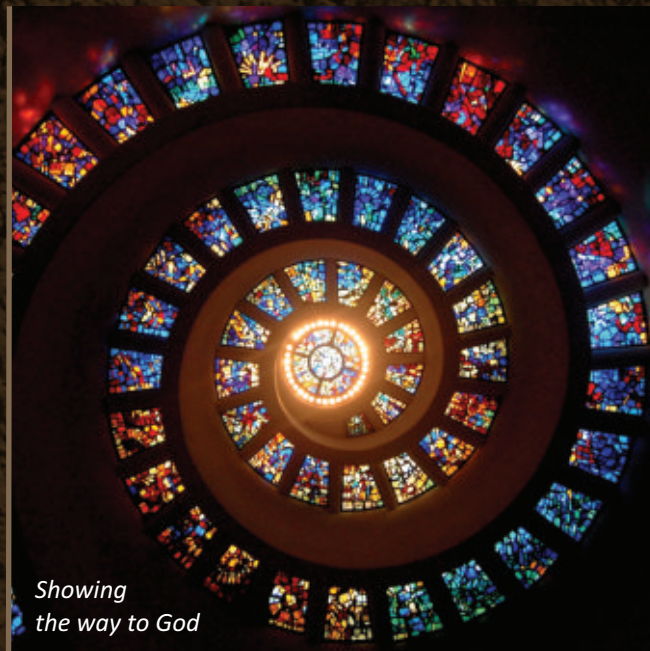




St. Xavier's College (Autonomous)
Kolkata

Ignatius



*Showing
the way to God*



*Walking with
the Excluded*

500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANNONBALL MOMENT OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER
IGNATIAN YEAR CELEBRATION
2021-22

VOL-2 (OCT - DEC, 2021)

Universal Apostolic Preferences (1 & 2)



ST. IGNATIUS AS A YOUNG SOLDIER

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Editorial

The Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) are the fruit of a process of discernment. The Preferences give a horizon, a point of reference to the Society of Jesus. They capture our imaginations and awaken our desires. They unite us in our mission.

The Preferences are four areas vital for our world today. As Fr. Arturo put it, “This is not a strategic plan or a ministry checklist, but a call to conversion.” Priorities would mean that we exclude or stop certain things that we are doing. Instead, UAPs are intended to reorient and rededicate ourselves in all our work.

The four preferences must be seen as integrally related, not as separate entities or as four different types of work to be done by different apostolic sectors. The challenge is for each of us to integrate these four preferences in whatever mission we are engaged in.

The four UAP are: (i) showing the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment, (ii) walking with the poor and excluded, (iii) journeying with youth, and (iv) caring for our common home.

This edition of the newsletter focuses on the UAP 1 and 2. The choice of these preferences follow discernment by Jesuits and colleagues personally and in communities. They naturally flow out of prayer and spell out what it means for Jesuits today to follow Jesus in their lives and work.

In this context, they primarily engage the heart. In reflecting on our lives and work they are things that should excite us and so influence how we live and work and the choices we make about how we spend our time, and cooperate with others. This implies that they are not separate priorities but influence one another.

On reflection, we can say that we see the heart of our way of working is to accompany people who are poor and victims of violence. We aim to strive for justice through our advocacy and public comment, and look for reconciliation rather than conflict within the justice system and through the relationships we build with decision makers and public servants. A central focus is to accompany the poor who are vulnerable in the hope that they will find grounds for hope in the connections they build with and through us to society.

The Preferences inspire us, giving us energy to get up, each and every morning, to breathe life into them through who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

I take this opportunity to thank all our contributors of this edition who shared their personal experiences of God and their personal involvements with the poor and marginalised and helped us in bringing out this edition.

May God bless us all.

Rev. Fr. Joseph Kulandai, SJ

Vice-Principal and Convener,

St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata

Ignatian Year Celebration Committee

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Universal Apostolic Preferences

Rev. Dr. Dominic Savio, SJ
Principal, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata.

From May 2021 until July 2022, the Society of Jesus celebrates an Ignatian Year. May 20, 2021 marks the 500th anniversary of St. Ignatius' conversion — that fateful day when Ignatius the soldier, struck by a cannonball, began his transformation into Ignatius the pilgrim. The objective is to understand how might we grow in our relationship with God and our love for one another by meditating on this important moment in Ignatius' life? God continues to invite each of us into a deepening relationship, to ongoing transformation. We believe that by embracing this invitation, we embrace our God who calls us to act in new, bold ways that reconcile our world, bringing about justice, peace and compassion. For this Ignatian Year, we ask for the grace to see all things new in Christ.

The Society of Jesus celebrates an Ignatian Year, called for by Fr. General Arturo Sosa, SJ. As a global community of educators from Jesuit institutions we are invited "to see all things new in God" by reflecting, discerning, and sharing throughout this Ignatian Year through the lens of the Universal Apostolic Preferences. About fifteen thousand five hundred plus Jesuits around the world have set out on a roadmap called the UAP - Universal Apostolic Preferences.

In their 480th year old history, beginning in 1540, the Jesuits have so far held 36 General Congregations where without fail the Jesuits ask themselves two fundamental questions:

- Is what we are doing now in accordance with the will of God and His expectations of us? and

UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES

2019 - 2029

To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment.

To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.



To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.

To accompany the young in the creation of a hope-filled future.



SOCIETY OF JESUS



- What greater and whatever new responses is the Lord asking of us in today's context?

They believe that the Spirit of God has each time led them in the right path and right direction.

In 2016, in their 36th General Congregation, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Jesuits adopted a set of four global concerns termed Universal Apostolic Preferences or UAPs. Released on February 19, 2019, the Jesuit Superior General, Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, announced four UAPs for the Society of Jesus to be contemplated and adopted over the next decade. The four UAPs that has started functioning in 2019 and will conclude in 2029, for ten years. The 4 UAPs are:

- To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;
- To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;
- To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; and
- To collaborate in the care of our Common Home, Mother Earth.

In the context of UAP 1, we are constantly exposed to options and there is no space to find our true self or to let God find us. We don't know or drown our own desires and passions. Without the wisdom of the Lord, we can easily have a sense that we are not in charge of our own destiny, merely puppets at the mercy of the moment.

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola are an instrument for making the life and action of the Lord present in diverse social contexts in today's world at large. A deeper experience of the Spiritual Exercises will lead us to a personal and communal encounter with God that transforms us. At the same time the Spiritual Exercises will provide us, especially the young, with the opportunity to make use of them to begin or to advance in following God.

We see the gap between rich and poor widen across the world and we hear weekly reports of hundreds perishing as they try

to reach a new home. Political leaders have kindled hatred and erected walls between rich and poor, young and old, those at home and those who have to migrate. The reality of children who have been physically abused is also painfully and personally present to us.

In the context of UAP 2, the path we seek to follow with the poor is one that promotes social justice and the change of economic, political and social structures that generate injustice. This path is a necessary dimension of the reconciliation of individuals, peoples and their cultures with one another, with nature and with God. Walking with the poor precludes care and respect for indigenous peoples and confirm our commitment to care for migrants, displaced persons, refugees and victims of wars and human trafficking.

The Jesuits are continuing the transformation their founder St. Ignatius himself had in his own life, known as the cannonball moment, who in turn effected the same in the life of his companions. Eventually, he and his companions, the first Jesuits, effected great transformation in society of their time starting in 1540, in various ways like the Pathway to God, Education and others. This transformation continues till today by the present Jesuits in many ways like Pathway to God, Education, Ecology and Social Justice, Youth, and many others. As Jesuits we want to make our best contribution in these areas and show our love and commitment for God in their brothers and sisters around the world and for God's creation. Thus, seeking what is for the greater service of God and the more universal good.

To achieve this transformation, we need to pray for Inspiration, Guidance and Courage from God through the intercession of St Ignatius.

May St. Ignatius, our Founder and St. Francis Xavier, our Patron, who in 1542 brought and effected this spirit of transformation in India and Asia, guide our steps and bless us and especially our students, Faculty, Parents and Alumni to fulfill our Jesuit vision and mission through these UAPs.



Walking with the Excluded

Echoes from a Global Perspective

Rev. Dr. Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ
Secretary, Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, Rome.

Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs)



Jesuits - "Learned and Poor" friends in God

Walk with the excluded, marginalized and deprived

But what a blessing it would be if the Society of Jesus could honestly say that its "learned Jesuits" or "intellectuals" had been taught by the poor.

- Arturo Sosa SJ, May 26, 2018

This is why we place the overall education of each individual (and not only their professional education) at the core of our university work. ... We seek to educate consistent individuals, who are responsible for themselves, for others and for the earth that we all inhabit.

- Arturo Sosa SJ, World meeting of Universities, Loyola, 10 July 2018

Four Jesuits who walk with the excluded



Jose Alberto Idiaquez, SJ
President of
the Universidad
Centroamericana (UCA)
in Managua, Nicaragua

'Chepe' Idiaquez - Nicaragua

- Repression on students in the university, by government and govt. affiliated groups.
- 127 people were killed including students, many more injured
- Detained, death threats, intimidation and slander against Fr. Chepe and others.
- Support to Universities by the State reduced.
- University in Managua attacked by military
- "A university cannot be at the service of the status quo. It is not about being rebels without a cause, it is about the





university forming professionals who are truly humanized; to not enter into the mercantilism of knowledge; that the institution can unite social commitment with academic rigor."



Gregory J. Boyle, SJ
Founder and director of Homeboy Industries, the world's largest gang-intervention and rehabilitation program in California, USA

Greg Boyle - California, USA

- Began in 1988 to improve the lives of former gang members in East Los Angeles has today become a blueprint for over 400 organizations around the world, from Alabama and Idaho, to Guatemala and Scotland.
- Homeboy Industries
- is the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world.
- For over 30 years, it has stood as a beacon of hope in Los Angeles to provide training and support to formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated people, allowing them to redirect their lives and become contributing members of our community.



Ludovic Lado, SJ
Director of both the Centre for Study and Training for Development (CEFOD) and the CEFOD Business School based in Ndjamen, Chad

Fr. Ludovic Lado - Cameroon

He has Ph.D from Oxford on social and cultural anthropology

- 4 Years of separatist wars and conflicts displacing people internally.



- 3,000 people were killed, no dialogue took place between government and separatist groups
- He has been raising his voice since 2007 and has been a strong critique of Paul Biya who was the President of Cameroon for 39 yrs and continues still
- Lado wants education for children of Internally displaced people in the country and be with them.
- He says, "This pilgrimage is a call for solidarity to support the education of children of internally displaced persons or refugees, who are living a precarious lives."



Ismael Moreno, SJ
Director of Radio Progreso and ERIC, (A Reflection, Research and Communication Team) based in El Progreso, Honduras

Padre Melo - Honduras

- Defend human rights and promotes economic, social and political and environmental justice in Honduras
- Runs a Radio Station to educate, create awareness and conscientize people in the remote indigenous places.
- Builds capacity among women and indigenous people, critically analyses the reality.
- Already some indigenous people were killed from his organization. His Radio station attacked, police and military stands in front of his office 24 hours.
- Strongly opposed land grabbing for mining, fraudulent elections etc.





Showing the Way to God

Rev. Dr. C. Joe Arun, SJ

Director, Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA), Chennai.

The fundamental perspective of Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) of the Society of Jesus is that God is working already in the world (John 5:17) and we join Him in His work. We are only collaborators with Him. God elects us to be collaborators or co-workers in our own redemption. The Spiritual Exercises explain this in a unique way. The Holy Spirit brings all things back to the Father in and through Christ that is reconciling and sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. The UAPs represent a point of 'convergence' between the Spirit moving in the world and the Spirit moving in the life/discernment of the Society, the process started in GC31. In this mission of reconciliation and justice we are just companions. We want to collaborate in what God is doing. Reconciliation is our ministry (2Cor. 5:18). Reconciliation is part of the Society's understanding of its mission. This is gradually developed and emphasised in GC35 and GC36. In fact, it is possible to understand all the UAPs as aspects of the Society's mission of reconciliation. Indeed, the three aspects of reconciliation which the congregations set out – reconciliation with God, with neighbour and one another, and with creation – allow it to be the central integrating dynamic of the UAPs. It is a grace of God to choose us in His work. They not only express a particular discernment of the Society, but they mark the convergence of the Spirit working from within the secular as well as religious cultures. Through the Preferences, we are called to be instruments in the hands of God to renew our relationship and understanding of God 'who labours and works in all things', but we may see them as an invitation to service, service of faith.

Following Vatican II, GC31 undertook an extensive renewal of the Society's life and 'way of proceeding'. That desire for an

ever-deeper understanding of our life, character and mission has proved a continuous theme of all the General Congregations up to this point. Without this effective desire to acknowledge and remove whatever impedes our greater union with Christ and participation in His redemptive mission to the world, all our works and initiatives would cease to serve the principal end of the Society to announce the presence of the Kingdom. For this reason, the first UAP remains foundational. It always finds expression in subsequent General Congregations. Of course, it could also be glossed over as

We need to have contemplative listening to the way in which the Spirit is already working and we must respond to Him. In Ignatius' vision, God does not act without a human response in freedom but seeks our response and makes us participants in the work of redemption. Contemplative listening requires particular dispositions of freedom, discernment and response. They lead us into the horizon of 'an unexpected hope' – 'the evidence of things hoped for and the substance of things not seen,' (Heb.11:1). We need to listen to Him contemplatively and must ask for the grace and the freedom to say our 'yes' to His call. In doing so, we enter into discernment.

This response leads to collaboration with others, lay and religious partners who may have the needed knowledge, insights and expertise for the mission. Collaboration requires an openness to receptive learning and a different understanding of leadership, a collaborative leadership in which we are partners, not the ones who lead.

Showing the way to God, one of the UAPs, begins from the context we live in. Scientific advancement has resulted in

arrogance. Many inventions have given human beings jaunty optimism to play God. That has led to a belief that God is only for the weak. For Ignatius of Loyola, search for God begins in the process of realisation of his vulnerability. He becomes aware of his brokenness, Cannonball experience, in which God becomes necessary for meaning of his life. God who suffers, the Cross, for the humanity. It is the God who shares the brokenness of human beings, who are on the margins. His original vision, "Place me with your Son", means that the Son is the who is carrying the Cross. The Ignatian God is found in the suffering of the vulnerable people. Placing with the Son on the Cross transforms us: "we resolve to gain a deeper experience of the Spiritual Exercises so that they lead us to a personal and communal encounter with Christ that transforms us. Life hinges upon the choice we make. The core of Spiritual Exercises is the choice: The choice of Standard of the Son who suffers for the people on the periphery. Choosing to side with the weak and vulnerable is the way of being spiritual. Showing the way to God - the most fundamental discovery of our lives [Jesuits], namely, that discernment and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius show the way to God. It is a preferred way to God. We also resolve to promote discernment as a regular habit for those who choose to follow Christ.

The Society of Jesus is committed to practicing and spreading spiritual discernment, both personal and communal, as the ordinary way of making decisions guided by the Holy Spirit in our lives, our apostolic works, and our ecclesial communities. It is an instrument that helps us become aware of inner feelings, motivations, movements, and intentions in making decisions: is this what God wants me to do? It is an instrument that helps us become aware of inner feelings, motivations.

Becoming aware of one's vulnerability and being with the vulnerable people is our way of showing the way to God. We want to help people find Him and to live His way. We want to accompany people as they discern complex choices in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres. We will help to create environments that favour free personal processes, independent of social or ethnic pressure. We want to promote in depth study of the Spiritual Exercises. We want to give the Exercises in places of social exclusion so that people will know they are part of one family in solidarity with one another and with the Creator. We want to offer a deeper alternative to secularism. A mature secular society will allow a greater and better exercise of religious freedom, recognising the complex dimensions of human freedom. The God shown in the Spiritual Exercises helps us free from inordinate attachments and gain inner freedom to side with justice and peace.

As St. Ignatius of Loyola, we need to become aware of our vulnerability, brokenness, and fragility. Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, accountability, creativity, and authenticity. It is in our vulnerability we see God, as St. Ignatius did. That immediately makes us united with God by a total surrender to Him. St. Ignatius wants us to be placed with the vulnerable God, the Son who carries the Cross. This process of conversion is helped by using the instrument of discernment and method of spiritual conversation in which choosing the standard of just and loving God. This gives an experience the inner conversion, which results in communal and institutional conversion. The only way to God is to journey with the vulnerable people. That must finally help us all to transform the world.



"It is my desire that at the heart of this Ignatian year, we would hear the Lord calling us, and we would allow him to work our conversion inspired by the personal experience of Ignatius."

*- Rev. Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ
Superior General of the Society of Jesus*



Grassroot Women toward Empowerment

Rev. Fr. John Kerketta, SJ

Director, Udayani Social Action Forum Kolkata.

Today women are not silent spectators. They are very vocal and assertive to defend their feminism as a natural gift of God. In the book of Genesis 1:27, 'God created male and female in his image, and blessed them -Be fruitful and multiply'. The divine necessity was already put in place without gender bias. Going back to the root of human existence, there is in fact, no need of women's empowerment for they were empowered with men from the beginning of creation. In the course of journey on earth they lost the equal right with men who are now victims of social, political and economic exclusion. They have the right to owe what is due. Hence the women's empowerment is the restoration of their due rights to build an inclusive and resilient society. The Synod 2023 theme - Communion, participation and mission is a prophetic call of the universal Church.

Udayani primarily focuses empowering women for integral social transformation. Women's empowerment is an important goal in achieving sustainable development in society worldwide. Excluding women from social development project is to ignore their strength 'Nari Shakti' for a social change. Udayani has identified their unbelievable strength that can make a significant difference in the life of people, and consistently capacitate rural women in particular by organizing trainings programs. Offering this opportunity, we have increased their inclusive participation in social change. The Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) is a call to walk with the excluded/women for their empowerment. It is a wakeup call for us to respond for its apostolic necessity in the church. It is a revelation in our mission and a new way of looking at it in the feminist perspective.

Understanding the context

Udayani is an organization wherein love, peace, justice, gender equality and a sustainable environment prevails, upholding human dignity and social values. It visualizes a long-term mission to build by means of every endeavour, a fuller expression of justice and love into the structures of human life in common. In this undertaking women as a whole play incredible role in achieving the goal. It is an uncompromising mission to include women in the creation of integral human society. "Life is not a competition between men and women; it is a collaboration", says David Alejandro. One cannot sideline their strength in socio, political and economic change. They are emerging forces in every arena of development. The recent West Bengal Assembly poll has eye-witnessed the strength of women in exercising their democratic right who overtook the last 2016 vote share from 46% to 50% which is 4% higher than the men voters. We cannot think of progress without their participation. Empowerment process must be cordial and participatory in fairness to bring equity and equality in society for the common good.

In society till today men have greater access to power. This gender inequality can be observed in several aspects of daily life such as access to education, job opportunities and economic resources. In the patriarchal society a woman finds herself at the last option whose contribution is within four walls on account of gender bias.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of women's empowerment one has to walk and talk with them in their pace. Problem analysis alone will not lead to a solution.

Several empirical studies could not impact any systemic change in understanding of women's power in society. Throughout history and across nations still today, men on average have greater access to power. 'Specifically, men relative to women have greater access to the use of force, greater access to resource control, less social obligations to uphold, and more advantageous cultural ideologies. This gender inequality can be observed in several aspects of daily life such as access to education, job opportunities, and economic resources' (UNDP 2015). What makes a country prosperous is the human resource. India is incredibly rich on human resource in the world yet lags behind among the countries. The underlining reason is lack of women's participation in the nation building. They are merely beneficiaries of the country. There are many strict social, cultural and religious restrictions which keep them away to share in the development project. They still cannot freely exercise their talents in any sector in the male dominated society.

There is consensus that gender equity is an important goal to be achieved among the world leaders. More precisely, they have agreed on working toward providing women and girls with equal access to various domains of social life. Diverse interventions have been developed and implemented to strengthen the position of women across the world such as health, educational and financial programs. The concept of empowerment has been developed as a framework and process aimed toward addressing the inequity in society.

Challenges

A numerous social, economic and political challenges hinder empowerment of women. They are the powerful blockages to pierce through in the women's life. Udayani worked hard to break the social belief system and misconceived ideas predominantly vested in people's mind. Social taboo for womenfolk was very strong due to strict religious obligations among different caste groups. In the pluralistic society, variety of cultures are distinct from each other. A number of social problems such as child marriage, dowry, childbirth, women's menstrual cycle, caste struggle, girl child education etc create a complex social structure to overcome. In the economic challenge, people are by and large belonging to a low-income group. They are primarily day wagers and agricultural labourers whose economic status is below poverty line. Financial dependency on land lords was another important

challenge to overcome which forced women into exploitation and lured young girls into child marriage and prostitution. Political leaders took advantages of all government welfare schemes. Dealing with such a leadership was a risky affair. In a very unfriendly circumstance Udayani went ahead in its mission of women empowerment and achieved a good result until now.

Tripartite Empowerment model

Udayani developed three models of women empowerment which is called rights based approach (RBA) model namely, to be intellectual force, to be creative force and to be a protest force. Each model enables to increase a collective reflection and understanding for better learning.

1. To be an intellectual force: We create women as intellectual force to enable people for wholistic transformation. Being sensitive to different social and political issues they sensitize others to think and raise questions to the concerned authority. Over the years there has been an increase in women's empowerment in different fields. Women possess self-worth, confidence, and freedom to choose their needs and requirements. Understanding people based on gender is unreasonable, and it has no worth. Still, women are paid less for their labour, expected to cook, and restricted by their family members. To overcome these situations and to have an independent role in society, women's empowerment is a necessity.

Today, empowering women is their fundamental right. They can have equal rights to participate in education, society, economics, and politics. They need to have higher education and be treated in the same way like men. Imparting Intellectual force is to create a space for them through numerous training programmes on different fields such as leadership, technical learning, soft skill development for attitudinal change and vocational training. Without women's empowerment in India, we won't be able to determine and understand the intelligence of women. Therefore, making existence in work is particularly important and an advantageous one. We give recognition to their work to promote and manifest hidden talents in different forums.

2. To be a Creative Force: Women are strong and creative force in themselves. They are powerful change makers among the rural and urbanized poor. Identifying this quality of women Udayani ignited their zeal and enthusiasm in them for the service of nation. Moulding them into a unified force to

defend their own rights of freedom to live, act and believe in society like any other dignified human being is a desirable intervention. Organizing a number of awareness programmes is an attempt to regenerate a collective consciousness among them. Silence discredits the power of women vested in them. Women form a resistance group to check the prevailing system in rural areas and proactively take part in the dialogue with the system for an equitable role in society.

2.1 Emerging grassroots NGOs

Udayani gave birth to five independent NGOs headed by women in South 24 Parganas, Hooghly and Burdwan districts of West Bengal. Adarsha Nari Sangathan, Pratyusha Nari Sangathan, Nari Mukti Chetana, Jagrity Nari Kalyan Sangathan and Sampurna Nari Kalyan Sangathan are the grassroots NGOs which have emerged as a result of movements. These NGOs and conscious women activists take a lead to address every local issue concerning development.

2.2 Income Generative programs (IGP)

For economic self-reliance women started several income generative programs. It projects women's creative and productive potentials to improve their quality of life. Udayani imparted training on solar home lamp, Mushroom cultivation, Detergent powder, tailoring and handicraft to enhance their economic sustainability. Udayani is able to



connect more than 5000 women in micro finance system through Self Help Groups whose collective transaction for financial year 2020-2021 is Rs. 13,74,47,058.

2.3 Lobbying Advocacy and Networking

To safeguard the vulnerable section of the society women in particular there is a need to work in collaboration with the like-minded groups who share the common vision. Not every Government policy is favourable to the poor. Good and pro-poor development schemes often do not bring desired result due to the poor implementation and corruption. Political mafias extort income from the development schemes as a cut money; poor remain poorer. To counteract against the powerful agencies who curtail the rights of the poor, there is a need of strong women platform to raise collective voice against the Government faulty policies. Lobbying, advocacy and networking are very good tools to influence for a policy change. They strengthen and guide the policy makers in favour of the poor. The Food Security Act, 2013 is the result of extensive lobbying and advocacy work of NGO partners at national and local level. Local NGOs are often socially excluded and do not get necessary government support to execute important development projects benefiting the disadvantaged individuals of the society. Women's empowerment is a collective fight for the right of women which Udayani promotes unflinchingly.

3. To be a Protest Force

Protest is a democratic right and an exercise of the freedom of speech in our country. Everyone has the right to assert in the form of protest democratically against any corrupt system or elected government. The Constitution of the land provides this right to its citizens. Rural women are largely unaware of this provision due to the lack of education and social interaction outside society. In a close culture society, women often become victims of social exploitation in their own family. Breaking the chain engrained in conventional mindset of menfolk is a herculean task. Udayani plunged into the mission impossible embracing innumerable challenges to exploit women's energy into a positive direction to serve the society for a common good. Self Help Group (SHGs) formation has a multifaceted platform to involve women proactively.

3.1 Right to food Act (RTF)

The great achievement of being a protest force is the National Food Security Act 2013, also known as 'Right to Food Act' which aims to provide subsidized food grains to 1.2 billion people. It is the result of women's collective campaign and protest against the poor ration distribution under the PDS in fair price shops, mid-day meal and Anganwadi. The impact of the protest was effective due to the mass campaign and protest of women at every level. The act guarantees the right to life of every citizen. West Bengal right to food and work network is vigilant to monitor the fair distribution of ration and its quality. Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) rural women proactively demanded 100 days' work for all. Self Help Group women are active at village level to address people's concerns and their basic human rights.

3.2 Right to education (RTE)

Education is the most vibrant factor of advancement and growth for all. Education is therefore the most significant tool for women empowerment. It gives right to the possibilities for access to employment and making a livelihood for the eradication from poverty. Under the Right to education Act (RTE) 2009, Udayani firmly stood in defence of women's right to education and promote it indiscriminately. Organizing literacy campaign, we are able to generate awareness among illiterate parents. Mass literacy campaign enthused women to learn to sign their initials. Imparting education on number of subjects women are aware that it has unlocked the door to preferences that are confined by tradition. With a meaningful non-formal education, women's status strides beyond the restrictions of motherliness. Education will go an extended way in making women familiar with their legal and personal rights and make them battle for their privileges, which will direct to protecting their rights mentioned in the Constitution.

3.3 Government Entitlements

In our mode of education of women, we focused rights based learning. There are several government welfare schemes and entitlements for people which they are not aware of due to lack of knowledge or accessibility of knowledge. Central and State Govt. schemes such as maternity benefit, old age pension, widows' pension, free medical treatment, housing schemes, scholarship schemes etc are out of reach for many beneficiaries due to ignorance and the corruption of Govt. officials from top to bottom

level. Udayani sensitized the common people addressing these issues directly at blocks and panchayats. Women are more vocal to get their work done, and they are now more informed than before concerning development schemes. They play a catalytic role to organize campaigns and protest to sensitize general public.

Conclusion

Gender bias is a critical social issue for women empowerment. Conservative laws and religious practices prohibit women to engage outside work. The gender sensitization is a key to break through the inherent belief system and a strong mindset of menfolk that curtails freedom of women. Udayani faces stiff opposition of men to reach out women. Self Help Groups (SHGs) model has played pivotal role to bring women together for awareness meeting that helped in our intervention. Women gathered in smaller groups of 10-15 once a month to share their social and personal problems. It was the beginning of a new era of social transformation. As a catalyst Udayani provides a platform for women to develop their potentials and to share knowledge with one another. Gender discrimination in all realms of action must be checked continuously at all levels to ensure socio-economic and political participation of women. Women must be furnished with a resort to take an active part in decision making at every level to attain the motive of empowering women. They need to get due admiration and prominence, which they rightfully earn on merit basis in society to accomplish their goal.





Covid-19 and Challenges of Distress Migrants in India

Rev. Fr. Martin Puthussery, SJ

Head, Labour Migration Unit, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore.

The mass exodus of migrants

The impacts of Covid-19 in South Asia heightened and further exposed the vulnerability of distress migrants. In India, the pandemic national lockdown in 2020 manifested the largest exodus of migrants. According to estimates, 10 to 40 million migrants were forced to walk hundreds and thousands of kilometres to reach their native places. The migrants trudging miles on the highways towards their native places remains in the embedded memory of the Covid-19 countywide lockdown in India. In fact, no other country in the world witnessed such painful and strenuous mass exodus of migrants. The exodus of the migrants was almost reminiscent of the mass migration between India and Pakistan after the independence in 1947. Immediately after the declaration of national lockdown, migrants realised that they do not belong to the very cities and urban areas where they worked. They got stranded far from home without employment, shelter, food and social security. So, they had no choice but to take a painful sojourn back to their native places. The long walks of the migrants on the highways manifested their tragedy and desperation. As the pandemic spread and fear continues even after twenty months, the sporadic exodus and the challenges of internal distress migrants in India continue.

Who are the distress migrants in India?

Distress migrants in India are both intra-state migrants and interstate migrants. They are mostly temporary migrants, circular migrants, seasonal migrants and irregular migrants. They are individuals and families mostly migrated from rural areas to urban centres due to various reasons. Landless farmers, agricultural labourers and marginal farmers who lost

their livelihood on account of globalised agricultural practices form bulk of these distress migrants. The majority of the distress migrants in India are from the socially and economically deprived strata of the rural society belonging either to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or to the Other Backward Classes with very little or virtually no control over the means of production. Among these migrants, some of them, especially the Adivasis, had no choice, but were forced to migrate due to forced displacement from their original areas of habitation.

The introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1992 through liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) accelerated migration in India. The developmental plans centred on mega cities and negated the countryside was leading to a large scale distress migration in the country. The masses of disposed farmers and labourers were forced to migrate to cities and other parts of the country for survival. The faulty agrarian policies, forced failure of agricultural



activities, indebtedness due to loans taken and mass farmer suicides have resulted in marginal peasants abandoning agriculture, landless workers being unemployed and exodus of these groups to other parts of the country for survival.

All the three major sectors of the Indian economy, namely agriculture, industry and services employ a large number of migrant workers as they provide cheap labour. The building and construction industry along with brick-kilns, stone quarries, hospitality sector and garment industry employ the majority of the inter-state migrants. Services provided by migrants include domestic services, security services, working in small hotels, selling things as street vendors and driving auto-rickshaws and taxis.

Challenges of Distress Migrants

Distress labour migrants are forced into alien languages, cultures, races, climate, food habits, work cultures, etc. These adverse factors at the destinations have resulted in their alienation, exclusion and various vulnerabilities despite the same nationality. The violation of rights of migrants include right to livelihood, residence, food, health, education, social security, equal wages, proper hours of work and freedom from bondage. They mostly remain without local identity documents and so are unable to claim state resources. They have no social security, no compensation in cases of accidental injuries and deaths, and no access to safe drinking water and health care. The Covid-19 has further exposed their vulnerability and has added to their struggles for survival.

Internal migrants in India are forced into adjusting themselves in the new locality or state which is linguistically, culturally, geographically and traditionally far from their native place or state. With Covid-19, most of these internal distress migrants in India have no choice, but to suffer from exclusion, stereotypes, xenophobia, harassment, isolation, rejection, exploitation and discriminations at the destinations.

Exclusion

Migrants' rights are often denied on the political defence of the "sons of the soil" theory. In fact, exclusion of migrants takes place through political and administrative processes. This exclusion results in ghettoisation of migrant population. They are excluded from government schemes to varying degrees, from formal residency rights, identity proofs, political representation, adequate housing, financial services, public distribution system [PDS] and membership in trade unions at the destinations. They are also denied access to public health, education and other basic amenities such as water and sanitation. As a result of these exclusions, migrant workers are also prone to several types of vulnerabilities.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia can be described as attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the local community, society or national identity. There is a close link between racism and xenophobia, two terms that can be hard to differentiate from each other. There is a general tendency among the locals to look down on the distress migrant workers based on certain stereotypes which seriously affects the perception and treatment towards them. The number of crimes in which these inter-State migrant workers are involved is much less in proportion when compared with the corresponding figures for the general population. However, a few of the crimes in which they are involved get high degree of publicity which adds fuel to the



perception that most of the migrants are criminals. This adds to the fear psychosis and strengthens suspicion and distrust which informs the attitude of the authorities too. The Covid-19 situation has heightened these xenophobic attitudes towards the migrants.

Exploitation, Discrimination and wage theft

The intermediaries often exploit the desperation and helplessness of the migrants by giving certain advance payments and force them and their families into a kind of bondage or trafficking. Those who have been trapped as bonded labourers work 12 to 16 hours a day with very little or no wages. Some of the employers, particularly the owners of construction companies, brick chambers and quarry chambers exploit and harass the migrant workers as slaves. In some cases, extreme exploitation including bonded and child labour are practiced through the grip of labour contractors and money lenders.

The vulnerability of the migrant work force at work sites is evidenced in the form of low wages, long working hours and lack of safety measures. They are often forced to take up more difficult, hazardous and menial jobs compared to the local workers. They are usually in the 3D jobs – dirty, dangerous and degrading. Very often migrants are forced to work under inhuman conditions. They are not given equal wages compared to local workers and are often forced to work long hours without appropriate payment for over time.

Local employers prefer to hire migrant workers as they are easy to control and exploit. Multiple methods are used to ensure maximum extraction of surplus from these workers. Employers vanish when the time for payments is due or pay less than agreed upon. Since workers have no recourse, they are easily cheated. There are several instances reported where migrant workers were not paid wages. Further, withholding of wages to migrant workers is a commonly used cunning tact by the construction companies, the garment factories, the employers of domestic workers and the other local employers. Further, the contractors operate to break up any possibility of unity between workers as any such unity poses a threat to the system of exploitation.

Discrimination and violence faced by migrant women and children

Women and child migrants are the most vulnerable sections among the distress migrant workers and they suffer from

discrimination and violence. Women's wages are less than those paid to men. They often end up as victims of abuse and harassment. Migrant women and child domestic workers often experience harassment by the owners. Migrant women and children are also the major victims of human trafficking which is an extreme form of human rights violation. The pandemic has heightened their battle against loneliness and emotional stress.

Covid-19 and New forms of Challenges

The continued spread of Coronavirus has brought several new forms of discriminations, mostly affecting the lives and livelihoods of migrants. The pandemic fear has created a new forms of local-migrant and employer-employee relationships. The Covid-19 has increased xenophobia and prejudices among the local population and the local employers towards the migrants. As a result, in many places in India, migrants are blamed for the spread of Coronavirus and discriminated based on rumours.

The pandemic has brought new struggles and challenges to distress migrants in terms of livelihoods, places of living and education of children. As the fear of spread of Coronavirus continues, most of these migrants are unable to resume their earlier works and some are struggling to find new types of jobs. For examples, domestic workers and security guards are not welcomed back in many households. Street vendors are not able to resume selling things on the streets. Most of the street eateries and beauty parlours are still closed.

In some areas in the post lockdown period, migrants are not allowed to get back to their old rented rooms and are struggling to re-locate to new places for rent. In most cases, migrants could not pay full room rents in the post lockdown periods and were forced to vacate their rented places. Then, without local identity documents, migrants are often denied rooms on rent in the new areas. If rooms are given, higher rate of rents are extracted. In such occasions, migrants have no choice, but to pay higher rents.

Education of the children of migrants are very badly affected by the pandemic. The re-locations of the migrants have forced the discontinuation of the education of thousands of children. Many of the children had no choice, but to drop out as the new locations demanded new admissions, with documents and even in new language situations. Those children who got admitted in new locations, are struggling to adjust to new environment and very prone to discontinuation.

Psychosocial challenges of migrants

The pandemic has increased the levels of alienation, loneliness, social exclusion, fear, emotional deprivation, stress, anxiety and depression of the migrants. Covid-19 pandemic has also caused chronic psychological manifestations like panic disorder and other psychosomatic manifestations among the distress migrants in India. The unfavourable attitude of locals towards migrants have resulted in a sense of strange feeling associated with their alienation. Living away from home, the migrant workers missed their loved ones deeply. As most of the migrant workers are not residing with their family members, their loneliness itself makes them fall prey for mental issues like depression. Social exclusion is adversely associated with mental health of migrants. Their loneliness is worsened by their inability to communicate or socialise with locals after the pandemic.

Lack of work and loss of jobs led to no financial means to take care of daily food expenses and this has resulted in high levels of anxiety and panic attacks among internal migrant workers. Due to Covid-19 migrant workers are also vulnerable to serious nervous breakdowns, depressive psychotic disorders and other psychological ill-effects. Social exclusion and inability to timely access the psychiatric services give rise to the peritraumatic psychological distress to internal migrants. The pandemic has also contributed to migrants' fear and psychological stress. The stressor is predominantly comprised of the uncertainty of the duration of lockdown, the uncertainty of jobs and the future, along with the fear of the spread of the pandemic.

Walking with the excluded migrants

Among the 'Four Universal Apostolic Preferences' (UAPs) of the Society of Jesus for 2019-2029, the second is 'To Walk with the Excluded'. It is to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice. It is to take a decisive path that promotes social justice and changes structures that generate injustice. It is a special mission to reach the unreached, and to accompany the least, the last and the lost ones of today, including the distress migrants.

Walking with the excluded in south Asia includes walking with indigenous peoples/Adivasis for their basic rights, walking with marginalised groups such as dalits, fisher folks, estate workers, tea garden workers, etc., and walking with refugees, distress migrants, forcefully displaced persons and victims of wars and human trafficking. It is to accompany distress migrants to live with dignity, rights and entitlements.

Ignatian year invites us Jesuits and collaborators to recommit ourselves to be contemplatives in action, to pay attention to how God is moving in our lives, and to respond to the needs of the world. It is a special vocation to be contemplatives in action discerning God's movements, responding out of love, and living as persons with and for others. Thus, walking with the excluded distress migrants in India is a manifestation of the recommitment of the Jesuits and their collaborators to accompany, serve and advocate the distress migrants.





JRS in Bangladesh Walks with the Rohingya Community, the Excluded

Rev. Fr. Jerry Raymond Gomes, SJ
Project Director, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Bangladesh.

(Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is founded in 1980 by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., the former General of the Society of Jesus. To give refugees some release from their sufferings was the original purpose. JRS programs, found in 56 countries worldwide, provide assistance to over 677,000 individuals. This service provision is overseen by 10 regional offices with support from the International Office in Rome. JRS Bangladesh is part of JRS South Asia Region. Several persons of JRS from the International Office, different regions visited in Rohingya camps including the catchment area of the projects located in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Responding to the request of the JRS South Asia Region, the Calcutta Province of the Society of Jesus provides his men to monitor and look after the projects. Fr Jeyaraj Veluswamy, SJ (served till March 2020) and Fr Francis Dore, SJ (served till November, 2020) were in this ministry in the initial phase. At present three JRS men serve in Bangladesh: Fr. Jerry Gomes, SJ (from October, 2019), Scholastic Roton Boidya, SJ (from December, 2020) and Scholastic Newton Tripura, SJ (from June, 2021). This article attempts to give a summary of the works done for four years with a special emphasis on the works done in 2021).

What Led JRS to Respond?

The Rohingya crisis event of 2017 led JRS to respond in collaboration with ERP (Emergency Response Programme) of CB (Caritas Bangladesh) to give the forcibly displaced Rohingyas some release from their sufferings. Cox's Bazar's Rohingya Camps of Bangladesh have become a long-term host to a steadily growing flow of forcibly displaced Rohingyas from the neighboring war-affected Rakhine state. Rohingya people were forced to flee to Bangladesh to seek refuge from oppression, discrimination, gender-based violence and other

serious human rights violations. The mass influx of 712,179 refugees from 25 August to 31 December 2017 caused a major humanitarian emergency. Of 880,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in 34 camps in the Cox's Bazar District, around half of whom were children who were in need of psycho-social support. The Bangladesh government shelters the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar camps on humanitarian grounds. The nature of camp's life that is temporary settlement. Movement of Rohingya families from one camp to another and outside the camp in some cases, results in fluctuation in number of project beneficiaries.

Initiation of Rohingya program in Bangladesh is an outcome of a long assessment of JRS team following the Rohingya crisis event of 2017. And the program has been going on for four years as more interventions and accompaniment are to be continued to attain the objectives of the programs the way it should be. Pope Francis' apostolic visit to Bangladesh (Nov. 30-Dec.3, 2017) was also an inspiration for JRS. During the interfaith meeting at Kakrail Catholic Church and the meeting with the Jesuits, the Pope said, 'The presence of God today is called Rohingya.'

Joint venture of JRS and CB

ERP of CB and JRS are happy to be partners for four years and years to come in accompanying the Rohingya Community in Bangladesh. Apart from funding and taking part in projects pertinent to Child Protection Sub-sector, JRS also funded for 223 solar lights inside camps and in host community in 2018. Other works included support to Shelter and Site improvement and support in staff and office development.

Thanks to JRS International Office for arranging donors like German Jesuit Mission, CHARIS Singapore and Silent

Foundation for funding the projects. Caritas Luxembourg supported to some extent in this regard till March, 2020 through the Foundation of Catholics of Luxembourg. And for the next two-years it would be Missio through the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation (KZE)/Misereor.

3200 Rohingya Children and Adolescents were served in 11 Centers

From 2018 to 2021, 3200 (1632 male and 1568 female) Rohingya children and adolescents were served in 11 CFS (Child Friendly Space)/MCA (MULTIPURPOSE CHILD & ADOLESCENT) Centers. Our projects reached out to project zone population including the Rohingya representatives, community leaders, parents, family members, expecting mothers, lactating mothers and youths. In 2018, the participants of 6 Centers located in camp 4 were served. From 2019 to 2021 (upto April), the participants of 11 Centers located in 3 camps were served. And from May 2021 to April 2022, the participants of 6 Centers located in Camp 4 are/will be served. And from June 2022 to April 2024, the participants of 8 Centers located in 2 camps are/will be served.

About Activities from May to October 2021

The time period of the project called CB-JRS MCAC Project was effective from May to October 2021. On account of second Covid19 wave, lockdown was imposed in the Rohingya refugee camps in the first week of April on orders of the Bangladesh Government. This report period was affected by the pandemic and lockdown coupled with calamities like heavy rain and flash flood in the camps which restricted regular project activities. Lockdown in camps was lifted from 10 September. All activities were permitted to operate in the camps gradually strictly adhering to the COVID-19 preventative measures. The Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Office's written letter of September 9, 2021 indicates that no group activity of more than 15 people is allowed. Vaccination in camps which started in the middle of

August helped to keep positive cases under control. As of 14 November, there were 3258 positive cases with 34 fatalities in camps. In the project catchment area, there were some positive cases, but the COVID-19 caused no fatality.

It is reported that several Rohingyas got killed as a result of internal conflicts among themselves. Because of these events ordinary Rohingyas living in camps don't feel safe there. The Government of Bangladesh insists that Rohingyas should repatriate to Myanmar¹. NGOs are expected to motivate the Rohingyas to repatriate.

Rohingyas are very often victims of fire incidence and natural calamities in camps. According to Sandra Zanotti, head of mental health activities at Doctors Without Borders (MSF), this "is contributing to existing mental health problems," as new griefs have been added due to the loss of family and friends².

Rohingyas are given refuge in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char Island, Noakhali³. The maximum capacity of Bhashan Char is one lakh. Life on isolated island is difficult⁴. According to UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees (Protection), Rouf Mazou, "Bangladesh government has made important investment in Bhasan Char. If you compare with Cox's Bazar, housing facilities are much better in Bhasan Char."⁵.

The foreign minister of Bangladesh said on 4 October that the Government will take tougher steps to prevent drugs smuggling, illegal arms and human trafficking along the Bangladesh-Myanmar boarder line, and warned of firing shots if necessary⁶.

In 2017, the host community was generous in giving food and accommodation to the Rohingyas. But increasingly they are becoming hostile to them for various reasons. Besides, with regard to Rohingya programs the project approval was easier earlier. The Governments imposes more restrictions than before in camps as its priority is repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

As the present project is related to protection and psycho-social support, the events mentioned above have negatively affected our activities. In spite of different challenges, all the program activities were addressed.

1. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2021/09/23/pm-hasina-global-inaction-over-rohingya-repatriation-shocks-bangladesh>
2. <https://thedi diplomat.com/2021/09/the-invisible-wounds-of-the-rohingya/>
3. <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/runaway-rohingyas-police-arrest-28-more-300313>
4. <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/bangladesh-detains-24-more-rohingya-fleeing-remote-island-3581383>
5. <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/bhasan-char-much-better-coxs-bazar-camps-un-delegation-2103457>
6. (<https://www.unb.com.bd/index.php/category/bangladesh/foreign-minister-talks-tough-against-smuggling-along-bangladesh-myanmar-border/80026>)

The important external actors in Rohingya response program in Bangladesh include the Government of Bangladesh - Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), the Executive Magistrates: Camp in Charge (CiCs) and the Assistant Camp in Charge (ACiC), the Rohingya Community and NGOs in different domains inside the camps coordinated by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG).

From the organizational point of view, the CB-JRS MCAC Project is a project of CB. The project follows all the CB guidelines, policies and concepts. Caritas Bangladesh (CB) is a social arm of the Catholic Church in Bangladesh (established 1972), mandated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB)⁷.

JRS BD team members are missioned to look after the training, monitoring and evaluating the projects. JRS is a partner of CB in JRS funded projects of CB. In 2021, the new MoU was signed by CB and JRS. The MoU stated that the project should be implemented jointly both by CB and JRS.

JRS' Priorities (Reconciliation, Mental Health & Psychosocial Support, Education & Livelihoods and Advocacy) incorporated into program activities especially while conducting sessions in the camps.⁸

One important work is to ensure the social, emotional and cognitive aspects of Rohingya children are improved. We conducted sessions using Essence of Learning approach for the children (4 - 12 years), also regularly teach them to practice proper hygiene to prevent COVID-19. EoL's child friendly education, ECD, Psycho-social Support (PSS) and community engagement is incorporated into the Project. The CB-JRS Project is inspired by Caritas-Switzerland's child friendly education of Essence of Learning approach, PSS and community engagement⁹. Beatrice Rutishauser Ramm developed this approach and found that EoL approach is relevant for the children living in Bangladesh Rohingya camps. In her opinion, EoL approach helps children to overcome mental distress. Drawing inspiration from the EoL approach, the project has developed it's the child developmental stages with some modifications. Target for EoL sessions was 1 session for 1 child per week. The target was achieved. For adolescents, there were sessions on life-skills. Target for life-skills sessions was 1 session per week for every adolescent.

The target was achieved. For adolescents, vocational training was also provided. Target for life-skills sessions was 3 sessions per week for every adolescent. The target was achieved.

Another important work was case-management. The project is also inspired by The Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Intervention Pyramid developed by Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and modified it accordingly. Technical Officer (Case Management) and Caseworkers deal with the 6 forms meant for Child case management (which are related to 1. Identification and Registration, 2. Assessment, 3. Case Planning, 4. Implementation of the case plan, 5. Follow up and review, and 6. Case Closure). Case-management categorizes cases, prioritize cases as high-risk, medium-risk and low-risk, and gives PSS to the participants of the catchment area accordingly.

Children without appropriate care, children abandoned, children associated with arm forces and arm groups, trafficked children, children involved in sexual activities /suffered from sexual abuse, children neglected, children with early marriage, children with worst forms of child labor are high priority cases. Children with gangs' activities, facing discrimination, without legal documents, suffering from minor physical abuse, in conflict with the law, distressed with protection concerns and in child labor are medium priority cases. Children dropped out from school, in extremely poor families, living with elderly/vulnerable caregivers, being isolated and without friends, with disability, as orphans are low priority cases. This year, the target was achieved in the sense of fulfilling the requirements according to the demands. 262 cases were identified. 390 Cases were followed up. 116 cases were referred. 15 lost children were found and reunited. 15 Family Tracing reunification legal support cases are closed. 1717 are given basic psycho-social support. 219 are given Psychological First Aid support.

The Project also used the Washington Group Questions developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics¹⁰ in order to identify Children with Disability followed by giving PSS to them following case-management procedure. The type of disabilities identified includes both mental and physical disabilities. Their age ranges from 5 to 16. 11 of them are male and 10 of them female. They are regularly visited and given regular psycho-social support through case-management. The target was achieved.

7. (<https://caritasbd.org/>)

8. For more information, please visit: https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JRS-Strategic-Framework_English-1.pdf.

9. For more information, please visit: https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JRS-Strategic-Framework_English-1.pdf

10. (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/washington_group/WG_Short_Measure_on_Disability.pdf)

General information of Beneficiaries from May-2021 to October-2021:

Objective/Expected Result	Stakeholder	Male	Female	Total
Objective/result-1: The social, emotional and cognitive aspects of Rohingya children (birth -12 yrs.) are improved.	Children (4-12 yrs.)	709	630	1339
	Support to differently-abled children/ children with disabilities	10	11	21
Objective/result-2: The adolescents (12+ to 18 years) are able to protect themselves from exploitation, abuse, neglect, violence, discrimination including from COVID 19 and become resourceful by developing their potential skills.	Adolescents	86	94	180
Objective/result-3: Rohingya children at heightened protection risk including COVID19 are identified and addressed.	Cases in hand till 31 Oct-2021	78	50	128
Objective/result-4: Parents and communities address child protection issues including COVID19 using their increased knowledge and skills.	Enlisted parents, social & religious leaders & youths	348	252	600
Different groups are formed from indirect beneficiaries known as caregivers to ensure child protection	Youths	42	42	84
	Parents	120	150	270
	Child Protection Committee	36	30	66
	Social & religious leaders	90	00	90
	Central Management Committee	60	30	90
Total		348	252	600
%		58	42	100
Indirect beneficiaries including caregivers		5263	6044	11307
%		47	53	100
Direct beneficiaries	4-12 years	709	630	1339
	12+-18 years	90	90	180
	Total	799	720	1519
	%	52%	48%]	100
Total beneficiaries (Direct and Indirect)		6062	6764	12826
%		47	53	100

It is good to know that direct participants of results 1 and 2 were divided into four groups based on their age group. They are called Rose (+4 to 6), Orange (+6 to 9), Pigeon (+9 to 12) and Star (+12 to 18). Nearly 60% direct participants and 40% indirect participants of the catchment area are benefitted by Case-management of result 3. Indirect participants are mainly served through result 4 and cross-cutting issues. They are Rohingya youths, parents, Child Protection Committee, Social & religious leaders and Central Management Committee. There were 3 sessions with youths. And for other

groups, there a session in every month. These groups ensured community engagement. Steps were taken for their capacity building. Real heroes of this project were 30 Rohingya volunteers because of giving constant accompaniment to our beneficiaries.

Grateful to Those Who Served the Project

A total of 17 local staff [male 9 (including 3 JRS members) and 8 females] and 30 Rohingya volunteers (17 males and 13

females) from the Rohingya community directly served in the project. Besides, there were nearly 25 indirect staff members of CB (of its three offices) were indirectly involved in the project.

Conclusion

Both CB and JRS represent the perspective of the Catholic Church about forcibly displaced people. May this meeting point bind us together. The partnership of CB and JRS also has paved the way for quality projects though there are areas for more improvements. This bond has led to the sustainability of

our achievements even if they may look so much invisible. Issues like psycho-social support though not very visible; it is very much rewarding and relevant. Our beneficiaries appreciate our activities as these promote human dignity and empowerment. There is no doubt that the achievements of the projects would sustain even donation discontinues and Rohingyas repatriate. Joint venture of JRS and CB in accompanying the Rohingya brothers and sisters in spite of the pandemic is another expression about the sustainability of our programs. JRS' refugee friendly approach may help us to journey towards an ever wider "we".



Children are taking part in the Drawing session at the MCAC.



Ray of Hope to the Broken World

Rev. Sr. Sheeja, AC
Apostolic Carmel, Asha Deep Trust.

They are no more criminals whom the world has rejected; they are no more depressed whose heart is heavy with stored up dark realities. They are no more tortoise-like creatures who fear and hide their heads in the presence of the human being. A ray of hope reaches out to them through the iron bars of the central jails, now known as Correctional Homes. Correctional home activities is one of the most moving and loving activity that is carried out by Asha Deep Trust of Apostolic Carmel Sisters. The most beautiful thing of all the good works, that moves the heart of many is their service rendered in the correctional homes of the West Bengal.

The presence of Asha Deep within the four mighty walls makes a difference, especially the Alipore Women's Correctional Home. It gives a great relief to the broken hearted mothers and sisters, whose situations once marked their fate. The occupational and cultural therapy introduced in the correctional homes make them worthy of living. They are given training to different activities like tailoring, knitting, handicraft, cord bag making and fabric painting to occupy themselves, a shift from their dark world of depression, frustration and the prick of conscience. It gives them a meaning to their life where they earn something for their children, family or for themselves, so they too experience a spark of human dignity. Above all the presence of Sr. Alexia, the Director of Asha Deep brings smiles and joy to the people there, who lean over to her and open up their hearts, pouring out their problems. It was heart touching to see the inmates run towards her like children towards their mother and hug her as soon as they saw her, pulls her by the hand to show their fruits of hard works, the cloths they stitched, the saris they painted, the bags they made, with great joy and satisfaction. She and her staff have been an inspiration for

them to live on, who try to counsel them, who try to bridge their relationship with the families, who takes care of their children and their education at home, who gives them a shelter in their own house when they are out in parole or holidays.

The inmates are able to earn something from these skill training and production. Whatever item they produce are sold during the Mela organised by the prison department and sold outside whenever possible and the amount is sent to their account (every prisoner have an account in the prison) which is kept with the jailor. With these earning some of them educate their children, some fight their own cases and others spent it for any other needs in their families. The inmates feel happy that they too are earning something and feel great to be of some help to their families even though they are inside the correctional home.

Most often it is the family of the prisoners that are suffering the social stigma and the pain. So family visit is one of the major areas that are covered by Asha Deep. The family visit helps in bridging the gap between the prisoner and the family and also to see to the education of the children who have become dropouts due to social stigma and financial crisis. Asha Deep helps in putting these children back to school and some of them are placed in their own Carmel school without others knowing it except the principal.

Not only the women but also the men in the correctional homes feel the presence of Asha Deep very much. For them Asha Deep is a channel of communication with their own families, giving constant support and strengthening the hope to the one inside and to the burning hearts outside. It is a joy to note that in the men's Central Correctional Home the

respect and trust that the inmates as well as the authorities had for Sr. Alexia, the backbone of Asha Deep Trust and her group. Their loving and caring approach to the unwanted souls, showering the fragrance of gospel values of love and peace all around regardless of male or female, black or white, behind the bars make the big difference.

Through the activities like occupational therapy, taking care of the children of inmates and their education, training programmes, awareness programmes, counselling, adult education, rehabilitation and cultural programmes like singing course, celebrations and competitions the Asha Deep

keeps the ray of hope still shining in the dark and wounded hearts of many men, women and children in and around five correctional homes.

The name "Asha Deep" completely match with the works it carries out, giving out ray of hope to hundreds of people especially women and children in and around Kolkata, the city of Blessed Theresa who lit the light of hope and joy for many thousands of broken hearts. We hope and pray that Asha Deep Trust, continue to be a great source of hope, shining like the sun extending its powerful rays to thousands who are in need.



Tailoring inside
the correctional Home



Tailoring inside
the correctional Home



Hand work on sarees



Tailoring inside
the women correctional Home



Educating the children
with love and care



Products are being
sold during Mela



Sports organised inside
the correctional Home



Christmas celebration inside
the correctional Home



A Challenging Mission to Serve Young Girls and Women in Exploitation!

Rev. Sr. Chandbibi Pradhan, AASC

Adorers Sister working for the poor girls and women in red light areas in Kolkata.

Pedagogy of Loving Service

Adorers believe in the pedagogy of Love and announce to the world that change is possible in the lives of the young women and girls in prostitution, which otherwise seems impossible. It is through love and humane gaze that we want to help in healing their past identity.

One of the very first gestures shown to the girls/woman is a warm welcome. A special welcome, care and accompaniment is given as the girls arrive at the centre. As they arrive with lots of painful experiences we provide them our listening ears with a non-judgmental attitude. In our dealings with the girls we try to offer the girls unconditional support, the same attitude of the Jesus who encountered the Samaritan woman and woman caught in adultery. The relationship that we thus build is one of trust and acceptance, respect, understanding and kindness with a non-judgemental attitude. We also care for their physical, emotional and spiritual well being.

My experience in working with girls and women in exploitation

I would like to divide my experience in three categories namely PRIVILEGE, LEARNING AND THE CHALLENGES.

Experience as a privilege

I tenderly recall each of the experiences with deep sentiment of Love and kindness. And I call my experience as a PRIVILEGE. The very mission of our Congregation inspired and encouraged me to enter into the zone that is looked-down upon, is less talked and labelled. The Congregation has played a vital role in enabling me to carry out the noble task

for the most vulnerable group of the society. I consider it to be the most fortunate person in getting into the lives of our women and girls who are helpless, dejected and traumatised in every way. I believe and take it as a special gift from God, who has led me to encounter his suffering countenance through these women and girls.

Secondly as a woman, I feel blessed to be able to show solidarity with the women, who are exploited, rejected, dehumanised and personality distorted. I do not consider myself superior to them in any way rather feel humbled to get this privilege to know and accompany them with love and respect, listening to their excruciating pain. It was easy for the women to relate to me due to unconditional acceptance and support they receive. And I am happy to be with them, helping them in their re-reading of their history and finding ways and means for healing.

Thirdly, As a follower of Christ I feel I am entrusted with the care for the lost sheep for whom Jesus the Good shepherd laid down his life on the Calvary. I see it as a great privilege in taking part in the mission of Christ the Good Shepherd himself who left the ninety-nine behind and went to look for the one strayed. Every time I encountered them, I was in deep pain and left speechless.

Experience as Learning

Every person, every situation leaves remarkable lessons. Whether they are good or bad, it depends on the attitude of the receiver. For me being with the women of our mission is a great and positive learning. Knowing them very personally, I feel they teach me a lot through their life. I admire their



Experience as a Challenge

Working for the women of our mission is a great challenge. Specially venturing into such places with single handed is difficult because of the operation of gungs, pimbsand sex racketeers.

First and foremost it is very difficult to build trust with the women as they have been repeatedly misled and cheated by all. It takes long time to build real trust with us. In my dealing with the women and girls it had been a great challenge to build confidence and trust to enable them to heal their wounds.

To get into their various problems and find solution: Every human being looks for solutions to his or her problems, no

one is exempted from it. Working with the women and girls of our mission I have experienced they have bundles of problems. They are into various problems like physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial difficulties. It is so complex. When each individual has such a lot of difficulties, it becomes very tough to bring them out of that situation. Solution to their different problem only through net-working with various to bring a healing touch to their past experience and enable them to see a new meaning in their life.

tremendous HOPE IN HOPELESS situations. The Clients treat them in-human ways, there are those who cheat them and harass them, there are the 'gharwalis' who extract from them excess amount; after having lost their dignity still they rise up and continue their lives. Though their stories are agonizing and inhuman yet I see them strong and brave to face life. Even in the greatest pain they will never abandon their children rather they give their best to them. They may be vulnerable in the eyes of the society but within they are tough people who keep their hope high and never fail to wish for a better tomorrow.

I have experienced women of these groups are very friendly. Again one can think, these women are angry, depressed and rebellious; they may be at times due to the hostile situations, but they are deeply sympathetic and friendly. They can't bear the pain of the other. They remain united and stand together to help relieve the pain and difficulties of other. They are as much human and kind.

They highly appreciate and are very grateful when one does any good to them. A young girl was rescued form the place and given education and she told me, 'Had you not come after me and rescued, I would have been lost forever.'



Biggest challenge is to rehabilitate them completely. Women coming out from red-light areas always wish to hide their identity. They are not accepted by the so called “good people”. I have several examples where women expressed about their difficulties in working in the houses as maid servant or in any other works. Most of them experience rejection, disrespect and non-acceptance. They have a desire to live a dignified life but they are segregated and labelled always. Arranging marriage for their children becomes extremely difficult unless someone generous comes on his own to find a match.

Challenges are many and following them from day one till the complete rehabilitation is a very huge task. Only God can

intervene in the lives of the women and bring about change. And I firmly believe in the past God walked with our dearest Mother St. Maria Micaela to rescue the women held in prostitution and today He continues to walk with us her daughters, the Sisters Adorers to fulfil His mission of searching and saving these our marginalized sisters in our midst.

This mission is being carried out in four continents today. And In India we have two provinces, Mumbai and Kolkata.

FOR ME, THE DESIRE TO SAVE SOULS IS LIKE A SPUR STUCK IN MY HEART. (St. Maria Micaela)





My life with the Beautiful Buds

Rev. Sr. Beena Das, SCC
Director, Navjeevan (Home for Street Children), Kolkata.

"Let us reach out to the children. Let us do whatever we can to support their fight to rise above their pain and suffering." Nelson Mandela.

I work with children from the streets of Kolkata in Navjeevan a charitable home of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod. It is not everyone's cup of tea, yet God has given all a heart to feel and love.

You and I are the luckiest ones because we had/have the basics of life, have parents who could afford the basics, health and education to know and enjoy life as created. We had the best of schools and medication unlike many unfortunate children of the world. Getting into such children's feelings and having a personal care for them to fulfill their dream is the demand in this field.

The children are with lot of energy and talent, at times complicated in their behaviour. Understanding them is a challenge and if that is done the life intended to serve becomes beautiful. Their mood swings need to be patiently understood and adjusted. Caring for them is not easy, day and night, in sickness and wellness, tired or sleepy one needs to be ready to meet their needs and serve them. They cannot be blamed for any of their actions, they too go through a lot of insecurity and adjustments with us when they come in with us and the system.

Each one is a bundle of capacity beyond what you and I can think of; given a chance they are the best. I have seen children



fighting all odds to rise above to stand on their feet in the society. They want us to be doing persons and not ordering persons. Their energy level is high when they have something to challenge and live.

Children are given the prime focus in Navjeevan and all that we do are concerning them. We need to accompany them with extra eyes, ears & mind and identify their struggle to cope with tough studies which they are not much interested in and the discipline that we intend to impart to them. Sometimes the home is like a cage to them, the street gave them freedom to where their mind would take but the home doesn't. Their movements are often based on the vibration they receive and experience from among the people they live and move with. They make us think, they make us creative, they make us grow and awaken the life in us. When I want rest they teach me sacrifice, when I think of being with myself they invite me to be with all, when I want to cry they call me to

laugh, they are demanding and they are simply lovely. Their life is a lesson to be learnt and daily they teach us a lot and shape our life. In fact we are polished by them to live our committed life in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ.

They have made me realise what a mother is and how a mother should be. They have awakened the motherhood in me and I play the role of a mother to them. Working with and for them is a joy with lot of struggle and challenge. If I can make a drop of change in a child's life, that becomes a great success for me. I don't have anything but just the goodwill and optimistic attitude towards them. God has blessed me and let me be a blessing to others.

Through this ministry both we and the children are learning to become better HUMAN BEING and that is the beauty of it. God bless all our children in and out there. Merry Christmas to All.

500th Anniversary of the Cannonball Moment of St. Ignatius of Loyola



Five hundred years ago, St. Ignatius of Loyola experienced an event that would change the course of his life... and the world. As a young soldier in the Spanish army, Ignatius dreamed of fame and glory. But everything changed when he was suddenly and gravely injured by a cannonball while in battle at Pamplona. While in recovery, Ignatius experienced a spiritual conversion and immediately decided to make a change: he found a new sense of purpose and set out to establish the Society of Jesus.



Children of a Lesser God...are they?

Dr. Panchali Sen

Dean (ISP) & Associate Professor, Department of Political Science,
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata.

For St. Ignatius, God is Creator and Lord, Supreme Goodness, the one 'Reality' that is absolute; all other reality comes from God and has value only insofar as it leads us to God. God is present in our lives, "laboring for us" in all things. He can be discovered, through faith, in all natural and human events, in history as a whole, and most especially within the lived experience of each individual person.

Jesuit education is world-affirming, it assists in the total formation of each individual within the human community. It is an apostolic instrument, promoting dialogue between faith and culture. It acknowledges God as the Author of all reality, all truth and all knowledge. Jesuit education, therefore, affirms the radical goodness of the world and it regards every element of creation as worthy of study and contemplation, capable of endless exploration.

Each man or woman is personally known and loved by God. This love invites a response which, to be authentically human, must be an expression of a radical freedom. Therefore, in order to respond to the love of God, each person is called to be free to give of oneself, while accepting responsibility for and the consequences of one's actions - free to labor with others in the service of the Kingdom of God for the healing of creation.

Growth in terms of the responsible use of freedom is facilitated by the personal relationship between student and teacher. Teachers and administrators, both Jesuit and lay, are more than academic guides. They are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of every student, helping each one to develop a sense of self-worth and to become a responsible individual within the community. While they respect the privacy of students, they are ready to listen to

their cares and concerns about the meaning of life, to share their joys and sorrows, to help them with personal growth and interpersonal relationships. In these and other ways, the adult members of the educational community guide students in their development of a set of values leading to life decisions that go beyond 'self' - that include a concern for the needs of others. They try to live in a way that offers an example to the students and they are willing to share their own life experiences. "Cura Personalis" (concern for the individual person) remains a basic characteristic of Jesuit education.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. However people with disabilities all over the world experience human rights violations, stigma and discrimination. To have a disability means that one has fundamental difficulty accomplishing things that others take for granted. There are many social factors that can affect whether or not individuals with disabilities are included or excluded from participation in various activities, which in turn can affect development or esteem. Disability is thus just not a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

Disability is a contested concept, with different meanings of different communities. It may be used to refer to physical or mental attributes that some institutions, particularly medicine, view as needing to be fixed. It may refer to limitations imposed on people by the constraints of an able society. People with disabilities have the same health needs as non-disabled people for immunizations, cancer screening and so on.

The Convention on the Rights of the Disabled is an international human rights treaty of the United Nations

intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. In the Charter of the United Nations it is proclaimed that the inherent dignity and worth and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Similarly, the United Nations, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights presupposes that the Convention would make a significant contribution to redressing the profound social disadvantage of persons with disabilities and promote their participation in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres with equal opportunities, in both developing and developed countries.

These days, persons with disabilities are mostly referred to as 'differently abled', the term being created by the U.S. Democratic National Committee as an alternative to "handicapped." Dating back to the 1980's, the website goes on to say that: The motivation seems to have been both a genuine attempt to view the people previously called handicapped in a more positive light and also a need to be seen as politically correct. However, some have seen the label as a euphemistic attempt to disguise the difficulties experienced by people who have serious physical or mental handicaps.

The situation of differently-abled children

It is considered that around 150 million children in the world live with a disability; 80% of them live in developing countries. Most often, these children do not receive necessary treatment and most of them are discriminated.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in the year 1989 is the first international treaty that contained a specific reference to disability; its article No. 2 is dedicated to non-discrimination of children with disabilities. There is also a separate article No. 23, which dedicates itself to the same concern.

There are numerous causes of disability. It is unfortunately true that most of these instances could have been avoided had they been provided with proper prevention and access to relevant treatment. Indeed, a disability is mainly caused by: Genetic problems, Disease (Polio for example), Malnutrition, War, Sanitary neglect, Poverty.

According to the Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (in India), 'Disability' means i. Blindness; ii. Low vision; iii. Leprosy-cured; iv. Hearing impairment; v. Locomotor disability; vi. Mental retardation; vii. Mental illness.

The inevitable consequences are –

Social marginalization - lack of access to education.

Violence - an increasing risk of disabled children becoming unfortunate victims of violence due to their inability to defend themselves. Thus, physical, psychological and emotional violence happens to be a sad reality that disabled children undergo in domestic, institutional as well as social circles. Unfortunately, in certain countries, a physical or psychological handicap could also be the cause of infanticide following the social and financial burden disabled children put on their family.

Discrimination due to disability

Discrimination due to disability is numerous: in fields such as education, lodging, transportation and cultural life, most of the places and services concerned are largely inaccessible to individuals suffering from disabilities. The obstacles are numerous, be it physical (buildings which cannot be accessed by individuals on wheelchairs), institutional (the lack of qualified staff, for example professional sign language interpreters), or even obstacles that simply stem from intolerance.

Even in developed countries, one could observe a certain discrimination which affects disabled children: they are most often separated from other children, kept in special institutions away from the family, in special classes, etc. Thus, the opportunity of integrating into society and later finding an employment becomes impossible.

Policies in India

The Government of India formulated the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in February 2006 to deal with the physical, educational and economic rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The National Policy recognises the Persons with Disabilities as valuable human resources for the country and seeks to create an environment that provides them equal opportunities, protection of their rights and full participation in society. Some of the aspects which the policy focuses on are:

1) Prevention of Disabilities 2) Rehabilitation Measures 3) Women with disabilities 4) Children with disabilities.

There has been an increasing recognition of abilities of persons with disabilities and emphasis on mainstreaming them in the society based on their capabilities. The Government of India has enacted three legislations for persons with disabilities viz. (i) Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which provides for education, employment,



creation of barrier-free environment, social security, etc. (ii) National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999, has provisions for legal guardianship of the four categories and creation of enabling environment for as much independent living as possible. (iii) Rehabilitation Council of

India Act, 1992, which deals with the development of manpower for providing rehabilitation services.

The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. It fulfills the obligations to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.

December 3 is marked by the UN as International Day of Persons with Disabilities in a bid to promote a more inclusive and accessible world for the differently-abled and to raise awareness for their rights. The 2011 census in India estimated that the number of people with disabilities is close to 2.68 crore (or 2.2% of the population) — that is more than the entire population of Australia.

Like other disadvantaged groups, the disabled in India are entitled to some benefits, ranging from reservation in educational institutes to concessions on railway tickets. To claim these benefits, they have to furnish certificates as proof of disability. At the macro level, data on the prevalence and type of disability is useful while making allocations for welfare schemes.

Among the female disabled persons, 55% are illiterate. This number rose amidst COVID-19 where the number of female dropouts increased as most families could not sustain education due to unemployment. The Central Government on the other hand was trying its best with campaigns such as Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao that encouraged the education of the girl child. The Government must look at various aspects from the point of view of encouraging and empowering females who are differently abled or girls with a certain percentage of disability. All differently - abled individuals, especially women, must create a consortium through social communities to come together and create opportunities for those who seek them. This can be funded by institutions and large corporates.

“Together with our friends and the whole Church, the universal Society [of Jesus] wants to remember that privileged moment when the Holy Spirit inspired Ignatius of Loyola in his decision to follow Christ, and to deepen our understanding of this pilgrim way in order to draw fruit from it”.

*- Rev. Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ
Superior General of the Society of Jesus*



Walking with the Poor

Sch. Oscar Daniel, SJ
Student of Theology, Vidyajyoti, Delhi.

'Is there any relevance of Religious life today?' was asked by a religious nun in one of the seminars on 'Consecrated Life' which took place in JDV in Pune (2016). Fr. George Pattery SJ, the spokesperson of the seminar, responded to her question saying, 'It is very much relevant today if you keep in touch with the ground reality of the society (unwanted, the neglected, the marginalized and the destitute.)' The world is a like a circle which gives a place for everyone and everything to live. Human beings in their journey of life make circle of friends, relatives and march ahead in their life. The humanity circle can get bigger and bigger but it can never become humane unless and until it includes and incorporates the poor in the same circle. Walking with the poor is the cry of the humanity in today's context. They are excluded because they are exploited. They have become objects in the hands of the powerful. It is high time to wake up, walk ahead and win against injustice which is prevalent in our society. There is a saying, 'we live in a strange world where the poor walks miles to get food, and the rich walks miles to digest food.'

After going through several months of deep discernment, Fr. Arturo Sosa SJ, the superior General of the Society of Jesus came up with the Universal Apostolic Preferences: showing the way to God, walking with the poor, journeying with the youth and care for common home. These four preferences reflect the past, alarms the present and set the tone for the future. These shortlisted preferences recall the experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits and his companions. Our founding fathers met the need of the poor and the suffering in their life in the mission of the Church. The Church is always known for thinking globally and acting locally. All are called to integrate the message of the gospel in the context of the ground reality in the surrounding. Apostolic preferences orient the Jesuits to recollect, rebuild and renew

our vision and mission towards the transformation of the society. Vision means tomorrow but the mission means today. Our vision is the goal but the mission is the action that we take today.

Pope Francis says that we are called to draw near to the poor, to encounter them, to meet their gaze, to embrace them, and to let them feel the warmth of love that breaks through their solitude. Jesuits from all over the world have engaged themselves in uplifting the poor in various ways in accordance with the context of that particular area. Bengal Jesuits work among the Santals. Who are these 'Santals'? Santals are the largest tribe in India and Santali is their language which is the widely spoken among the Munda languages. They are spread all over India especially in the States of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. They are simple, efficient agriculturists and excellent hunters. Dance and art are part of their culture and tradition and it is inbuilt in their nature. The first born in the family is given the name of his grandfather in order to transmit the tradition. Santals are divided into twelve clans. Marriage between the same clan is verboten. Their history is actually a history of struggle with their environment to survive and to keep their culture active. At times, their simple nature was exploited by the land lords and other employers.

We have seven Santal Mission centers, thanks to our forefathers namely Fr. Siluvai Francis, Fr. Mongal Das, Fr. Aloysius Carvalho, Fr. Ernst Albert, Fr. De Cocq Jean Pierre and many others who toiled in the soil and sacrificed their life for this mission. Their contribution towards this mission is incredible. 'Udayani' is a social forum in our province which is totally committed to the mission among Santals. The nature of the ministry is to fight for social justice, to empower and to educate the needy. Numerous awareness programmes are

organized and self-help group is created among them in order to enable them to stand on their feet. Udayani through many meetings conscientizes the people of their basic rights. Santals are not born poor. They became poor because their basic rights are deprived and they are exploited. What aggravates the life of Santals is the absence of human dignity. They are underprivileged of education, right to food, electricity, road, water and so on. The society in which we all live, gives privileges the privileged and undermines the underprivileged. Thus 'Udayani' is a call to privilege the underprivileged, to emancipate the downtrodden and to foster the feeble. We are not only called to walk with the poor but also to walk the talk.

During my novitiate, (i.e., the second stage of formation for the Jesuits) for a month I stayed at one of the Santal families at Gurap, West Bengal. Being with them for a month broadened and widened my understanding of their culture, tradition and the way of life. I was touched by the unity and the caring attitude of the villagers. I went with them to work every morning to the paddy field. In the course of the time, I learnt that generations after generations they have been working under the Zamindars. Initially, all the lands belonged the Santals but due to many difficult circumstances Santals had to borrow money from the Zamindars. When they were unable to pay the high interest the landlords confiscated their land. Since then the Santals have become mere care takers of the land. The agreement between the two parties is that Santals have to invest money in the cropping and whatever they harvest, half of it will go to the landlords. In many of the families, children are already trapped to be slaves of these Zamindars at an early age itself. These children and their family can never come out of this ongoing struggle. Where is the humanity here? It is a crime to exploit the poor. Their slavery and hardship are similar to that of the Israelites who struggled under many rulers. The Lord our God continues to listen to the cry of these people. Just as He sent Moses to rescue them from the bondage of slavery, He is sending all of us to uplift the lives of our Santal brethren. We are not mere silent spectators. Like Fr. Stan Swamy, we must be involved in this process of liberation and emancipation. There is a big networking system which has enveloped the lives of the Santals in darkness. We are called to break this network and build the humanity. Humanity is not about living together but live for one another loving and caring. Equality and Justice pave a way for that.

In the current scenario, consumerism and the digital culture have disrupted the relationships between the people creating

a gap between them. GC 34, d.26, no.548 says that today, whatever ministry we do, we, the Jesuits enter into solidarity with the poor, the marginalized and the voiceless, in order to enable their participation in the processes that shape the society in which we all live and work. They, in their turn, teach us about our own poverty as no document can. They help us to understand the meaning of the gratuity of our ministries, giving freely what we have freely received, giving our very lives. They show us the way to inculturate Gospel values in situations where God is forgotten. Through such solidarity we become 'agent of inculturation.' There is a lack of solidarity with the unwanted and the uncared people. Santals are very much situated in this context. They are not fully incorporated among the other humans. every human is supposed to be feeling solidarity with the suffering but in today's context there is an absolute absence of solidarity. It is because of the arrival of new ideologies. People are carried away by the culture of individualism, materialism, consumerism and egocentrism which have weakened the social bonds, fuelling that 'throw away' mentality which leads to contempt for, and the abandonment of the weakest. (Message of Pope Francis at World Day of Peace in 2014) All are created to care and share with one another but the social context has changed today. St. Ignatius and his followers did not neglect the poor. Though they served the powerful they looked into the need of the powerless. They rendered their service among the poor who were lying on the street and enabled the people who were victimized by the plague. Every follower of Ignatius must stand in solidarity with the poor who are longing to see Christ in others. It is not about thinking conceptually— rather stretch our hands towards them in fulfilling their needs.

At times, the poor are excluded from the society as if they are part of the humanity. To eradicate such systems, we cannot live in a comfort zone and do little social service. We are not just social workers. We are called to go beyond. We are meant to contextualize the gospel today. One needs to read and analyze the society issues and contextualize with the gospel. This is a long process in which we bring the ministry of Jesus alive and active in our context today. This is not just about relieving the poor from current problems but one must produce sustainable solution. The question which must linger in our ears always is, 'What Jesus would have done if he were to be here?'

Being silent in the midst of persecution is a violent act. Social issues must disturb us. Yet, a vast majority of us is silent. We must be agitated to do something about it. Being rich is not a sin but does one share the table with the poor? Does one



stand with the poor? This is where the problem lies. Getting involved in the process and participating in the struggle for justice is the first step in liberating the poor. Our fear must kill us rather kick start our fight against the exploitation. We are called to closely look at the social issues in the light of the Gospel. Pope John Paul XXIII urges the Church in the Vatican II that the Church is for all the people especially for the poor. Walking with the poor calls us to have an experience of conversion which is personal and communal. In this journey, we are called to imitate the life style of Jesus who is fully human and fully divine. Fr. Valan Anthony SJ who teaches scripture at Vidyajyoti, Delhi says, 'Gospels can give lived experience if one reads it in the slum.' Jesus' ministry with the least, the lost and the last must be carried on in the society. His ministry was not limited to a particular section of the society but was for everyone. Luke narrates the beautiful parables of a Samaritan woman and the ten lepers who were segregated from the society. Jesus breaks the order. Jesus was radical in his approach. He went out of his way to help the needy. He looked for the last and the lost sheep. His approach was universal. Walking with the poor is a Universal call. Each and every one of us is expected to respond to this universal call. If we walk before the poor they may lose the way and if we walk after the poor we may not understand their struggle.

Therefore the Society of Jesus is urging us to walk with the poor so that we share the suffering and shoulder the mission to raise the voice for the voiceless. I would like to end my article with a poem, 'Poor Who' by Bhawana Bhowmik.

Poor Who?

Poor Who?

The man on the road, Begging

Collecting daily necessities.

The man in Mercedes,

Managing industries can't let go.

Poor who?

The stranger walking up to me

On a sturdy morning

Asking nothing but

The extra belongings.

Poor who?

The children running naked

The help an elderly.

The educated woman watching

Thinking what an absurdity.

Poor Who?





Five Pillars of Islam

Mr. Firdausul Hasan

Honorary Secretary

St. Xavier's College Calcutta Alumni Association (SXCCAA).

The word Islam means to surrender to the divine will. Central to the Islamic faith are the essential duties and practices known as the Five Pillars of Islam. These are:

- the profession of faith (*shahada*)
- the duty to perform five daily prayers or *salat*
- the obligation to provide alms or *zakat*
- fasting during the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar)
- pilgrimage to Mecca or *hajj*

THE SHAHADA

The profession of faith is known as the *shahada*. It is the prerequisite for membership in the Muslim community and an affirmation of the faith. Muslims are required to profess this in public at least once in their lifetime, but most Muslims recite it daily as part of their prayers. In Arabic, the *shahada* is, "*Ashhadu al-la ilahaiilla-llah was ashhadu anna Muhammadar rasulu-llah*" ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.")

It is not enough to merely utter the Shahadah for it to be accepted by Allah. It is believed to be the key to the gates of Paradise and in order for it to work, it needs to have the right conditions.

The Shahadah must meet the following conditions for it to be accepted by Allah:

1. Knowledge

One must have knowledge that Allah is the supreme being

worthy of worship. Followers of Islam should not worship other deities. Allah is the only one who deserves all types of worship, such as *salah* (prayer), *du`aa'* (supplication), hope, sacrificial slaughtering, making oaths, etc.

2. Certainty

One must have certainty in the Shahadah. Certainty is the opposite of doubt, so there is no room for a person to doubt his belief. Allah says:

'The believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not, and strive with their wealth and their lives for the Cause of Allah. Those! They are the truthful'. (Al-Hujurat 49:15)

3. Acceptance

One should accept the Shahadah in its entirety. It is not sufficient that a person merely know what the Shahadah means and believe it with certainty rather he must accept it by pronouncing it openly and accepting to become a Muslim.

4. Compliance

It means obedience and acting upon all what the Shahadah necessitates.

A person must do what Allah ordered and abstain from what He prohibited. Allah, says:

'And whosoever submits his face to Allah, while he is a *muhsin* (doer of good), then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold. And to Allah return all matters for decision.' (Luqman 31:22)

We should note that the word "*muhsin*" in the verse literally means a person who does something well. Here it means one

who does righteous deeds sincerely for Allah, according to the method the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) taught us.

Here we see mentioned both submission to Allah along with doing righteous deeds, and only if a person does this has he grasped onto the truth of the Shahadah.

5. Truthfulness

One must be truthful in his Shahadah. Even though a person may be doing all these things on the outside, he might be hiding disbelief in his heart.

Allah says:

‘They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.’ (Al-Fath 48:11)

6. Sincerity of worship

One must worship Allah sincerely and obediently. One must direct his worship to none other than Allah.

7. Love

One must love Allah and his messenger and his righteous followers. He must prefer what Allah and His Messenger love, even if it is different to what he desires.

Shahadah & Oneness

The Shahadah also necessitates that Allah is the only one who has the right to legislate, whether it be in matters concerning worship, or matters concerning the government of human relations in both the individual and public affairs. The act of making something prohibited or lawful is for Allah alone. His Messenger merely explained and clarified Allah’s commandments.

And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it). (Al-Hashr 59:7)

THE SALAH

Prayer is an essential duty of every Muslim, and the second Pillar of Islam. It is performed five times a day. These times are dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening. Before prayer there is ritual cleansing and purification. Typically, this means washing one's hands, mouth, nose, face, ears, forearms, head, and feet three times with the right hand. If there is no water available, sand may be substituted. Prayer itself consists of three or four cycles of ritual bowing and prostration, along with recitation of parts of the Quran (the

sacred text for Muslims) and other prayers in Arabic. All end with the phrase, "May peace, mercy and blessings be upon you."

Muslims can perform prayer just about anywhere, but the most favoured place is in the mosque. A crier (*muezzin*) calls the faithful to prayer. The holy day each week is Friday. The congregation of worshipers at the mosque is led by the religious leader or imam. Prayers, wherever they take place, must be performed in the direction of Mecca. This direction is indicated by the *kiblah*, a word meaning "direction of prayer." It is indicated in a mosque by a wall (referred to as the *kiblah* wall) that is usually marked by a niche called the *mihrab*.

THE ZAKAAH

The third Pillar of Islam is a call to charity. There are two categories: compulsory and voluntary. Compulsory almsgiving resembles a tax for all Muslims, payable to either the community or state. It is calculated on the basis of one's possessions and income, and usually equates to 2.5% of a person's annually accumulated wealth. This system ensures that the poor will be at least partly provided for and encourages a sentiment of sharing among the various social classes. Almsgiving also has spiritual value, as a way of atoning for one's sins and ensuring salvation in the afterlife. Voluntary almsgiving (*sadaqa*) should be performed freely and spontaneously, with discretion and sincerity.

THE FASTING IN THE MONTH OF RAMADAAN

Fasting (*sawm*) is a ritual observance during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims are required to abstain from eating, drinking, and sexual activities between sunrise and sunset. Nursing and pregnant mothers, the sick and children up to the age of puberty are permitted to break the fast. Ramadan is important because it marks the time in the year when the Quran began to be revealed to Muhammad.

The word Ramadan etymologically means 'to be hot' which suggests that the month originally fell in summer. However, following the Islamic lunar calendar, the month of fasting can come at any time during the year.

The Muslim calendar-year is measured by the cycles of the moon rather than the sun, so the Muslim lunar year is eleven

days shorter than the solar year. Muslims are forbidden to adjust their year by adding an extra month to keep their lunar calendar in sync with the seasons. Hence, the months of the Muslim year do not relate to the seasons.

The Ramadan fast starts at dawn, defined as the moment when the human eye can distinguish a white thread from a black one, and ends at dusk, when the eye is again no longer able to do so. The end of the month of Ramadan is always marked by a feast, known as the *Id al-Fitr*.

THE HAJJ

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is a pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim must take at least once during their lifetime. It occurs during the month of *DhulHijja*, the last month of the Islamic calendar and concludes with *Eid-ul-Adha* prayers.

The Hajj pilgrimage includes the following:

- Wearing the Ehram - the standard clothing for pilgrims upon arriving in Mecca
- Performing Tawaf and Sa'ee in Masjid Al-Haram
- Staying and praying in Mina
- Spending the night at Mount Arafat in prayer

- Staying in Muzdalfah
- Revisiting Mina and throwing pebbles at the Jamaraat pillars that is symbolic of stoning shaitaan (devil)
- Performing Eid-ul-Adha prayers
- Performing Qurbani / Udhiya, the Sunna of Ibrahim
- Men have to shave their head while women simply clip a piece of their hair.
- Performing Tawaf-ul-wida

Hajj is by no accounts an easy journey, however it is not painstakingly difficult either. It is believed that any pilgrimage involves a certain amount of hardship and discipline, which is needed to gain spiritual blessings from this sacred pilgrimage. Performing prayer in the scorching deserts of Arabia can be a daunting task yet millions of Muslims perform Hajj every year in order to renew their faith, their Taqwaa.

Islam is one of the most egalitarian and inclusive of religions. The teachings of Islam lay down the rules to lead a clean and healthy life in harmony with the universe and with fellow human beings. Islam, based on these five pillars insists upon universal brotherhood, love for humanity and working towards maintaining peace and love, honesty and integrity, wisdom and faithfulness and the readiness to make sacrifices for others.



St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier at Paris University



St. Ignatius missioning St. Francis Xavier to India



Way to God

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But those who seek after the indefinable unmanifest Immutable omnipresent, unthinkable, self-poised, immobile, constant, they also by representing all their senses, by the quality of their understanding and by their seeing of one self in all things and by their tranquil benignancy of silent will for the good of all existences, arrive to Me. ~ Ch. 12:3-4 (Gita)

The primitive man located in the fold of animality never rendered himself homogeneous. Instead, they conformed to a heterogeneity that put them closer to their animal doppelgangers. The evaluation of man's superiority began with his subjectivation and the recognition of reason over impulse. The primitive man relied on and depicted the vitality of life in the hunting frescoes, where the multiplicity of life is portrayed in the multiplication of the prey. As opposed to being mere cave decorations, their prehistoric art marked the ritualistic correlative of life and survival. Hence, the enigma of God is not a mere idea of civilisation. It is a prehistoric question that drove the Palaeolithic Man from the visceral to the vital in search of the Virat.

Base religiosity has created tributaries of devotion, conflicts and questions but yet no understanding of God. Sri Aurobindo elaborates, "Man can know by other means this or that exclusive aspect of the one existence, its individual, cosmic or world-excluding figures, but not this greatest reconciling Oneness of all the aspects of the Divinity in which at one and the same time and in one and the same vision all is manifested, all is exceeded and all is consummated. This vision can be reached by the absolute adoration, the love, the intimate unity that crowns at their summit the fullness of works and knowledge. [...]" Thus ends the Chapter 11 of The Gita and begins Chapter 12 – The Way and the Bhakta.

With his algebraic philosophy, Spinoza responded to Descartes' dualism of existence. To him, all existences, with

their contradictions and conflicts, are becomings of the substance. The Vedantic philosophy says – bhavanti matta eva. From bhutani to bhavanti and bhavah lies the way to become; bhu. The way to God comes from an understanding of the divine as the all-encompassing omnipresent, omnipotent and also, the omniscient. The bifurcations of morality and the diversifications of spirit and

faith and any such dualism is rendered obsolete in the union of the Yogic convergence. Chapter 12 begins with one such question of dualistic faith where the idea of the convergence into the infinite as the Yoga of knowledge (sayujya), the Yoga of adoration (salokya) and the Yoga of works (sadrishya) arrives at an understanding of the divinity in question. It is only after encountering the infinite self of Krishna does Arjuna understand the unity of being and the orthodox Godhead. But the Godhead is the manifest in the world and not the unmanifest Immutable Supreme being that eludes the universe itself. The unmanifest is the greater principle to which the manifest spirit of the Divine is but an "inferior figure". It is the very union of the manifest and the unmanifest, the heterogeneous fusion with the arms-infinite upon which lies the supreme faith. Aurobindo observes, "The supreme faith is that which sees God in all and to its eye the manifestation and the non-manifestation are one Godhead."

The way to God lies in this awakening. Like Arjuna, we identify the Godhead through our various convictions and seek to transcend the fivefold of the body, as laid in The Upanishads, to become one with the Godhead. The Yogic transcendence is realised when the soul, the mind and the body is transcended into a union with the Pursushottama. The way to God is the way of the devotee not just from the Purusha to Purushottama but also to Parameshvara, Parabrahmana and Paramatman. The living way of the Gita invites us into a Yoga

of meditation. Every intensity, force, energy is drawn into a convergence that sees all to be Krishna. It is right here that the devotee reaches the Divine where the Divine meets the devotee at every point, every turn, at all times.

“And if thou are not able to keep the consciousness fixed steadily in Me, then [...]” ~ Ch. 12:8-17 (Gita)

From meditation to yogic practice to the idea of renunciation, Krishna shows the way to Arjuna. The way to God then, lies in the realisation that whatever practice and ethics and conviction that we believe in will and must arrive at the One. The idea of receptive generosity becomes the foundation of such awakening. The Yogin who finds his way through the exclusive knowledge and struggle in their search of the unmanifest Brahman becomes the one who meditates. The unmanifest Immutable is the indefinable Oneness that accepts everything, receives all. The vastness of such immanent divinity is incomprehensible. But reaching such vastness requires an immobile spiritual impersonality. Such impersonality is only achieved in silence and withdrawal as the unmanifest “offers no hold to the mind”.

Unlike the orthodox meditative practice, the impersonality of the spirit is attained by stern individual efforts of self-submission.

The divine nature of the state of supreme consciousness and the being of the devotee who follows the way lies in reception. Equality, desirelessness and freedom of spirit from the ego itself and the fivefold Field of the body (kshetra) is the way to liberation – liberating our beings from the volition of the body and transcending in the cosmic ego-less Ananda. What results from the knowledge of universal reception is the desireless actions offered to the Godhead, the surrender of cognition into the hands of the indwelling spirit. The nature of such divine transcendence can only be obtained by an understanding of the Field itself. The five elemental states of matter, the senses and the ego, the intelligence and the five objects of the senses constitute the kshetra. The idea is to transcend the principles of the body by accepting the body, towards the transcendent which is the Brahman. Explaining the thirteenth chapter of the Gita, Aurobindo notes, “[...] that Eternity is the Brahman. Brahman is That which is transcendent and That which is universal: it is the free spirit who supports in front the play of soul with nature and assures behind their imperishable oneness; it is at once the mutable and the immutable, the All that is the One.” Aurobindo’s explanations lead us to observe that the mutation of the immutable and the mutable lies in the multiplicity of the One. Therefore, the way to That Oneness, is by way of a reversible mutation that retraces itself back into the unicellular bond of

life that led to the multiplication of existence. The way to God is in understanding the being of the Unborn, that which is perpetually in birth, continually becoming into existence. That the all-encompassing Oneness is the immutable impersonal Spirit of the Divine offers no hold to the mind is what Krishna was preaching Arjuna to awake him to the paradox of the spirits. The One who is without any Origin cannot be sought. The trajectory of its Oneness can never be deciphered as the Immutable is, like Spinoza’s substance, self-sufficient, self-existing and one that is not bothered by the claims of the universe because it is neither Sat (existence) nor Asat (non-existence). But we are its attributes. Therefore, we suffer the noise. The way to God is a way of learning to harmonise the noise and draw it into a greater convergence of spirit, where all is embraced without dishonour, without distinction and without disregard.

Protagoras’ humanism that proclaimed human to be the sole centre of civilisation led Da Vinci to create the Vitruvian Man. The Vitruvian Man has ignored all the possibilities of existence. In our Post-human situation, the idea of the anthropomorphism has been rendered obsolete by the conditions of the environment. Similarly, the idea of an anthropocentric God gets denied. Unlike the primitive men, the homo sapiens have a tendency to attribute their features into a God so as to identify themselves in God, closer to God. The primitive men wore masks of animals before conducting their hunts. Early civilisations show signs of animal-like Gods, even monstrous in our terms. This is a direct opposition to the condition of a receptive generosity that the Immutable undefined lives with. Understanding that all and every organism and every organic and inorganic particle remains in a constant mutation with the One is the basis of arriving at God. Therefore, the way to God is by means of adoration and embrace, not by humanistic policies but by the conditions of the divine. The conflicts led by human volition is not the central conflict. The understanding of our decentralisation is the beginning of the admittance into an understanding of the all-consummating Divine by the dismissal of our collective ego.

Although the Aristotelian would speak about the beginning and the middle and end, similar to what Krishna preaches Arjuna, Arjuna being the kshetra failed to see the beginning and the end. Here lies the concept of renunciation of fruits as a means to arrive at God. There is only the middle. Everything is perpetually becoming. Hence, there is no particular Way to God but whichever way we take, it will arrive at God where to arrive at God is to arrive from all directions, at all times, at every instant.



The Hindu Way to God

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The sole aim of Hinduism is to have a direct experience (Aparaksha Anubhuti) of the Absolute, i.e. God as the Eternal Unchangeable Immutable Reality pervading the Cosmos. Academic study of scriptures and Theology take a backseat as the target is to have a firsthand experience of the Divine. (Witnessing God).

The Absolute (Brahman – not to be confused with Brahma, God as Creator) is beyond form, beyond description, beyond comprehension through intellect. Brahman reveals itself to those whom it chooses. Sri Ramakrishna gave an analogy: A police officer is patrolling the dark streets at the dead of night. He holds a torch in hand and is flashing a powerful beam of light in any direction of his choice. He can see everything – but no one can see him (he is behind the source of light). Anyone desiring to see him must plead with tearful eyes, “Master, turn the torch towards yourself. Let me see your face.” One more thing is vital – a devotee seeking to experience the Divine must ask God to crush his Ego (Ahamhara – the notion of I, Me, Myself, Mine). Egotism is like a curtain between God and the devotee, preventing interaction between the two.

A Hindu Sadhak aspires to establish a ‘secure link’ with the Divine. The temperament, mindset, value system and life-experiences (lessons learnt from life) would differ from person to person, as well as from community to community. Hence, no two persons will witness God in exactly identical way. Each person will experience God in his own private way. This gives rise to the maxim, “As many Sadhaks, so many Sadhanas”. i.e. as many aspirants, so many are the paths leading to God. Brahmabandhav Upadhyay said - A Hindu is free to indulge in any type of spiritual practice that would lead him to witness God. Each sect interprets the instructions given in the scriptures in its own unique way. The Vaisnav

interpretation as well as life style is very different from that of the Shaktas – yet both are Hindus. However, they have to confirm to the social norms prevalent in their part of the country. The social norms vary from region to region, e.g. the married women in Northern and Eastern parts of India wear Sindur as the sign of wedding, while the Hindu ladies of South India wear Mangal Sutram. Brahmabandav wanted to utilize the spiritual freedom to serve the Christian faith, the way De Nobelli and St. John the Britto wanted. Anyway, that could be the subject matter of another article.

Among the million ways of approaching God, four main ways are regarded as Highways (most important approaches)

Gyan yoga: Union with the Divine through discrimination (Vichar) and contemplation (Dhyan). Those treading this path keeps on asking themselves, ‘Is what I am desiring at this moment eternal and immutable or is it only temporary and subject to change?’

By critically judging the desires that keep on bubbling in their mind, they seek the Brahman that is eternal and beyond any type of mutation. They have a philosophic bend of mind and prefer sedentary, cloistered life. They avoid rituals and Pujas.

Karma Yoga: Working incessantly for the benefit of others, without expecting anything in return. Swami Vivekananda gives the analogy of a common soldier at a battlefield. The soldier knows very well – if the battle is won, all credit will go to the Commanding officer. If the battle is lost, no one will blame him anyway. Knowing this harsh reality, he fights with utmost valor, risking his life every moment as long as the battle is going on. While facing the enemy bullets the only thought in his mind is to execute the orders given by his commander. He does not think of his family members nor is

he overpowered by the pain caused by the wounds: he continues to fight with his mind focused to the specific tasks assigned to him.

Bhakti Yoga: The path of devotion. The only reward a devotee seeks is the pleasure of serving God. He /She may regard God as Parents or master or friend or child or beloved: but the essential feeling is that of unconditional and all-encompassing LOVE, the incessant wish to execute the Divine WILL. Such persons are emotional by nature.

Raja Yoga: The mystic path of experiencing the Divine within one's own self. Apart from these ways of seeking union with God, the path of ritualistic worship (as prescribed in the scriptures), is also there: most Hindus, especially the laity, join in Pujas done at temples, private houses or community centers. Serving guests (atithi) or any other person seeking help is mandatory for householders (grihastha dharma). Srimad Bhagavatam – a very sacred book that describes the life and teachings of the Incarnations, relates the connection between serving God through living beings and ritualistic mode of worship in this way: God says, “I abide in all beings as their inner most self. Without recognizing this, the mere ritualistic worship of Me in images is only a mockery of worship. If one disregards Me present in all beings as their souls and Lord, and offers worship to images only, such worship is as ineffective as offering the sacrificial offering of Ghee to ashes after the sacred fire has died out. If a man persecutes his fellow beings, but worships Me in images with numerous rich offerings and ritualistic practices - I'm not at all pleased with him. A man should, however, worship me in images along with discharge of his duties towards all being, until he actually realizes My presence within himself and in all beings. As long as a man is self-centered and makes absolute difference between himself and other, he will be subject to the great fear of death. So, overcoming the tendencies to lead a self-centered life, one should serve all beings with gifts, honour and love, with the recognition that such service in really being done to Me who reside in all beings as their innermost soul.” Srimad Bhagavatam, Book- III, Ch: 29, verses: 21 – 27 This is strikingly similar in spirit to ‘The Final Judgement’ (Mathew, Ch- 25, verses: 31-46): “Whatever you do to the least of your brothers, you do that unto me.”

Srimad Bhagavatam, is not to be confused with Srimad Bhagavat Gita. Hinduism is a way of life and Bhagavat Gita is the Handbook – it tells us what to do and what to avoid while living (it also contains the “trouble shooters guide” – what to do when crisis arises.). As the goal of life is to attain union with

God, each chapter is termed a ‘Yoga’, i.e. way of union with the Divine. Hindus enjoy the freedom of choosing their scripture. Srimad Bhagavatam is the favourite scripture with Bhakti Yogis. The Gyan yogis prefer the Upanishads. The Raj Yogis have ‘Patanjal yogasutra’. Those who like to do ritualistic worship, have the ‘Kriya Kandam’ portion of the Vedas.

The majority of Bengali Hindus love God as Mother. As Durga or Kali, God the Mother protects creation; as Jagadhatri, SHE sustains while as Annaprana – Laxmi – Saraswati, SHE nourishes her children. I belong to this sect (known as SHAKTO). Our scripture is DEVI MAHATYAM, popularly called Sri Sri Chandi. Durga, Kali or Jagatdhatri puja will not be complete without the ceremonial recital (Chandi-path) of this sacred book. Chandi- path is also done to bring or restore peace in household. In Bengali, a person doing ‘Juto selai theke Chandipath’, means the person is doing every type of job. (Note the word Chadi-path – not ‘Gitapath’ or any other sacred book).

The fifth chapter of Sri Sri Chandi tells us how to detect the presence of God in all things and all beings. Ch: 5, verses: 59 – 61 says: With my body, mind and soul (with my or thoughts, words and actions), I repeatedly offer salutations to the DEVI, who abides in all beings as Gainful Occupation – VRITTI. A mother will never desert her children – she will go through any amount of hardship to provide what her children will need. VRITTI means the job for which I am being paid. God the Mother has given us the talents, opportunity, skills and connections by which we earn money to make a living. So, every work for which we are being paid, ought to be done with the spirit of worship.

A teacher will experience God if he / she lovingly teaches the students, keeps on preparing lessons before taking classes, continues personal upgradation to keep the students academically uptodate and meticulously checks the answer scripts. A Businessman will experience God if he/she deals with the customers honestly and with reverence. A professional (Doctor, Lawyer, Engineer, Courier, Cook, Sweeper or any type of service provider) will experience God if he/ she serves the clients to the best of ability, putting the interest of the client before self-interest. Earning a living without giving one's best, amounts to cheating God the Mother – then other display of devotion will be like pouring water in a pot with holes.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.



Faculty Orientation Programme on Ignatian Pedagogy and Jesuit Charism

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Pope Paul VI at the 32nd General Congregation in Rome, in 1974, while addressing the quorum said, "Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, at the crossroads of ideologies, in the social trenches, there has been and there is confrontation between the burning exigencies of man and the perennial message of the Gospel, here also there have been, and there are, Jesuits." St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, had an incisive sense of reality. He saw that the Church needed men of practical wisdom; men who keenly discerned what Christ wanted of them and set out to find creative ways to do it. These were men not bound by some unexamined unnecessary custom, but alive with divine common sense and tuned in to the ways of the spirit, establishing that, all that is visionary, mystical, imaginative and heroic is part of a Jesuit's life.

On the 19th of September 2021, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata organised a Faculty Orientation Programme, on Ignatian Pedagogy and Jesuit Charism, in continuation of the celebration of the Ignatian year, namely, the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Cannonball Moment of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm is based on St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, taking into account a holistic view of the world. This pedagogy uses a dynamic five-step method, namely Experience, Reflection, Action, Context and Evaluation, along with an Ignatian vision of the human and the world to "accompany the learner in their growth and development" as well as in making sound and conscientious decisions. The paradigm challenges faculty to know the background of their students and how that impacts their learning. It reminds faculty to build in reflective practice where students attempt to draw meaning out of their learning and then move to actions based on what they have learnt; followed by

evaluating the success of the action to change their lives.

Values that make institutions distinctive and cohesive are referred to as charisms, and a firm foundation in charisms as promoted by St. Ignatius, has always been the hallmark of Jesuit institutional heritage. The concept of "education of the whole person" is described in The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education which states that the purpose of Jesuit education is to assist in the fullest possible development of all of God-given talents of each individual as a member of the human community. The principles of Jesuit education continue to reflect the foundational values that begun with St. Ignatius of Loyola over 500 years ago. In challenging students to reflect on their learning, Jesuit educators hope to move students to assess how their learning impacts them as individuals and how it defines the individual's relationship with the world.

While topics and texts may change, the underlying values of Ignatian Pedagogy remain the same, namely the Jesuit Charism, to educate "the whole person, head and heart, intellect and feelings" resulting in "a person who exhibits precision of thought, eloquence of speech, moral excellence, and social responsibility". In challenging students to reflect on their learning, Jesuit educators hope to move students to assess how their learning impacts them as individuals and how it defines the individual's relationship to the world. What has changed however, is the society in which our students reside: a virtually-enhanced world where conversations and interactions are as frequently communicated over electronic platforms and where a storm of information is available 24*7 from almost any location. And while this constant connectivity can assist faculty in dissemination of content and aide student learning, it can also present barriers to personal

interactions at the heart of Ignatian pedagogical goals. As Jesuit educators of the 21st Century, we are challenged to piece together the Ignatian principles to instil in our students a “depth of thought and imagination” that encompasses engagement with the reality of the world and the human condition. We are further challenged to leverage the technological tools that both enhance and distract from learning and put them to positive use in and outside the classroom.

Rev. Dr. Dominic Savio, S.J. Principal, in his inaugural address spoke about the new normal that all of us are trying to reconcile and adapt to, despite the prevalence of consistent anxiety. However, he said that, we need to use this fear and uncertainty to develop a new paradigm of growth and change. He further added, the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) with its emphasis on the five-step method, namely, context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation, is posited to usher in hope during these troubled times, assist us in making informed decisions, educate ourselves and our students in the wisdom of the past, nurture cognitive skills and help in character formation and personality development which is an urgent need of the hour.

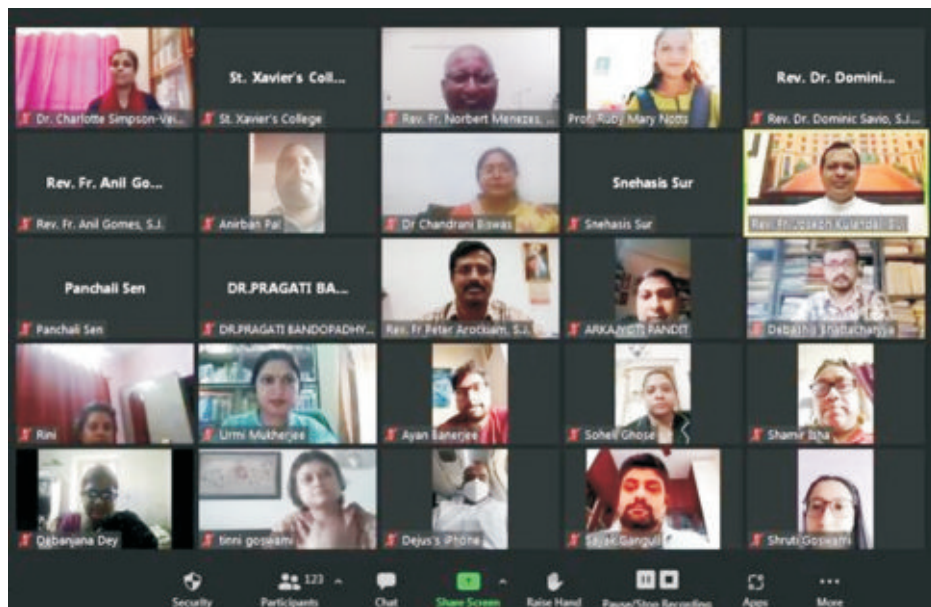
The resource person for Faculty Orientation Program, Rev. Fr. Norbert Menezes, S.J., the former Secretary of Jesuit Educational Association (JEA)-South Asia and the National Advisor of Jesuit Alumni Associations of India and presently the Rector of St. Michael's Jesuit Community, School and B.Ed. College, Coordinator of Education for the Patna Province and the Director of Education – Buxar Diocese; at the very onset, clarified two terms, namely, Ignatian and Jesuit, bringing out the difference between the two and their implication in the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola. He then took the faculty members through a brief description of the Cannonball Moment in the life of St. Ignatius. Father Menezes, while introducing the background to the Ignatian Pedagogy, highlighted the fact that the Ignatian Pedagogy has the ability to transform both the learner and the guide who accompanies the learner on the journey of knowledge. It is in this light that the Ignatian Pedagogy differs from other approaches to transformative education. He went on to add that the IPP facilitates Jesuit educators to make the service of faith and the promotion of justice an integrating factor of their personal and professional life. He highlighted and explained the nine characteristics of Jesuit Education, namely, Holistic Formation of each individual, Person Oriented, Value-Based, Faith-Inspired, inclined Towards a Just Society, Participative, Pursuing Excellence, Collaborator-

Jesuit Participation and Adapting to Relevance. Father Menezes provided an insight into the salient areas of Ignatian world-view, highlighting St. Ignatius' perspectives and beliefs integrated with education and emphasising on the fact that, regardless of who we are we should all focus on Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (AMDG), that is, seeking and serving the greater glory of God. He stated that as educators in a Jesuit institution, it is important to understand the Ignatian world-view as it involves ways to view our socio-economic and human reality, understanding the human person and responding to the world's needs. In the context of education, the Ignatian world-view gives us certain directions on the way of running educational institutions and training students. The goal is to help shape students' minds and hearts in such a habit of reaching out that in the process, they reach out to God. Father also very clearly explained the significance of reflection for quality teaching, emphasising upon Reflection-in-Action and Reflection-on-Action to improve professional practices, bringing out the Centre of Ignatian/Integral Education, namely Student-Centred Learning and how the five-step method of the IPP helps achieve this. He went on to state that the IPP is an iterative cycle, wherein the Context focusses on 'who', Experience asks the question 'what', Reflection focusses on 'why/how', Action emphasises on 'what next' and Evaluation is centred on 'how well'.

After a full-fledged and in-depth discussion on IPP, Father Norbert then shifted focus to the foundation of Jesuit Charism. The underlying values of Jesuit Charism that helps shape the lives of students include, Finding God in all things; Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (AMDG), that translates to 'for the greater glory of God'; to educate “the whole person, head and heart, intellect and feelings” resulting in “a person who exhibits precision of thought, eloquence of speech, moral excellence, and social responsibility”, that is, Cura Personalis (Latin Meaning 'care for the person'); Magis which translates as 'more' embodying the act of discerning the greater good in a given situation and strive for excellence; A faith that does justice, namely inspiring faith in action and working for the betterment of society by becoming agents of change; Discernment of Spirits that guide our decisions and actions towards the greater good; Men and Women for and with others encouraging us to pursue justice on behalf of all persons and make the world a better place; Commitment to Academic Excellence triggering maximum development of one's intellectual capacities and skills in service to humanity; Contemplative in Actions, promoting the need to stop, reflect, pray and then return to activity with greater zeal and

purpose; Care for the Earth by growing awareness that we are all part of a single human family, living in a common home, which we need to take care of and not exploit its resources; Dignity of the Human Person; Collaboration between the lay people and the Jesuits to assume appropriate responsibilities and work together in leadership and in service as a unified team; Respect for Religious Beliefs of Others fostering inclusivity by having students from diverse faiths, encouraging them to explore common values by building bridges among diverse faiths through varied enrichment programmes. Father concluded with a 'Moment of Clarity',

introducing the audience to the concept of 'Journaling', which is another important aspect of Ignatian Pedagogy, teaching us to focus on where we are now and on our cognitive abilities, so that we are able to make the swift transformation. He asked the participants to reflect on what they had learnt and imbibed from the session, what they were pleased to have deciphered and what awareness had the session instilled in them. The presentation ended with a discussion on the above points, wherein Fr. Norbert Menezes addressed all the participants questions and opinions in depth.



All through his life he put Christ in the centre. And he did so through discernment. Discernment is not about always getting it right from the start, but it's rather about navigating, about having a compass to be able to set out on the road which has many twists and turns, but always letting oneself be guided by the Holy Spirit who leads us to an encounter with the Lord

- Pope Francis



• SHOWING THE WAY TO GOD •

CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME



WALKING WITH THE EXCLUDED

• JOURNEYING WITH YOUTH •