upon the foundation laid by the founder-

director, Fr. Stan Swamy, Bagaicha, took up "Migration" for concrete action. In fact, all the Provinces in the CZ have accorded priority to Migration and Displacement. Thousands of people from Central India migrate to the Southern and Western part of the country. Bagaicha, along with GIAN (Global Ignatian Advocacy Network) Migration, was in fact preparing to get involved when this crisis drew us in.

## The potential of simple Messaging:

Communication tools to converse with migrants and to gather reliable information on rules and directions that would help migrants were effectively used. Soon after we flashed a simple message through social media, our phones were clogged with messages, calls, photos and video messages. Migrants were asking help to get out of the very cities which they helped to build. They were now pleading for food and shelter.

We felt the need to upgrade skills, to communicate the hope of the Risen Lord, and cultivate patience. Our hearts broke when

a migrant rang up to say that his walking companion died of exhaustion having walked three hundred kilometres. The cell phone is wonderful for communication but it too fails in times of death, suffering, helplessness and sheer bureaucratic drag. Fr. Sebastian's face reflected his anguish when he narrated the events leading to the death of a 29 year old migrant labour Vijay Kandait at Wardha, Maharashtra, on the way to Jharkhand. Silence enveloped us. Radio waves and social media enabled us to accompany them, communicate hope and network with people and organisations of goodwill. We have realized the importance of using the social media platform for the poor.

## The power of Collaboration and Networking (C&N):

“We were surprised by an unexpected and angry storm, but we realized we were in the same boat. In this boat we are all like the disciples who speak with one voice and, with anguish, say ‘we are lost’. We also realize that we cannot go on our own, but only together.” (Pope Francis, Rome, March 2020).

We tried to ‘network and collaborate’ as the Society of Jesus has emphasized. We registered the migrants with help lines, filled in the registration forms, gathered names and other details, and then passed these on to our networking partners. Our Jesuit partners in several States have been pillars of strength with other partners such as Lok Manch, AISWACS, SWAN, PUCL, Right to Food, Jharkhand Janadhikar Mahasabha, Jharkhand Migrant Helpline, JMJ sisters in Andhra, FMM sisters at Chattisgarh. C&N acquired a new meaning. Our networking did wonders. For instance, when a group of girls working in a garment factory in South India, wanted to return home, they were prevented from doing so. But through negotiation and networking they were able to reach home. This process took three days involving ten networking partners. The conversations were like the Jesuit discernment process; we learnt a lot. Bagaicha has delineated best practices in networking.

Migrant Solidarity Centre listened, discerned with partners and took steps to ensure that families were united; groups stayed together, families helped one another and Government officials followed procedures and acted sensitively. There were instances when migrants lost their composure and yelled at our animator who tried to counsel them. Migrant workers staying in Ladakh, who were airlifted at a later stage, had to be calmed down. Their anger had to be managed; patient listening, assuring them of safety and security, and fulfilling their expectations brings tremendous spiritual responses from migrants. Our presence gave them hope. Suicides were averted and some bonded labourers released. Fr Sebastian's presence of mind, commitment and compassion helped.

Bagaicha along with Right to Food Campaign, Jharkhand Janadhikar Mahasabha, and Lok Manch have called for immediate arrangements to bring the migrants back, asking Governments to ensure that those returning would be treated with dignity. Our initiative to pay tributes to the migrants who were killed on the tracks became symbols of solidarity and protest. We have organized webinars with workers who have

returned taking their demand for work to the Government. The indefatigable Fr. Stan has written articles on migrant crisis, and has released YouTube videos. Tribal intelligentsia is coming forward to create modules suitable to tribal development. These meetings, campaigns, conversations with migrant workers will keep the issues of the migrant on the front burner.

The road ahead: Our social centres have to become prophetic institutions bearing witness during these times when sickness, death, hunger and starvation, violence, environmental degradation, displacement, fascism and greedy capitalism stare us in the face. Fascist forces are gaining momentum and corporate control and capture of the resources is happening. Hunger deaths have been reported in Jharkhand. What is the role of social centres?



Bagaicha community offering floral tribute to the migrants at the ancestors memorial stone.

Photo Courtesy: David Solomon, SJ

- Can the Jesuits commit a minimum of 25% human and financial resources to the social sector? A report submitted to REGAE has shown that very few are in the social ministry. This has to change if we are serious about our mission of Justice and Reconciliation.
- Relief works for the next three months will be our major involvement. However, long-term sustainable planning will have to be done. Our ADO has been immensely supportive but the big challenge is to analyze data and to network.
- The Central Zone, with its rich mineral and water resources, will face increasing pressure on the land with the commercialization of mining. Large scale displacement and impoverishment of tribals and forest dwellers will take place.
- Our social centres will be called to face increasing conflicts in the rural areas. The impact on health due to lack of adequate health services will be felt, especially on women and children.
- Caste and social prejudices will increase as a result of fear created by false lockdown policies. How do we continue working in the villages where such conflicts keep arising?

This is a moment of reckoning for us; an opportunity to truly row into the deep.

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# “I can't breathe” in India too

Breathing is such a natural activity that we do not even pay attention to it most of the time, unless of course, we are practising pranayama or yoga. What is more, breath is free! For the rich as well as the poor! Yet, there are tyrants who stop us from breathing by choking us to death. This is exactly what happened on that horrible day in Minneapolis, USA, when a white police officer strangled to death a handcuffed and prostrate black man, George Floyd, by pinning him down to the ground and clamping his knee on his neck for 8 long, horrifying minutes, even as his victim desperately pleaded: “I can't breathe! I can't breathe!” Heart-breaking! Sickening! Outrageous! In the “Land of the Free”! Forget the Declaration that “all human beings are created equal.” It looks as if some are always more free than others. And they have the gall to preach about freedom, justice and human rights! The killing of George Floyd was senseless and brutal, a sin that cries out to heaven for justice.

How is it possible that in America the life of a black man can be taken away while his requests for help go unheard and his killing is recorded? How is it possible that in India today a father and son could just be taken to the police station to be tortured and killed as it happened to Jayraj and Fenix in Tamilnadu? Today, black people all over USA are crying out for breath. They are not asking for wealth. They are not asking for power. They are asking for something as common, as cheap and as free as breath. They are shouting: “Black Lives Matter”. Why can't we hear them? Where is the mass upsurge here in India to seek justice for Jayraj and Fenix? We the middle class and affluent people seem to be quite smug in our comfortable cocoons even as brutal monsters in khaki torture and kill the innocent.

This cry for breath in America has a long and harrowing history. “I can't breathe!” cried Eric Garner before dying on 10th July 2014 at the hands of the police in Staten Island, New York. “I can't breathe!” cried Freddy Gray before dying at the hands of the police in April 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland.

“I can't breathe,” cried George Floyd before dying on 25th May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the hands of the police. All of them were choked to death, deprived of breath. “I can't breathe!” Black people are crying desperately to be allowed to breathe. And their cries go largely unheard. Blacks are constantly begging for oxygen, a gift that God granted everyone. Blacks are simply repeating the elementary truth in a constant, haunting refrain: “Black Lives Matter.” Does this need to be announced? Does anyone need to be reminded in the

“land of the free and the home of the brave?” Yes! It seems we need a reminder that black lives indeed matter! In recent weeks, Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed 25 year-old black man in Georgia, was fatally shot by three white men. In March, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old black woman, died at the hands of white police officers when they entered her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky. Episodes of custodial deaths in India are so common and so frequent that they have deadened our sensibility and killed our humanity.

It is such a cruel irony that the horror of George Floyd's murder took place right in the midst of the raging pandemic Covid-19. It is a terrible disease. It infects the lungs. It makes breathing an agonizing struggle. People die breathless, deprived of oxygen, crying out in agony, “I can't breathe!” Today, while we are well protected, some of our fellow human beings worry about both Covid-19 and the police depriving them of their breath. Still, we seem to be immune and impassive.

What a cruel irony that this horror in Minneapolis should occur as we were preparing for Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Spirit! One of the epithets we give the Holy Spirit is “the Breath of God”. We sing: “O breathe on me Breath of God”, and: “Blow, blow, blow till I be but breath of the Spirit blowing in me”. How hollow and heartless these words must sound when our consciences are not singed and seared at the ghastly sight of a fellow human being in mortal struggle to breathe just because another brute, human or otherwise, calmly, casually



Image Source: GroupsMet

and callously, puts him in handcuffs, pins him down to the ground, and methodically chokes him to death in slow, painful, agonizing stages. Jayraj and Fenix were murdered in the aftermath of Corpus Christi. How can we honour the sacramental body of Christ with incense and candles when the living bodies of our brothers are so brutally tortured?

Lest we here in India succumb to the usual Indian temptation of hypocritical superiority and sit in judgement on the inexcusable crime in Minneapolis, let us remember that very recently we watched impassively videos of hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens trudging helplessly hundreds of miles in the broiling summer heat, desperately fleeing from their heartless, inhospitable, inhuman and exploitative employers, towards the warm, welcoming though tiny shelters of their own homes, which they were determined to reach, carrying their meagre belongings with pregnant wives and little children in tow, barefooted, starving and thirsty, some of them dying lonely deaths in railway compartments, on railway tracks, in loaded trucks, in traffic accidents and by the wayside, out of sheer exhaustion, starvation and heat, lonely, abandoned and discarded, far away from home and loved ones. Did they also cry: "I can't breathe"? We will never know because we never listened. We never listened because we never cared. We never cared because we were busy celebrating the Pentecost; busy singing our hymns to the Holy Spirit, the breath of God; and the music of our hymns drowned out those desperate cries. "Sabka saath! Sabka vikas!" Our shame! India's shame! Christians' shame! Such a shame that we do not feel a twinge at the senseless killing of Jayraj and Fenix.

Being Black in America should not mean that they should walk in fear of death, with less access to breath. Being a Dalit in India should not mean that they have less respect, less freedom, less opportunities, less food, and less breath. Being poor migrant workers or domestic helpers in India does not mean they should be left to fend for themselves, trudging hundreds of miles to desperately reach home even as the children of the affluent, the influential and the powerful as well as rich pilgrims are transported home by chartered flights; even as a single 300-seater plane is booked just for four passengers, paying Rs 25 lakh, to transport home the wife and three children of



Where is the mass upsurge here in India to seek justice for Jayraj and Fenix? We the middle class and affluent people seem to be quite smug in our comfortable cocoons even as brutal monsters in khaki torture and kill the innocent."

a liquor baron. Is this "Sabka saath, Sabka vikas"?

What about the atrocious cruelties, gratuitous indignities and senseless assaults on roadside vendors, tea sellers, rag pickers, street urchins and homeless beggars, even the physically and mentally challenged? What about the innocent subjected to torture on mere suspicion of a petty crime? George Floyd was killed for a \$ 20 bill that looked fake. Jayraj and Fenix were killed on suspicion of having criticized the police. How many people in India die every day for far less? What about so many other custodial deaths? Who is to account for them? The job of the police is to protect and serve, to safeguard human life, human dignity, human liberty and human rights. During George Floyd's agony, however, we

see in the video police officers standing by without assisting the dying man. How many police men supinely witnessed and even actively participated in the murder of the father and the son in Toothukudi?

We profess faith in a God of love, mercy and justice – the God of Jesus Christ. We need to be true to our faith. We need to put our faith into practice in the concrete circumstances of our life. Our faith needs to be translated into work for justice, reconciliation and peace - justice for all. Above all, we need to beg God to heal our deeply broken view of one another, of our deeply broken society, our deeply broken world, our deeply wounded planet. We need to build a society where everyone, black and white, Dalit and high caste, man and woman, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, everyone can breathe fully and freely; can walk with head held high, with self-respect and dignity; can live without fear and insecurity; can freely express his/her opinion even critical of those in power. Soon it will be Independence Day when exotic turbans will be sported and inane hot air will be spewed even from the ramparts of the Red Fort. "Sabka saath, sabka vikas" yes! But what we need is true, inner freedom! For this let us pray: "Into that haven of freedom my Father, let my world awake".

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Intention For  
July 2020

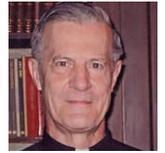
## Our Families

We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.



Pope's Worldwide  
Prayer Network





# The Person of Ignatius

There are many ways to approach the life of St. Ignatius. One could focus on his writings, his vision, or his leadership qualities. One could trace the path of his life in chronological order, the moves from soldier to pilgrim, to founder and administrator. We choose here a less common way, namely to look at his person as seen by those who lived and worked with him. We rely on the scholarly portrait of Ignatius presented in 18 packed pages from Georg Schurhammer's immense and monumental life of Xavier, entitled *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*. These pages, entitled "Iñigo the Leader - 1540" are found in Volume 1, Book 4, Part 4 (pp. 475-93) of the life of Xavier. I will select items that I believe are more important and revealing, putting them in quotation marks. There are 235 footnotes for these 18 pages on Ignatius, and Schurhammer relies on contemporaries of Ignatius as his sources, rather than later biographies. The two main sources would be *The Life of Ignatius of Loyola* by Pedro de Ribadeneira, SJ and *Remembering Iñigo*, the *Memoriale* of Luis Goncalves da Camara.

**Imitation of Christ and/or St. Ignatius:** St. Ignatius wanted all Christians to know, love and imitate Jesus Christ. He should be the focus, the centre of Christian life. Ignatius never said that we should imitate him, Ignatius. But the early Jesuits did see him as a model for others. Thus Ribadeneira in writing the *Life of St. Ignatius* explains that he aims to present "the living model by which they (Jesuits) are ideally to shape their lives." Da Camara in the *Memoriale* too tries to draw special and particular characteristics of St. Ignatius "since I thought that from these the perfect imitation of our Father, to which we all should aspire, depended" (No. 4, Preface). Again he writes (No. 5, Preface) "It seemed to me most important that we should act in exactly the same way as our Fr. Ignatius."

Here then are some elements of that article by Schurhammer that deepen my understanding of Ignatius as a person. Remarks in quotation marks are directly from the essay of Schurhammer.

**External appearance:** "He supported himself on his cane as he went about." "He walked with a slight limp. He had been wounded in the right leg at the siege of Pamplona." Yet he made many long journeys. "Iñigo was rather small in stature, but sturdily build," about 5 feet and an inch tall. His face had "deep-set, cheerful eyes, which were as a rule cast down." His face was "gracious and earnest, and lit up with an inner joy and supernatural glow." He wore a black cassock with rosary beads on a cord, not in a circle.

**Food and work:** "He ate little and he frequently remained for three days taking hardly any food or drink." "He seems to have lost his sense of taste." "He never spoke of eating and never complained if the food was poorly prepared... or if the wine was sour." "Iñigo was a foe to all idleness; he was always busy himself and he did not let disciples stand idly about or spend their time in gossip." At meals "He never finished before the others," and nibbled on a piece of bread "until all were finished." Then "an hourglass was set out for recreation after the noon and evening meals [meals were silent] to spare fatigue and the danger of immediate application to prayer or study." This gave the companions "an opportunity of conversing with one another and consequently knowing and loving one another more." "About four hours of sleep were enough for him."

**Speech:** Ignatius reflected carefully and then acted and always

followed through. "Once he had decided upon a course of action, he held tenaciously to it." A stubborn Basque, he was "a man of action. Iñigo was sparing in his speech. He spoke little and with well chosen words." "He spoke Spanish with a Basque colouring." "His Italian was poor - a mishmash of Spanish, Italian and Latin."

**Spiritual Life and Prayer:** "Even the most insignificant creatures, the leaf of an orange, a flower, a small worm on a path were sufficient to lift his thought to his Creator." "He had few books in his room - only two - the New Testament and *The Following of Christ*." He shed so many tears that "this excessive weeping" was bad for his eyesight. His companions obtained a dispensation for him, permitting him "to substitute other oral prayers or pious works for the Office." "He had a great devotion to the Mother of God, devotion to Mary." "The high point of the day was the celebration of Mass." "He thought that a Mass in which he did not weep at least three times was dry and devotionless." "He needed a full hour and more to celebrate, even though he urged his companions not to exceed half an hour in this."



**Following of Christ:** "He wished to follow Christ his Lord in everything - in His humiliations, His debasement, and in His extreme poverty." "He regarded poverty as the strong protecting wall of the Society." "Despite all his love for holy poverty, Iñigo insisted on the greatest cleanliness in everything." Broet considered this as "Master Ignatius' excessive mania for cleanliness." Yet "Iñigo regarded soap as a superfluous luxury, even if the dishes had always to be clean and bright." "Lights were put out in winter at ten o'clock, and before dawn at five o'clock in the morning, an excitatory went from door to door." Dinner was at 10 in the morning; supper was around 6 to 8 pm." He regarded self-conquest, mortification as "of greater value than pious feelings and protracted prayers."

**Father and Mother:** "He showed his care for the disciples especially when they were sick. He visited them day and night..." "Even the most loving mother could not have been more tender or more solicitous for her children than Iñigo was for the sick." "Iñigo was not simply one whom his disciples revered, but he was also their loving father." "He had a paternal regard for all, and all knew that they were loved and esteemed by him. They were therefore enthusiastic in their love for him."

**Concluding Remarks:** These are glimpses from the portrait of Ignatius presented by the early Jesuits. There are also records of another side to Ignatius. In the view of some, he was dictatorial and stiff-necked, ambitious and tyrannical. He was severe, critical of several of his closest co-workers including Laínez, Nadal, Polanco and Luis Goncalves. He was harsh on Laínez. It is related that Iñigo "hardly ever said a kind word to Father Juan Polanco who was his secretary for nine years." It is said that he sometimes admonished Father Nadal so severely that Nadal wept many tears.

What is the bottom line? Ignatius was at times a stern taskmaster, but as we have portrayed him, he was for the most part, and most importantly, a caring father and companion.

After many years in Nigeria, and three in Amman, Jordan, the author is now a staff member of the Jogues Retreat Centre, near New York City.

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# 'Ignatian Sources' at De Nobili College, Pune

A contingent of 16 participants (6 Jesuits and 10 religious sisters) belonging to the Ignatian family from India and Sri Lanka participated in a ten-week programme on 'Ignatian Sources'. It was organized by CISR (Centre for Ignatian Spirituality & Research) at De Nobili College, Pune. The programme deepened our understanding of Ignatian Spirituality, enriched our personal reflections and broadened our horizons. The resource persons, specialized in various aspects of Ignatian Spirituality, engaged us with their scholarly and insightful inputs on the original sources of the Ignatian charism. Along with academic rigor, the various modules also moved our hearts and enkindled in us a greater desire to go back and know our 'sources' better.



The first module by Fr. Somy, 'Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality' set the tone for the entire programme. His research and expertise on the Examen offered us new insights on this important spiritual practice. Fr. Stephen Thadam dwelt on prayer, and highlighted the unique contribution of Ignatian Prayer as seen in the Spiritual Exercises. Fr. William Sequeira 'opened our eyes a little' (Autobiography, 8) to a re-reading of the life of Ignatius. Fr. Gratian helped us understand the process of Discernment and gave us an excellent understanding of genuine consolation and desolation. Fr. Jossie D'Mello pointed out the treasure of the Spiritual Exercises, with special emphasis on the Annotations, its significance and what is required of a retreat director.

The spiritual insights and dynamics of the Constitutions of the Society and the Spiritual Diary were presented to us by Fr. Francis Pudhicherry. Fr. John Pradeep spoke of the early Society of Jesus and letters of St. Ignatius. He selected about 20 letters of St. Ignatius and analyzed them from the perspective of helping a person in Psycho-Physiological, Psycho-Social, and Rational-Spiritual Integration. Fr. Jose Panadan gave us a scholarly understanding of the history of the Society. His analysis of the

Suppression and Restoration of the Society was insightful. In particular his objective presentations of the 'lights and shadows' of St. Francis Xavier, enabled us to appreciate the saint in the context of the 16th century. We concluded the module with the eight day retreat directed by Fr. Zacchaeus Dung Dung.

Besides the regular modules, the facility of video conferencing helped us to have three scholarly talks: one on Polanco by Fr. Jose Garcia de Castro (Madrid), the second on the Suscipe (Take & Receive) by Fr. Pavulraj (Rome), and the third on the Letters of St. Francis Xavier by Fr. Rolphy Pinto (Rome). The programme included

a pilgrimage to Goa visiting to places of spiritual significance like the Basilica of Bom Jesu, XCHR, Konkani Kendra, Shrine of St. Joseph Vaz, chapel of the Jesuit martyrs of Cuncolin, etc. The Goa pre-novitiate was generous to host the group for three days.

De Nobili College provided the group with a wonderful atmosphere during the ten weeks. We extend our special thanks to them. The newly renovated wing of CISR with self-contained rooms, the refectory, classrooms, computer room and the chapel was ideal for prayer, reflection, discussions, introspection, video conferencing and study. The Rector and the Minister along with the inspiring De Nobili community were warm and very hospitable. Kudos to the Jesuits associated with the Ignatian Centre for their painstaking effort to ensure that the time was an apt combination of serious study, prayer, reflection, relaxation and community life.

The sixteen participants came from different backgrounds - educational, formation, spirituality, pastoral, etc. Each came with an intense desire to grow in the Ignatian charism and the programme certainly fulfilled it.

| Robert Das, SJ | Pune

# Helping Hands - Loyola, Chennai

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented challenge, the failure of scientific research and inadequacy of technological advancements. The Jesuit Migrant Service (JMS) from Loyola College (Chennai) has been taking care of the migrants from the North East, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, etc. Those who come to the city seeking jobs have been kept in the shelters at Koyambedu and Chepauk (both in Chennai). Their needs - food, legal aids, education for their children, etc. - are taken care of. Helping Hands Loyola (HHL) at Loyola College, with the help of alumni/ae from all the constituent institutions in the campus (LCAS, LIBA, LCE, and LICET) offered help (mainly dry rations) to the stranded migrants, affected gypsies, unemployed domestic workers, neglected widows, transgenders, workers in



brick chambers, etc. JMS has helped those migrants returning home to board their trains with provisions for the journey. The Department of Chemistry and the Entomology Research Institute (ERI) in Loyola campus prepared sanitizers, and ERI is working on establishing a virology research centre. Faculty members and students helped the Greater Chennai

Corporation in counselling people affected by the lockdown or those in quarantine. The College Management also set up a helpline for the benefit of the students and parents. The counsellors of the Loyola institutions have been in constant touch with the staff (teaching and non-teaching) to find out how they were getting on. The Corporation of Chennai took over a couple of buildings in the campus to bring in people for testing and to quarantine those who tested positive.

What is amazing is the bond of love and affection among the migrants. We are educated but they are learned. They have learnt from the school of life.

| Francis P Xavier, SJ | Chennai

# Delhi Minorities Commission honours Jesuits with Annual Awards 2019



On 16th June 2020, The Delhi Minority Commission (DMC) awarded Fr. Cedric Prakash, SJ with their Lifetime Achievement Award 2019 for his work in Human Rights. In the booklet published for the Award Ceremony, the DMC acknowledged Fr Prakash's significant contribution and commitment to human rights, peace, interfaith, and reconciliation work. It also referred to his writing, speaking, training and facilitation on issues related to justice and peace.

Dr Zafarul-islam Khan, Chairman, Delhi Minorities Commission before presenting the award lauded Fr Prakash's role in standing up for human rights, justice and peace – all his life. Further, in a written statement to Fr Prakash he said, "We and our country are proud of you and your services."

Fr. Deniz Fernandes, SJ the Executive Director of Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, was also conferred the Human Rights Award 2019 for being a "reputed social scientist working for the human, civil and minority rights in the country and for having served as a member of a DMC fact-finding committee."

The citation for the award stated: "Your contributions and role in society go a long way to create the secular, egalitarian and inclusive India."

Delhi Minorities Commission also honoured Fr. P.R. John, SJ Principal of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, with the Supporter of Minorities Award 2019 for "guiding students to participate in peace initiatives and leading dialogue with Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims every year."

The Delhi Jesuits run St. Xavier's School, Sahbad Daultapur, Rohini School was awarded for being "quality educational institution following the integrated school model" among others.

The awards were given in the DMC premises at Vikas Bhawan, ITO, Delhi, instead of the earlier Vigyan Bhavan in more than one private gathering due to the nationwide lockdown.

| Paul D'Souza, SJ | New Delhi

# St. Xavier's College, Mumbai: Responding with Creativity and Compassion

St. Xavier's College Mumbai has been offering a steady stream of helpful responses to the pandemic. One of the first was to establish a "Corona Helpline", comprised of professional counsellors, staff members and Jesuits across the city who offered their voluntary services to listen to students in distress. A whole burst of online educational programmes ensued, with many Departments of the College offering innovative courses for a pan-India audience, with resources persons from across the globe. Special efforts were made to address the needs of differently-abled students at this time.

With the help of alumni, fellow Jesuits and a number of NGOs, the College engaged in various relief measures, by way of the distribution of food, rations, medicines, medical kits, health workers' equipment, and other items. Those living in slums, migrant labourers, footpath dwellers and needy institutions - all of these, as well as the local police and municipality were beneficiaries



of these management-supported ventures. Perhaps the image that will stay the longest is the one of our Main Hall being converted into a COVID-19 hospital. Both the Hall and the canteen foyer have been prepared by the municipality for the use of symptomatic and asymptomatic patients, if the situation warrants. As a result, the start of regular classes and work on campus will likely be further delayed.

It is wonderful to learn that our staff and students are eager to help the vulnerable and the destitute in the larger community much after the lockdown ceases. A number of College

units and student groups have drawn up a flurry of programmes and relief projects to engage with and help especially those who will be struggling for some time to come.

| Keith D'Souza, SJ | Mumbai



## Fr. Lankapalli Prasad, SJ (AND)

Fr. Lankapalli Prasad, SJ, hailed from Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India. He is survived by his beloved mother, an elder sister and two elder brothers. When he was four he lost his father. The influence of the devout family seems to have contributed to his understanding of society at large as well as God in his tender love and self-discipline. He experienced God's tough-mindedness in his justice and wrath, and God's tender-heartedness in his love and grace. All along in his religious life, he strove to personalize these attributes of God.

He enjoyed the beauty of friendship with the poor. He was very warm in his affection for the poor as is clear in his M.Th. thesis on Dalit Realities. He linked himself with God, creation and human beings through his love and concern for the poor and the marginalized. This has echoed in his doctoral thesis.

His goodness was not found in passive commitment to creed, religious rules and regulations, but in his active participation in the formation of young Jesuits and other

religious. He fanned the flame of enthusiasm in his lifetime of service at JDV, Papal Seminary, Pune. Greatness is discovered in kindness, humility and service. He did not allow a dent in that spirit in spite of having a near fatal death experience on Pune-Mumbai Express Highway in 2013. He was full of compassion and kindness. Many students and staff, both Jesuits and non-Jesuits, at the Papal Seminary would testify to his wonderful qualities. The sincere concern he had for the young drew them close to him and gave them an experience of genuine joy, solace and consolation in times of pain and difficulties.

Fr. Prasad, you combined both knowledge and humility, youthful enthusiasm and a spirit of inner restraint. You were available, responsible and compassionate. You lived by convictions. Father! Into your hands we commend our beloved Fr. Prasad Lankapalli. May his soul rest in peace!

■ ISF. Jeyaraj, SJ



## Fr. Felix Tirkey, SJ (DUM)

Fr. Felix Tirkey died of a massive heart attack on March 2, 2020, at Asha Deep, Bathbanga, in Sahibganj District, Jharkhand. For the past two years, in spite of poor health, Fr Felix had been working for the upliftment of the Paharias, Santhals and others at the Socio-Pastoral Centre, and Arrupe High School as Director of the Boys' Hostel and teacher.

Born at Jena village in Gumla on July 14, 1968, Felix entered the Jesuit Novitiate of Jisu Jaher at Dudhani in June 1992 after completing his matriculation. He did his Juniorate studies at XTITI, Patna, and his college studies at St Joseph's, Trichy. After his Philosophy at Satya Nilayam (Chennai) and Theology at Parasmani and Vidya Jyoti (Delhi) Felix was ordained a priest in 2007. His first pastoral assignment was as assistant pastor in Hathimara Parish. From 2008 to 2013, Fr. Felix was the Director of the Boys' Hostel and teacher at St. Xavier's Hindi School

in Sahibganj. He loved the children and took good care of them.

After his tertianship, Fr. Felix was appointed Headmaster of Krist Raja School at Nunbatta (2013-2018). Wherever he was appointed, he always shouldered his responsibility with enthusiasm and eagerness. A simple person and affable by nature, he could get along with everyone he met – students, hostel boys, staff, parents, and so on.

Fr. Felix was noted for his hard work, adjustability, friendliness and prudence in judging persons and happenings. He had a great impact on those who came in contact with him and is sure to remain alive in their memory. May his soul rest in the joy of the Lord!

■ Fr. Paul Aquilina, SJ



## Fr. Valentine de Souza, SJ (GUJ)

Fr. Valentine de Souza was the quintessential Jesuit. When he died on April 6, he was 92 years old, 74 years a Jesuit. The Tribals of Gujarat, the Church and the Society have lost a legend! He was a visionary and a missionary who was totally people-centred.

Vally (as he was affectionately called) worked in the Vyara Mission from the 1960s till he breathed his last. Besides the long years there, he had brief stints at St Xavier's in Surat, Jeevan Darshan in Vadodara (where he cared for the sick and was responsible for the construction of the Province infirmary), and a sabbatical in the US. His heart, however, was unquestionably with the Tribals of Vyara.

As a pioneer missionary, he would travel by bullock-cart or on a rented bicycle, visiting different villages. He would stay in the villages, listen to the people and learn from them. Being close to people, he got to know them well and, as a result, he had a deep and lasting relationship with them.

Vally mastered the Gamit language and spoke it with proficiency. He wrote and composed several hymns in Gamit (which are popular even today). He was sensitive to Tribal rituals and cultural practices. He adapted catechesis to their way of life.

He was convinced that the local Church would be truly empowered when the priests realised that they had to be animators, drawing the best from their people. He was part of the DELTA team and proved to be a trainer par excellence.

Besides being a polyglot, Vally was a gifted musician. He played the accordion and the guitar. He was a good singer too. Vally lived life to the fullest. In unassuming ways, he gave but did not count the cost! He loved the people and he did all he could to bring dignity, respect and self-worth into their lives. He will be greatly missed!

■ Gujarat Jesuit Samachar





**Danis Ponniah, SJ**

**Leadership in progress:** An able administrator is expected to possess eligibility, capability, and credibility. But a Jesuit Superior is not a finished product; he is constantly in the making, adapting himself in attitude and aptitude according to the growing needs and challenges.

**Co-responsibility as an integral part of governance:** Inspired by the Gospel and animated by the spirit of our Founder, the General Congregations, and other Jesuit documents every Jesuit is called to be a leader sent on a mission to proclaim the Good News of liberation to the poor wherever he is sent. Thus, he shares in the universal mission of the Society and participates in governance. A Jesuit shares co-responsibility with his local Superior, who participates in the collegial authority of the Major Superior, who in turn does so with the Superior General. But the Major Superior's co-responsibility with Fr. General is unique in that the Society confers on him certain authority, rights and privileges in accordance with our Institute, which facilitates his deeper understanding of the apostolic requirements, broader perspectives of issues under consideration and greater access to information.



The Superior's credibility constitutive of his love for the members, simple lifestyle, availability, openness, prayerfulness, impartial decision-making, absence of favouritism, etc. inspires corporate resolve to implement decisions made, and also facilitates reconciliation of the members with decisions that run contrary to their expectations. ”

As an inspiring administrator, the Major Superior is invited to make effective decisions, build meaningful and apostolic relationships, and accompany his companions in the Lord. To me, primarily, this broader understanding is a key to good governance in the Society.

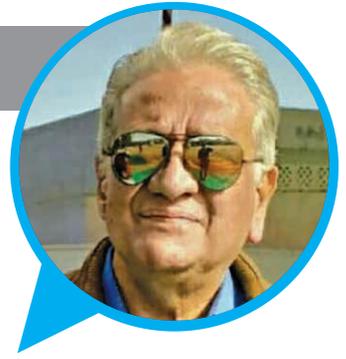
**Discernment in common:** One aspect of our Jesuit governance that fascinates me often is the practice of discernment resonant with spiritual conversation. My experience has been that the ingenious use of it has always resulted in inner joy and consolation irrespective of the outcome of the discernment. A faithful adherence to the time-tested route to an eventual decision taken by the Superior emerging from dialogue with members and collaborators in the light of discernment in common and spiritual conversation at different levels

enhances transparency and accountability. It thereby promotes cura personalis, cura apostolica and community life. The harmony between communal discernment by the members of the Province/Community and the Superior's decision-making is the hallmark of the Society.

**Credibility:** The Superior's credibility constitutive of his love for the members, simple lifestyle, availability, openness, prayerfulness, impartial decision-making, absence of favouritism, etc. inspires corporate resolve to implement decisions made, and also facilitates reconciliation of the members with decisions that run contrary to their expectations.

**Total self-surrender:** The Jesuit is a person not so much of ability as of availability, of success as of fruitfulness, of competence as of compassion, of decision as of discernment, and of achievement as of surrendering totally to the Holy Will of God for the good of the needy. I am convinced this is all the more true of the Superior. A Superior radiates peace and joy.

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**Br. Pravin Falcao, SJ**

Of late accountability is discussed a lot. Usually, we think that the subject has to be accountable to the superior. I think it is rather the other way around – it is the superior who has to be accountable. Whenever the subject commits a mistake the damage is negligible. However, when the people at the helm of affairs make a mistake, it has a cascading ripple effect which is felt much later. The damage is often irreparable. One of our main apostolates is education. Today we are facing a serious shortage of manpower, because the men at the top did not have proper foresight and a vision for the future. Who will hold them accountable? History will judge them not only for what they did, but for what they did not do and should have done. Today we are recycling retired men to run schools - men fatigued, worn out and low on enthusiasm who will not have much to contribute. It is like putting new wine into old wineskins. And the Provincials have no other options but to “plough with the bullocks they have.”

In addition to the three vows, it seems to me that we also inadvertently vow never to grow into adults, and mature, even at the ripe old age of 80. A person at the top, half my age, with half my experience and dedication, will tell me what to do in the name of “holy obedience”. Much more so for brothers, even in their field of specialization. They by their very life will not govern, and will always remain subjects to be governed. My nephews and nieces in the world, who are half my age, take decisions which I will not be able to. A Sr. Provincial of St. Ann's trusted and empowered me to find and purchase a property for them in Delhi to the tune of Rs. 47 lakhs which I did. But around the same time, back home as Minister of the Jesuit residence, going through the procedure/protocol, my request for a much needed bicycle for kitchen use which only cost a few hundred was turned down. You can well understand the feeling.



Somehow the word 'superior' gives rise to the notion that the rest are 'inferior'. Would it not be sensible to replace the term 'superior' with a more professional role-based title like director, coordinator, etc., to encourage their call to servant leadership? ”

As regards 'consultation', I feel the Holy Spirit is not the monopoly of the few selected ones. If I need to know something about agriculture, for example, I would rather approach an illiterate farmer and not consult the Minister of Agriculture who cannot distinguish one plant from another. Seeking his opinion is futile. First of all, the superior has to accept in all humility that he does not know everything nor is he supposed to know everything. Only then can he approach the right person - even a subordinate - for the right information.

For centuries we have been used to and have accepted the designation of 'Fr. Superior'. Somehow the word 'superior' gives rise to the notion that the rest are 'inferior'. Would it not be sensible to replace the term 'superior' with a more professional role-based title like director, coordinator, etc., to encourage their call to servant leadership?

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## LOVE BOMB



Image Source: Google

Albert Einstein, who we all know as a great genius, wrote some letters to his daughter Lieserl back in 1938. He said, "Please hold on to these letters because I'm not sure that humanity is ready for it."

She finally released the letters in 1980 (Albert Einstein died in 1955).

Are we ready for it now?

"When I proposed the theory of relativity, very few understood me. And what I will reveal now to transmit to mankind will also collide with the misunderstanding and prejudice in the world. I ask you to guard the letters as long as is necessary, years, decades, until society is advanced enough to accept what I will explain below.

There is an extremely powerful force that so far science has not found a formal explanation to. It is a force that includes and governs all others and is even behind any phenomenon operating in the universe and has not yet been identified by us. This universal force IS LOVE.

When scientists looked for a unified theory of the universe, they forgot the most powerful unseen force. Love is the light that enlightens those who give and receive it. Love is gravity because it makes some people attracted to others. Love is power because it multiplies the best we have and allows humanity not to be extinguished in their blind selfishness. Love unfolds and reveals. For love we live and die.

Love is God and God is love.

This force explains everything and gives meaning to life. This is the variable that we have ignored FOR TOO LONG. Maybe because we are afraid to love because it's the only energy in the universe that man has not learned to drive at will. To give visibility to love, I made a simple substitution in my most famous equation.

If instead of '**E equals MC squared**', we accept that the energy to heal the world can be obtained through '**love x Speed of light squared**', that Love is the most Powerful Force there is because it has no limits.

After the failure of humanity in the use and control that have turned against us, it is urgent that we nourish ourselves with another kind of energy. If we want our species to survive, if we are to find meaning in life, if we want to save the world and every sentient being that inhabits it, Love is the one and only answer.

Perhaps we are not yet ready to make a bomb of love, a device powerful enough to entirely destroy the hate, selfishness and greed that devastates the planet. However, each individual carries within them a small, but powerful generator of love whose energy is waiting to be released. When we learn to give and receive this universal energy, dear Lieserl, we will have affirmed that love conquers all. Love conquers all, is able to transcend everything and anything because love is the quintessence of life.

I deeply regret not having been able to express what is in my heart which has been quietly beating for you all my life. Maybe it's too late to apologize, but as time is relative, I need to tell you that I love you and thanks to you I have reached the ultimate answer.

Your father, Albert Einstein"

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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# How Kerala's Health Minister became a corona virus slayer



controls. All their contacts were traced and quarantined - 9 tested positive. Then thousands returned from the Gulf. They were tested and quarantined - 170,000 in all.

Shailaja Teacher's teams accommodated and fed (3 meals daily) 150,000 'guest workers' from other States for six weeks, before sending them home in special trains. She was already a celebrity of 'Nipah', in 2018. A movie 'Virus' was made on her handling of the deadly Nipah.

When a whole village was packing up to leave, to escape the virus, she personally went there with doctors to explain things. The villagers stayed back.

After reading online on 20th January about a dangerous new virus spreading in China Shailaja Teacher, the Health Minister of Kerala asked her medical deputy, "Will it come to us?" "Definitely, Madam."

Four months later, with a population of 35 million, Kerala had only 524 cases of COVID-19, four deaths and no community transmission. By contrast, the UK (with twice the population of Kerala) had over 40,000 deaths, and the US reported over 82,000 deaths.

Shailaja Teacher set up a rapid response team on 23rd January in all the 14 Districts. The first case arrived on 27th January from Wuhan. The WHO protocol was already in force - test, trace, isolate and support.

Those with fever went sent to hospital; the rest to home quarantine and COVID-19 pamphlets in Malayalam were distributed. Some of those hospitalized tested positive; but the disease had been contained. In February, a family returning from Venice slipped home, avoiding the

Growing up in a family of social activists and freedom fighters,

Shailaja joined the Communist Party of India (CPI). She participated in the CPI land reforms, the decentralized public health system, the total literacy campaign, etc. The educated Malayali understood, trusted, and supported Shailaja's strategy to combat the virus. If the pandemic returns - each district sets up two hospitals for COVID-19, and the ten medical colleges will set up ten 500-bed hospitals. Health workers, police and volunteers will be specially looked after. The corona virus test results are given within 48 hours in Kerala.

The Chief Minister consulted religious leaders and got the temples, churches, mosques, etc. closed. Shailaja is ready with plans A, B and C - requisitioning of hotels, hostels, conference centres, etc. with 165,000 beds, over 5,000 ventilators. Her ministerial term ends next year. When asked what secret she would pass to her successor, she laughs, "Proper planning!"

Adapted from: The Guardian (Data till May 16, 2020)