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From the Editor



Market Society or God of Grace Who Is Your God?

The reality of market is all-encompassing as its channels flow into every nation, city and village of the world. According to Robert Heilbroner, ‘the nature of our society is accumulation of wealth as power and the logic of our society is exchange of commodities.’ Everything hops around these realities. The modern women and men believe in them implicitly and shape their lives according to this logic. It is increasingly the reason through which people expect life, happiness, security, and future. No one can deny the awesome effect of technological society.

However, the market society will not be able to absorb the Church, for the presence and power of God is concretely and publically manifested in the life of the community of

Christ. However, in God’s fallen world, history narrates a gory tale of pursuit and misuse of absolute power and control which dominates and decimates humans.

Economy is a matter of life or death. The ruthless market economy celebrates accumulation of wealth as power, even by crushing its competitors, leaving behind a trail of causalities of crippled losers. For example, Nike’s reason for being, as defined by its core purpose, is: “To experience the emotion of competition, winning, and crushing competitors.” I have heard Bible believing Christian leaders engaged in training, praise the mission statement of Nike.

One wonders what sort of God they believe in, one who enjoys crushing others or the one who, when saw the crowds had compassion on them for

they are harassed and helpless (Mt. 9:36)! What values are Christian leaders communicating?

Grace is not a virtue practiced in market society. In the arena of the market society cut throat competition guided by self-interest and individualism is the norm, where weakness is despised and success is defined by the power one possesses and exercise. To survive in a free market economy, one must have capital or skills; and billions of children and youth all over the world have neither capital nor skills.

Market is changing the world, but market will not redeem the world. In a market society, all social goods are produced and distributed as if they were commodities.

Listen to the advice of a professional model to other aspiring candidates, “You must consider yourself a product, to be packaged and marketed.”

Human beings are not products or commodities to be marketed in a competitive world.

Are we outraged when millions of our nation’s children no longer have access to what it takes for them to live and live abundantly? The best way to judge the viability of an economy is to pose the question: What happens to the children in this economy? The

United Nations tells us that today, as every day, 42,000 children will starve to death. The death of the children is not due to their *karma*, rather to human greed and faulty economic systems that refuse to share the abundant resources of nature with all.

The billionaire capitalists are realising the disillusionment of the market system. And one of its biggest beneficiaries Bill Gates comments is significant and point to the distorting of essential priorities. He told the conference of governments and philanthropic organisations about this flaw. He gave an example that the malaria vaccine is getting no market funding whereas male baldness gets ample.’ (HT 18 March 2013. p.14).

There are certain social goods that should be distributed according to a different logic because these social goods are themselves not commodities. The church has always known that healing cannot be distributed according to the logic of exchange. Hospitality is at the heart of the Christian life (Rom.12:13).

“Hospitals were originally the church’s way of practicing hospitality as open house for the stranger, the poor, the sojourner, and the homeless. The church said that they should be given home even if they had nothing to exchange. And, yet, even our church hospitals now are employing a logic which causes them to exclude the

very persons for whom hospitals were brought into being.” In the market society the practice of medicine is seen as a lucrative business. How do the poor foot the bill?

God’s compassion is rooted in God’s free love and grace, which became humanly visible in the incarnation of Christ. This is evident not only in Jesus’ solidarity with the people but also in His sacrificial self-giving love towards the “harassed and the helpless” (Matthew 9.36).

Though people of all faiths rightly advocate practicing works of mercy and compassion, as far as their idea of God is concerned; the votaries of Advaita Hinduism believe God is an impersonal reality, which is beyond emotions; while in the Muslim tradition, foremost among God’s attributes are mercy and compassion, yet in Christ alone is the embodiment of the very essence of compassion. Jesus demonstrated the self-giving nature of compassion, by his sacrificial death on the cross. As the Scripture teaches, Christ “died for the ungodly” (Rom.5:6).

Jesus focused on the little ones and took special care of the harassed and

helpless. The church in many places is in the forefront of empowering the cause and aspirations of the poor and the marginalized for this is true neighbourliness, much more remains to be done.

Having experienced the compassion and comfort of God (2 Cor.1:3-7) the Spirit enables us to enter sympathetically into the experience of others whose pathway leads them through a vale of tears, distressed by the hard knocks in life. Our participation in the triune life of compassion is manifested as we enter into mutually enriching compassionate relationships, characterized by openness, vulnerability and availability.

The followers of Christ must increasingly detest evil, in the face of social injustice to the poor and powerless, we must hate oppression, discrimination, selfishness, greed, covetousness, and always live consciously in the presence of the Holy One. Living by the grace of God we strive to love as Jesus did! That the Holy Spirit is active in our lives is discerned in our actions of self-giving love.❖

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell



Christians compete for crumbs

JOHN DAYAL

The government of India's annual budget for the financial year 2013-2014, a year that may possibly see a general election, has been panned by both the political right and the Left, but it is the religious minority that feels totally disappointed. The Christian community is particularly impacted, considering the few benefits are designed to benefit the Muslims largely, a major political segment wooed by the government assiduously.

The Union Budget presented to the Parliament by Union Finance Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram on 28th February has fallen far short of the expectations of the Christian community. In the preparation of the 12th Five Year Plan, which becomes operational this year, they had forcefully sought specific mechanisms to ensure that funds meant for them actually devolved to the needy persons and areas in a transparent manner.

The Budget also conclusively shows that until the religious minorities get a special component plan in the pattern of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, there will be little actual devolution of funds for their development. While presenting the annual general budget, Union Finance Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram allocated welfare sub plans— Rs. 41,561 crore to the scheduled castes and Rs. 24,598 crore to the tribals— which cannot be diverted and must be spent for the designated purpose.

In contrast, government data shows that a large component of budget allocations for religious minorities in the past have remained unspent. There is little indication in the budget how the government intends to ensure that the money allocated is spent on the target communities and specially to the Christian community, which has not received its fair share of

these funds. The community must be assured that it will get its share of funding on a pro rata basis, especially in area development schemes and scholarships.

The finance minister has allocated Rs. 3,511 crore to the Ministry of Minority Affairs, a notional increase of 12% over the budget estimates of last year, which merely compensates for the rate of inflation. The government has also allocated Rs 160 crores to the Rs 750 crore corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation, the main vehicle to implement education schemes and channelised funds to non-government organisations for the minorities, but this alone does not increase direct support to disadvantaged children desirous of education.

In actual terms, only the pre-matric scholarship sees a real increase from Rs 540 crores to Rs 810 crores. The post matric scholarship sees only a small increase from Rs 405 to Rs 450 crore. Both schemes need much more resources, apart from the funding that is necessary to make them known to small towns and village populations.

The Christian community is the least benefited by the Multi Sectoral Development Programme in selected minority districts, a scheme that benefits only one minority group, the Muslims who are euphemistically called a “vote bank”. And even here, this has been reduced sharply from

the Rs 1,077.60 crore in 2012 budget to Rs 887 crore in the 2013-2014 budget. This scheme will benefit the Christian community only when it is sharply focused on the population figure for minorities at the block level. As it stands now, this scheme once again basically benefits Muslims who are concentrated in a 100 of the 600 districts in the country. If the focus shifts to blocks, Christians, including fishermen in coastal areas and marginalised farmers, will benefit in states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, apart from areas in other states.

Possibly the only segment of Mr. Chidambaram’s gender budget that can be welcomed wholeheartedly is the funding of Rs. 97,134 crore for women and a child budget of Rs. 77,236. Women who belong to the most vulnerable groups, including single women and widows, will be to some extent helped in living a life of self-esteem and dignity. It is good that the ministry of women and child development had been asked to design schemes to prevent gender discrimination, especially at the work place. Our own experience of the situation of women and children in states such as Orissa and Madhya Pradesh show the plight of women and children in all aspects of life. ❖

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Engaged

SANJIV AILAWADI

God is love. He does not change. He is immutable and faithful. No matter who we are or have been, He remains the same. *If we are faithless, He is faithful. He cannot deny Himself* (2 Ti 2:13). Forgiving and kind, gracious, merciful and compassionate.

Love engages. Love cannot keep still when a loved one is hurt. Love acts to rescue, to get involved, to do what it takes to make a difference. *Love never fails*. God loves, therefore He acts: He sent His Son because He loves.

God rescues. *He devises means so that His banished ones will return* (2 Sam 14:14). He made a plan for the redemption of man. So that as many who believed and followed would be released and redeemed.

Love confronts. The gospel is a gospel of confrontation. Jesus confronted sin in the form of religious hypocrisy, social injustice, individual impurity. He healed diseases, delivered men from demonic bondages, raised the dead. Ultimately He confronted the hosts

of darkness on the cross, *disarming principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them* (Col 2:15).

God loves, God engages, God rescues, God confronts. Jesus came to show us the face of the Father: He loved, He engaged, He rescued, He confronted. We are His body, *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that we may proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy* (1 Pe 2:9-10). God's mandate for us, His people, is also to love, therefore engage, rescue and confront.

Jesus said that we are the light of the world, to confront darkness. The salt of the earth to halt corruption and release flavour. He declared *'I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it'*. His church has

power to break the shackles of hell, destroy the works of the devil. *It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is revealed to principalities and powers in the heavenly places* (Eph 3:10). The church has a high calling. This is to be a redemptive community, on a single-minded focussed mission to see a righteous Kingdom established.

The church lived out its mandate in the first few centuries. From 120 believers huddled secretly, praying in the upper room, the church grew and added 20 million more by AD 300 (about 10% of the world's population at the time!). *They were an illegal religion, had no church buildings, didn't have the scriptures, no professional leadership, no seeker sensitive services, seminaries, and to make matters worse they made it hard for people to join the church!* (The forgotten ways, Alan Hirsch). To become a Christian was to sign a death warrant as it was an illegal religion in the Roman empire punishable by death. It meant death by crucifixion, sawn into two, thrown into the arena with wild beasts, stoned, limbs torn apart, dipped into burning oil and skinned, or roasted alive. None were easy and quick: all terrible violent deaths which served to dissuade potential converts. And yet, the church grew in leaps and bounds. The church engaged, rescued, loved, and confronted and therefore grew,

because by doing so, it offered hope to an otherwise despairing world.

Today things are not quite the same. Tagore's words (*Where the mind is without fear*) could easily be as true for the church today as for our nation. Thanks to our tunnel vision, we have managed to break His body up, *into fragments with narrow domestic walls*, disunited on grounds of class, caste, ethnicity and colour. We seem to have lost our way *into a dreary desert of dead habit* and rituals that govern us, doctrines that have become our gods that drive us and divide us.

We have made following Christ into a religion rather than a lifestyle of love and engagement. We have substituted being transformed into His likeness with conformity to our cultures. Instead of a dynamic faith that gets us involved, we have rejected the world to escape into our Sunday meetings. If that is not enough, there is now a strong lobby for gay marriages in the church, no hell, and we are told that the bible is a collection of fables and mythical stories rather than being the infallible word of God.

We now propagate our doctrines, not our faith. God's kingdom has become over the years the sum of saved souls, with evangelists making endless appeals for money so that many more would be added on. There are some who now have the 'book of life' God has been kind enough to share with

them. Apparently, no pastor's name from their city is recorded there. Needless to say, they have made a considerable sum of money feeding off the naivety and fears of people.

In the world, people are objects; information is power, logic and reason preferred over prayer and surrender. Credentials matter more than character, position counts more than calling. Has the church degenerated into the ways of the world, have we become '*lunatics who carry the harvest into burning barns*' (P Schutz, 1930), Do we bring people into the church to have them conform to yet another way that is intrinsically just the same? There can be no basis for rescue if all we offer is another prison, no dynamic of engagement if we teach people to escape, no privilege of confrontation if our morality is just the same.

The church must return to being disciplined into being the catalysts of transformation, the pioneers of mission, the carriers of the Presence, the ones that challenge injustice and corruption. Not just join others on their political bandwagon or half baked philosophies, tossed to and fro by the wind of every doctrine. Our mission is to be peacemakers: dissolve walls, break down hostility and help people cross boundaries that divide. Our mandate is to be inclusive of all, especially the marginalised, the vulnerable, those who are disempowered.

We are not just teachers providing cold information about a two thousand year old event dead and shrouded in the mists of time. We are living witnesses of His resurrection testifying to His great power that works within us and through us today. *The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us and gives life to our mortal flesh* in order that the ordinary would do extraordinary works, the foolish would become the wisdom of God.

Love that leads to engagement, confrontation that results in rescue. These were the works of Jesus, *who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself of no reputation, took the form of a bondservant, came in the likeness of men* (Phil 2.6,7). We are meant to be the light, we just have to step into darkness and get involved in the world.

It is not about mindless conversion to another religion. It is about oppression and injustice. About evil systems which cause suffering and pain. It is about mindsets that create tyrannical structures which disempower and humiliate. These are alive and well, both in the church and out of it, in our hearts and in the hearts of others. Throughout history, in every generation, God has always started the process of judgement and change within His body, His people, before He uses us to make a difference in our times. ❖

Inside out

A view from the
underside of society!

VIKAS A. RAM

Have you ever wondered while sitting inside costa or any other expensive coffee shop that the amount you shell out for a cup of coffee may actually be a day's total income for a family living in a slum few miles away from your house? Perhaps you are already aware of this. How would you respond to the fact that in India over two hundred million people sleep without a square meal every day? If this is not enough to make you think seriously enough about the issue of deprecating poverty, here is one more bit for you – over seven thousand people die of hunger every day in India.

You could ask how can this be in a nation like India, which happens to be the second largest wheat producing country of the world? How could a person die of hunger in a nation, which claims to be one of the fastest growing economies of the world? I believe that such a situation is not so much due to the dearth of resources as much as it is because of the predominating

worldview, which is responsible for the great wedge between rich and poor. The issue is about how we look at resources, at other humans and to life itself.

Recently, 'Maha' Kumbh mela, which claims to be the largest religious gathering in the world, got over in the city of Allahabad. It attracted millions of devotees from around the world. During my visit to the mela, I was told that there were separate living areas and bath timings based on one's caste. This reminded me about a friend, who undertook a pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi in Jammu & Kashmir. He shared that as they were standing in long queue to go inside to main area of the shrine, there were others, who were escorted by the local sadhus directly into the main area for 'darshan'(glimpse). Later, my friend found out that these men paid extra donation to the sadhus in order to bypass the long queue. This is a reflection of how one's caste and class determines a person's access even in the places of worship.

Though it appears unjust, but why do such practices go on? Perhaps, this has something to do with the underlying worldview, which believes that people were created unequally. Since money is one of the ‘goddesses’, therefore it has to be worshipped and treasured. But, what about the people who are poor and suffering? The majority worldview holds that the present life and situations of people is an outcome of their ‘karma’ (acts in the previous incarnations). Since everything is part of this self-regulated cycle, therefore, it should not be disturbed. Though worldview issues involves a deeper discussion, however suffice here is to conclude that our underlying worldview continues to manifest itself in multifarious forms within our society.

I get fascinated by how other nations do whatever it takes to rescue its citizens from almost unreachable accident locations. Then I observe how much value is placed upon a citizen in our nation. Two weeks ago, while returning from my travel I needed to go back to my house from Delhi airport. Rather than taking a cab, I thought of discovering if it was possible to make use of the public transportation system (as my friend says that one of the marks of developing nation is that more and more people use the public transportation). After enquiring about the bus station, I came to know that it was not located at terminal

T3, but at terminal D2. This took me through approximately half a kilometer stretch that included passing through a secluded long tunnel. As I was passing through it, I found myself reciting Psalm 23, where it says, “even though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me.” By the time, I reached the bus stop; it was around half past ten in the night. I waited for the bus and since it was getting late without any sign of a bus, I enquired from a security staff about the bus. He asked me to move to another location as the buses sometimes don’t come to the official stop. After waiting for about fifteen more minutes in the second location, I found one more security personnel, who suggested that I should go alongside the road and cross over a passage and reach a parallel road. As I moved forward, I realized that it meant going through ten feet wide and five feet deep crater and an open land in the dark. By now I was thinking if my decision for opting for public transport system was a good idea.

As I waived my hands to the cabs passing by, a car finally stopped after ten minutes. Before I could ask him, he enquired if I wanted to go till Mahipalpur. Finally, I got a sigh of relief as I reached a better location. But I had another battle ahead of me – to find a conveyance that would reach me home. At a distance I found one auto standing on the side as if he

was waiting for me. As I enquired if he would go, to my joy, he agreed. I thanked God that I was now on my way to home. Then the auto driver told how they are not allowed to go near the airport area. I realized that perhaps the administration has decided for the passengers travelling by air that they ought to travel only by hired cabs. Experiences such as this explain how the public laws are made keeping the rich and the affluent in mind and not the underprivileged. At another instance, I remember talking to a Riksha puller, who told that in the name of removing poverty, the poor have been getting eliminated from within the urban areas.

When we hear such stories, we look at the religious gurus or the political leaders as the villains. However, we fail to realize that in many ways, we also operate in a similar fashion. What about our treatment with those, who are working under us? For instance, how do we treat and decide the wages for a domestic help? I guess to strike at maximum work on lowest possible rates through negotiation. In many homes, I have seen that separate tea cups and vessels are used for the cleaning staff. In my own case in the past, I remember arguing with the manual Riksha pullers and at the same time spending hundreds on food, movie and other recreational activities etc. Have we ever considered how these people live? Some of us

feel sad about the situation, but our response only leads us to an emotional feeling of discomfort. Others think that addressing such problems is the responsibility of the government. After all, taxes are being paid to the government for taking care of its citizens. However, we fail to realize that even governments are also run by humans just like us.

While the dominant worldview assumes that suffering, hunger and other problems that people face are the consequences of their karma in the previous birth, the Bible talks how God created each one of us equally in his own image. The suffering came because of human rebellion and disobedience to the will of God. God did not leave His creation to suffer and die. He took the form of a man and came to offer forgiveness and eternal life. The Lord Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world so that we may be rescued from the consequences of all our sins. The resources including money are given to us by God; they are not divine in themselves. Rather than worshipping or valuing them above people and treasuring them in secret vaults or in Swiss banks, they are given to us by God as a blessing to be enjoyed and shared with others. While a religious expert enquired about what was the greatest commandment, Jesus unhesitatingly quoted the '*Shema*' from the Old Testament, which asks humans to love the Lord our God with

all our heart, mind, soul and strength. However, Lord Jesus did not stop here. He went on asking us to do something very special – something that does not come naturally to us. Jesus continued and said, “The second is this – Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mk. 12:31). What would possibly happen if everyone in the nation, especially those in positions of political power and influence began to take this command seriously? I encourage you to imagine the prospect. One thing is sure – we will not exert our power to exploit the powerless and/or use others for selfish ends.

As Jesus received water from the hands of a Samaritan despised woman, Jesus made a revolutionary public declaration – that we are not called to label and treat people on the basis of their caste, race, gender or creed. **Unless we as a nation begin to see humans as not only those who are created equally and worthy of equal respect and as those for whom we are blessed (and responsible), we as a nation will not be able to bring our dreams of development to reality.**

The challenge before those who call themselves as Disciples of Christ is to align them with the biblical worldview

and re-work their priorities and come alongside with what God is interested doing in the lives of people. **Just fulfilling certain religious duties will not help anyone.** God emphatically spoke about what truly pleases him through His prophet Isaiah:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer, you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

May God bless you to be challenged by his Word and move beyond our cultural moorings to what God is doing and calls us to do. Let us be the change we want to see in the place where we are!! ❖



Deprivation & Development: The role of Women



DIVYA JACOB

This time around when I started writing for the magazine I was assigned to give a female perspective on the issue of development and deprivation and the role of women.

Many aspects kept cropping up in my head. But starting with the biblical perspective on women let me first begin with the creation account found in Genesis 1:26-27 where God created man and woman in His own image and likeness, thereby God created co-equal beings. Traditionally the woman is held responsible as the one due to whom sin entered the world, and then under God's plan, how she became the instrument through whom salvation came into this world by giving birth to the Saviour. Thus balancing and bringing her under the throne of grace and at the same time making her a key player in the salvation plan.

In the context of economics and development, it is so amazing that women account for half of country's talent base. It is thus felt that empowering their participation in the workforce would greatly enhance productivity and foster development and economic growth. In fact, studies reveal that development strategies focusing on gender equality see stronger economic growth than gender-neutral strategies. But sadly enough, throughout the world, women embody a considerable, underutilized force for sustainable development.

It is not inappropriate if we say that there has been a feminisation of poverty. Women are severely underemployed. According to the 1971 census in India, women constituted 48.2% of the population but only 13% of economic activity. Women

were excluded from many types of formal job, but mainly engaged and employed in the unorganized sector as in agriculture, agro-forestry, fishery, handicrafts and so on. The crisis in the agricultural sector adversely affects the livelihoods and food security of the rural poor, particularly women. There has been a sharp increase in the number of deaths from poverty and malnutrition. Empowering women to take part in the workforce is not a simple problem to solve. For many women, there are physical and psychological consequences for entering the workplace – harassment, discrimination, violence and shame.

It may not be doubted that women play a very important role not only in running the household but also the nation. They provide the anchorage and support that working men seek for their success. They are not only good home-makers but also the caretakers of the culture and tradition. History has shown several brave women who have laid down their lives for the nation and have been freedom fighters. Today there is not a single field where women do not play a key role. It is for the men to understand and respect the role of women and respond them with the support they need and join together for development and progress. Great men are actually created by women, who teach them moral values including equality and respect for one and all.

Gender equality is not just a condescending goal anymore; it is the necessary missing link for sustainable development, which is now been agreed by all. Reducing gender inequality gives women more money to spend on food, housing and education – essential component for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. The consensus is growing: getting more women into the workforce is one of the cure to many economic ills and imperative to sustainable development. If economic growth is to be achieved without social development at the grassroots level, it will not only widen inequality but also give rise to socio-economic paranoia, socio-political unrest and instability. Growth and progression without development will have dangerous socio-political consequences that could undermine the very essence of freedom and democracy and deepen inequality.

There is an imperative need to increase women's participation in power and decision making. Gendered career advice leads women to choose lower-status, lower-paid jobs than their male counterparts, making them more prone to poverty. Women living in poverty have a greater risk of educational underachievement which leaves them lacking the skills, qualifications and confidence to enter the work-place. These women are less likely to be able to afford the kind of childcare best suited to their needs and aspirations.

Low-levels of flexibility and choice in the workplace push women into low-paid, part-time, low-status jobs, which embeds them in poverty. The structural barriers need to be addressed but not in isolation, because then it is unlikely to lead to the fuller participation of women from disadvantaged areas in work, education and training, and in public and political life. There is no one government department which can, on its own, improve the situation. Instead, joint action is required across many government departments if these barriers are to be addressed in a strategic and not piecemeal manner.

It is felt that the Economic Policies should be guided by objective conditions of deprivation, not by subjective feelings alone. Economic policies should be concerned about reducing unemployment rather than distributing jobs to louder groups who in fact may be less objectively deprived. Governments and politicians care about subjective feelings and often design policies to appease subjective rather than objective deprivations. If objective-subjective divide is studied and a pragmatic approach is adopted during the policy formulation, then it can help governments design policies that are responsive to the objective conditions of deprivation, especially in women, while also being mindful of

peoples' sentiments. More importantly, if gender norms affect the perception of deprivation and the voice associated with perceptions, then changes in gender norms can change perceptions and voice, which in turn can aid governments and politicians' focus on the issue of female labour deprivation etc.

The role of Women is more than simply the hands at work. The full actualization of benefits in terms of economic prosperity, improved social welfare, and ultimately political democratization requires a state that is both willing and able to implement social and economic policies designed explicitly to promote female employment, empowerment and development. God's disposition for mankind includes both man and women, we humans can best replicate Him. As it is said, if you teach a man you only teach him but if you teach a woman you educate an entire household, hence if we truly are striving towards development it is imperative to give due acknowledgement to the role of women- girl, wife, mother, homemaker, career women and entrepreneur. Deprivation if handled properly would make way to development and growth, especially if the role of women is harnessed to the best of her gifted abilities. ❖



Educational Deprivation: Open wounds that are festering or healing

JOYCE DAVIS

What happens to the character building process when it is met with educational deprivation?

20 year old Rajini, looked with shock at her husband as he stood on the threshold of their home. "You can't keep her here!", she told herself as she looked at the woman who stood alongside her husband. "This woman looks better than me in every way", she thought." My three children and me, what shall we do?"

From there started Rajni's long journey in coping with deprivation of every kind.

Rajni's husband Raj was an engineer and earned a reasonable salary but most of it was squandered and a pittance was given to his wife to take care of the family expenses and the three children two girls and the youngest a boy. There were expenses for food, school fees, school uniform, house rent etc.

So Rajni decided to take up a job. She had no professional degree so she started learning the basics of computers. She took up a job as a receptionist. Her concern for her children was always uppermost. The children did odd jobs like typing, tuitions and running errands which

brought in some money to meet every day needs.

When Rohit, her son was in class five, he came home crying one day Rajni felt hurt by this hand to mouth existence. Rohit had been selected to be in the first row of the choreography being put up by his class for the annual day. On the day of the dress rehearsal he was put in the last row because he did not have new black shoes.

That evening Rajni counted all the money she had. Their food money would be in deficit but she went ahead and bought the shoes anyway. The family ate whatever they could to keep hunger pangs down and they managed least realizing that this would be their life style for many more years for one reason or the other.

Rajni's husband Raj invested everything for his mistress and her two sons. They lacked nothing as far as Rajni could see.

There were dark, hopeless moments in Rajni's life when she felt compelled to swallow sleeping pills, and tried black magic on her husband and his mistress. She felt her life was wrecked because her own father too told her not to come back. Her brothers were of no help. In

her despair she cried out "Is there a God? Can you hear me?"

It was at this time that someone gave her a Bible, invited her to their Bible study and Church. Jesus, the savior who knows grief and sorrow met with her and he taught her how to cope with life on a daily basis. Rajni's children began to attend Sunday school and their life revolved around the church and its activities.

Rajni's job profile kept improving. Her children grew up to be fine young vibrant members of their church always looking out to reach out to young people. Her eldest daughter got a fine job as a lecturer in a leading college. The younger daughter worked in an international bank and the youngest son got a job in an international IT company.

Rajni's life of deprivation began when at the age of three her mother passed away and a step mother came along. She could have gone to the best school but it was not so. As a thirteen year old she was married off to one of her relatives, an engineer, who was much older than her and did not value or respect her. You have read the rest of her story.

Psychologists would predict that her children would become social misfits and she herself a broken woman.

But in God's hand her story turned out quite differently. It was similar to the

story of Joseph of the Old Testament. What was meant for evil turned out to be a blessing for her. Even the fact that her husband went after another woman allowed Rajni the freedom to find Jesus and bring up her children in the fear of God rather than the influence of her husband.

In a country like ours we are surrounded by deprivation of all kinds. The girl child is not sent to school at all and made to look after her siblings, the facilities at the school are not adequate so the girl child is kept at home. If the child has any disabilities then he or she is a non entity. If the father is an alcoholic or the mother has no time for the children then it is a life of deprivation. As a result of this the church and other organizations have taken up the effort to bridge the gap. Mt. 25: 34 to 46. If we don't take up the cause of the underprivileged then Jesus will deny knowing us.

While this is one side of the picture the other side concerns the individual. People on the outside are making an effort to bind the wounds of deprivation but the individual too needs to experience the healing touch of our Lord Jesus within himself to experience true wholeness. Without the inner relationship the wound will continue to fester. Jesus makes us whole. ❖

I dream of development

NAMRATA ACHOWE

I took to gardening a few weeks ago, and devoted myself to it with all the zeal of a new convert. I made grand plans with every moment of free time, dreamt of a mini-rainforest flourishing on my terrace, and hoped that I will be able, in good time, to hand out 'farm'-fresh produce to friends and family.

Anyway, the following week, I found myself standing in front of a store, bursting at its seams with pots and cans of every conceivable shape, size and colour. Bags and bags of manure adorned the corners, packets of seeds and saplings were vying for attention, and the genial owner, finding little room in the midst of all this, had set up his desk on the sidewalk. I bought pots, saplings, and returned home.

The next morning I realised that I didn't have soil! So, I try to find a solution, and I can't think straight because I can't see any soil for miles. I try to ask my neighbours, but the amused look on their faces makes me think of myself as a clown. I ask the help in my house, and she gives me a blank stare, mumbles something and wanders off.

The next day, I find myself standing in front of the same store, and the salesperson points to the sacks of soil in the corner. I would love to buy

more, but when I felt the weight of one bag, I limited my ambition. And, to answer your question, I was planning to grow sprouts.

This brief foray into the world of agriculture, thought modest in scale, was a revelation. One, you had to buy soil now. To think that a few years ago, it was something you scooped out of the ground, and that was that. Granted that I was in a big city, and soil was too embarrassing to be seen in public, and had to be dressed in concrete. But, since when did we start buying soil?

Is this not the very heart of deprivation? That we should have to purchase soil, water, and air. That these are no longer freely available, but are commodities that are bought and sold. The day is not far when they shall be speculated upon, and we will see them soaring up and down the stock exchanges of the world.

For instance, Chile, a country which produces a third of the global output of copper, has sold several of its streams and rivers to mining companies leaving the locals digging deeper and deeper for water. Many fear that the next war will be for water. Large tracts in Africa are being sold to arid countries for agriculture, depriving the local population of cultivable land as

well as pastures for their cattle. And, we don't even need to mention the stories of deprivation in our country. The irony is that all of this is done for the sake of development.

In the introduction to his book, 'Everybody loves a good drought', P. Sainath observes that 'Too often, poverty and deprivation get covered as events. That is when disaster strikes, when people die'.

Deprivation is not so simple. To illustrate my point, let me narrate a particular instance which helped me understand the true nature of deprivation. All those who are familiar with the Indian landscape know the ubiquitous chai-shop, the true birthplace of the chai-latte. I became friends with the owner of one such chai-shop, Malatee. One evening, she introduced me to her grandson, and asked me if I could spare some time and help him with his English lessons.

As is characteristic of six or seven year old children, this child enjoyed talking more than his lessons. So, when he saw a picture of an airplane, he started telling me all about airplanes, and somehow the conversation ended at a point where I asked him what he would like to be when he grew up. To which he promptly replied, a pilot. Before I could say anything, the mother, who was at an arm's distance from us, said, 'no, child, think of something else'.

Can there be greater deprivation than this, that a child no longer has the right to dream, that he is bound by mental chains to what others believe is impossible? Can there be greater defeat than this that we have conquered the world, but failed our own children?

True development can happen only when each person has a chance to explore and develop his potential. And, exploration begins in the realm of dreams.

You may laugh all you want at their improbability, write off them as impossibilities, but, you cannot deny that dreams are where it all begins.

A man can live without a meal, but he cannot live without hope. This month, as we focus on issues on development and deprivation, here is what I would like to leave behind with you.

Do know that there will be no end to the tables and charts and reports, the hundred different indices that will assess and quantify development, and the annual, bi-annual and quarterly measures and initiatives and programmes.

But, as Christians, remember that to rob a child of his right to dream is deprivation of the deepest and darkest kind. If you want this country to develop, please encourage children to dream and hope. ♦

They will lead the way.

I appreciate your time. Thank you for reading.



The King, The Suffering Servant

“Your King is coming”

Reflection on St. John’s passion narrative

Dr. Saphir Athyal

The most commonly used words for ‘sin’ in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, in their original roots, mean to miss the mark, or in shooting missing the bull’s-eye. Once we miss our goals, mess up our God’s purposes for our lives, and become what we should not be, then it is sin. Sin is the basic nature of our being, and then only our doing, speaking and thinking. Sin produces sins which are expressions of who we are. Therefore repentance

is primarily from who we are and then only from what we do. A complete change of heart and turning around to have an entirely new direction in life is obligatory to enter the kingdom of God.

The basic question is to which kingdom we do belong. Who rules us, our own self and the devil or God in Christ? Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters at the same time. There is true freedom when Christ becomes our Master. When selfishness and

values against God rule our hearts and actions, we have no freedom.

I remember one of our central cabinet members was discussing something about Shahrukh Khan before the news media. He was suggesting at that time that because Shahrukh Khan is a great icon, a great person whom all of us particularly young people adore, it would be good if he did not smoke in public. When Khan knew of this comment he was provoked and said angrily that none had a right to judge his personal matters and he had full freedom to smoke. It is said that later due to pressures from his own family he quit smoking: I hope it is true at least for the sake of his family.

Those who smoke are slaves to smoking. True freedom is not freedom to smoke but freedom not to smoke. When a boy and a girl are together alone totally in their private world, when they follow their urges and do what they know is morally wrong, is not freedom, but true freedom is their inner strength not to do what is wrong. Many things in our lives work out this way.

Entering the kingdom of God and coming under his rule would produce in us qualities such as, strength not to get angry but to forgive and love, urge to help others when we could easily walk away from the needy, courage to stand for truth in the face of falsehood and to fight for justice in

a world of injustice, and willingness to do all we can to alleviate the wrongs all around us – these are what being in the kingdom of God and under his rule does in us and through us. Our natural inclinations become what God wants us to do.

Jesus revealed himself as the expected Messiah and King, by applying the Old Testament titles ‘the Messiah’, ‘the Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Son of man’ to himself. He declared, “Seek first of all God’s kingdom”. The gospel is the “good news of the kingdom of God” that he broke into history to “establish justice and peace on earth” by “reconciling all things to him.”

Jesus worked against all forces and principalities that oppose the will of God. He showed that kingdom is at work through his ministry of healing, casting out of demons, feeding the hungry, fighting against laws and customs and condemning empty ritualistic religion, racial prejudices and gender discriminations.

In Christ’s own person and ministry the kingdom of God is already a reality, as he is the King. Those who repent and come under his lordship are already living in the kingdom. “The kingdom is among and within you”. But the Kingdom is not fully come till all peoples will recognize his sovereignty and a “new heaven and new earth” is a reality. In this sense the kingdom is not yet fully come. The great future has

already begun in the present. So these two aspects exist, the kingdom that is “already here” and the kingdom that is “yet to come”, or the kingdom of the present and the kingdom of the future. Therefore, we are taught to pray, “Let your Kingdom come”.

To be ‘in him’ is to be in his kingdom. Those who enter the kingdom constitute the Church, an assembly of those who are adopted into the family of God and are his disciples led by the Spirit. But God’s kingdom is not identical to the established Church, and the scope of his rule is much wider than the Church. The Church is to be ‘the sign of God’s kingdom’ and his instrument for its expansion.

The book of Revelation depicts the consummation of the kingdom at the second coming of Christ, the defeat of Satan, the judgment of all peoples and re-creation of all things. Then Christ will be acknowledged by all as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev.19:16). His rule will be everlasting with no end to it. World history moves toward this goal.

The Jewish leadership could never think of Jesus as their expected Messiah. This is because his idea of the kingdom of God was entirely different from that of theirs in several ways, and his method of establishing his kingdom was radically different from what was generally assumed.

First, the kingdom of Jesus was

universal and not national. His reign, as prophet Zechariah said, “will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth” (Zech. 9:10). The strictly nationalistic Jews could never imagine the people of other nations having an equal place as they in the kingdom of their Messiah.

Second, Jesus will extend his rule peacefully by changing the hearts of people rather than by the use of military force. Righteousness and justice were to be established by peaceful process. By love he would conquer hate. Here too Zechariah had said that the Messiah “will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations” (Zech. 9:10).

Third, God establishing his kingdom through Jesus was by breaking into human history and redeeming people through the suffering and atoning death of Christ. Jesus Christ who is called, “the Lion of Judah,” ‘the Lion-king’, is at the same time, “the slain lamb.” It is a great mystery and paradox that the true Messiah is at the same time King and the ‘Suffering Servant’ as Prophet Isaiah pictured. We will later look more closely at his suffering and its victory.

One mystery of the kingdom is that there is a degree of hiddenness in the expression of the kingdom as in Jesus’ parables of the leaven in the dough,

the mustard seed and wheat among the weeds. The kingdom grows rather quietly.

God's kingdom is holistic in its nature and not simply a spiritual reality. It encompasses the spiritual and the material, the individual and the social, the earthly and heavenly. It is both now and in the future. In his kingdom both the spiritual and the secular come under his rule. All secular professions also are important in God's kingdom on earth.

A doctor, an engineer and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the earliest and most godly. The doctor said, "At the very beginning of time God created Eve by taking a rib out of Adam, and that is a doctor's work." But the engineer declared, "Even before that God created an orderly and structured universe out of what was formless, void, dark and chaotic. Definitely that is the work of an engineer God." But the politician claimed, "But where did chaos come from except that it was the work of the politicians: so my profession is the earliest". It is not just the spiritual ministry, but all professions should be godly and come under God's rule.

"Your king is coming" was a declaration and the loud shout of the crowd of the first Palm Sunday. What does kingship of Christ mean to us? As we saw, the central theme running through the whole Bible is the kingdom of

God. It is the heart of God's plan and purpose for the world. It is also the major theme of all the teachings and parables of Jesus. His life inaugurated his kingdom and a new phase of God's rule.

The kingdom has a spiritual core, and without repentance and a radical change in life one cannot enter the kingdom and have a new start in life. We as followers of Christ are called to work for the kingdom, "He has made us to be a kingdom and priests" (Rev. 1:6). We are to live by the kingdom values. We are also challenged to be ready even to suffer for the kingdom.

When the Bible spoke of Christ as King the concept of king was that of the ancient world. Kings then had absolute power. When King Herod ordered all the babies of Bethlehem to be killed, could anyone question him? Today if there are sovereigns like the Queen of England or the king of Thailand, we know well that the center of power is not the queen or the king, but the Parliament of the people. The sovereigns have the titles but no power. They are only nominal rulers.

We adore Christ as our King, but does he control and rule over all areas of our lives? We sing songs such as, "King of my life, I crown thee now", "Lead on, O King eternal", and "O, worship the king, glorious above." But what is the nature of his rule over us? There is no democracy in our relationship

with Christ, only autocracy. He has us totally, our all, or nothing at all. Are we willing to submit to him in these terms?

The forces that guide our lives should be the values of God's kingdom. They should be our natural inclinations. In our living rooms when we have flower pots with natural plants, we see how their leaves always turn to the window and light outside. When we turn them around so that the leaves face inside, within a couple of days again they turn to the light that comes through the window. The question before us is not whether we are perfect, but whether our inclination or urge is to consistently follow the light of Christ, or not.

We cannot please God by some church rituals, our religiosity, charity works, and trying hard to live right. But if we repent, take a decisive U-turn in our lives, and accept the kingship and rule of our Lord over us, he will give us great freedom by giving in us his life and power.

Let us bow our heads for a moment of reflection and commitment:

For Self-examination and Commitment:

1. Christ whom we honor as our Lord and King demands our total allegiance to him in all aspects of our lives. With the help of the Holy Spirit, let each one of us reflect on those areas in our lives that we have not submitted to his lordship and rule –

- (a) In my profession, work
- (b) In my personal and private life
- (c) In my family relationships
- (d) In my spiritual growth
- (e) In other areas such as, service of God, handling of money, and any others.

2. Let us repent with regard to each of these areas, and pray, "Let your kingdom and rule come into my total life: I know this is your will for me. Amen" ❖

to be contd.

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Kingdom Learning

JONATHAN ABRAHAM

No one really knows how big the internet is. They do know, however, that it is gargantuan and holds more information than anyone would ever care to try to calculate in a life time. It is one of the great wonders of our time. With smart mobile devices, a few light whisks of a finger can expose us to more information than most generations could dream of. At the same time, we have been unable to put all our information in context. We do not know what to do with all the available knowledge. Information must to be put back into the context of Gospel love.

The proliferation of modern technology is, no doubt, God's way of helping us share the good news of Christ more. But, most of the language that we hear around how we should use modern technology is about communication. They say it helps us communicate faster, and to more people. But this is just one of the many assets that we are offered. I would suggest that learning, and gauging worldviews are the best ways in which we can use instant information. Such understanding will let us properly move towards real development of God's Kingdom.

The apocryphal story goes that the Apostle John, in the latter stages of his life, was still actively involved in the ministry of the Church. Whenever any conflict arose in the church, the story says, they would carry John in, on a stretcher, and place him in the middle of the group. He would then say "Brothers, love one another", and be carried back out of the church. In today's culture of knowledge saturation, we have many 'soft-copy' conflicts, i.e. how to properly use the tools of information technology. Our message, however, has not changed. **We are called to love with the love of Christ.** When our focus remains on love, how we use what we have falls into place.

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul notes that "knowledge puffs up, while love builds up". Knowledge is a very dangerous thing in the kingdom of God because it is closely linked to pride. In many ways, in our degree driven generation, we have been overcome by such pride. You can't go very far vocational, even in ministry, without a higher degree. What we should replace our degree mindset with, however, is learning. There is a

pointed difference here. If we focus on acquiring knowledge and degrees: it becomes selfish. Whereas, if we focus on learning in order to edify the church, we can show more love. Degrees and knowledge are not bad things in themselves. But when they are seen as trophies it produces a puffed up spirit.

As we get older, holding the posture of a learner becomes increasingly difficult. We generally become more solidified in our views, and our minds become harder to change. In order to be a constant learner we need to keep ourselves interested in the how God's world works. Mahatma Gandhi once noted "live as if you were to die tomorrow, learn as if you were to live forever." As Christians this adage rings true without the passive voice. That is, we will live forever with Christ and, as the book of Revelation notes, "Reign with him forever". If we reign with Christ, my interpretation would be that we will continue to learn and grow in heaven. So, our learning on earth will only complement our learning in heaven.

We have many resources to practice the humble posture of learning in today's world. 'iTunes U' offers thousands of free courses from universities and seminaries ranging from neurology to neology. A couple years ago, I was reading Dante's 'Divine Comedy' and was able to simultaneously take a Harvard University course on the

book. It expanded my understanding of literature to a great degree.

Online learning has changed how we can use knowledge. We can now learn anything we need, at any point in time. Bill Hybels notes in his book 'Axiom' how he sometimes got frustrated with leaders who came to him when they didn't how to deal with a common difficulty. His first question, he says, is "have you read about this issue yet"? Hybels touches on an important point in today's leadership challenge-most of us, especially in the English speaking world, have readily available books, websites, and online courses at minimal costs which we can use to tackle daily challenges. However, to do this we need to humble ourselves to be ongoing learners.

Learning does not stop simply in acquiring more knowledge. Once we learn, we humbly teach and share what we know. The book of First Timothy notes that we should "...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it..." We must not only learn but continue to grow in what we have already been taught. Any teacher will tell you that the best way of learning and growing in something is to teach it. We should be looking who best we can tell what we have learnt.

Together with learning, the excessive information environment can help us

asses our culture in order to reach it for the Gospel. Ralph Winter, the respected American missiologist was gifted in assessing culture through literature. Every month he would review new books, mostly non-Christian, in order to give a Biblical perspective on their theses. He was a genius in differentiating between truth and lies. Often we critique something as rubbish or 'secular' without thinking as to what Biblical truth says to the issue. As we practice sifting through information and context, we need to practice assessing and evaluating where the truth and the lies fall on the subject matter. When we exercise such analysis, we are able to put our finger more correctly on the pulse of the society in which we live.

With knowledge from technology only becoming faster and more easily accessed, we need the Gospel context to inculcate all that we do. Moore's Law states that the speed of a processor doubles every two years. In other word, our technology will continue to speed up exponentially. Evil can also proliferate with such growth, but such advancement can also be utilised to further God's Kingdom. Christ's light cannot be overcome by darkness. ❖

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Let us use worldly things as wise pilgrims do their staves and other necessities convenient for their journey. So long as they help us forward in our way, let us make use of them, and accordingly esteem them. But if they become troublesome hindrances and cumbersome burdens, let us leave them behind us, or cast them away.

—George Downname

Destitute because... I made the choice?

HANS RAJ JAIN

The 70 year old was getting desperate by the day. Each day brought her more misery. It was not so much that she was unwell or diseased. She was not even invalid or too frail to help herself. It was the 'silent treatment' from her two adult children that sent her heart shooting pain. She felt deeply their rejection.

Three years ago her husband had died suddenly. He had been good to her all through their married life. Fortunately for her, he had built them a house from his small salary and had left it to her. At the advice and persistence of her children she had given over the house to her son. He had gone and sold it without consulting her. He had then bought a flat for his own family and for his sister's family. She was told to temporarily live in a rented room in the locality where she had lived all her life. Their reasoning was that she would be unable to live in the city with them in their 'small' two bedrooms flat. That was three years ago. Each time she called or attempted to move in

with them, they shunned her with one excuse or another. She felt rejected and knew she wasn't wanted. But her heart refused to believe. Day after day she grew despondent and desperate. Her mood swung between depression and angry expressions. This made her feel all the more helpless. One fine morning she finally decided to accept her 'fate' which meant she would die alone. So why wait for death? she reasoned. She talked about her thoughts with her land lords who brushed it a side. They reasoned that it was one of her poor 'moments'. She would not shun the topic. She talked about her son that she would never allow him to light her funeral pyre.

A few days later, to the shock her landlord, and the keeper of funeral pyre site, they found her at the footsteps leading to the pyre site. Dead.

The seventy year old had laid herself out on the firewood arranged for another funeral sprinkled kerosene on the wood and performed her own last rites. She burnt herself alive. Even in

death she suffered ignominy of self-immolation!

Horried? It's a true and a recent story.

'Destitute' are all around us. In fact, they are in our neighbourhood; even at our doorsteps. Some live within the four walls of our homes. The tragedy is that they often cry in silence. Why is offer of acceptance, belonging and self worth so difficult for us today? We see them all about us. Sadly, our response is either to feign ignorance or turn a blind eye. Some of us quicken our pace to get away from these folks because we consider them to be a nuisance. When confronted, we go into denial mode. *"Are they our problem?"* we demand to know. *"Should Government's to deal with 'these people' become a noose around our neck? It they who should do something about this condition. Police should protect such people and take their family members to 'task' over it."*

That is until we practice such behaviour with our own and gets reported in the papers. Then we pretend to be outraged and judge the society by asking, *"why are people interfering in our personal matter? It is none of their business. We are not monsters. We love our folks and we know how to care for them. No one needs to teach us."*

Still there those among us who demonstrate their outrage at the growth of the desperate people in the society

saying, *"What is happening to our society? This sort of thing can happen in our so called 'civilized society is unbelievable. How did we manage to get to be like this? When did we lose our sense of being a caring, protecting, and accountable community?"*

The Perception: Right or Wrong?

While the Dictionaries provide us with technical image of the term 'Destitute', we believe that relational definition is much more appropriate in illustration and content.

How do we know? Well, our conviction comes from the lives of many 70 years olds we have heard and read about. Allow us to narrate another true story. Reading about condition of Delhiwalas, we came across this story of a 'Destitute' person found in Karolbagh area of Delhi. This person was ones a professional. She was 10 years into her retirement when her whole world fell apart. Unbelievable as it seemed to us, she was found living on the street in pathetic state. The finder was her shocked student. He had a 'double-take' when as passed her way on business. At first he was uncertain but taking courage he approached her and called her by her surname. When she looked up and in fluent English responded to him, he was flabbergasted.

Sitting down beside his teacher of old he heard her narrate her story. She said, *"I thought I was doing the*

sensible thing and logically the right thing, when I decided to make the life of my only son and his family easier by transferring the deed to the flat in his name. I was getting on years and thought it would make his life hassle free if before her death she signed her rights to property, bank account etc. to his name. Three weeks later I was dumped her. This has been my home now for a year now. I am waiting for death to come and the municipality will do the necessary for me. This footpath of Karolbagh is where my last days shall be.

But tell me how are you? Do you have a family and how many children?"

At this the man broke down. His teacher had not changed. She cared even within her own chaos.

Children honor your parents.

The above is more than one of the Ten Commandments Moses gave. Matthew in chapter fifteen and verses three to nine narrates one of the most significant events in the life of Jesus. Matthew presents Jesus as pretty annoyed. Allow us to present to you the event.

The issue was about washing of hands that the Religious folks picked on Jesus' disciples. His 'boys' were eating without washing hands first. (Talk about adult behaviour!). They took offense at this and targeted Jesus.

Jesus response. The amazing fact is

Jesus' choice of 'tool' to rebuttal. He uses a relationship driven behavioural offense that had severe consequences for the offender. It carried the death penalty. Now that is pretty severe in nature for the offense we have softened. It is as if Jesus is saying, if you take offense at something that goes only into the stomach and then at appropriate times has its effects on the person who ate something. It affects no one else. On the other hand you permit a behaviour and action that is socially and spiritually destructive and offensive to God. Why?

Your objection to eating with unwashed hands has little, if any, external consequence. Where as relational issues between parents and children you choose to justify and soft paddle and give it a religious appearance in the name of God has huge consequences. The action of those who break this law and you who promote the breaking of this law has both eternal and temporal relational consequence for here and now. This relationship between parents and children has everything involved: it puts societal norms and behaviour at stake, correct perception and understanding of God and His character at stake and most of all family life and relationship between them at stake with wider social impact.

Then Jesus ends his rebuttal with a severe tongue lashing by calling them Hypocrites!

That is harsh. It is not something these religious heads would have heard someone dare to call them, and that too, to their face!

What's the Antidote? Choose wisely!

Jesus' rebuke and rebuttal was never to put-down anyone. Rather it was to enable people to confront the truth of their daily living, relationship values, and to help evaluate their chosen interpretation of God's Word.

In all of this, where does God and His character fit in? This relationship with God is not meant for heaven but for heaven to also make its presence felt on earth in and through all those making claims to be in relationship with Him.

That's why dishonoring parents is to dishonor God. Temptations to usurp authority are bound to come but what we do with them, is the choice we make and their consequences we face. If we flaunt God's order of behaviour, relationships, value and truth, then we can expect depravity, selfish behaviour, and breakdown of social and communal harmony. Suspicion and insecurity will mark our lives.

Antidote: Honor your parents and we will honor God and live secure, peaceful and contented lives filled and marked by harmony, joy, a sense of safety and belonging! ♦

Choice is your. Choose wisely!

Hans Raj Jain, Managing Director
Interiors, Nagpur.

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“Let us never forget to pray. God lives. He is near. He is real. He is not only aware of us but cares for us. He is our Father. He is accessible to all who will seek Him.”

– Gordon B. Hinckley

1 MONDAY “Yes! Christ the Lord is risen.” His resurrection is the guarantee that God has enabled us to live out the thought of eternity, here and now onwards. Therefore, let us thank God for His faithfulness in our lives.

2 TUESDAY Pray for children suffering from autism, as we observe World Autism Day today.

3 WEDNESDAY There are three things human beings face universally, like King David, that is Evil, Suffering and Death. The question is, are we victims of these? Let us re-examine ourselves and renew our relationship with God to gain victory and fresh breakthroughs.

4 THURSDAY The major social problem in India is gender discrimination. The obsession for having male child is creating gender gap and this is leading to other social problems like dowry related harassment, domestic violence, child marriage, female foeticide etc. If people stop discriminating between

the genders and treat both the genders equally many social problems of the nation can be solved. It can be done only through education and making the people understand the importance of girls and teach them to respect women. Please pray for change in mindset.

5 FRIDAY Conviction rates improve when teams of lawyers and social workers supervise progress of individual cases in a spirit of cooperation with officials. Please pray for a greater appreciation of this fact in the nation.

6 SATURDAY Cruel death of girl babies at the hands of relatives continues to prevail in our country. The 2001 and 2011 Indian Census reports show a significant decrease in the number of girls compared to boys in the 0-6 categories. There is an urgent need to change the mindset of the communities while strengthening the laws within the country. There is no dearth of laws but the implementation needs to be tightened. Compassion is an inner feeling resulting in outward action.

7 SUNDAY As we celebrate World Health Day, let us pray for the health of people, especially those who are suffering from fatal illness. May Jesus, the God of impossible, make healing possible in their lives.

8 MONDAY In Delhi, the Rape Crisis Cell under the Delhi Commission for Women partners with non-governmental organizations to provide legal and social support to rape victims. The Delhi Commission for Women's lawyers starts providing oversight only at the trial stage. The National Crime Records Bureau reports that in 2011, Delhi NCT had a 41.5 per cent conviction rate in rape cases compared to the 26.4 per cent national conviction rate. This programme provides a good model for the advocates who represent the victim's interests, while collaborating with government authorities to strengthen the criminal justice system.

9 TUESDAY The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides protection to all children under the age of 18 years from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. These offences have been clearly defined for the first time in law. The Act provides for stringent punishments, which have been graded as per the gravity of the offence. The punishments range from simple to rigorous imprisonment of varying periods. There is also provision for fine, which is to be decided by the Court. Let us pray for its proper implementation.

10 WEDNESDAY The Planning Commission had revised the poverty estimates on the basis of the Tendulkar Committee recommendations for computing and updating poverty lines. The data for 2009-10 shows that in comparison to 2004-05, Rural poverty declined from 41.8% to 33.8% and urban poverty declined from 25.7% to 20.9%. Poverty ratio in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttarakhand has declined by about 10 percentage points. Poverty has increased in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Praise God for the decline in poverty. Let us continue praying for its complete elimination.

11 THURSDAY The Bodos have long been working — often using violence — to oust what they called illegal immigrant (Muslim) settlers, as well as some other groups from Assam itself. The battle is for limited resources, including jobs. Let us pray for peace in Assam and other parts of India affected by unrest due to ethnic/class/caste conflicts.

12 FRIDAY We must look deep into our conscience and find out where we have faltered. The solutions to problems have to be found through discussion and conciliation of views. People must believe that governance is an instrument for good and for that, we must ensure good governance. Therefore let us pray for a renewed conscience for India and the world.

13 SATURDAY Let us pray for the hunger deaths in the district of Orissa

and other part of India have increased. It is ironic that on the one hand the Centre is touching an 8 per cent growth rate and painting a rosy picture of its progress and, on the other, starvation deaths are on the rise. All measures, like selling nutritious food at subsidized rates, and improving health-care infrastructure, should be taken to curb chronic hunger.

14 SUNDAY Pray for the believers all around the globe as they worship. Pray for God's revelation through the scriptures, which may lead to change of hearts for many.

15 MONDAY India has an opportunity for unprecedented economic growth and social stability. It could be achieved by an avalanche of investment, particularly in better and greater education. Education is the ladder that can help those at the bottom to rise to the pinnacles of professional and social status. India can double its growth rate by turning today's disadvantaged into multiple engines of economic development.

16 TUESDAY Recognizing the need for speedier justice delivery, the 13th Finance Commission has granted Rs. 5,000 crore for improving functioning of Lok Adalats and legal aid panels, alternate dispute resolution centres, heritage court buildings, state judicial academy and training of judicial officers and public prosecutors. Please pray for effective implementation.

17 WEDNESDAY Join in praying for the global bleeding disorders community today to mark World Hemophilia Day. This year a special

significance needs to be mentioned for the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH), as it marks 50 Years of Advancing Treatment for All.

18 THURSDAY World Heritage is the shared wealth of humankind. Protecting and preserving this valuable asset demands the collective efforts of the international community. Therefore this special day, celebrated as 'World Heritage Day' offers an opportunity to pray and raise the public's awareness about the diversity of cultural heritage and the efforts that are required to protect and conserve it, as well as draw attention to its vulnerability.

19 FRIDAY Let us pray for all the children who are at risk and are used as labourers in different parts of our country. Pray that they may be rescued and rehabilitated and given the opportunity to lead a healthy and happy childhood. Please pray for the Project Director Aashima Samuel and the local coordinators of EFICAR that God would give them strength and wisdom to work and speak on behalf of the poor and marginalized children.

20 SATURDAY Continue to pray for the Maoist hit areas in the country.

21 SUNDAY Failure of the justice delivery system has been a favoured topic of discussion for long with little effort by the government to deal with it comprehensively. Please pray for a greater and effective judiciary in India.

22 MONDAY Please pray today for the Earth we live on the occasion of World Earth Day. Earth Day aims to

inspire awareness of and appreciation for earth's environment.

23 TUESDAY Pray for the wayward youth, who get easily enticed by the false glamour of the world and end up ruining their lives to alcohol, drug, immorality and other evils.

24 WEDNESDAY Pray for all the Christians who are being persecuted in India at this time, and particularly those in Orissa and Karnataka. Pray that the Lord will watch over them, keeping them safe and providing for all their needs. Pray for Divya, Vikas and the team at the Centre for Religious Freedom, EFI, as they work for the persecuted and to promote religious freedom.

25 THURSDAY The government spending on social services, which include education, sports, health, family welfare, water supply, sanitation, housing, urban development, SC/ST/OBC welfare, labour welfare, relief from natural calamities, have increased substantially. Pray for proper utilization of funds and improved services.

26 FRIDAY The rise in number of cancer cases, especially among the youths, is alarming. Pray for God's healing and compassionate hand.

27 SATURDAY Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) is under implementation in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) districts. The programme is monitored regularly. From the year 2011-12,

Planning Commission has increased the number of LWE districts from 35 to 60. Let us pray for effective implementation of programmes for peace and stability.

28 SUNDAY Pray that the Lord in His sovereign power will speak into the hearts of all those who are agents of violence and unmerited hatred and that the Christians will be courageous, standing firm in their faith and continue to witness for Christ. Pray also for wisdom for Christian leaders at this difficult time, that they may know how to act and what to say as they seek to persuade the authorities to take firm action to protect the Christian community

29 MONDAY Pray for all ministries. I Corinthians 12:5 says, 'There are differences of ministries but the same Lord.' We all serve Jesus Christ. Different ministries exist because of different needs. Pray for ministries engaged in mission fields, social transformation, literature, media and apologetics. God wants all – from the layman to the intellectual in His Kingdom.

30 TUESDAY Pray that God will reveal Himself to them through dreams and visions. Ask God to grant wisdom and favour to the mission agencies working among the Dangs Bhil. Pray also for Dangs believers' boldness to share the Gospel with their own people.❖



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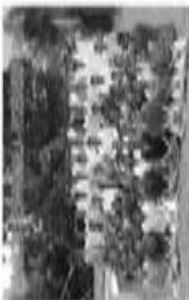
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Students & Faculty group picture

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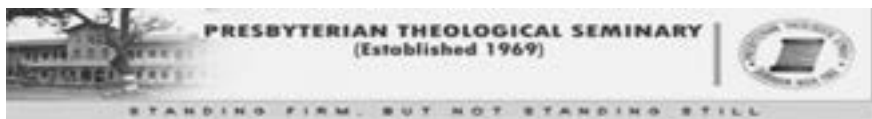
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Diploma in Theology (Dip. Th.)	10 th Passed	3 Years	TAMIL
Bachelor of Ministry (B. Min.)	H.S.L.C Passed & above 20 Years of age	3 Years	TAMIL & ENGLISH
Master of Divinity (M. Div.)	B.A. / B.Sc./ B.Com. / B.R.E.	4 Years	ENGLISH
„	B.Th.	2 Years	ENGLISH

Last Date for submitting the filled in application form for **B.D / B.C.S** is **30-04-2013**

For B.D / B.C.S Application & Prospectus send Rs.100/- by M.O:

The Registrar, Madras Theological Seminary & College, 14, Waddels Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 10

For Extension Education Programme Application & Prospectus Send Rs.100/- by M.O:

The Director, Department of External Studies, MTSC, 14, Waddels Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 10